

JOHN HOLMES'S FINE FAMILY.

FOUR WIVES, FIVE CHILDREN, AND ONE
MOTHER-IN-LAW.

PLAINFIELD, N. J., May 26.—Four women have appeared here since Monday who claim to be wives of John Bute Holmes, who was buried on that day. How many more may appear seems not to be known. Holmes lived out on a farm about two miles from here, in Washington Valley, and was a surveyor doing business at 39 Nassau-street, New-York. He would have been 69 years old had he lived until next Wednesday. He died last Thursday rather suddenly, and although he had been ill for a few days Dr. Fritts, the attending physician, refused to give a death certificate. Coroner Sutphin, of Somerville, was called in. He deliberated a day and concluded that Holmes died of cerebral apoplexy. A certificate was given to that effect.

The day Holmes died his young wife Katie went to his office and removed his valuable maps and papers. The same day also Mrs. Browning came here from New-York in response to a telegram from her young son, Charles Holmes. Mrs. Browning, who was formerly Mary Sullivan, was at one time Holmes's wife, and the boy is her son and had always lived with him. Katie and her mother, Mrs. Meadows, were greatly surprised when this person turned up at the house. She gave them a few items in Holmes's history which opened their eyes. Katie again went to New-York on Saturday and consulted her lawyer. On her return she informed Mrs. Browning that she must leave the place. This she quietly did after staying long enough to show that she would do as she pleased.

Sunday brought another delegation, consisting of Mrs. Williamson, another of Holmes's wives, and her three children. They came to join another child who was already on the place. On Monday the funeral occurred, only the last wife, the children, and the neighbors being present. The other wives refrained from participating in the services. In the afternoon the wives returned to New-York, leaving the children on the place.

In the evening the circus commenced. Katie came to town and made a complaint before Justice of the Peace Charles Austin that Hannah Williamson and her children—Grace Wright, Harry Wright, Walter Wright, and Wallace Wright—and Mary Browning and her child, Charles Sullivan, had threatened her with bodily harm and with burning down the buildings on the farm. Three constables proceeded to the place and brought the five children to town. They were taken before the Justice about 9 o'clock in the evening, and with no one to represent them a hearing was given.

Katie and her mother testified that one of the women had threatened to horsewhip Katie, and that the children had also taken an inning in the threatening game. Charles Sullivan, they said, barricaded himself in the library, and, after amusing himself by tearing up valuable maps and papers, had leveled a pistol at the young stepmother's head and warned her that if she testified against his mother in court he would use her head for a target. Various other antics were indulged in until Katie and her mother concluded it was time to round up. The Wright children were discharged by the Justice, but Charles Sullivan was held in \$50 to keep the peace. No one appearing to help him out of the scrape, he reposed in the borough lockup over night. The next day Mrs. Browning and Mrs. Williamson returned from New-York in response to telegrams, and were greatly incensed at the treatment their children had received. As the constables were ignorant of the names of the women, and they declined to inform him, the warrants against them remained unexecuted. By the efforts of a lawyer the Sullivan boy was released, and also the eldest Wright boy, who is an imbecile, and had been committed to the charge of the Overseer of the Poor. They all returned to New-York that evening.

Yesterday Mrs. Anna M. Holmes, the genuine first wife, appeared, and, accompanied by her counsel, Arthur P. Miller, proceeded to Somerville, the county seat, and filed application before Surrogate Long for letters of administration on Holmes's estate. Katie's lawyer, John H. Van Winkle, had previously written the Surrogate that she would apply for letters of administration in a few days. The contest now as to the property, therefore, lies between the first wife, aged 64, and the last wife, age 19. How many counter claimants between these two ages that may come in is hard to tell. The estate is placed by conservative people at about \$20,000, although the claims may amount to as much. A large portion of the estate consists of personal property.

Holmes married his first wife in Ireland in 1838, when she was 16. In 1875, after living apart from him for many years, she secured a limited divorce. He was once a candidate for Alderman in the First Ward, in New-York, and in the campaign preceding the election killed a policeman who tried to arrest him. He was indicted for manslaughter, but the jury disagreed and the charge was dropped. He was sentenced to 15 years for forging Ida Kerr's name to some deeds. She was living with him at the time as his wife. He was pardoned when he served five and a half years by the efforts of his half sister, Miss Wright. He rewarded her afterward by seducing her and they lived together as man and wife for many years on his farm here. Four children were born to them. He was once sued for breach of promise by Mary Chamberlin, and a judgment of \$6,000 was given against him. But a fifth of this sum was paid when Holmes talked sweet to her and she dropped the matter and went off with him again. Another of his wives was Mary Sullivan. He had known her from the time she was a baby. She was entrapped by his story of being a widower, and married him. She lived with him a number of years, but finally left him when she could stand his abuse no longer. She has remarried, and is living happily. Gertie Barlow, who loved to masquerade in man's attire, was another presiding genius at the farm. She was entirely too much for Holmes to handle and he let her go. Then there was Jennie Morgan, the song and dance artist, and Dora, the cook, and hosts of others. Last December he again advertised for a governess, and pretty Katie Meadows answered the advertisement. Her mother was averse to her going alone in the country with a widower, and so Holmes made love to the young girl and they were married in two weeks. She converted him to the Roman Catholic faith and they attended service together faithfully. His neighbors say that his young wife had reformed him. He had stopped drinking and seemed to have settled down.