

WHO WAS THE THIEF?

My brain was on fire. I felt choking as I walked away from the office. Dismissed as a thief! I, the son of a man whose very name was still held sacred for his honor and integrity; oh, it was too much.

For three years I had been in an office in Edinburgh, and prided myself I was getting on fairly well. I did my work honestly and faithfully, and all seemed going smoothly when Mr. Heron, my employer, took a strange uncontrollable dislike to me I tried to persuade myself I was mistaken, but the pleasanter I tried to be the more distant he became.

Things went on like this for about three months, till one day I was called into my principal's sanctum and dismissed. Of course, I demanded an immediate explanation. Mr. Heron sneered, and my blood began to boil. I felt as if I could have killed him as he said—

"No heroics, if you please, Blair, but thank your stars I am not to prosecute; for your widowed mother's sake I refrain, but not another day do you stay here."

"Mr. Heron," I began, as calmly as my indignation would permit me, "I demand to know what you dismiss me for?"

"For theft," he answered curtly. "For months it has been going on. Everything pointed to you as the culprit, but I was loth to believe that the son of William Blair could have fallen so low, but this day has proved it."

"In what way?" I enquired, sarcastically.

Mr. Heron's face flushed angrily—more at my tone than my words, I think.

"You have overreached yourself this time," he said. "The cheque you so cleverly forged my name to was suspected. As a rule one uses his cheque straightforward, and it would have answered your purpose better had you not clumsily supposed it would avert suspicion, and used the last in the book."

In vain I protested—threatened—demanded a clear explanation. Mr. Heron simply ignored my request, and sternly pointed to the door.

"Go," he said, "and never darken my door again. Once your father befriended me, and for the memory of that I let you go free."

Mr. Heron's stern face is the last thing I distinctly remember. I have a hazy recollection of putting on my coat and hat, walking through the inner office amongst the clerks, who eyed me curiously, and of walking the whole of Princess street. I could not realise what had happened; it came upon me with such a shock that I felt dazed and stupid.

Suddenly I thought of Murdoch. Murdoch was a lawyer in Glasgow. We had been fast friends since the day we both entered the same office—raw country lads we were, too. From the very first we drew together. We shared the same rooms for three years, then Murdoch left for Glasgow, and I remained with Mr. Heron. I resolved at once to go to Murdoch, tell him the whole story, and get his advice.

I could not go home; my mother would have broken her heart to know her only son was suspected of being a thief. I turned my steps to the Waverley Station and took train for Glasgow, via Polmont. By this time my head was aching, and I was thankful to lean back on the cushions and shut my eyes. My fellow-passengers were an old lady, with a curious black bonnet—something like the ones worn by the Sisters of Mercy; an old, foreign-looking gentleman; a young mother with two children; and plain-looking, quietly-dressed girl, who was seated in the corner opposite me. My head was throbbing frightfully, and I lay back in ending to sleep if possible.

But just as we emerged from the first tunnel I was roused from my lethargy by a curious change that had taken place. I could have sworn that when I entered the train at Edinburgh the carriage contained but two children—now there were three. I puzzled over the third child till my brain ached. I rubbed my eyes, shut them, looked again, but no, there sat the third child grinning at me in an idiotic fashion.

Suddenly the old lady with the black hood dived underneath her cloak and stealthily produced a long dagger. I started violently, and was about to say something, when, to my horror, we entered the second tunnel. I heard a muffled groan, then a dull thud, and when once more we emerged into daylight the old gentleman was gone.

The old friend in the black hood looked at me sardonically and smiled. An icy finger seemed laid on my heart—I could not speak—I could not move. I looked wildly at the other passengers, and they seemed paralyzed with horror.

At the next station the young mother and her children hurried out; but the young girl opposite me seemed glued to her seat, and gazed at me with terror in her face. I was about to open the door and go into another compartment when the train moved off, and we were alone once more with the maniac.

We were fast approaching the last tunnel, when the old woman looked furtively at me, pointed to her dagger, then at the defenceless girl in the corner. But I could not see her butchered in that cold blooded way, and I stood up to wrest the dagger from the mad woman. But just as I got to my feet we entered the third tunnel. I rushed to the window to feel for

the cord to alarm the guard. But I was dragged back and thrown violently to the floor, and I remembered no more.

When I regained consciousness I was in a strange room. It was dusk, and everything had a dim-like look, but gradually my eyes became accustomed to the semi-darkness, and I saw a girl seated in an arm-chair, gazing into the fire. I had seen her before, but where I could not remember.

"Where am I?" I asked her, as she glanced across to the bed. As I spoke she started violently, and came across to the bedside.

"You are with friends," she said, "but you must not speak, you will know all about it when you are a little better."

"Have I been ill?" I enquired.

"Yes," she replied; "very ill, but you are now out of danger." Just then the door opened, and the doctor entered.

"Well, young man," he said, grimly, "so we are to pull you through after all."

"Doctor," I begged eagerly, "tell me how all this happened. Where am I? Who brought me here?"

"Just you let all these questions rest for the present," replied the doctor. "Try and sleep, and rest with the assurance that all is well—tomorrow, if you are strong enough, you shall be enlightened."

I was too weak to protest. A feeling of rest and peace gradually stole over me, and I fell asleep.

Next morning I felt very much stronger, and gradually memory returned. I remembered perfectly my cruel dismissal, my leaving for Glasgow, the blood-curdling episodes of the journey, then a blank till my awakening in my present position—what was in between was a mystery to me, and by the time the doctor arrived I was in a perfect fever of impatience. At last he entered the room, and I began at once.

"Doctor," I said, "now you must tell me what has happened. I shall never get well till I know the meaning of this."

For answer the doctor seated himself by the bedside and took my hand.

"Young man," he began, "didn't I tell you not to trouble yourself about anything?"

"Yes, doctor," I answered, "but I can't help troubling myself. If you only knew—"

"I know all about it," interrupted he, "and just you lie quiet till I tell you. You left Mr. Heron's office on the 21st of June, exactly seven weeks ago."

"Seven weeks?" I shouted, incredulously, sitting up in sheer amazement.

"Lie down at once," said the doctor, sharply, "or you will hear no more. You left the office, as I said, seven weeks ago, took train for Glasgow, fainted in the carriage, and here you are."

"And what about the old man that was murdered?" I enquired. The doctor started.

"What old man?" he asked, in surprise.

Then I related the experiences of that awful journey to him. The doctor listened patiently till I had finished, then said—

"My dear fellow, you have had a very severe attack of brain fever—it must have been begun even then. There was certainly no murder. Miss Arneston was travelling from Edinburgh to Glasgow, and in the last tunnel you brushed past her, intending, she thought, to throw yourself from the window. By a superhuman effort she pulled you back, and on arriving at Buchanan street, you being in a dead faint, she called a cab, and like a sensible girl, brought you direct to her mother's house."

"They knew nothing about you for over a week, then I noticed a paragraph in the papers about the mysterious disappearance of a young man. As the description given answered exactly to you, I communicated with a Mr. Heron, who was advertising in all the papers for you, and also with a Mr. Murdoch, who has been here every day. Now, Mr. Heron can explain the rest himself."

"Mr. Heron," I repeated, in amazement as the doctor rose.

"I promised to telegraph whenever you were well enough to see him. I did so this morning, and he arrived an hour ago, accompanied by your mother, who has also been ill."

The doctor left the room, and in a few minutes returned with Mr. Heron and my mother.

Mother burst into tears, and Mr. Heron seemed deeply moved.

"John Blair," he said huskily. "I have come to beg your forgiveness. I shall explain shortly how it all happened, meantime it is enough to know that all is cleared up, and I shall strive to atone to you for what you have suffered."

I was about to speak, when the doctor coolly ordered me to hold my tongue and try and go to sleep.

I minded rapidly after this. Mother and Miss Arneston nursed me, and in another week I was sitting at the fireside.

One afternoon Mr. Heron appeared. Mother rose and left the room—evidently knowing he had come for a talk.

Mr. Heron had a painful story to tell me. For a long time his only son had been living a very fast life. Again and again Mr. Heron paid his debts, but at length he refused him everything save his allowance, which was a handsome one. By dint of careful planning John Heron had got access to his father's room and by means of a false key had opened his desk, and, of course,

in a very short time everything was in confusion. But his last act was the most atrocious. Not only had he forged his father's name, but by cleverly laid plans he fixed the blame on me. By means of scraps of paper purposely torn up in my room, a blotting-pad with his father's name many times there, and many other trivial ways, suspicion could hardly fail to rest on me.

But John Heron's reckless life had had a sad ending. Only the day after my dismissal he had been out driving with a party of young fellows as wild and reckless as himself. The horse bolted—one young man was killed on the spot, John living long enough to tell his father of his cowardly crime, and obtain his forgiveness.

Mr. Heron finished his tale with bowed head and husky voice, and my heart ached for the old man in his trouble.

Nothing more was said, and in a few weeks I was back in the office. But somehow business seemed to take me pretty often to Glasgow. Murdoch gave me many a sly hit; he had guessed my secret at once, for Margaret Arneston's plain face was the one face in the world to me.

By and by Mr. Heron saw how matters stood, and soon I had a snug little home to offer Margaret. The object of the cheque was never again mentioned between us, but I was repaid over and over again for the agony I had endured in the three tunnels.

A FAMOUS BLACK LIST.

The "Index Expurgatorius," That Included the Works of Hugo and Balzac.

Many people must often have wondered what the "Index Expurgatorius," really is—that famous "black list," which has numbered among its names those of Balzac, Renan, Victor Hugo, Voltaire, and more recently M. Zola.

The "Index" is a committee of priests who report to a body of cardinals chosen by the Pope, and has been in existence for three hundred and fifty years. Its function is to read all new books which bear, directly or indirectly, on faith, or morals, or ecclesiastical discipline, or civil society.

Its sentences are of three kinds. In which case he who reads or sells it may be disciplined by the church; or it is allowed to be read only by priests, who are supposed to be contagion-proof; or the judgment of the "Index" is suspended, in order to afford the author an opportunity of amending the offensive passages.

The object of the institution was to suppress the publication of protestant or anti-romanist doctrines; and as, at the time of its establishment, it was a doctrine of the church that the earth did not move, there were a good many books which fell under the censorship of the "Index."

At the beginning of this century, when liberal views penetrated the church and Vatican, the office of clerical expurgator became a sinecure. But when Pius VII. returned to Rome after his captivity, he revived the "Index" in full vigor. Under his direction, a complete list of books which were under the ban was compiled and published; and ever since then an annual supplement has appeared.

"MISS S. S. S."

The Young Man Had "A Sweetheart's Name Upon His Arm."

Apropos of the song "A Sweetheart's Name Tattooed upon the Arm," which has been so much applauded by St. John audiences lately, the following anecdote is of interest: He was young and debonnaire, and wore a pink shirt, and a well bred air, and was seen about the docks looking for an old sailor. "Any old sailor will do," he remarked confidentially to a big man, who abstracted his confidence and the object of his quest in the same breath, "because all I want is to have some tattoo marks taken out of my arm."

When the tugman informed him that those India ink punctures would stick closer to him than a blood relation, and would be on his arm when his death certificate was filed, the masher was aghast.

"What in the world am I going to do?" he said, in despair. "There's a heart and two arrows and a girl's initials on my arm, and I want to get them off. I've got to get rid of these letters anyway. The girl ran away last week with another fellow, and they're enjoying the honeymoon now. I must get another girl, and I don't want to sleep with a married woman's monogram just above my elbow."

The case was truly a pitiable one, and the generous heart of the tugman was touched. "I'll tell you what you've got to do," he exclaimed; "you must find another girl to suit those initials."

When last seen the tattooed man was in search of a damsel who would answer to the initials "S. S. S."

A New Forest.

The beneficial effects of a judicious system of tree planting have been very marked in the case of desolate Yorkshire moor near the large manufacturing city, Leeds England. Ten years ago, according to the London Timber Trades Journal, this moor was a bleak, wind-swept tract of ground, as barren and useless as could well be conceived. The place was shunned by all, and was of absolutely no value in any way. Now however trees have been planted, and this cheerless waste has been converted into a place of pleasure, with charming sylvan scenery, and it is known as Woodhouse Moor Forest.

THE CHILD AND THE MAN.

Once upon a time it chanced that a child accosted a man, saying:

"Papa, may we play in the street?"

The man replied and spoke:

"I should say not. To-day is Sunday."

And the child came back at the man presently, and quoth:

"But papa, we will call it a sacred concert."

And the man said nothing, since there was nothing to say.

A JAPANESE STORY.

Told by a Native of Japan to an Audience in Rochester.

At Y. M. C. A. hall, Rochester, on Sunday afternoon, Yeatsuo Okano, a Japanese, told the following story to a large audience:

"Once upon a time there lived in a little hamlet in Japan a young couple. They had one child, a beautiful little girl, whom both loved very dearly. It came to pass while the child was still a baby girl that the father was obliged to take a long journey to the far-distant city. It was too far for him to take his wife and child, so he left them at home and travelled alone."

"In that great city he saw many new things, which, having lived in the peaceful little hamlet among the mountains all his life, he had never seen before. He desired to take home to his wife some of these new things which seemed to him so wonderful. And the most wonderful gift he could take, it seemed to him, was a mirror. He wished to take home to his wife the pleasure and surprise he had experienced when he first looked into a mirror. So he took one home to his wife."

"When he arrived home he gave the present to his wife, and for the first time she looked into a mirror. 'What do you see?' her husband asked. She replied: 'I declare! I see a very pretty woman. She wears her hair just as I do mine, and she smiles and moves her lips as if she were talking to me.' Her husband told her that the mirror was a present for her and he hoped she would use it every day. But the wife thought it far too beautiful and rare and costly a gift to use every day; so she put it carefully away and never spoke about it to the little daughter, who grew more beautiful and more like her mother every day."

"By-and-by a great misfortune fell upon that little household. The wife and mother fell sick and it was soon evident that she must die. As she lay upon her death bed she called her little daughter to her and told her that she was going to lose her mother forever. She could point to no future life after death, in which they should be reunited. But the love and simplicity of her heart she did the best she could; she told her little daughter about the wonderful mirror. 'After I am dead,' she said, 'take down that box and look into the mirror that it contains. There you will see my face. And I want you to look into the mirror every day, that you may never forget your mother and that you may grow like me, more and more, every day.'

"So the mother died. The little girl did as she had been told, and in the wonderful mirror she thought she saw her mother's face, young and beautiful, not as she had seen her, pale and ill as she lay dying, but fair and fresh as she had looked before the fatal illness. And the little girl looked into the mirror every day, and thought of her mother and her many lovely ways, and so it came about that she grew to be more and more like her mother as the years went by."

Statistics.

"My good man," said the severe lady, 'have you ever stopped to think how much money is wasted each year for tobacco and rum?'

"No, mum, I haven't," answered the object. 'It's takin' all my time just now to figger out how many poor families could be supported off the price of the extra cloth women puts in their sleeves.'

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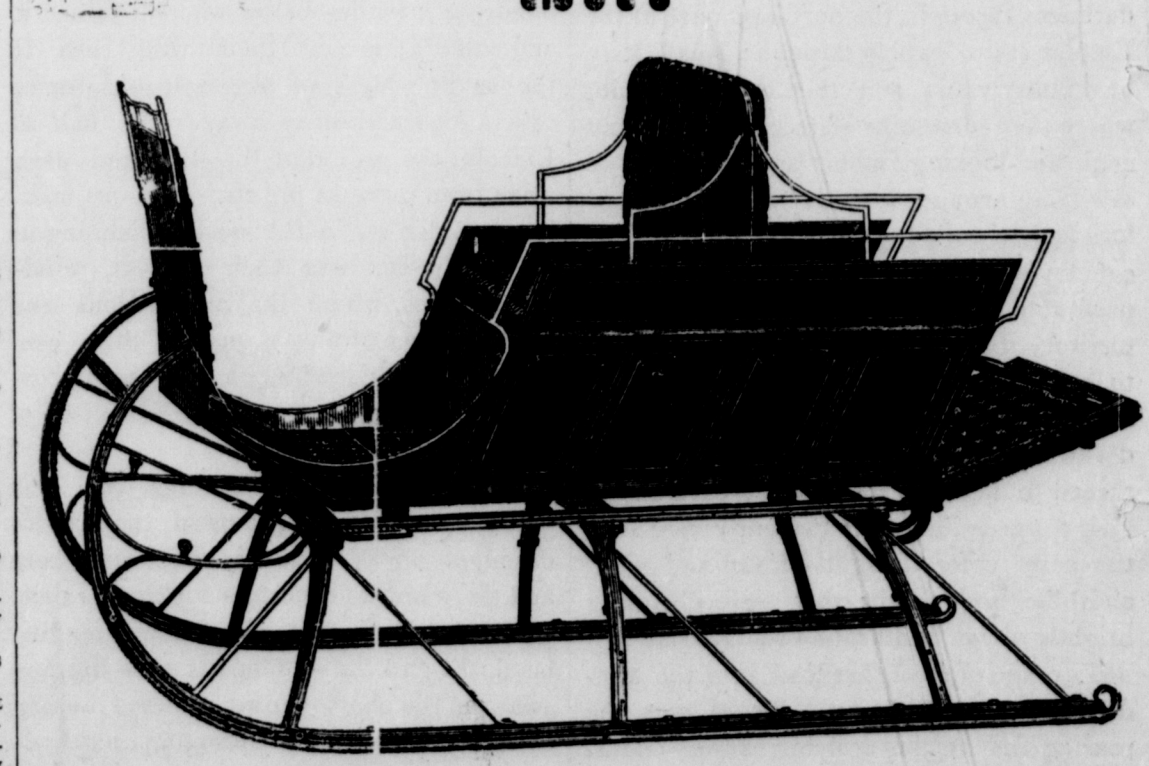
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