

The Cashier's Story.

BY ALFRED B. TOZER.

We had been discussing spiritualism before the open fire in Charley's room, and had drifted from arguments on the condition of the dead to the relation of incidents of a mysterious character influencing the lives of the living.

"I don't like to figure as a creature of the mysterious," Charley continued, "because it seems to commit me to a belief in all sorts of outlandish and unnatural things—to include me in an atmosphere altogether unearthly; but my only relief seems to lie in an utter repudiation of an occurrence too real and too productive of practical results to be repudiated, so you see I am in a good deal of a mess over it."

Now, Charley is one of the most matter-of-fact of men. At the down town bank where he holds the position as cashier, such an admission on his part would have produced a sensation. In the familiar circle where he sat that night it only provoked curiosity. This curiosity he at once proceeded to satisfy beginning with an abrupt question:—

"Do you remember the night of the 15th of March? At the time you all took a great interest in at least one of the occurrences of that night. I refer to the attempted bank robbery."

"Well, when I left the bank that evening," said Charley, "I was accompanied by Dick Munson, the paying-teller—a pale, nervous little fellow, with a memory for faces and signatures almost phenomenal, and an instinctive ability to detect fraud. We stopped on the bank steps for a moment to speak to a customer, and then passed on up the street together. His rooms are about half a mile further out than mine, and when we were kept at the bank later than usual, as on that occasion, we frequently dined together at a neat little restaurant not far from my chambers. We did so that night, occupying a table alone in a small alcove from which a window looked out upon a side street."

"We were well through the meal, when Dick called my attention to the figure of a man standing on the outer edge of the walk, and facing across the side street."

"Do you remember having seen that person before this evening?" he asked.

"I glanced up carelessly, and replied that, to the best of my recollection, I then saw the man for the first time."

"Then," he added, nervously, "note peculiarity in dress or attitude, as you will know if you see him again. Wait, the face is the best index. He may turn this way in a moment."

"As though influenced by our rigid scrutiny, the man on the walk turned almost before Dick had done speaking and faced the window where we sat."

"Don't look now," Dick said, turning his eyes away. "He is watching us. When you do look, notice the upper portion of his face. People of his kind usually point out their peculiarities by trying to hide them. Look sharp under the rim of the slouch hat he wears for some distinguishing mark."

"While the teller was speaking, I caught a full view of the man's face. The eyebrows were very thick and black, and came close together. These were no arch to speak of, and general effect was that of a straight, unbroken line crossing the lower forehead. It was a face not easily forgotten."

"I thought you would find something there," Dick said, when I told him what I had seen. "I was not quick enough to see the fellow's face, but I should have known him anywhere. He stood in front of the bank-steps when we stopped there to-night, and has kept us in sight nearly all the way up. Unless he is frightened off we shall hear from him before long."

"I laughed heartily at Dick's view of the matter, and nothing more was said on the subject until we reached my rooms. Then, placing his hand on my arm, he exclaimed:

"I can't get over what we were talking about at the restaurant. I can't get that slouching figure on the sidewalk out of my mind. Let me remind you once more to look sharp for that face wherever you go. Good-night."

"He was off before I could make any reply, and I went on up-stairs, laughing quietly at what I considered the nervous fears of a first-out and naturally suspicious man."

"On my sitting-room table I found a note reminding me of an important engagement in another part of the city, and left hurriedly. To this day the janitor insists that I left my door unlocked, but I am positive that I did not. Not long after my departure, however, he found it ajar, looked carefully through the rooms, saw that I was not there, and locked it. Had he been more thorough in his search he would doubtless have saved me a very strange experience."

"It was midnight when I returned to my rooms. The gas was burning dimly in the sitting-room, but the sleeping-room beyond it was in total darkness. I was tired and fell asleep immediately. How long I slept soundly I cannot tell. I am utterly unable to describe the first sensations I experienced. Dimly, and afar off, I heard Dick Munson's voice, speaking as though in terrible fear or from out an overpowering nightmare. At first the sounds came to me like a voice muffled by the walls of a close room, and conveyed to my mind no distinct form of words. But the tone was one of warning, and told me as plainly as words could have done that I was in deadly peril of some kind. After a time the voice ceased, and I heard as plainly as I now hear the rumbling of wheels outside, the rapping of a private signal known only to Dick and myself, and used only in the bank when he desired to attract my attention to any face or suspicious circumstance in front of his window. This was repeated several times. Then I heard the voice again, clear and distinct this time, as though

a door or window had been opened in the room from which it proceeded.

"There was no mistaking the words this time. I heard them over and over again, as one hears words in vivid dreams: 'Lock the bath-room door! I can't get that slouching figure out of my mind!' With the words came a feeling which I cannot describe, but which you have, doubtless, all experienced—a caution of immediate personal danger coupled with a physical inability to meet it."

"The words and the private signal alternated many times, and then I heard a crash—such a crash as would follow the falling of a heavy window-sash. Absolute silence followed, and with the silence came a sense of physical depression, as though a current of electricity which had wrought my nerves to their utmost tension had suddenly been withdrawn."

"I awoke instantly. When I say I awoke, I mean that I awoke to a consciousness of the things immediately about me, for it is my belief that my mental condition cannot be expressed or described by the word sleep."

"I heard the City Hall clock strike one, and tried to sleep again, but could not do so. I could think of nothing but the slouching figure I had seen early in the evening on the outer edge of the walk; I found it impossible to forget the mysterious words, warning me to lock the bathroom door."

"I should have got out of bed and made a tour of the bathroom and closet, only it occurred to me it would be a rather ridiculous thing to do. Men who pride themselves on a practical turn of mind dislike to do ridiculous things, even when alone. Besides, notwithstanding the effect produced upon me by what I had heard, I regarded the matter as an unimportant clear-out dream, and was not in the least alarmed. The longer I lay awake the more thoroughly did I become convinced that the nervous suspicions of the paying-teller were alone responsible for my losing a good hour of sleep, and I resolved to make up for lost time as soon as possible by turning over for another nap."

"If I had not, as a preliminary step to the resolve so formed, raised myself in bed and made a great noise beating up and rearranging my pillows, perhaps the most trying portion of that night's experience would have been spared me. Be that as it may, the fact remains that before I had arranged my pillows to my liking my attention was diverted from my task by three rather startling objects."

"The first was a dark lantern pouring its red rays full in my face. The second was an unusual long and unnaturally bright self-cocking revolver located within six inches of my nose. The third was a particularly villainous face, with thick, black eyebrows running together above the nose, forming an arch to speak of, and producing the general effect of a straight, unbroken line crossing the lower forehead."

"Was I frightened? Yes; but I scarcely think my fright took the usual form. I knew in an instant, as well as I know now, that it was not my life, nor the trifling amount of money he might find in my room, that the intruder wanted. I recognized his presence there as part of a well-laid plan to rob the bank. The intruder's first words confirmed my suspicions."

"Get up and dress yourself," he said, in a whisper. "We want you at the bank. If you value your life, be quick about it, and make no noise."

"The man's arguments were unanswerable, and I obeyed."

"You are going with me to the bank," he said, holding his weapon close to my head as I dressed, "and open the vault. The first movement you make to escape or call assistance will be your last. My mates are below. If I miss my aim, they will not. If we meet an officer at the bank, or on the way there, and you are questioned, you are to say that you want important papers left on your desk, and pass on. You will not be harmed. We want money, and not human life. Do you understand?"

"In a short time I was at the outer door of my sitting-room, dressed for the street. Never for an instant, in all my journeys about the room to secure my clothing, had the threatening weapon been removed from the close posting in my waking moment. Still, I had not abandoned all hope. Surely, between my rooms and the bank, some opportunity for escape would present itself. I had no intention of unlocking the vault. At the last moment I should have risked a few shots from the robbers' revolvers."

"My escort unlocked the sitting room door and paused with his hand on the knob. At that instant a sound of footsteps were heard on the stairs, the key was quietly turned in the lock, and I felt for the first time the cold rim of a revolver on my temple. The steps passed my door, and the weapon was lowered. You all know what followed. Before the weapon could be raised again, the door fell in with a crash, and the robber, who stood directly in front of it, was clubbed to the floor and handcuffed by a squad of policemen led by the paying teller."

"Dick did not return to his chambers that night. We spent the time until daylight over a basket of wine and some prime cigars in my sitting-room. At first he absolutely refused to explain his sudden appearance with the officers, for Dick is a hardheaded sort of fellow, who scouts everything that cannot be demonstrated by set rules and figures; but over the second bottle he fairly unbosomed himself, telling his story before I had even given a hint of my own mysterious experiences."

"I slept soundly until nearly one o'clock," he said, with the air of a man who expects to be laughed at, "and then I awoke in a strange trance-like dream. In that dream I saw, as plainly as I ever saw it in my life, the interior of your bath-room, and seated at the foot of the tub, where the opening door would have concealed him from

any one looking in, I saw the man we had last seen opposite the window where we dined. I recognized at once the slouching figure and the level line of eyebrows he then attempted to hide beneath the rim of his slouch hat."

"There was no light in the bath-room, or anywhere about your apartment, but I had no difficulty in tracing every line of your face, nor seeing you sound asleep in your bed. My mind at once became filled with the idea that you were in danger. In my sleep I called out to you to lock the bath-room door, and warned you that I could not get the slouching figure we had seen on the edge of the walk out of my mind! I could not make you hear. In my alarm I even gave the private signal we use at the bank. I actually awoke to find myself sounding it on the head of my bed, and repeating over and over again the words I have told you of speaking."

"I laughed at myself for a superstitious idiot, and went to sleep again, only to renew the experiences described—to see the slouching figure in the bath-room, and to repeat my cries of warning and the private signal. I awoke again, to find myself standing by open window (I must have opened it in my sleep, for I closed it on retiring), sounding the private signal on the sash and repeating the warning words. How long I should have remained there I cannot say. My blow on the sash must have loosened the catch, for the window fell with a crash. In a moment I heard the city hall clock strike one."

"I was not thoroughly awake, but I could not drive from my mind the impressions created by my singular dreams. Perhaps I should have gone to bed again only for the fact that the figure my dream had shown me in your apartment was the same I had warned you against on parting with you for the night. I resolved to dress myself and seek you in your rooms."

"I was ashamed to come to your door at that time of night, with no excuse to offer for my presence save such a one as any old woman would have laughed at, so I crept up stairs like a spy and listened. I saw the flash of the dark lantern at the threshold. I heard enough to satisfy me that something was wrong. So I went for the police."

"Don't bring me into ridiculous notoriety by repeating what I have told you. Draw your own conclusions, only be silent in public."

Napoleon as a Horseman.

Napoleon was a most cruel horseman, and changed his mount frequently during battle. At Waterloo, however, he rode only the famous Marengo. Another celebrated war horse of the great Corsican was "Austerlitz."

Napoleon always insisted that his horses should be white or gray. Twelve were killed under him. He was once carried quite narrowly the enemy's lines, where he narrowly escaped capture, by a mad charger. Napoleon's runaway it is not fair to confess, was caused by a terrible word that goaded the poor steed to uncontrollable madness. Men loose their heads from pain; why may not a horse?

For a dumb combatant of unqualified savagery we must go to the camp of those masters of warfare—the French of Napoleon's day. One of the emperor's aides, Captain de Marbot, owned a mare named Lizette, noted in peace or war for viciousness under certain provocation.

Once, with her master on her back, she was surrounded by Russians. A huge grenadier made a lunge at Marbot with his bayonet, and Lizette dispatched him with tigerish ferocity, using only her teeth. Afterwards she backed off, clearing with her iron heels a space among the Russians pressing on her flanks, then wheeled, dragging down beneath her hoofs and officer as she did so, and darting through the astonished crowd to a place of safety.

In that brief encounter she killed two Russians outright and crippled several others with her heels, and it all came from a cruel bayonet thrust that aroused all the poor creature's latent frenzy.

French Mode of Conducting Auctions.

The French mode of conducting auctions is rather curious. In sales of importance the affair is placed in the hands of a notary, who for the time being becomes an auctioneer. The auctioneer is provided with a number small wax tapers, each capable of burning about five minutes. As soon as a bid is made one of these tapers is placed in full view of all interested parties and lighted. If, before it expires, another bid is offered, it is immediately extinguished, and a fresh taper placed in its stead, and so on until one flickers and dies out of itself, when the last bid becomes irrevocable. This simple plan prevents all contention among rival bidders and affords a reasonable time for reflection before making a higher offer than the one preceding. By this means, too, the auctioneer is prevented from exercising undue influence upon the bidders or hastily accepting the bid of a favorite.

Origin of the Chinese Cue.

It seems that it was not the custom of the ancient Chinese to shave the head and wear a cue. That was a custom brought in by the Tartar invaders, nearly 3000 years ago, and they forced it upon the conquered provinces. The result was that many Chinese were driven into Corea, and the inhabitants of that province when they yielded to the suzerainty of the Tartars stipulated that they should be permitted to preserve their ancient dress. So the Coreans do not shave the head, but wear their hair as their ancestors wore it 4000 years ago, a manner which is seen in China only on the stage.

Shakespeare's Sonnets.

It is claimed that the "Dark Lady" to whom twenty-eight of Shakespeare's sonnets were dedicated, was the notorious Miss Mary Fitton, maid of honor to Queen Elizabeth.

ROMANCE OF A NEBRASKA CITY

The Rapid Growth of the State Capital and the Real Estate Boom that Followed.

You hear fairy stories of the mushroom cities of the west—of Leadville becoming a popular centre in two years and then growing smaller almost as fast as it grew larger. But Leadville had no state university, no magnificent post-office building and court house, no architectural phenomena, such as a beautiful white stone state insane asylum of a size and elegance that any state of any nation might well be proud, and a penitentiary equally imposing. Many men went to Leadville; but surely you could not have found there the scholars of a state as you might have found at Lincoln. Leadville didn't get five railroads all in a lump. Railroads may fall and pass into the hands of receivers; but railroads are substantial things, and, however badly they pay, there they are, fast and solid; and usually they have to be run, though there was a time, possibly in the hard times of the 70's, when the railroads lying around in Lincoln were not all run.

Lincoln was from the first a city to be proud of. Born, as I have said, full-fledged as a city, from the wisdom of the state, with all the paraphernalia of cityhood thrice augmented, as I have described, it maintained itself steadily and continuously through all the hard times of the 70's; for it was then that the finest buildings were put up and that settled air of eastern culture was attained. And all this, just as I have stated, for I am no longer an inhabitant of Lincoln, and I was not born there and it is years since my nostrils breathed its brisk airs. But I saw, or heard from my own father, all that I have described.

The rest of this romance of a city must be devoted to dry statistics—not as to the number of paupers, insane and criminals, the number of students at the university, male or female, and so forth, but to the price of city lots, for all the bloom and all the tragedy of this fair young city was in the price of her city lots.

City lots in good locations started in at about \$200, were bought for \$400 and over in the early 70's, and sold for \$100 after the crash of 74. Only those who were obliged to sell sold, and those who were not obliged to sell held their property at the old figures. But prices went steadily down for the next seven years. Land worth \$5,000 declined to \$4,000 in '76, to \$3,000 in '78, and sold in '80 for \$2,000. Each year the city grew 1,000 inhabitants; it matured and became more or less rich in and of itself, but it had little surplus money to put on to the prices of lots. The slow, steady decline forced on the poor little by little, and the prosperous and wealthy bought, hoping for a happy day.

At last the happy day came. It had been a prosperous year and the wheat and corn and oats were excellent. The country in general was prosperous. Everything was propitious. How it started nobody knew, but it got into the air—that happy day. Long and patient waiters recognized it at once. They could not be mistaken, they who had waited for fully fifteen years for the happy day to come. They recognized it when it was only a breath in the air. They encouraged it at once by every power within their reach. They fanned the little spark of boom till it began to blaze. They wrote to their eastern friends about it. Their jealous rivals, the new comers to the city, who did not hold the land but wished they did, saw the spark and offered to buy. The old ones sold, and then bought back and sold again. Everybody heard how prices were going from \$500 to \$1,000 and \$1,000 to \$1,500. Young boys went down to the real estate offices and bought suburban lots for \$300 in the morning, and sold them the next morning for \$500. Two hundred dollars for a mere boy who knew nothing, and that in a single night! Money grew like Jonah's gourd. People heard about it and rushed toward the great city of Lincoln. Lincoln, said the old ones, was the great railroad centre of the West. Every important railroad of the plains passed through it. It must be the great shipping centre of the whole west. It was destined to be like Chicago, the mighty, only larger. There are 20,000 people in Lincoln, which had been growing steadily at the rate of 1,000 a year, or even 2,000. Now, 10,000 people came at once. The hotels were crowded. Ten thousand people must have homes. Ten thousand people must buy lots to live on and build houses to inhabit. They would not come and go away again as they did from the mushroom mining towns, for Lincoln has its university, its schools, its culture, its improvements, and its insane asylum and penitentiary. If men lost their wits in the wild race, still they would stay in Lincoln; and if men went deaf and committed crimes, still they stayed. Lincoln was not a place you could so easily escape from. It may have been uncertain just what these 10,000 people would do after they had their homes and had speculated. But at any rate they had to stay there, and they did.

Prices went madder and madder. Then they grew cooler and cooler. There were no more buyers and no more sellers. Land, city lots, had doubled, triple in value, all the inhabitants had made their fortunes, and the city having gained fifty per cent, in a year, values could never go back again.

There was Father Brighton. He had come from Illinois with a few hundreds in his pocket. In Chicago he had just missed making his fortune, and now he was old. With his few hundreds he bought a quarter section of unbroken land on the edge of the city limits, erected a batted barn, in which he housed his family, and a lean-to shed, in which he housed his

cattle. He made him a garden and turned his cows and horses out to grass. When the boom came he sold his quarter section for city lots—all but a fine estate of ten acres on a commanding eminence in the centre of West Lincoln—for \$75,000. The \$75,000 he invested in mortgages at 10 per cent. on the land he had sold, and there he was, in his old age, finding the fortune he had always missed till now.

There was Ingram. He had been a real estate dealer all these years, sometimes without, waiting patiently for his original city lots to raise in value. The land had steadily declined instead of rising, and he could never get rich with such an incubus about his neck. But at last the boom came, and he sold his city lots for \$200,000, and became established as a real estate broker and manager so firmly that now he is a millionaire.

I need not mention every name. I know somebody who owned lots all those years until the last, when they reached their very ebb tide, when the lots were sold to put bread into the mouths of starving children and to bury the dead. The boom came to late for him. But that is only one of the many items in the romance and tragedy of the young life of a maiden Athens city of the plains.

An Extraordinary Story about the Ganges.

A planter in India, writing to a newspaper published in Calcutta called the Englishman, makes the statement that the Ganges will soon lose its sacred character. He says:—

"Further, a critical period in the Hindu era is at hand. It may not be known to many, but within a very few years the Ganges is to cease to be the holy river. Another is to take its place. The Narbadda, I believe, is to be in future what the Ganges has been for thousands of years. With Hinduism on the wane, it is natural that the leaders of the religion should desire to make some point to fix the credulity of the uneducated masses. For it must be a terrible strain on a religion which has ever desired blind faith from its followers to have one of its greatest landmarks transported as it were in a moment, 3,000 miles away. Now, Jonakpur presents every advantage which the Hindu Pandits could desire. First, it is already holy and a shrine closely interwoven with the Hindu mythology; secondly, it is within the precincts of a Hindu Raj. The British Empire will there have no power to belittle the influence of the Brahmin."

This is all, and it is most disappointing. It seems incredible that a man should know such a thing and not say more about it. The Ganges, "Mother Ganga," has been worshipped as no other river has ever been within historical times.

The most sacred city of the Hindus, Benares, gathers most of its holiness from the Ganges. To bathe in the river is to wash away all sin.

How is it possible that all this should be swept away, and why did the writer of the paragraph say so little about it?

Auctioned Off the Old maids, Too.

An auction of unmarried women used to take place annually at Babylon. "In every district," says the historian, "there assembled on a certain day in every year all the women of marriageable age. The most beautiful was first set up and the man who bid the largest sum of money gained possession her."

The second in personal appearance followed and the bidders gratified themselves with handsome wives according to the depth of their purses. But alas! It seemed that in Babylon some women for whom no money was likely to be offered, yet these also were disposed of, so provident were the Babylonians. "When all the beautiful virgins were sold," continues the historian, "the crier ordered the most deformed to stand up; and after he had openly demanded who would marry her with a small sum, she was at length adjudged to the man who would be satisfied, with the least; in this manner the money arising from the sale of the handsome served as a portion to those who were either disagreeable looking or who had any other imperfection." This custom prevailed about 500 B. C.

Man's Stupidity.

"I wonder what that girl is working her face around to one side all the time for?" asked the fussy old man on the North Indianapolis car. "Do you reckon she's got the toothache?"

"Here you have been married fifteen years and don't know any more about girls than that," replied his wife in disgust. "Don't you see she's got her young man with her? She's twisting her cheek that way to make her dimple show."

Notifying the Deity.

Several of the Chinese temples have a bell at the entrance, so that each devotee as he passes may announce his arrival to the deity.

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