

## HID IN THE NETHER WORLD.

Abe Cronkite's Search for an Absconping Confidential Clerk—Reasoning That Led Him in Another Direction.

To say that old Tennis Van Dyck, senior partner in the great banking house of Van Dyck & Platner, was indignant when it was covered that Sylvester Quarles, his confidential clerk, was a defaulter to a very large amount through methods of false keeping as simple as they were clever, did not fittingly express his mental condition. He was enraged by the audacity as he was humiliated by the duplicity of the man. All the hard, tensuous qualities of his being, which his competitors in any important transaction had learned to know and dread as his direct inheritance from his Dutch ancestry, were roused to fullest action. To catch and punish the thief became an enthralling purpose in comparison with which his financial interests seemed as inane as the sports of his far distant childhood.

It was not the loss, Van Dyck & Platner could charge off, as they did, the deficit of several hundred thousand dollars and not realize its absence in any business or personal way. But Tennis Van Dyck punished strong convictions concerning an anker's duty in such a case, and had often expressed them, alas! to his favorite clerk.

"The banker is the trustee of industry and thrift," he was wont to say, "having a duty as sacred as that of the priesthood. Defalcation is an assassin's blow at modern life—the commercial unpardonable sin. The very moment a banking house discovers that one of its assistants has been unfaithful, all the resources of the law should be concentrated on bringing the scoundrel to justice."

So the banker had announced his views many a time; and the very man who had concurred in them so intelligently was even then stealing right and left, and now was missing, together with half a million. Hence, it ever a man had incentive to superhuman exertion, that man was Tennis Van Dyck.

He lost no time in vain regrets, working even while he cursed. In a few strokes of his pen all the public and private agencies of detection were enlisted to the efforts of their lives in apprehending Sylvester Quarles. The daily press, too, proved a mighty coadjutor. Sylvester's picture was seen on a thousand sheets; dapper, well dressed, clean-shaven, with inevitable glasses shining reassuringly. His record was revealed in the cold, remorseless light of publicity. Indeed, it might be said that his records were revealed, for so many evils were attributed to him, such dissipation and gambling, such double living and consorting with strange women, that it really was a wonder where he had found time for those misdirected efforts which were the cause of all this wrath and woe.

One day, at the very height of this laudable excitement, a small, slight woman dressed in black and heavily veiled called on Judge Josiah Marcellus and was invited at once into his private office.

"What, Julie, my poor child," cried the eminent lawyer, as his visitor disclosed a white face, the whiter for dark, flashing eyes which gave it an expression of intensity; "believe that I commiserate with you for my heart. But there are alleviations you know. No one for one moment thinks that you were cognizant of your husband's crime. You have consolation in your friends and children and future relief and protection in your father's loving care."

"The police," began Mrs. Quarles. "Yes, I know," interrupted the judge in his eager kindness, "they are displaying unusual efforts, but hope for the best, my dear. Sylvester had a three days start, which means nearly 3,000 miles in these days of limited expresses. I may tell you for your comfort, what I heard confidentially, that there is not a clue, a trace, to his whereabouts. The authorities are completely balked."

"That's it, that's it," exclaimed the little woman in a white heat of impatience and indignation, "the police are weak and incompetent, they have not found him, and so I come to you, our old family friend, my father's trusted adviser, I come to you for help in catching him."

"What, your own husband, the father of your children—"

"What sort of husband, what sort of father?" retorted Julie passionately. "Do you think I have no feelings, no shame! The police, indeed; if they are not hoodwinked, they are dishonest; for they never tell how bad a good man really is until it is too late!"

"Perhaps he has made away with himself," suggested the judge feebly.

"Nonsense! He wasn't suddenly tempted; he didn't impulsively yield; he did

none of those momentary acts which bring on remorse! Haven't you read the papers? This was a deep-laid plot of his to dishonor the wife of his bosom by fleeing with that woman, that unknown woman, of whom so much is now said. They are away, in safety, in luxury, together, while I am left to beat the ignominy alone!"

"Since he is so unworthy, you should put him out of your mind," advised the judge.

"Can I put the years of love and devotion out of my mind? Can I put the children, the fatherless children, out of my mind? No, no, no! I can never rest content until they're found, unmasked, stripped of their plunder, punished! And so, as I say, I come to you."

"But you surely don't think that I—"

"Oh, no," answered Julie, "I know that you are not a police runner: that your cases, to be respectable, must deal with millions; but I have often heard my father speak of your man. Abe Cronkite, and the sensible way he has of getting at the truth. Now, I want you, my dear Judge, to put me in touch with him, so that he may take up the search and carry it through for me."

At first the Judge remonstrated, urging such feelings of revenge were unworthy, but the very contrast of her bright, happy face, as he formerly knew it, with her tense, livid energy now deprived him of his determination; so stipulating that he should be free from further responsibility or knowledge, he called Abe Cronkite into the room.

What the former detective thought of the assignment did not appear from word or look: the fact that the Judge wished it was sufficient to bring his trained powers into full play. Quickly exhausting the information that Mrs. Quarles could give—that her husband had gone to work one day and had not returned that he had taken none of his clothing with him and that she had no means of knowing how well supplied with money he was—he then called on Tennis Van Dyck, and without telling who had employed him, said that he too was seeking the defaulter.

The old financier gladly furnished a skilful detective as Cronkite with a description of the steps already taken to apprehend the thief. They were indeed comprehensive. For the past six weeks the legal machinery of two continents had been dragging a net for Sylvester Quarles. The various means of transportation leading out of the city, with their connections, had been scrutinized and searched. Where ever the telegraph wires reached there had gone offers of lavish reward, and descriptions faultless in minute particulars. The whole world had been papered so that the reading eye, wherever it might be, could recognize the fugitive, and yet the result of his expenditure, actual and conditional, equalling in amount at least one-half of the loss was purely negative. If Quarles had been suddenly swallowed up by the earth, less could not be known of him.

Abe Cronkite sought his room and retired into consultation with himself. He had derived one conclusion from his conversation with the banker, and that was that, wherever Quarles was, he was alone. The detail of a feminine companion was picturesque, nay, almost indispensable to popular satisfaction, but too improbable for serious consideration. Geometrical proportion could not fairly represent the way the risks of a man so handicapped would multiply, and every succeeding day of immunity from discovery gave the lie the clearer to such a theory.

What then remained? The identification bill, which had one Sylvester Quarles under the microscope of the world. Abe Cronkite read over the description again and again, and in the end he had an accurate mental picture of the defaulter as he appeared in the bank, on the streets and at his home—slight, dapper medium height, smooth-shaven, eyeglasses habitual, good bearing and careful dress, lip and drawl of speech, fond of high living, billiards and horses. Yes, there was the man as he was, a photograph less than a month old, so definite, so exact, as to limit the seekers not only to a personal preconception, but also to a circumscribed territory. The steamships, the parlor cars, the hotels had been searched, and well searched, there was no doubt of it; but nothing had come of it, as something must have come had Sylvester Quarles remained the same as he had been.

Was such an assumption, so universally adopted through faith in the poster, tenable? What then, were the facts and cir-

cumstances of the case beyond dispute. First and foremost, Quarles in his stealing and in his flight had acted deliberately. No sudden temptation had overcome him; no suspicion had hurried him. Throughout the transaction there had been intelligent design.

In the next place, the man had been warned in advance of the difficulties and dangers he must withstand. Mr. Van Dyck had made it plain that no expense would be spared in his detection; that no item of personal knowledge that could be used against him would be lacking. Such were the conditions which would have to be considered before defalcation could seem a practicable risk; and yet, since he had persisted in his purpose and had not been apprehended, he must have seen his way clearly to subvert them.

Then there was the poster, a warning to all men to look out for such a person as Sylvester Quarles had been; but was it not especially a warning to Sylvester to guard against his natural appearance and tastes?—Had not the authorities furnished the fugitive with a chart of the ways that must be avoided? It would seem so, since into none of these ways had he steered his dubious fortunes. What, then, had he abstained from doing and being under the guidance of such conditions and efforts?

Why, he must have kept from ordinary modes of travel and his accustomed manner of living, shunning the steamships, the parlor cars, the hotels, and becoming rough and dirty in dress, dishevelled in appearance and uncouth in bearing and speech. Common prudence would warn him in passing through the enemy's country to disguise himself and keep close to the border. But what was the enemy's country to him? Why, the reputable walks of life, of course; yes, and its border must be the nether world. So Abe Cronkite considered, so he deduced, and when he had at length reached a logical conclusion, he exclaimed:

"I believe the man took to the road and became a tramp."

Here, however, an alternative presented itself. Had the defaulter fled at all? Was he not, on the contrary, concealed somewhere within the great city? Faithful to his system of examination and elimination, the detective went over this new proposition carefully, but finally to discard it. Such procedure could accomplish nothing except delay, at some time or other, unless he hoped for composition or contemplated surrender, the conditions and efforts would have to be faced and circumvented. But no offer of compromise had been made to the bank, and Quarles well knew from Mr. Van Dyck's own lips that it must fail, if made, besides one who deliberately steals plans some other ending to his adventure than surrender.

What, then, may have been the defaulter's reasons for disappearing? The theory of the police and the public was that, having lined his pockets, he had fled to parts unknown with a woman with whom he was infatuated. The feminine detail Cronkite had already rejected as part of the stock setting for the same reason he questioned the retention of very much of the plunder. It was alluring to the imagination, the wealthy fugitive plunging into wild extravagance in some corner of the world, but it belied his experience. Defaulters, as he had known them, had become such either through stress of circumstances or habits which consumed what they stole or in the hope of securing a fortune through speculation. In the light of all he had heard of Quarles's life, seemingly discreet, at all events, it appeared to Cronkite that this latter case was the more probable. It was likely, then, that he had lost until he had feared to risk more likely, then, that some chance event had shown him the certainty that his methods would be found out. Therefore he had disappeared through fear and the fearful flee! Again Abe Cronkite repeated his conclusion.

"I believe the man took to the road and became a tramp."

This much granted, what, then, followed? Why, that Sylvester Quarles, ragged, unwashed, unkempt, walking instead of riding, subsisting on odds and ends instead of dining, dozing uneasily in hedges instead of sleeping peacefully in bed—a citizen, in fact, of that nether world of distress and degradation where misfortune is a protection and the selfishness of respectability a warrant of isolation—must inevitably escape observation except from those with whom he had chosen to cast his lot. Among the tramps he must be sought; for Cronkite well knew that there are no tramps in that community any more than among vermin ever clustering closer and closer together.

A hopeless task, one would say, considering the endless roads, the boundless distances, but to Cronkite's view the kingdom was circumscribed. Tramps have their routes and resting places, their natural habitats, as thoroughly understood as the territory of a Scottish clan. Tramps

like other hibernating animals, have their winter quarters, to which they return with true homing instinct. It was now late in the fall, and in his mind's eye Cronkite could see congregating in the state, from south and west, via bumpers and ties and turnpikes, the countless hordes to whom its penal institutions were a refuge from cold and storm. With some such party Quarles must have fallen in; and with some such party he must remain, finding safety in acquiescence and freedom from inquiry in regularity of conduct.

Over to the Park went Cronkite, fairly assured that there he would come across some of the hobo leaders bidding a lingering farewell to urban sights and sounds for the next three months. Nor was he disappointed; for on a slightly bench, with hobnails stretched out and jumpers closely buttoned and hands deeply pocketed, were old Mackey and Sailor Ben and Pickles the Bum, three of the inveterates, known and welcomed in every jail in the State as handy and trusty ballmen, with eyes to the front but conversing obliquely.

They greeted the former detective cordially yet expectantly, like travellers in the desert awaiting news of an oasis. He indicated with his thumb—the second tongue of all rascaldom—a neighboring hostelry, and thither proceeded, the others silently following in natural file. After fitting libations had been poured out and down and in Cronkite described the object of his quest, bidding up the stranger tramp, even as a naturalist may construct an antediluvian bird, from knowledge rather than from information. The three men looked at one another uneasily and shifted in their chairs. Finally old Mackey spoke by virtue of seniority.

"It is straight goods, Abe?" the old cadger asked anxiously; "we're on to your graft, you know, and though you've come down good with the lush, and are a safe mark for some kippies, it's not us, so it isn't, that will inform. It, so be, it's only curiosity, or perhaps a tortun' involved, why, thin, there might be somethin' to be told, and agin, there mightn't."

"I think I can safely promise you that no harm will come to him through me," replied Abe Cronkite, once more having recourse to his knowledge rather than his information.

"Give it to 'im, Mack," advised Sailor Ben.

"G'wan," concurred Pickles the Bum, with a glance at the empty glasses.

The essential emollient to loquacity having been supplied, old Mackey proceeded as follows:

"It were 'trec or perhaps four week ago, and we was trampin' t'roo the inter'or, wukkin' our way easy like to the city, takin' the bumpers now and then for the exercise, but mostly follerin' the towpat' be day and coppin' the haymows be night. Occasionally, when the wedder was salt and fine, wit' a haz' in the air, and the stars a shinin' t'roo, like kind and sympathetic eyes behind tears, we'd gather broken pieces from 'ot' the farmhouses and the woods, and camp out, a-munchin' our grub by the fireside. It was wan sech night, and the ham bone was a-succulatin' and the faghots a-crackin', when from the hide beyent there kem a groan."

"Sperruts," says Pickles, gittin' puckery about the mouth."

"Not on your life," says Sailor Ben, who been in furren parts and orter know. "Sperruts kin walk n'iseless and pint with fingers a full yard long, but havin' no breath, they n'at'ally ain't got no v'ices."

"And the long and short of it was that we braced up and dragged out of the mire, that halt kivered him, a cove as like to the wan you speak of as wan tin is to anudder. He was a touge cove to look at and a strange cove to talk, so he were, half starved and halt perished, and makin' all sorts of bad breaks in his ineffectual efforts arter the patter. We sized him to onot as wan in hidin', a swell thief, perhaps, or a actor that had scoffed his missis. But that was all right, too, and the fate of many a wuss man; he trusted hisself in our hands, and we wudn't have throwed him down for twict what he didn't git away with. For it was apperient befur' long that whatever it was that he did he hed somehow or nudder slipped up on the swag. What he had in his clothes he turned out and diwided honorable; but it was our private conviction that he had allus been a little ahead of his dragoff, blowin' the swag into speculation or some udder bottomless hole."

"Well, he jined heart and hand, as the sayin' is. Niver did I see wan pass so quick from the made-up stage to the genuine conditun of bein' to the manners born. He out-hoosed us hoboos, he did, in two week, readin' the marks and rowin' the bluffs and jawin' the patter ekel to our bist representatives; and for wukkin' bang-up hand-me-outs he didn't hev' his sooper on the road, blow me, if he did."

"But it's the constitutin that counts, and you can't git the casht-iron wan necessary

unless you growed up to it. His innards wint agin him, and what with cold and rheumatiz and fever, he hed no more witality than a scare-crow. Thin it was that Pickles here, who was sorter yearnin' for a tin-day spill wit' some of the ould byes up at the jnt, where you did time yourself, Abe, and no denyin' of it, perposed that our frind should take a ninety-days bit and git generally repaired t'roo the winter. And to make a long story short, there he is how, happy as a clam, carryin' bolts and doin' chores, a-rivilin' in the hate and growin' fat on diluted bootleg and the second bilin' of the soup. And when he comes out his eddicatun will be so t'orough and his initiatun into the frater-nity so complete that his own mother cudn't pick him out from the smallest gang goin'. A lucky fiod and a lucky transmigratun it was for him, Abe, for most men don't know when they're well off, but he does!"

Abe Cronkite, again promising the three men that their confidence should not harm their new associate, hastened to report his tidings to Mrs. Quarles. Evidently in this assurance he estimated her nature with accuracy, for she at once discharge any intention of furnishing the information to the authorities.

"I thought he was living in luxury with that woman," she explained, "and so of course; I wanted them punished. But now, poor fellow, let him go; I still have papa and the children, as that good, kind Judge said!"

And so Tennis Van Dyck was left to continue his search, which daily became more and more hopeless, without the trained assistance of Abe Cronkite.

### Every One

Should remember that by the loss of health, enjoyment and happiness are also lost forever. Check the slightest cough or cold by using Adamson's B'tanic Cough Balsam, according to directions printed upon the label of the bottle 25c. all druggists.

Visitor—Ah! What a picture of innocence that child is!

Mother—Dear me! I hadn't noticed! Gertrude, what have you been doing?

**Rheumatic Joints.**—Mrs. George Smith, 62 Charron street, Point St. Charles, Que., says: "Rheumatism in my joints caused me sufferings that words cannot describe how terrible. I took four bottles of South American Rheumatic Cure and am a well woman. I have recommended it to others with as good results. Think the treatment nothing short of a wonder."—10

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"It does."

"I have made many millions. Therefore I must be as great a genius as Shakespeare."

"Perhaps you belittle yourself. It has been hinted that Shakespeare did not actually write all his plays."

"Oh that merely heightens the similarity it has been hinted that I did not earn all my money."

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**Nervousness, Dyspepsia, Indigestion,** and kindred ailments, take wings before the healing qualities of South American Nerve. Thomas Hoskins, of Durham, Ont., took his preacher's advice, followed directions, and was cured permanently of the worst form of Nervous Prostration and Dyspepsia. He has recommended it to others with gratifying results. It's a great nerve builder.—12

Mr. Meddergrass—Well, them New York folks has certainly gone the limit now.

Mr. Crosslots—What they doin'?

Mr. Meddergrass—Goin' to have a horseless horse show.

**Take One of Dr. Agnew's Liver Pills** after dinner. It will promote digestion and overcome any evil effects of too hearty eating. Safe, prompt, active, painless and pleasant. This effective little pill is supplanting all the old school nauseous purgatives. 40 doses, 10 cents.—13

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Candidate—What's the cause?

Editor—The opposition got up a lynch-party just out of pure spite.

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"You mean they were in Chicago," interrupted the intensely grammatical person.

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