[illegible] Old Lady Beat John.

[illegible] Story About the Will [illegible] Wasn't Finished.

[illegible] Journal of Commerce.

[illegible] driving out some miles [illegible], and coming home in [illegible] passed a substantial looking [illegible] old farm house, with com- [illegible] and outbuildings indicating [illegible] householder. The rich bot- [illegible] which stretched away a half [illegible] the river to the hill sloopes [illegible] with abundant birch and maple [illegible] plant with grain and corn.

That evening, when we were sitting in the [illegible], after dinner, smoking and chatting, I asked the judge: "To whom does that farm we passed on the level belong?"

The judge is not and never was on the bench. Yet long as I had known him, and that was a long time, he had been called "Judge" by all the country people, because it was an established fact of ancient date that he decided most of the disputes and differences, commercial and social, which arose in that part of the country. It is frequently the case, I here, that one man in a scattered community is the recognized adviser to those people can go. My old friend had inherited this position from his father, who had been to a former generation what the son now was to his neighbors. They came to him on all occasions when they needed counsel, and he did the work of a half dozen lawyers. No one had died or could die comfortably and leave property, unless his will had been drawn by "Judge—." He had the perfect confidence of all. Living from youth up among them, known to be a man of extended education, whose life was passed in study, but who was also a practical farmer of great skill and success, having large property, and always giving his advice and services as a matter of friendship and neighborly kindness, and not for fee or reward, his position was one of commanding influence. His influence was one of command too, not for the reason that he almost never exerted it. He took no prominent part in politics, but in the 18 years before the war, there were at every town and county meeting more in the county, who could give no other reason for their votes than this, that they voted as the judge voted.

I have said that he drew the wills for people who had property. This was no small gem, for it involved much time and the most inconvenience. But the judge was an essential part of the social structure of that town, and quietly performed what he regarded as the duty and pleasure of his position.

When I asked him who was the owner of that farm he laughed outright, and after a moment's pause, said, "I will tell you a story."

"One stormy night, after midnight, I was sitting there reading, the rest of the family having gone to bed long before. When old Dr. Young thundered at the door knocker, and made noise enough to wake the Seven Sleepers. It is a way he has, and neither my wife nor the [illegible], who were roused out of slumber, nor I myself, had any question who was at the door. I let him in myself and a tempest of wind and snow with him. When I came back he was just recovering his wind, and after a gasp or two told me his errand. 'Old Mrs. Norton is dying. She can't live till morning, and now only on stimulants. She wants to see a will and I have come for you.'

"'A will?' I said 'for a two-mile drive, to fix a will for a woman who hasn't a cent in the world to leave. Why didn't you tell her so and have done with it?'

"'Nothing else,' said the doctor, 'this is a queer old woman and an old maid, and she wants a friend, and she thinks you can do something for her, and I'll be [illegible] only to comfort her I'll do some things and come [illegible] all not find her alive [illegible] and you'll be sorry if [illegible] it was that I went. [illegible] drive out to the farm- [illegible] which you are asking [illegible] was the widow of [illegible] who had died forty-odd [illegible] John Norton, when [illegible] a widower with one [illegible] was a man of consider- [illegible] when he died left a [illegible] by his first wife, [illegible] second wife. The [illegible] had never been on very [illegible] with the stepmother, and [illegible] had had no intercourse [illegible].

"The old lady lying in the big [illegible] that bedstead on one side [illegible] opposite to the broad chim- [illegible] which was a roaring [illegible] light in the room. [illegible] doctor had spoken [illegible] remembered something, a [illegible] suppose, he came over to me [illegible] whisper: 'Hurry up; she's [illegible].'

"[illegible] paper and pen and [illegible] found a stand and a [illegible] them at the head of the [illegible] saying a few words to [illegible] I was ready to prepare the [illegible] and now go on and tell [illegible] wanted to do. I write the [illegible] phrase rapidly, and lean- [illegible] her said, 'Now go on, [illegible].' Her voice was quite [illegible] she seemed to speak with an [illegible] said: 'First of all I want [illegible] my sons Harry and [illegible] that down.' "But," [illegible] I, "what do Mrs. Norton; [illegible] years to give away." [illegible] isn't mine!" she said in [illegible] stronger than be- [illegible] isn't yours. You have [illegible] interest in it."

[illegible] I've run for goin' on [illegible] next spring isn't time [illegible] with it! Why not, [illegible] tells to know what you [illegible] Norton, your husband, gave [illegible] in all his property, [illegible] the farm goes to his [illegible] your children get the [illegible] I die John Norton is to [illegible] and farm whether I will [illegible] it will be his.'

"[illegible] going to die,' said the [illegible] in a clear and decidedly [illegible] healthy voice. And so say- [illegible] that over the front of the [illegible] gathered a blanket and [illegible] straightened up her [illegible], walked across the room and [illegible] in a great chair before the fire. [illegible] I came home. That [illegible] ago. Poor old lady's [illegible]. And she seemed [illegible] best John alive all [illegible] years ago, in Boston, and [illegible] what will be left. But [illegible] the farm-house [illegible] it will not be John [illegible] the farm-house [illegible] and everything about [illegible] John Norton's [illegible] drive out to the farm- [illegible] which you are asking [illegible] was the widow of [illegible] who had died forty-odd [illegible] John Norton, when [illegible] a widower with one [illegible] was a man of consider- [illegible] when he died left a [illegible] by his first wife, [illegible] second wife. The [illegible] had never been on very [illegible] with the stepmother, and [illegible] had had no intercourse [illegible].

"The old lady lying in the big [illegible] that bedstead on one side [illegible] opposite to the broad chim- [illegible] which was a roaring [illegible] light in the room. [illegible] doctor had spoken [illegible] remembered something, a [illegible] suppose, he came over to me [illegible] whisper: 'Hurry up; she's [illegible].'

"[illegible] paper and pen and [illegible] found a stand and a [illegible] them at the head of the [illegible] saying a few words to [illegible] I was ready to prepare the [illegible] and now go on and tell [illegible] wanted to do. I write the [illegible] phrase rapidly, and lean- [illegible] her said, 'Now go on, [illegible].