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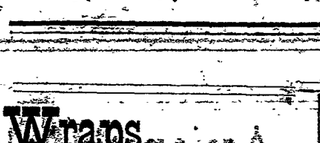

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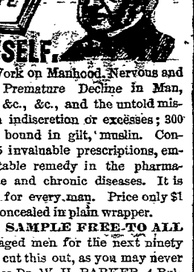

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THE M'GRAWVILLE SENTINEL

THURSDAY, JANUARY 27, 1887.

Her Will Was Made.

"That's right," said Peckham, "pile on the wood! It's a mortal cold night, and I never was no believer in pinchin' and scrapin'. If you hain't no objection, Mrs. Travers, I'd like that ere corner of the fire-place—I always set on the left-hand corner and I don't s'pose it makes any difference to you."

Mrs. Travers rose, in meek obedience to the spectacled autocrat who ruled the household with a rod of gold.

"And, Abiah Travers, you'd obleege me by not smokin' while I'm in the house," went on the remorseless old tyrant. "If there's anything that sends the blood straight into the end o' my nose, its tobaccy smoke!"

Abiah cast a rueful glance at his beloved meerschaum, but he laid it down, nevertheless, with the air of a martyr.

"And now I'm goin' up stairs to get some knittin' out o' my leather reticule, and I hope you'll hev the tea ready by the time I get down stairs, cause I always was a great sticker for early hours. I know 'tsint your reg'lar customs to hev it afore six, but I couldn't wait so long, no ways!"

And as Miss Peckham slowly climbed the creaking chamber stairs, and her ebony cane tapping at every step, Mary Travers spoke boldly out:

"Mother, how can you let that arbitary old Witch of Endor order you around in that sort of way? Father, take up your pipe and smoke it out! She is neither queen nor empress here; and if I were you, I'd have tea just when I wanted it."

"Hush, my dear child!" said Abiah Travers, looking apprehensively at his daughter's kindling cheek and sparkling eye, "you know it won't do to offend her; she's got money to leave."

"Money! and what if she has? Does that give her the right to order us, and domineer over us, and turn all the habits of our lives upside down, I wonder?"

"Mary, my dear, don't speak so loud," put in her mother, "you know, child, it's for the family advantage to humor all her little ways."

"Mother, I would rather work for a living than to be so tyrannized over in our own house."

"Hush, Mary! Papa and I understand these matters much better than you can possibly do. I am afraid Abiah," said Mrs. Travers, turning to her husband, "that we shall have to send Richard away."

"Why?"

"Aunt Peckham says she can't bear the noise of a boy around the house.

"Well, then," said Abiah, regretfully, "he'll have to go, I s'pose."

"Father!" ejaculated Mary, with a rising color; do you mean to say that you would send little Dick away—my uncle's orphan boy—just because Miss Peckham is a whimsical old maid?"

"My dear," said Abiah, turning hot, and looking inexpressibly mean and cringing under his daughter's indignant glance, "you know we really must humor her prejudices."

At this instant the "tap, tap" of Miss Peckham's crutch sounded once more on the stairs, and the discussion was of course interrupted, while Mary went on setting the table, clinking the cups and saucers together with unnecessary energy, and rattling down the knives and forks like a young hail storm.

"This is a mighty inconvenient house of yourn, Abiah," said Miss Peckham, gloomily. "Chimblies in the wrong corners, windys jest where they had't ort to be and ceilin's so low I feel as if I was bein' flattened down the hull mortal time."

"I am sorry," apologized Abiah; but—

"Sorry!" echoed the spinster. "Sorry don't butter parsnips! I'll tell you what you'll have to do, if you calculate on my stayin' here along with you—build a two-story wing, with a chimbly right in the middle."

"Yes—but—it will be so very expensive.

"Expensive! Of course wings cost money; but Luke Storrs' folks would ha' built anything I said, and Jemimy was dretful anxious for me to stay there with 'em."

"Well, well, don't say a word," said the daunted Abiah, "I'll build to suit you, Aunt Peckham."

"Mother," said Mary Travers, at the end of a fortnight, I'm going to marry Truman Lilly to-night."

"Mary!"

"I am, mother. I'm tired of this despotic rule. Father is building an addition to suit Miss Peckham; you have papered all the rooms for her taste; Dick has been sent to the poor-house, and poor, half-blind Sally Jones has been turned out of the kitchen because Miss Peckham think she cost too much. Mother, no blessing will come of this, though Miss Peckham had all the gold of Ophir to back it. And now I can endure it no longer, so I shall marry Truman—partly because he is a dear good fellow and I love him, and partly because he says I shall have Dicky to live with me and a corner for blind Sally in my kitchen. And, mother, you may come and sit on your own side of the fire-place, and father shall smoke all over the house, if he likes, and if Miss Peckham shows her wrinkled old face within a quarter of a mile of the place, we'll set the dogs on her, Truman and I."

"Mary! Mary!" ejaculated her mother; but it was not without a singular sense of relief that she heard her daughter's independent plans.

"For, you see, father," she said to her helpmate, when Mary was safely married and out of the way, "Mary was too spirited like—she never would do as Aunt Peckham wanted—and to tell you the truth, shd told me last week that unless Mary could be disposed of some way, she should go back to Luke Storrs' house.

"I—I'm very glad Mary concluded to have Truman Lilly," said Abiah, cringingly. "It's all-important not to disoblige Aunt Peckham, especially now that I'm mortgagin' the farm to pay for the new wing, and paper hanging, and things."

The Czar of all the Russias was not half so autocratic as Miss Peckham in her more limited domains. If there was a momentary cessation of homage, she had only to say, "I guess I'll see Lawyer Johnson about altering my will," and they were—figuratively speaking—prostrate before her.

To be sure, Abiah Travers sometimes contracted his brows over the numberless expenses into which the old woman's whims and humors led him; but he invariably consoled himself by mentally remarking:

"Never mind; she can't last very long, and it'll be all right when I get her money."

And one day, Miss Peckham being very old and feeble, bethought herself to die, which was perhaps the best thing she could have done.

"Now for the money!" chuckled Abiah. "It's been a long siege; but I guess it'll pay."

The will was produced, in full family conclave, Luke Storrs's family being all present in deep mourning—Truman Lilly, his young wife, and little Dick the orphan.

"How much?" shrieked Abiah, as the legal man sonorously read out the long phrases.

"To be equally divided between my nephew, Luke Storrs, and my nephew, Abiah Travers," shouted the lawyer, "the sum of fifty dollars!"

"Is that all?" fairly shouted Abiah.

"Is that all?" echoed the infuriated Luke Storrs.

"That's all," said the lawyer, dryly, taking a pinch of snuff.

"But look here!" ejaculated Abiah taking him by the sleeve. "Where is Miss Peckham's money?"

"That's Miss Peckham's money."

"All?"

"All!"

"And you knew it all along?"

"Why, yes, of course I knew it, but it wasn't my business to say anything," said the lawyer, evidently enjoying the discomfiture of the two fortune hunters.

"And who is to pay for the new addition to my house—and the papering and painting—and the new Franklin stove—and—and all the expenses she has brought upon me?"

"Ah—who, indeed?" remarked the lawyer. "That is certainly a subject for grave consideration?"

And that was the end of all the golden dreams of Abiah Travers and his wife, while Mrs. Truman Lilly observed, with great calmness:

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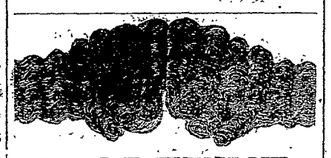

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We, the undersigned, tax-payers of said town, do hereby make written request that you submit to the electors of said town at the next annual election thereof and allow the electors thereof to vote by ballot upon the question of changing the manner of working the highways, pursuant to Laws of 1873, Chapter 395 and the acts amendatory thereto.

Dated, January 8, 1887.

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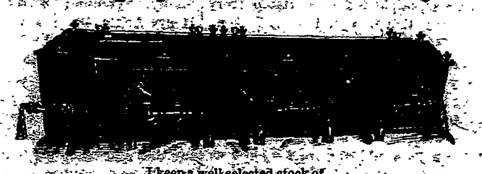

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