THE HOUSE OF A THOUSAND CANDLES

CHAPTER I

THE WILL OF JOHN MARSHALL GLENARM

Pickering's letter bringing news of my grandfather's death found me at Naples early in October. John Marshall Glenarm had died in June. He had left a will which gave me his property conditionally, Pickering wrote, and it was necessary for me to return immediately to qualify as legatee. It was the merest luck that the letter came to my hands at all, for it had been sent to Constantinople, in care of the consul-general instead of my banker there. It was not Pickering's fault that the consul was a friend of mine who kept

track of my wanderings and was able to hurry the executor's letter after me to Italy, where I had gone to meet an English financier who had, I was advised, unlimited money to spend on African railways. I am an engineer, a graduate of an American institution familiarly known as "Tech," and as my funds were running low, I naturally turned to my profession for employment.

But this letter changed my plans, and the following day I cabled Pickering of my departure and was outward bound on a steamer for New York. Fourteen days later I sat in Pickering's office in the Alexis Building and listened intently while he read, with much ponderous emphasis, the provisions of my grandfather's will. When he concluded, I laughed. Pickering was a serious man, and I was glad to see that my levity pained him. I had, for that matter, always been a source of annoyance to him, and his look of distrust and rebuke did not trouble me in the least.

I reached across the table for the paper, and he gave the sealed and beribboned copy of John Marshall Glenarm's will into my hands. I read it through for myself, feeling conscious meanwhile that Pickering's cool gaze was bent inquiringly upon me. These are the paragraphs that interested me most:

I give and bequeath unto my said grandson, John Glenarm, sometime a resident of the City and State of New

York, and later a vagabond of parts unknown, a certain property known as Glenarm House, with the land thereunto pertaining and hereinafter more particularly described, and all personal property of whatsoever kind thereunto belonging and attached thereto,—the said realty lying in the County of Wabana in the State of Indiana,—upon this condition, faithfully and honestly performed:

That said John Glenarm shall remain for the period of one year an occupant of said Glenarm House and my lands attached thereto, demeaning himself meanwhile in an orderly and temperate manner. Should he fail at any time during said year to comply with this provision, said property shall revert to my general estate and become, without reservation, and without necessity for any process of law, the property, absolutely, of Marian Devereux, of the County and State of New York.

"Well," he demanded, striking his hands upon the arms of his chair, "what do you think of it?"

For the life of me I could not help laughing again. There was, in the first place, a delicious irony in the fact that I should learn through him of my grandfather's wishes with respect to myself. Pickering and I had grown up in the same town in Vermont; we had attended the same preparatory school, but there had been from boyhood a certain antagonism between us. He had always succeeded where I had failed, which is to say, I must admit, that he had succeeded pretty frequently. When I refused to settle down to my profession, but chose to see something of the world first,

Pickering gave himself seriously to the law, and there was, I knew from the beginning, no manner of chance that he would fail.

I am not more or less than human, and I remembered with joy that once I had thrashed him soundly at the prep school for bullying a smaller boy; but our score from school-days was not without tallies on his side. He was easily the better scholar—I grant him that; and he was shrewd and plausible. You never quite knew the extent of his powers and resources, and he had, I always maintained, the most amazing good luck,—as witness the fact that John Marshall Glenarm had taken a friendly interest in him. It was wholly like my grandfather, who was a man of many whims, to give his affairs into Pickering's keeping; and I could not complain, for I had missed my own chance with him. It was, I knew readily enough, part of my punishment for having succeeded so signally in incurring my grandfather's displeasure that he had made it necessary for me to treat with Arthur Pickering in this matter of the will; and Pickering was enjoying the situation to the full. He sank back in his chair with an air of complacency that had always been insufferable in him. I was quite willing to be patronized by a man of years and experience; but Pickering was my own age, and his experience of life seemed to me prepos-

Russia did us the honor to keep a spy at our heels. I should like, for my own satisfaction, at least, to set down an account of certain affairs in which we were concerned at Belgrad, but without Larry's consent I am not at liberty to do so. Nor shall I take time here to describe our travels in Africa, though our study of the Atlas Mountain dwarfs won us honorable mention by the British Ethnological Society.

These were my yesterdays; but to-day I sat in Arthur Pickering's office in the towering Alexis Building, conscious of the muffled roar of Broadway, discussing the terms of my Grandfather Glenarm's will with a man whom I disliked as heartily as it is safe for one man to dislike another. Pickering had asked me a question, and I was suddenly aware that his eyes were fixed upon me and that he awaited my answer.

"What do I think of it?" I repeated. "I don't know that it makes any difference what I think, but I'll tell you, if you want to know, that I call it infamous, outrageous, that a man should leave a ridiculous will of that sort behind him. All the old money-bags who pile up fortunes magnify the importance of their money. They imagine that every kindness, every ordinary courtesy shown them, is merely a bid for a slice of the cake. I'm disappointed in my grandfather. He was a splendid old man, though God knows he had his queer ways.

I'll bet a thousand dollars, if I have so much money in the world, that this scheme is yours, Pickering, and not his. It smacks of your ancient vindictiveness, and John Marshall Glenarm had none of that in his blood. That stipulation about my residence out there is fantastic. I don't have to be a lawyer to know that; and no doubt I could break the will; I've a good notion to try it, anyhow."

"To be sure. You can tie up the estate for half a dozen years if you like," he replied coolly. He did not look upon me as likely to become a formidable litigant. My staying qualities had been proved weak long ago, as Pickering knew well enough.

"No doubt you would like that," I answered. "But I'm not going to give you the pleasure. I abide by the terms of the will. My grandfather was a fine old gentleman. I shan't drag his name through the courts,—not even to please you, Arthur Pickering," I declared hotly.

"The sentiment is worthy of a good man, Glenarm," he rejoined.

"But this woman who is to succeed to my rights,—I don't seem to remember her."

"It is not surprising that you never heard of her."

"Then she's not a connection of the family,—no long-lost cousin whom I ought to remember?"

"No; she was a late acquaintance of your grandfather's. He met her through an old friend of his,—Miss Evans, known as Sister Theresa. Miss Devereux is Sister Theresa's niece."

I whistled. I had a dim recollection that during my grandfather's long widowerhood there were occasional reports that he was about to marry. The name of Miss Evans had been mentioned in this connection. I had heard it spoken of in my family, and not, I remembered, with much kindness. Later, I heard of her joining a Sisterhood, and opening a school somewhere in the West.

"And Miss Devereux,—is she an elderly nun, too?"

"I don't know how elderly she is, but she isn't a nun at present. Still, she's almost alone in the world, and she and Sister Theresa are very intimate."

"Pass the will again, Pickering, while I make sure I grasp these diverting ideas. Sister Theresa isn't the one I mustn't marry, is she? It's the other ecclesiastical embroidery artist,—the one with the x in her name, suggesting the algebra of my vanishing youth."

I read aloud this paragraph:

Provided, further, that in the event of the marriage of said John Glenarm to the said Marian Devereux, or in the event of any promise or contract of marriage between said persons within five years from the date of said John

Glenarm's acceptance of the provisions of this will, the whole estate shall become the property absolutely of St. Agatha's School, at Annandale, Wabana County, Indiana, a corporation under the laws of said state.

"For a touch of comedy commend me to my grandfather! Pickering, you always were a well-meaning fellow,—I'll turn over to you all my right, interest and title in and to these angelic Sisters. Marry! I like the idea! I suppose some one will try to marry me for my money. Marriage, Pickering, is not embraced in my scheme of life!"

"I should hardly call you a marrying man," he observed.

"Perfectly right, my friend! Sister Theresa was considered a possible match for my grandfather in my youth. She and I are hardly contemporaries. And the other lady with the fascinating algebraic climax to her name,—she, too, is impossible; it seems that I can't get the money by marrying her. I'd better let her take it. She's as poor as the devil, I dare say."

"I imagine not. The Evanses are a wealthy family, in spots, and she ought to have some money of her own if her aunt doesn't coax it out of her for educational schemes."

"And where on the map are these lovely creatures to be found?"

"Sister Theresa's school adjoins your preserve; Miss Devereux has, I think, some of your own weakness for travel. Sister Theresa is her nearest relative, and she occasionally visits St. Agatha's—that's the school."

"I suppose they embroider altar-cloths together and otherwise labor valiantly to bring confusion upon Satan and his cohorts. Just the people to pull the wool over the eyes of my grandfather!"

Pickering smiled at my resentment.

"You'd better give them a wide berth; they might catch you in their net. Sister Theresa is said to have quite a winning way. She certainly plucked your grandfather."

"Nuns in spectacles, the gentle educators of youth and that sort of thing, with a good-natured old man for their prey. None of them for me!"

"I rather thought so," remarked Pickering,—and he pulled his watch from his pocket and turned the stem with his heavy fingers. He was short, thick-set and sleek, with a square jaw, hair already thin and a close-clipped mustache. Age, I reflected, was not improving him.

I had no intention of allowing him to see that I was irritated. I drew out my cigarette case and passed it across the table.

"After you! They're made quite specially for me in Madrid."

"You forget that I never use tobacco in any form."

"You always did miss a good deal of the joy of living," I observed, throwing my smoking match into his waste-paper basket, to his obvious annoyance. "Well, I'm the bad boy of the story-books; but I'm really sorry my inheritance has a string tied to it. I'm about out of money. I suppose you wouldn't advance me a few thousands on my expectations—"

"Not a cent," he declared, with quite unnecessary vigor; and I laughed again, remembering that in my old appraisement of him, generosity had not been represented in large figures. "It's not in keeping with your grandfather's wishes that I should do so. You must have spent a good bit of money in your tiger-hunting exploits," he added.

"I have spent all I had," I replied amiably. "Thank God I'm not a clam! I've seen the world and paid for it. I don't want anything from you. You undoubtedly share my grandfather's idea of me that I'm a wild man who can't sit still or lead an orderly, decent life; but I'm going to give you a terrible disappointment. What's the size of the estate?"

Pickering eyed me—uneasily, I thought—and began

playing with a pencil. I never liked Pickering's hands; they were thick and white and better kept than I like to see a man's hands.

"I fear it's going to be disappointing. In his trust-company boxes here I have been able to find only about ten thousand dollars' worth of securities. Possibly—quite possibly—we were all deceived in the amount of his fortune. Sister Theresa wheedled large sums out of him, and he spent, as you will see, a small fortune on the house at Annandale without finishing it. It wasn't a cheap proposition, and in its unfinished condition it is practically valueless. You must know that Mr. Glenarm gave away a great deal of money in his lifetime. Moreover, he established your father. You know what he left,—it was not a small fortune as those things are reckoned."

I was restless under this recital. My father's estate had been of respectable size, and I had dissipated the whole of it. My conscience pricked me as I recalled an item of forty thousand dollars that I had spent—somewhat grandly—on an expedition that I led, with considerable satisfaction to myself, at least, through the Sudan. But Pickering's words amazed me.

"Let me understand you," I said, bending toward him. "My grandfather was supposed to be rich, and yet you tell me you find little property. Sister Theresa

"Land out there is worth from one hundred to one hundred and fifty dollars an acre. There's an even hundred acres. I'll be glad to have your appraisement of the house when you get there."

"Humph! You flatter my judgment, Pickering. The loose stuff there is worth how much?"

"It's all in the library. Your grandfather's weakness was architecture—"

"So I remember!" I interposed, recalling my stormy interviews with John Marshall Glenarm over my choice of a profession.

"In his last years he turned more and more to his books. He placed out there what is, I suppose, the finest collection of books relating to architecture to be found in this country. That was his chief hobby, after church affairs, as you may remember, and he rode it hard. But he derived a great deal of satisfaction from his studies."

I laughed again; it was better to laugh than to cry over the situation.

"I suppose he wanted me to sit down there, surrounded by works on architecture, with the idea that a study of the subject would be my only resource. The scheme is eminently Glenarmian! And all I get is a worthless house, a hundred acres of land, ten thousand dollars, and a doubtful claim against a Protestant nun

who hoodwinked my grandfather into setting up a school for her. Bless your heart, man, so far as my inheritance is concerned it would have been money in my pocket to have stayed in Africa."

"That's about the size of it."

"But the personal property is all mine,—anything that's loose on the place. Perhaps my grandfather planted old plate and government bonds just to pique the curiosity of his heirs, successors and assigns. It would be in keeping!"

I had walked to the window and looked out across the city. As I turned suddenly I found Pickering's eyes bent upon me with curious intentness. I had never liked his eyes; they were too steady. When a man always meets your gaze tranquilly and readily, it is just as well to be wary of him.

"Yes; no doubt you will find the place literally packed with treasure," he said, and laughed. "When you find anything you might wire me."

He smiled; the idea seemed to give him pleasure.

"Are you sure there's nothing else?" I asked. "No substitute,—no codicil?"

"If you know of anything of the kind it's your duty to produce it. We have exhausted the possibilities. I'll admit that the provisions of the will are unusual; your grandfather was a peculiar man in many respects; but

he was thoroughly sane and his faculties were all sound to the last."

"He treated me a lot better than I deserved," I said, with a heartache that I had not known often in my irresponsible life; but I could not afford to show feeling before Arthur Pickering.

I picked up the copy of the will and examined it. It was undoubtedly authentic; it bore the certificate of the clerk of Wabana County, Indiana. The witnesses were Thomas Bates and Arthur Pickering.

"Who is Bates?" I asked, pointing to the man's signature.

"One of your grandfather's discoveries. He's in charge of the house out there, and a trustworthy fellow. He's a fair cook, among other things. I don't know where Mr. Glenarm got Bates, but he had every confidence in him. The man was with him at the end."

A picture of my grandfather dying, alone with a servant, while I, his only kinsman, wandered in strange lands, was not one that I could contemplate with much satisfaction. My grandfather had been an odd little figure of a man, who always wore a long black coat and a silk hat, and carried a curious silver-headed staff, and said puzzling things at which everybody was afraid either to laugh or to cry. He refused to be thanked for favors,

though he was generous and helpful and constantly performing kind deeds. His whimsical philanthropies were often described in the newspapers. He had once given a considerable sum of money to a fashionable church in Boston with the express stipulation, which he safeguarded legally, that if the congregation ever intrusted its spiritual welfare to a minister named Reginald, Harold or Claude, an amount equal to his gift, with interest, should be paid to the Massachusetts Humane Society.

The thought of him touched me now. I was glad to feel that his money had never been a lure to me; it did not matter whether his estate was great or small, I could, at least, ease my conscience by obeying the behest of the old man whose name I bore, and whose interest in the finer things of life and art had given him an undeniable distinction.

"I should like to know something of Mr. Glenarm's last days," I said abruptly.

"He wished to visit the village where he was born, and Bates, his companion and servant, went to Vermont with him. He died quite suddenly, and was buried beside his father in the old village cemetery. I saw him last early in the summer. I was away from home and did not know of his death until it was all over. Bates

came to report it to me, and to sign the necessary papers in probating the will. It had to be done in the place of the decedent's residence, and we went together to Wabana, the seat of the county in which Annandale lies."

I was silent after this, looking out toward the sea that had lured me since my earliest dreams of the world that lay beyond it.

"It's a poor stake, Glenarm," remarked Pickering consolingly, and I wheeled upon him.

"I suppose you think it a poor stake! I suppose you can't see anything in that old man's life beyond his money; but I don't care a curse what my inheritance is! I never obeyed any of my grandfather's wishes in his lifetime, but now that he's dead his last wish is mandatory. I'm going out there to spend a year if I die for it. Do you get my idea?"

"Humph! You always were a stormy petrel," he sneered. "I fancy it will be safer to keep our most agreeable acquaintance on a strictly business basis. If you accept the terms of the will—"

"Of course I accept them! Do you think I am going to make a row, refuse to fulfil that old man's last wish! I gave him enough trouble in his life without disappointing him in his grave. I suppose you'd like to have me fight the will; but I'm going to disappoint you."

He said nothing, but played with his pencil. I had

never disliked him so heartily; he was so smug and comfortable. His office breathed the very spirit of prosperity. I wished to finish my business and get away.

"I suppose the region out there has a high death-rate. How's the malaria?"

"Not alarmingly prevalent, I understand. There's a summer resort over on one side of Lake Annandale. The place is really supposed to be wholesome. I don't believe your grandfather had homicide in mind in sending you there."

"No, he probably thought the rustication would make a man of me. Must I do my own victualing? I suppose I'll be allowed to eat."

"Bates can cook for you. He'll supply the necessities. I'll instruct him to obey your orders. I assume you'll not have many guests,—in fact,"—he studied the back of his hand intently,—"while that isn't stipulated, I doubt whether it was your grandfather's intention that you should surround yourself—"

"With boisterous companions!" I supplied the words in my cheerfullest tone. "No; my conduct shall be exemplary, Mr. Pickering," I added, with affable irony.

He picked up a single sheet of thin type-written paper and passed it across the table. It was a formal acquiescence in the provisions of the will. Pickering had prepared it in advance of my coming, and this as-

sumption that I would accept the terms irritated me. Assumptions as to what I should do under given conditions had always irritated me, and accounted, in a large measure, for my proneness to surprise and disappoint people. Pickering summoned a clerk to witness my signature.

"How soon shall you take possession?" he asked. "I have to make a record of that."

"I shall start for Indiana to-morrow," I answered.

"You are prompt," he replied, deliberately folding in quarters the paper I had just signed. "I hoped you might dine with me before going out; but I fancy New York is pretty tame after the cafés and bazaars of the East."

His reference to my wanderings angered me again; for here was the point at which I was most sensitive. I was twenty-seven and had spent my patrimony; I had tasted the bread of many lands, and I was doomed to spend a year qualifying myself for my grandfather's legacy by settling down on an abandoned and lonely Indiana farm that I had never seen and had no interest in whatever.

As I rose to go Pickering said:

"It will be sufficient if you drop me a line, say once a month, to let me know you are there. The post-office is Annandale."

CHAPTER II

A FACE AT SHERRY'S

"Don't mention my name an thou lovest me!" said Laurance Donovan, and he drew me aside, ignored my hand and otherwise threw into our meeting a casual quality that was somewhat amazing in view of the fact that we had met last at Cairo.

"Allah il Allah!"

It was undoubtedly Larry. I felt the heat of the desert and heard the camel-drivers cursing and our Sudanese guides plotting mischief under a window far away.

"Well!" we both exclaimed interrogatively.

He rocked gently back and forth, with his hands in his pockets, on the tile floor of the banking-house. I had seen him stand thus once on a time when we had eaten nothing in four days—it was in Abyssinia, and our guides had lost us in the worst possible place—with the same untroubled look in his eyes.

"Please don't appear surprised, or scared or anything, Jack," he said, with his delicious intonation. "I

saw a fellow looking for me an hour or so ago. He's been at it for several months; hence my presence on these shores of the brave and the free. He's probably still looking, as he's a persistent devil. I'm here, as we may say, quite incog. Staying at an East-side lodging-house, where I shan't invite you to call on me. But I must see you."

"Dine with me to-night, at Sherry's—"

"Too big, too many people—"

"Therein lies security, if you're in trouble. I'm about to go into exile, and I want to eat one more civilized dinner before I go."

"Perhaps it's just as well. Where are you off for,—not Africa again?"

"No. Just Indiana,—one of the sovereign American states, as you ought to know."

"Indians?"

"No; warranted all dead."

"Pack-train—balloon—automobile—camels,—how do you get there?"

"Varnished cars. It's easy. It's not the getting there; it's the not dying of ennui after you're on the spot."

"Humph! What hour did you say for the dinner?"

"Seven o'clock. Meet me at the entrance."

"If I'm at large! Allow me to precede you through the door, and don't follow me on the street, please!"