

*THE UNKNOWN HEIRS, OR THE
CONTESTED INHERITANCE.*

CHAPTER VI (*concluded.*)

"So he does not know me," thought the old man to himself, at the same time asking,

"Then you do not know whether your parents had any brothers or sisters?"

"I do not," affirmed John.

"Then I may as well tell you of the mission that sent me hither," said the old man, who then explained the purpose of his visit to Meredith. "I saw you here yesterday," he said in conclusion, "and recognized you as my grandson. I have seen you several times heretofore, but was myself unknown to you. The person who so nearly robbed me yesterday told me of you, but I had then no confidence in you, and had given up all hopes of ever clearing my other grandsons. Since last night, however, I have changed my resolution. I am now satisfied of your intentions, and I feel that I would not be doing my duty unless I take you under my care. You are the only grandson I now have left me. Will you go home with me and fill the place which has been so long vacant? Only my nephew, Dudley Fleming, lives with me. When I left home, I resolved to amend my conduct. The character of your past life has been owing to me. I will do all that I can to make reparation. Let us try to overlook the past. Will you come with me?"

"Yes, dear grandfather," said the deceiver, as he grasped the old man's proffered hand. "I will go, and will do all I can to make you happy. I will try to keep the ground that I have gained."

It is needless to dwell longer upon this scene. On the very same day the deceiver and the deceived started for home. Thus far the plotter had been entirely successful, but was it destined to happen that he should long enjoy his ill-gotten prosperity, and his innocent cousins linger in disgrace?

CHAPTER VII.

A DISCLOSURE.

The feeling of Stephen, now that an opportunity seemed at hand for clearing up the villainous plot, of which he was a victim, can be better imagined than described. But soon the thought occurred to him that his enemies might have discovered his presence in the village, and that the letter was the first step in a scheme for entrapping him.

"After all," he concluded, "there can be no harm in going to the post office, but I must use caution in dealing with him."

With this determination, he went to the post office which was simply a small apartment in a grocery. At the appointed time, a person entered, wearing a black cap of a somewhat uncommon pattern.

Observing that Stephen was scrutinizing him closely, he approached him and spoke in a low, guarded tone.

"Did some person," he enquired, "put a letter without a signature into your pocket not long ago?"

"Yes, sir," was Stephen's answer.

"I put it there myself," said the stranger. "And now, will you not go with me to my room,—just above the adjoining store?"

Stephen hesitated a moment, but as he had particularly noticed the store and the tradesmen who occupied it, he silently assented, and the two passed out of the office, ascended an external stairway, and entered a small room in the second story.

This room was humbly and scantily furnished. The stranger struck a light, meanwhile inviting his guest to be seated. He then seated himself, drawing his chair near to Stephen, who now noticed that the apparel of the stranger was old threadbare and patched, but in his face he could detect no indication of treachery whatever his past life might have been.

"I will now tell you my name," he said, "and when I announce that it is Sam Slack, and that I have been an accomplice to John Kelley, alias Daniel Johnson, you will know, perhaps, what my business with you is."