

# The Portrait

Dr. T. T. Shields (1873 – 1955)

There was a man who died in England, so far as was known, without an heir and without leaving a will. His solicitors looked everywhere for his last will and testament, but they could find none. They found only a word of direction, a scrap of a will, that the contents of the house should be sold by public auction at a certain time after his decease. The only will they could find was at last probated and executed, and it was supposed that the rest of the great estate would pass into Chancery, for he had made disposition only of the contents of his house.

On the day appointed people came together to buy rare pictures and other things of value. There were works of art by the old masters that brought fabulous sums, some of them hundreds of pounds; and some, even thousands. In the course of the sale the auctioneer held up a little picture. It seemed as though he regarded it as being of little value, but he offered it for sale. No one seemed interested in it, and although he offered it again and again, no one bid; he could get no offer at all.

Presently when there was a lull in the proceedings an old lady timidly approached the auctioneer and said “You offered a picture for sale just now, but nobody wanted it. I wish I could have it.”

“What do you want of that picture?” the auctioneer enquired. The old lady replied “Nobody seems to know what it is. It is a portrait of the deceased gentleman’s son. I was a nurse in the family when the child was born. I loved his mother, and when he was a little fellow I loved him for her sake. He grew into a fine lad, and I learned to love him for his own sake. When he was a young man, suddenly disease laid its hand upon him, and took him off in a few weeks. His mother soon followed him to the grave, and his father was left desolate; and

not long after he went the way of the other two. Now they are all gone. Nobody seems to know, and nobody seems to care. I thought if I could only have that picture to remind me of all their kindness to me I should feel that I had a real treasure.” “Then,” said the auctioneer, “why did you not bid for it?” “Because I have nothing, sir, with which to buy it.” “You have no money at all?” “All I have in the world is a shilling.” “Very well, then, offer your shilling. I have instructions to sell everything without reserve. I will put the picture up for sale again, and you offer the shilling, and if no one offers more, you shall have it.”

After a while the auctioneer again held up the picture and said “How much can I get for it? How much am I offered for this?” The little old lady held up a shilling between her thumb and finger, and the auctioneer said, “I am offered a shilling. I am offered a shilling.” Nobody offered more, and presently he knocked it down to her. She put it under her shawl, and, all interest in the sale being over for her, started home.

She determined to give the picture of her dead master’s son the place of honour in her house, to put it before the door so that nobody could cross the threshold without seeing it. She rearranged her poor pictures on the wall, and as she was about to hang her new treasure she discovered that the back was somewhat bulged. She tried to straighten it, and as she pulled out the tacks something inside rolled up, and dropped on the floor, and she picked up a stiff document. She took it to the window and read it over and over and over again. Little by little it dawned upon her intelligence that she had stumbled upon the last will and testament of the deceased multimillionaire. The terms of the will were very brief: “I bequeath all my estate without reserve, to anyone who loved my son enough to want his picture.” The old lady discovered that she had become heir of her master’s estate because she loved his son.

The Gospel, or Good News, clearly states that we must receive God’s Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as our personal Saviour and Lord; and that if, through grace, we do this, we become the beneficiaries of the New Testament, inheriting God’s spiritual and eternal blessings.

Listen carefully to God's Word: "As many as received him (Christ Jesus): to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12); "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life" (1 John 5:11, 12); "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3).