

An Old Cobwebbed Key

It was a winter's evening, and Lawrence Masterson was pacing to and fro in front of a cheerful fire, greatly agitated. A run on the bank would mean for him speedy ruin; and tonight it seemed to him that nothing except a miracle could save the house.

Masterson's Bank stood at a corner of the market-place in Ditchford 1st Marsh. It was old and double-fronted, having been the counting-house and family residence of the Mastersons for a century and more. Young Masterson, sole proprietor of the bank through the recent death of a distant relation, had taken up his bachelor quarters in a set of rooms over the office.

While he still paced to and fro the postman's knock fell upon his ear. He was alone in the great house, and he now went down into the hall to see what the postman had brought him.

There was only one letter of any apparent importance, and he sank into his arm-chair before the fire to read it leisurely. It bore a foreign postmark, and ran as follows:—

"When you dismissed me from your employ I plotted to break your bank. But I have relented. You will presently be threatened with a crisis, and it is in my power alone to avert disaster. I have entrusted my secret to one Helena Lightfoot, in whom you may place implicit confidence. The key to great wealth hangs on a nail beside the window in the disused stable across the yard. Place it unhesitatingly in her hand. She will show you the way."

The letter was written in a woman's neat calligraphy, and was signed by another almost illegibly. But Masterson recognized the signature as "John Grimwood," that of the dismissed clerk.

The banker read the letter again and again. A key that opened the way to great wealth! The thing appeared like a dream. It was absurd. Besides, Masterson had no faith in the man. He had been confidential clerk in the house during the late banker's time.

At the moment of the old man's sudden decease the frauds the fellow had practised upon the house had been discovered; he had absconded, gone from bad to worse; and his end—as the address upon the letter showed—had probably come about in hospital at Cairo.

And yet what motive could the man have had for dictating this deposition if it had no shadow of truth? It was hard to regard a death-bed confession as a thing made without rhyme or reason. Could it be pure hallucination, uttered in a delirious moment?

Masterson crushed the letter in his hand with the thought to cast it into the fire. It seemed utter waste of time to puzzle over such a communication! He had risen from his chair, had raised his hand to fling the letter into the flames, when a sudden thought checked him.

"Stop! Why not?" Masterson stepped towards the door, and stood with his hand upon it, hesitating. Then he went resolutely down stairs, and, taking up the hand-lamp from the hall table, unlocked a back door at the end of the passage, and peered into the night. There was the little quadrangular yard, with the disused stable.

It was a place into which he had never yet had the time or curiosity to enter. He had so recently taken up his residence at the bank, so many urgent affairs had needed his attention, that there were many rooms in the old house even which he had never yet thought to explore.

He now lifted the stable latch, and, finding the door unfastened, went in. He cast a rapid glance round the place. It contained a loose-box and a couple of stalls. It was the neglected, dust-ridden abode of spiders and rats. There was the small, barred window with diamond-shaped panes facing the door at which he had entered.

Masterson stepped towards this window and examined every corner of it with growing interest.

"On a nail beside the stable window? No, not a sign of it! Why—what's this?"

As the exclamation escaped him Masterson bent the light still nearer. The frame work on both sides of the window was deep in cobwebs and dust; and at first sight the faint outline of what was seemingly a key hanging upon a nail, beneath the spider accumulation, had escaped his notice. Masterson hesitated to put his hand upon it. What motive, in fact, could he yet have for removing the key from its safe surrounding? The mystery as to the lock it could turn must remain a mystery until Helena Lightfoot—it such a being existed—should come to unravel it.

But a sense of intense curiosity had taken a hold upon Lawrence Masterson. He suddenly felt a keen impulse to lift the key from the nail. He had stretched out his arm, his fingers were within an inch of the cobwebs, when his touch was arrested by the sound of a loud knock at the hall door.

The young banker hastened to answer the summons. On the doorstep stood a girl, breathless from haste, her handsome dark eyes raised to his with a look of eagerness.

II.

"Mr. Masterson?" she asked.

"That is my name."

"Mine," she said, "is Helena Lightfoot."

"Will you come in?" Masterson led the way upstairs; and when he had placed a chair for his visitor beside the fire, he said: "Your letter from Cairo only reached me an hour ago."

Helena Lightfoot sat down. "I ought to apologise," she said, "for calling at so late an hour. But this matter is urgent."

"Most urgent," he acquiesced. "My whole fortune—the fate of this old bank—"

"Yes, I know everything. I know," she said, "more than you imagine. Pray tell me! Was the key in the place indicated?"

"Yes; hidden among cobwebs," was the reply, "I found it at the moment you knocked."

She rose quickly. "Will you trust me to show the way? I believe I can! Have you the key?"

"No; I left it in its place."

"Left it out there? That was unwise."

"Why?"

She looked up quickly into his face. "Aren't you afraid of its being stolen?"

"Stolen! How?"

He had turned to cross towards the door, and while speaking he started at the door, an incipient look of dread round with had awakened.

"I told you that I knew more about this affair—this key and its mystery—she said, 'than you could imagine! I repeat, it was unwise.'"

"But," he argued, "could the key be in a place of greater safety?"

"It couldn't be in a less safe place to-night."

"Indeed? And yet," said Masterson, "it has escaped attention hitherto, and—"

"That's true; but its place of concealment is now known! It is known to others besides ourselves! It is known to one whom I greatly mistrust. The man may rob you—steal that key, Mr. Masterson, at any moment."

The banker looked at his beautiful visitor with intense concern.

"What man?" he asked.

"Let me explain! I'm a nurse," said Helena, "in the hospital at Cairo, and John Grimwood—for whom I wrote the deposition that reached you by post to-night—is now dead."

"Well?" Masterson eagerly asked.

"In a bed at Grimwood's side—feigning sound sleep while the deposition was being made—was a wounded man."

"Ah! I begin—"

"His name is Crickmay," said the girl, "and I have found out that he overheard all that passed. I've reason to dread that he contemplates making an attempt to carry off your gold to-night!"

Masterson waited to hear no more, although he would have been well content, except for the urgency of the affair which had suddenly thrown them together, to have waited any length of time beside the hearth with this fascinating girl. At the foot of the stairs he stopped for an instant.

"One question! How comes it," said he, "that Grimwood knew of this hidden wealth?"

"It came to his knowledge," said Helena, "shortly before your predecessor—I mean old Mr. Masterson—met with his sudden death. The fact is, that Grimwood, living for some years all alone with the old banker, discovered him creeping stealthily down these stairs, and out of this back entrance, in the dead of a certain night. He followed him; he saw him take the key from a recess beside the stable window, and—"

"Well?"

"You shall see; come!" urged the girl, "get me the cobwebbed key, and I'll do my best to point out the way to the door which, as John Grimwood assured me, it will unlock."

They quickly reached the old stable, Masterson leading the way; but no sooner had the light from the banker's hand lamp fallen upon the window-frame, with its dust and cobwebs, than a cry of consternation broke from his lips.

"The key—look there—it's gone!"

"Gone!" echoed Helena.

They both stood staring in speechless amazement at the gap in the nest of cobwebs where—as Masterson grimly imagined—a grasping hand had been hurriedly thrust. The key had vanished.

III.

Masterson was the first to speak. He glanced towards the girl. "What's to be done?"

Helena Lightfoot was a woman of undoubted pluck. She had served in her capacity of nurse upon more than one battlefield among the wounded, and no danger had ever awakened any sense of fear.

"Give me the lamp," said she.

Masterson obeyed; and then with her finger uplifted she enjoined silence.

She now led him towards an inner door across the stable, and, pushing it noiselessly open, peered cautiously on all sides. The place was a coach-house, no less dilapidated than the stable. Of a sudden the girl pointed down at a large round stone on one side of the plank flooring. This cobble has been recently displaced; upon closer inspection Masterson was startled at the discovery of a large iron ring. Again he looked for guidance towards his fair companion.

"That ring," she whispered, "I've Grimwood's word for it—it lifts a trap door. Can you raise it? He was a broad-shouldered, athletic man; and having caught the ring in his grip, Masterson began to pull. A trap-door slowly rose, disclosing a flight of steps. All was darkness below.

"It's the way to the cellar which the key unlocks," said Helena. Are you inclined to go down? Mind you! there is risk! for it seems to me that we shall in all likelihood find the vault door open, and a desperate man awaiting us at the foot of these stairs."

Lawrence Masterson was no coward; but the thought of exposing this brave girl to danger caused him to waver. Don't consider me!" said Helena, quick to interpret his thought; "I'm ready, if you are."

"Light me!" he said; "let me go first."

Helena stood near. Masterson stepped forward and began to descend. The girl prepared to follow; but at that moment a figure sprang forward—the figure of a man—and with a dexterous movement slammed down the trap-door with a thud, and before the girl could utter a cry the lamp was struck out of her hand, and a sharp blow brought her senseless to the floor.

Helena Lightfoot was seriously injured; but, tended night and day by Masterson's landress, she soon recovered. The man who had stolen the key—who proved to be Crickmay—was caught the same night; for Masterson had succeeded in raising the trap-door again without great difficulty, and had given chase. The fellow was tried on a charge of attempted robbery and murder, and was sentenced to fourteen years' penal servitude.

Meanwhile a search was instituted in the vault, which resulted in a large amount of gold, packed in bags, being brought to light.

The discovery saved the old bank; and Lawrence Masterson, whose sense of gratitude towards Helena quickly ripened into love, ultimately persuaded the girl to become his wife.

HARD ON THE PRINCE.

A Plain Old Cabman Treats Him to a Homely Phrase.

An amusing little story about the present German Emperor, William II., and a cabman, was narrated at a banquet lately given by some diplomats, the narrator being himself a well-known member of the diplomatic corps.

In the year 1887 the present Emperor, then Prince William of Prussia, went to Vienna, visiting his particular friend and chum, the late Crown Prince Rudolf of Austria. Joined by the Prince of Wales, who was at that time also a frequent visitor to the Austrian Court, the princes took a fancy to mingle with the Vienna population. Dressing in ordinary clothes, they visited places which are not in the least regarded as suitable for princely guests. One day they entered a hotel, but instead of going into the dining-room, they walked into the 'schwemme,' a place which answers in some degree to the bar-parlour of an ordinary inn. In this room cabmen and servants of the hotel guests take their meals. The three princes took their seats at an empty table, and listened, highly amused, to a fierce debate about politics between several fashionable Vienna cabmen. The distinctive feature of these chateaux is a kind of good-natured boldness and droll familiarity towards their customers as well as to perfect strangers. After listening a while, Prince William put in a word, and was soon drawn into the excited discussion. Suddenly a stout, red-faced cabman walked up to the table where the three princes were seated, and, tapping Prince William gently on the shoulder, said—

"Now, if you should ever have anything to say in politics, you wouldn't set a river on fire, I'm sure!"

As every public cabman wears a number this man was—upon a special request of Prince William—easily identified. The prince sent him a handsome scarf pin with his initials, as thanks for the amusement he had furnished, and thus the man learned in amazement whose political abilities they were that he had so belittled.

If your child is hoarse or coughs a dose or two of Dr. Harvey's Southern Red Pine will relieve him promptly.

Mrs. Minks: "The nurse seems to have trouble with baby to-night. He is crying yet."

Mrs. Minks: "Yes, bless his little heart. I wonder what ails him?"

Mrs. Minks: "Oh, nothing serious. How sweetly shrill his voice is! So clear and musical."

Mr. Minks: "Yes; I—but hark! Those sounds do not come from our nursery. They come through the walls from the next house."

Mrs. Minks: "Mercy! So they do. Why can't people have sense enough to give their squalling brats paregoric or something, instead of letting them yell like screech-owls?"

"THESE D.S. ARE THE BEST, YET."

WEAR Trade Mark

SUSPENDERS

GUARANTEED

BORN.

Barachois, June 9, to the wife of S. Collet, a son.

Springhill, June 22, to the wife of Jas. R. Cook, a son.

Halifax, June 20, to the wife of Edward Johnson, a son.

Amherst, June 22, to the wife of James Facey, a son.

Milton, June 9, to Mr. and Mrs. Atwood Fader, a son.

Springhill, June 15, to the wife of Kent Foster, a son.

Barrington, June 7, to Mr. and Mrs. R. D. Doane, a son.

Amherst, June 17, to the wife of Thos. Bishop, a daughter.

Springhill, June 20, to the wife of A. McLeod, a daughter.

Springhill, June 21, to the wife of Jno. Mewy, a daughter.

Annapolis, June 14, to the wife of Allen Bishop, a daughter.

Joliette, June 5, to the wife of Thomas T. Gresham, a daughter.

Amherst Highlands, to the wife of Dr. J. M. White, a daughter.

Annapolis, June 20, to Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Malcolm, a son.

Stanbourne, June 22, to the wife of Stanford E. Moore, a son.

Yarmouth, June 21, to Mr. and Mrs. W. C. McPort, a son.

Port Medway, June 1, to Mr. and Mrs. F. E. Jackson, a son.

Jacksonville, June 17, to Mr. and Mrs. P. J. Jackson, a son.

West Pubnico, June 14, to Mr. and Mrs. Louis T. Amos, a daughter.

Palmer Settlement, June 9, to the wife of Joseph T. Bourgeois, a son.

MARRIED.

Victoria, by Rev. C. E. Crowell. Arthur Sommers to Annie M. Ryan.

Trenton, June 18, by Rev. H. R. Grant, Merrill Jones to Sarah Betts.

Kentville, June 4, by Rev. B. N. Nobles, James Taylor to Tilly Croft.

Yarmouth, June 22, by Rev. R. D. Bambrick, Arthur Vibert to Dora Tooker.

Port Hood, June 22, by Rev. E. S. Bayne, Rev. J. Calder to Emma Smith.

Berwick, June 15, by Rev. D. H. Simpson, Arthur Borden to Lella Porter.

Kempville, June 15, by Rev. J. W. Smith, Dexter Randall to Maggie Ring.

Halifax, June 15, by Rev. M. G. Henry, James Smiley to Ella J. Spence.

Kentville, June 1, by Rev. B. N. Nobles, E. M. Eaton to Clara M. Palmer.

Smith's Cove, June 22, by Rev. I. T. Eaton, George A. Cossitt to Mary Smith.

Lockport, June 21, by Rev. Alfred Morse, Frank Irvine M. D. to Alice Bill.

St. John, June 21, by Rev. H. W. Stewart William C. Izard to Ida May Hicks.

Blain, June 20, by Rev. J. M. Ramsey, G. W. Smith to Minnie Stockford.

Bath, June 22, by Rev. A. H. Hayward, Frank D. Tweedie to Beatrice Squires.

Mount Denson, June 15, by Rev. D. Hatt, Ainsly McDonald to Susie Morgan.

Yarmouth, June 22, by Rev. J. H. Foshay, Charles Moffat, to Nellie P. Durkee.

Kennett, Penn., June 8, by Rev. Mr. Hubbell, Dr. John C. Price to Mabel Lee.

Annapolis, June 22, by Rev. Mr. Howe, Jennie Dunn to George Rice.

Lorne, June 22, by Rev. John Macintosh, Wm. I. Fraser to Lillian Harris.

St. John, June 25, by Rev. R. P. McKim, Robert M. Bartsch to Lottie Belyes.

Rockland, June 22, by Rev. A. H. Hayward Fred D. Boyer to Abbie J. Nevers.

Halifax, June 21, by Rev. A. Hockin, Frederick W. Hodgson to Rosie M. Case.

Bridgetown, June 20, by Rev. T. M. Young, Chas. Freeman to Valerita Sabead.

Granville Ferry, June 14, by Rev. White, James T. Francis to George Harris.

Falmouth, June 16, by Rev. J. M. Fisher, Wm. Starratt to Matt M. Harrington.

Woodstock, June 22, by Rev. Thomas Todd B. A. Stickney to Mrs. Henrietta Olts.

Windsor, June 15, by Rev. A. A. Shaw, Stewart C. Dimock to Alice Worthiake.

Sydney, June 7, by Rev. D. Drummond, Rodk. Campbell to Miss K. A. McLeod.

Pugwash, June 20, by Rev. A. D. McIntosh, Allen McInnis to Margaret Matheson.

Brooklyn, June 1, by Rev. Scot F. Hearsey, John Rutherford to Lexie J. Ross.

Kingsclear, June 22, by Rev. H. Montgomery, Harry A. Perley to Bessie Strange.

Brooklyn, A. Co., by Rev. E. E. Locke, Charles T. Beaghi to Annie LeBlanc Beardsley.

Brooklyn, N. Y., June 15, by Rev. by Rev. J. C. Roper, Arthur Debiele to Georgia Hyde.

Bridgetown, June 8, by Rev. Stephen March, William S. Tupper to Admenna Crosby.

Bridgetown, June 15, by Rev. F. M. Young, Louis DeBlais Pigott, to Clara M. Whitman.

St. Martins, June 22, by Rev. S. H. Cornwall, Wentworth Lewis to Helen L. McCurdy.

Middle Musquodibit, June 22, by Rev. Edwin Smith, Rev. W. R. Foote to Edith Sprout.

Blaine, Maine, April 27, by Rev. J. M. Ramsey John W. Seagrave, to Damaris O. Cossman.

West Somerville, Mass., May 18, by Rev. E. L. Snel, Lela Geneva Webster to Ford E. Marshall.

Upper Lock Lemond June 22, by Rev. Henry Stewart, Herbert Fowler to Sarah Woodworth.

Mills Village, Queens Co., June 14, by Rev. James Lumsden Capt. J. Hopkins to Mrs. Amanda Mack.

DIED.

Halifax, Honora Burke, 72.

Shelburne, June 1, Joseph Guy.

Halifax, June 22, Mary Gumb, 79.

Milton, Queens, Annis Whynot, 55.

Boston, June 23, John H. Logue, 56.

Shelburne, June 11, Marcus Holden, 33.

Bateston, C. B. June 17, John Bates, 81.

Prospect, Me., June 1, George W. Baker.

Truro, June 22, Maggie A. Sutherland, 35.

Kentville, June 18, Frances M. Longley, 13.

Kentville, June 13, Thomas Wardrope, 50.

Yarmouth, June 13, Freeman Whitman, 86.

Milton, Queens, June 15, Edward Rafuse, 24.

New Glasgow, June 21, Mrs. Jessie Buck, 47.

Los Angeles, Cal., June 16, James Lawson, 52.

West Pubnico, June 9, Mande D'Entremont, sr.

Jones' Creek, Greenwich, June 23, Ervine Lindsay, 58.

Brooklyn, N. Y., June 7, Mr. Altorzo F. Rankin, 62.

Milford, N. S., June 24, Councillor William Wardrope.

Kentville, June 19, the infant son of Taylor Cochran.

St. John, June 18, John R. son of Frederick Chapman, 50.

Kentville, June 16, Sarah, daughter of Bernard Farrell.

Halifax, June 22, Rose, wife of Reuben Shaugthenwhite, 35.

Cambridgeport, Mass., June 23, William T. McGinnis, 31.

Salisbury, June 23, Lavinia, wife of William F. Steeves, 67.

Belmont, Hants Co., June 14, by drowning, Murray Sanford, 24.

Kentville, June 17, Nancy, widow of the late Peter Redmond, 82.

Boston, June 23, George W., only son of George W. Diney, 27.

West Caledonia, June 16, Mary, daughter of the late Francis Scott, 25.

Sussex, June 25, Margaret, widow of the late Thomas B. Millidge, 91.

Shelburne, June 3, Louis Aylife, youngest child of Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Cox.

Hebron, May 30 Ruby LeNoyce, only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Phillips, 15 days.

CANADIAN PACIFIC RY.
3 CHEAP EXCURSIONS
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CANADIAN NORTH WEST.

Second class return tickets for sale from points on lines of I. C. R.; D. A. R.; and C. P. R. in New Brunswick on June 28th, July 15th, and 19th, only.

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