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FATE PLAYS QUEER PRANKS WITH THE WEALTH LEFT BY CHARLES GOSSAGE TO HIS DAUGHTERS

Mary E. Scott and Her Husband, Money Spenders, Under the Pressure of Debts Due and Mortgages Foreclosed, Are Watching the Fortune in Chicago Real Estate Left Her by Her Father Pass Bit by Bit Into the Hands of the Sister Who Shared That Fortune with Her, Margaret G. Blaisdell, Who Married a Money Getter.

STRANGE ROMANCE IN EVERYDAY LIFE DISCLOSED BY THE TRANSFER OF WABASH AVENUE PROPERTY.

PROLOGUE.

"GOING, going, and sold to Margaret G. Blaisdell for the sum of \$50,000." People who heard Master in Chancery Winchester thus dispose of a piece of Wabash avenue real estate a few days ago could see no romance in the transaction. To the little knot of men and women who gathered about the auctioneer on the La Salle street steps of the Court-house and listened to the proceedings it was merely the formal closing out of the interests of one owner of the property and a transfer of title to another.

The equity of Mary E. Scott and her husband in this particular parcel of land and its appurtenances had been pledged to secure payment of a mortgage obligation. Failing to meet this obligation at the appointed time, the Scotts were forcibly shorn of their possession. Unusual interest attached to the proceedings in this instance, because of the fact that buyer and seller are sisters. And thereby hangs a tale, as the novelists say.

Such sales are not uncommon in a large city like Chicago. The law is inexorable. Creditors must be satisfied, and therefore we have the machinery of mortgage foreclosure. Today a man holds possession of valuable realty. Tomorrow he fails to meet an obligation secured by a lien upon this land and its improvements. The next day the law steps in, certain forms are gone through with, in due time an official auctioneer mounts the Court-house steps, mumbles over a set speech, somebody makes an acceptable bid, and the person in whom the title rested is bereft of his belongings. This is the law. There is one saving clause in the proceedings—for fifteen months the debtor has the right of redemption. If he can raise the money within this time and liquidate all claims in full the courts will restore to him title and possession of the property. Sometimes this is done, but it is not often, as the records will show. Once in the toils it is difficult for the loser to extricate himself unless favored by a combination of happy circumstances far beyond the lot of most individuals.

It is had enough when, in a sale of this kind, the title passes to strangers. The situation is made worse when the purchaser is of close blood ties to the despoiled owner and there is a friction in their intercourse.

It becomes almost intolerable when the acquisition is made during such a friction following the suspension of a warm and loving companionship extending over the long years from infancy to maturity. Then it is the formal demands of the law are lost sight of and an air of romance begins to enmesh the proceedings.

Legal documents are dry and dusty things, stiff and uninviting in phraseology, coldly accurate in statement, and utterly without the charm of imagination. And yet many of these papers, starting off with the usual "Know all men by these presents," or the equally familiar "This indenture witnesseth," contain material which would fill a clever novelist with delight. From the vaults in the offices of a score of attorneys in Chicago could be drawn packages of deeds, mortgages, wills, contracts, and similar instruments, musty and yellow with age, which would furnish under careful interpretation realistic plots for vivid and surpassing works of fiction. Well it is for the peace of mind of countless families that these documents are not open to the inspection of prowling writers in search of new ideas for books and plays. Man's creative brain can never originate anything so forceful and striking, so illustrative of human passions and desires, as may be found in actual existence in the keeping of the lawyers.

It was the knowledge of all this, perhaps, that made the foreclosure proceedings on the steps of the Court-house distasteful to one veteran attorney. For years he had been associated with the principals in the drama. He shrank from hearing the "Going, going, sold," of the master in chancery, drew tight the windows of his office as if to shut out the unwelcome sound, and sat down to reveries of the misty past. The client who dropped in upon him saw tears gathering in the old man's eyes, heard him mutter reverently "Poor Mary," and compassionately withdrew.

CHAPTER I.

It was in the early '60s that Charles Gossage came to Chicago and opened a pretentious dry goods store in State street, the firm being Ross & Gossage. Born in Northamptonshire, England, in 1829, Mr. Gossage had served a faithful apprenticeship, labor-

ing hard as boy and man, and acquiring full command of honorable business methods. Amiable and sunny in nature, just, conscientious, and even liberal in all his dealings, he became a popular favorite and his enterprise prospered beyond his anticipation. In time a new partnership was formed with Charles C. Boyle, and the sign of the Iron Lions became one of the best known landmarks in the city. The big fire drove the Gossage establishment from State street for a while, and a branch house was started in West Madison street. After the ruins were cleared away and the burned district rebuilt Gossage & Co. opened a new store at the southwest corner of State and Washington streets and at once secured a large and profitable patronage.

Everybody liked Mr. Gossage, and when he went down to Ottawa, Ill., in June, 1870, and married Margaret Ann Walker, congratulations were numerous and honestly hearty. "It's a fine pair," was the universal comment. The Gossage home was a place of genuine hospitality. Two daughters came—Mary E. Gossage, born in 1871, and Margaret, Gertrude Gossage, born in 1873. With the advent of the children the home was, if possible, more attractive than ever. Husband and wife entertained well, friends increased daily in number, and the family was an influential factor in the social and business life of the city. Mr. and Mrs. Gossage were both blessed with abundant means and did a great amount of quiet, unostentatious charitable work. They gave freely to deserving individuals and took leading parts in organized efforts for the relief of worthy causes.

In one short year after the birth of the youngest child Mrs. Gossage sickened and died. It was a blow from which the husband never fully recovered. Strong, resolute, and as successful in business as ever, Charles Gossage gave no outward sign of his affliction, but those who were close to him knew he suffered intensely. The family was then living at Forty-seventh street and Lake avenue, in the district called Kenwood, and there Mr. Gossage took his niece, Mrs. Charles Farnsworth, to serve as housekeeper and watch over his motherless girls. Under her influence, gracious and beneficent at all times, they were brought up to school age, taught to love and cherish one another, and made companions in all the word implies. This was the situation when a second great affliction came upon the household. Mr. Gossage, after an illness lasting some months, died on Jan. 5, 1883. Trustworthy counselors and friends ministered to him during his sickness. His long-time partner, Charles C. Boyle, was there, as was Dr. John E. Owens, the family physician; the Rev. Charles H. Bixby, pastor of St. Paul's

Episcopal Church; and Ephraim A. Otis, confidential agent and attorney for Mr. Gossage. They assisted him in arranging his earthly and spiritual affairs, heard him admonish the girls to stand by one another through life, and then came death and the end.

From this time on the ways of the sisters seem to lead in opposite directions. With Charles it is a matter of constantly adding to her possessions, of increasing her wealth and absorbing titles to valuable property. With the other it is the harassment of courtship, the making of a man, the process being much the same as the paying of a debt. The girls were brought up to school age, taught to love and cherish one another, and made companions in all the word implies. This was the situation when a second great affliction came upon the household. Mr. Gossage, after an illness lasting some months, died on Jan. 5, 1883. Trustworthy counselors and friends ministered to him during his sickness. His long-time partner, Charles C. Boyle, was there, as was Dr. John E. Owens, the family physician; the Rev. Charles H. Bixby, pastor of St. Paul's

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Master in Chancery's transfer the Blaisdells have now acquired a one-third interest. It is a case of one sister's buying away from another a property which the latter would doubtless have liked to keep.

Nor is this all. Mary A. Coleman, an aunt of the Gossage girls, holds a second mortgage for \$17,000 on the Scotts' property in the east of third principal meridian, and lying west of the Illinois Central tracks. This tract and its improvements passed into the custody of Alfred L. Baker on Oct. 7, 1885, by virtue of a trust deed executed to secure a loan.

Another piece of realty, known as one-third of the east half of the west half of lot 6, block 32, in the original Town of Chicago, was also formerly numbered among the possessions of Mr. and Mrs. Scott, but it was acquired by Charles C. Boyle on a warranty deed dated Oct. 15, 1887, supposedly the interest of Mrs. Blaisdell, as whose agent he is acting.

CHAPTER V.

Seated alone at a table in a well-known downtown restaurant one night last week was Richard P. Blaisdell, erstwhile plowman, and now manager of an extensive estate. It was the hour when people drop in for a luncheon after the performance at the theater, and the resort was pretty well filled.

"There's Dick Blaisdell!" remarked a man about-town to his companion, and indicating the object of attention. "Smart chap is Dick. He's a money-getter just like his father, and he can even give the old man some valuable pointers. Blaisdell senior had to work for his money, or at least he earned his first capital by sticking time and then added to it through the opportunities his trade gave him for lending money to those less thrifty than himself."

"You seem to know the family pretty well," commented the companion. "There must be something out of the ordinary about them."

"Know Papa Blaisdell? Well, I should say so. I knew him when he hustled about the old Times office in his shirt sleeves, with dirty hands and smudgy face. Deducible, you know. The old man took Dick to California and tried to make a farmer out of him. You see Blaisdell senior was always a grubber, and thought hard work the only road to success. But Dick is built on different lines. He plowed under protest until one day he became acquainted with a wealthy girl. He went in to win her, and before a month went by she was his wife. It was a big surprise to her sister and friends here in Chicago, as Gertrude Gossage was not looked upon as of the marrying kind. Then Dick shook the plow and blossomed out as a gentleman. It makes me think of the refrain in 'Old Hoss' Hoey's song where he sings, 'And I've now such lots of money'."

noticeable by reason of her hair.

"By Jove," said the gossip, "I've now such lots of money."

The woman and her friends by the table at which Blaisdell was seated before the skirt of her dress had touched him if she had drawn it aside. Their eyes were cold, glassy stare given him, but no sign of recognition. Their appearances were strange.

"That's funny," was the gossip's companion. "Not so strange when you facts," returned the man. "I've lost a lot of money, and the Scotts don't like the idea. Blaisdell in their affairs. They not got along together very long, and now it is only a matter of time before they will be another."

CHAPTER VI.

Out in California there is a smilingly complacent as he read from Chicago. The report of Mrs. Scott's Wabash avenue estate, Blaisdell was of especial interest. Mr. Blaisdell Sr. has reached a yellow leaf period in life, but an active admiration for plow-

"Dick is a smart boy," he said. "His son's achievements are a lesson. He will get along all right. I was trying to make him out of him, when all he needed of a business opportunity and he made more money than any farmer in the world could accumulate in a lifetime."

Visions of the days when he cashed "dupees" for impudent farmers before the old man of the old Times office, with his competence he now enjoys in contrast with the rapid rise in which his son acquires his smiles again, and says: "Dick is all right. He of himself in good shape, but different it was when I was a plowman."

CHAPTER VII.

Mr. and Mrs. Scott are in Virginia Hotel. Their old seventh street and Lake avenue residence has been sold into the possession of a new owner, and the Scotts have moved to the new place. The old man of the old Times office, with his competence he now enjoys in contrast with the rapid rise in which his son acquires his smiles again, and says: "Dick is all right. He of himself in good shape, but different it was when I was a plowman."