

Saint Mary's Beacon.

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THE PEARL EAR-RING.

One dark, stormy night in November, just four weeks after receiving his appointment to the detective police force, Dick Thurston was riding down town in a crowded street-car, when a little incident occurred that was destined to influence his whole after life.

A young couple sat opposite to whom his attention was irresistibly attracted. The man was handsome and well-dressed, and had a reckless, dare-devil look, that marked him as a hardened character. The young lady, however, was a shy, timid creature, with great, brown, innocent-looking eyes, and a face as guileless as an infant.

She seemed nervous and restless, and ever and anon would start suddenly, and cling to her companion's arm, thus mutely claiming his sympathy.

At length the young man arose to leave the car. The sudden movement seemed quite unexpected to his companion, for she gave a little gasp of surprise, and followed him to the platform.

"Oh, Jack!" she cried, a kind of pleading earnestness in her voice, "you are not going to leave me here?"

"Hush!" he answered, quite angrily. "Don't be a silly goose, Agnes! I must go—it can't be helped."

"But you promised to take me safely home!"

"Something has happened to prevent—I can't explain—I'll try to see you again to-morrow. Go back to your seat, and be careful you don't make a scene. I won't have it!"

The last words were hissed rapidly between his close shut teeth. Suddenly throwing off her clinging hands, he leaped down from the platform, and almost instantly disappeared.

The young lady was pallid and trembling when she returned to her place. Dick Thurston's eyes followed her, curiously. She looked so disturbed and heart-broken that he could scarcely restrain himself from sitting down beside her and offering some word of consolation.

Five minutes later, a stout, shrewdly-dressed man of sixty, who sat next to the young lady, suddenly started to his feet, with a loud exclamation:

"I have been robbed! My purse has been stolen!"

All was confusion in a moment. The car was stopped, and all in it gathered about the gentleman, looking startled and curious. There were broken ejaculations and cries of dismay.

"Let the car be searched," said one. "The purse may have fallen on the floor."

No trace of it could be discovered, however. The loser looked perplexed and furious.

"I had it when I paid my fare, not ten minutes ago!" he exclaimed. "It has been stolen since then. There are three hundred dollars in it, and some valuable notes. I can't quietly submit to such a loss, and insist that every person here shall be searched!"

"Yes," said one of the passengers. "There must be a search, of course; it is right. 'Begin with me, if you wish. No innocent person can object.'"

Just then, Dick Thurston, in whose bosom a professional zeal in the case had already been awakened, happened to glance at the young lady who had interested him so profoundly. She was pale as death, and looked ready to faint.

"Calum yourself!" he said, in a earnest whisper, leaning forward to throw up the window near which she sat. "There is nothing to be alarmed at. The search will occupy but a few moments; then you can go on again."

The cool air seemed to revive her a little.

"Must I be searched?" she panted. "Is there no help for it?"

"None. You had better submit quietly. I belong to the police force, and will see that you suffer no unnecessary annoyance."

She started, and looked up at him quickly at the word "police," then dropped her eyes, while a shudder ran through her frame.

"This is dreadful!" she moaned. "But I might have known what was coming—I might have known!"

man who kept a boarding-house, the next door, being summoned to take charge of the ladies.

The missing purse was not to be found, however, and the conviction was soon reached that it must have been taken by some one who had left the car before the loss was discovered.

Dick's protegee, as he began to consider her, was one of the last to be searched, and fainted outright the moment the ordeal was over. She looked so pretty and helpless, lying there, with her eyes closed, and her pale little hands hanging by her side, that the young man could scarcely force himself to leave her.

But urgent business required his immediate presence elsewhere. Before going away, however, he slipped some money into the hands of the boarding-house mistress, and requested her to take charge of the young lady for the night.

Urgent duties kept him later than usual the next morning, and it was twelve o'clock before he found leisure to retrace his steps to the spot.

Agnes had left the boarding-house, and no one knew whether she had gone.

Dick felt grievously disappointed. He was deeply interested in the beautiful stranger—had even dreamed of her the night before. He thought he should never see her again; but he did.

It happened some six months later. A house in Fourth Avenue had been broken into and robbed of money, jewels, silver-plate and other valuables.

Dick, though comparatively inexperienced, had already shown an aptitude for such investigations, and was selected by his chief to work up the case.

It was a handsome brick house, with a space of five or six feet separating it from the neighboring dwellings, on the right and left.

Dick found everything in confusion. Servants were running distractedly up stairs and down, and Mr. Lenmark, the master of the house, seemed the craziest of them all.

No shutters had been forced or locks broken; the lower story was found as secure in the morning, as though no robbery had taken place. Dick found himself thoroughly perplexed, and had gone over the house as far as the attic before he understood how the thieves had effected an entrance.

Here the mystery was revealed. One of the end windows was open, and there were footprints in the dust that thickly covered the floor. These prints were of three sizes, some of them being very small indeed, and evidently made by a woman's shoe. They led to and from the stairs and the window. Some support had evidently been stretched across the intervening space from the adjoining house-top, and thus the rogues had obtained easy access to Mr. Lenmark's premises.

Dick made still another discovery. While standing beside the open window, and studying the situation, he noticed a pearl ear-ring of peculiar workmanship lying at his feet. It had simply made a mark, so to speak, in the layer of dirt, and could not have lain any length of time where he found it.

Going below, he had all the servants called into the hall.

"I want to know," he said, "how many of you have been in the attic at any time during the present week?"

Not one. The attic was simply used as a lumber-room, the house-keeper said, and they seldom had any occasion to invade it. None of them had entered it for at least a month.

Dick studied each face by itself, but the domestic looked like an unusually honest set. Not one among them had the appearance of being a house-breaker's confederate. After trying them keenly a few moments, Dick turned to Mr. Lenmark, and said:

"Have I seen all the household?"

"Was no other person stopping here yesterday, or last night?"

The old gentleman shook his head at first, then quickly corrected himself.

"Why, yes; I had well-nigh forgotten. Miss Holcum was here."

"Who is Miss Holcum?"

"The day-teacher. She comes three afternoons in the week, to instruct my little daughters in French and music."

"At what time did she leave the house last night?"

"Why, the fact is she didn't go away at all," Mr. Lenmark answered. "It came on to rain at six, when she usually leaves, and my wife, being a very kind-hearted woman, insisted that she should remain over night."

Dick drew a quick breath.

"She left this morning, after the robbery was known?"

"To whom does the trinket belong?" he inquired.

A stars of curiosity from the assembled servants, but no answer came readily enough.

"It's Miss Holcum," he noticed, when she went away, that one of her ears had no jewel in it."

Dick turned on his heel, and said, speaking aside, in Mr. Lenmark's ear, "You may expect a report later in the day."

Hiring a cab, he drove to the day-teacher's address, taking in the police headquarters on the way, and picking up a couple of men to be used in case of emergency, for who could tell what number of persons might be there?

His seven months' experience had taught him caution in this particular.

The house was a shabby frame building, situated in a rather disreputable neighborhood, not far from University Place. The door was opened by a stupid-looking Irish girl, who, on his inquiring for Miss Holcum, unceremoniously threw open a door at her left, with the announcement:

"A strange gentleman to see ye, mum."

Dick stepped quickly into the room. It was a pretty place, with touches of real artistic taste here and there. A young lady, simply dressed in a white wrapper, reclining before the tiny fire that smoldered in the grate. A little gasp of surprise escaped her lips as she turned to confront the intruder.

Dick, for his part, stood spellbound a moment. It was the Agnes of his dreams—the beautiful stranger he had sought so long and vainly.

Trying to calm himself, he faltered: "It is Miss Holcum I wish to see—Can you tell where to find her?"

"That is my name," the young lady answered, trembling visibly—"Agnes Holcum."

She was pale as death, and a look of fear, that Dick sickened to see, swept quickly over her face.

What could he think of her, meeting her again like this, but that she was a hardened, wicked creature, in spite of her innocent looks and artless ways?

While he stood staring at her, at a loss what to say or do, and wishing himself anywhere else in all the wide world, Miss Holcum happened to turn her head a little one side, and there, in her right ear, glimmered the fellow to the pearl jewel he carried in his pocket.

The sight helped to harden his heart. He felt ready at last to perform his disagreeable duty. Advancing a step or two, he said, in cold, measured tones:

"I have found a little trinket, Miss Holcum, that is I believe, your property. Allow me to restore it."

Then he produced the ear-ring, holding it in such a manner that she could see without being able to take it.

"Yes, it is mine," she said, eagerly. "Where did you find it?"

"In the attic of Mr. Lenmark's house, on Fourth Avenue."

She clasped her hands and fell back at the answer, as though he had struck her a sudden blow.

"Lost!" was the cry that fell faintly from her livid lips.

"Perhaps you can tell me how it was left there?" Dick forced himself to say, "and why it was lying close by the window by which the thieves entered?" There are those who would like to know.

A shudder ran through her frame. For a minute she did not answer; then, looking up, she said, with an effort:

"You are here to arrest me, I suppose?"

"Yes. But the house must be searched. A great many valuables are missing, you know."

A shrill, piercing scream broke from her lips. She ran to an inner door, threw it open, and screamed again, standing on the threshold.

Dick, in his pity and grief, was powerless. She might have escaped altogether, for aught he was capable of doing to prevent.

him repeatedly to hold on, before I fired.

Even while he was speaking, Miss Holcum had broken from Dick's hold, and flung herself down beside the dying man with a heart-broken cry.

"Oh, Jack, Jack!" she moaned, "to perish like this! It is too terrible! Oh, how can I bear it?"

When Dick came nearer, and attempted to raise her, she pushed him fiercely away.

"Don't touch me! He was my brother—all I had in the world. Wild and willful as he was, I loved him, and would have saved him by sacrificing myself, if I could."

As Dick leaned over and looked into the dying man's face, he was not surprised to see the same handsome, disipated countenance he had noticed that memorable night of the street-car robbery. He had vaguely guessed the truth before—now it was perfectly clear to him.

It is unnecessary to assure the reader that Agnes Holcum was the sweet, guileless creature she appeared. Her only crime had consisted in trying to screen her brother, who was a professional thief. For years had she borne everything for the sake of reclaiming him.

The night of the Lenmark robbery, she had been awakened by the sudden appearance of Jack in the chamber where she slept. She had followed him to the attic, pleading with him and his confederate, though vainly. In spite of their persistence in evil, however, she could not alarm the house, and thus run the risk of bringing her brother to a felon's cell. The sacrifice seemed too terrible even to contemplate.

The remainder of the story can be told in a few very words. Dick married Miss Holcum, after a close acquaintance of six months, and has never found occasion to regret the step. But there is one episode in their lives of which neither the husband or wife ever willingly speaks.

A Federal Scout's Adventure.

A writer for the Detroit Free Press gives some interesting reminiscences of Castle Thunder, at Richmond, established by the Confederate government as a place of detention for Confederate deserters, suspected persons, and the captured attaches of the Union army.

One of the occupants of the Castle in the winter of 1864-5, says the writer, was a Federal named Jas. Hancock, claiming to be a scout attached to Grant's army. He was captured under circumstances which seemed to prove him an spy, and while waiting for his case to be investigated he was sent to Castle Thunder.

Hancock was a jolly, rollicking fellow, having wonderful facial expression, and great powers of mimicry. One evening, while singing a song for the amusement of his fellow-prisoners he suddenly stopped, threw up his hands, staggered, and then fell like a bag of sand to the floor.

There was great confusion at once, and as some of the men inspected the body and pronounced it without life the guards were notified of what had occurred.

The post surgeon was called in to say whether it was a faint, or a case of sudden death. He had just come in from a long, cold ride, and his examination was a hasty one.

"Dead as a door-nail!" he said, as he rose up, and in the course of twenty minutes the body was deposited in a wagon and started for the hospital, to be there laid in a cheap coffin and forwarded to the burying-place.

When the driver reached the end of his journey he was gone! There was no tail-board to his vehicle, and thinking he might have jolted the body out on the way, he drove back and made inquiry of several persons if they had seen a lost corpse anywhere.

Hancock's "sudden death" was a part of his plan to escape. While he had great nerve and an iron will, he could not have passed the surgeon under favorable circumstances. On the way to the hospital he dropped out of the wagon and joined the pedestrians on the walk. When the driver returned to the castle and told his story, a detail of men was at once sent out to capture the tricky prisoner, and the alarm was given all over Richmond.

To leave the city was to be picked up by a patrol; to remain was to be hunted down.

Hancock had money sewed in the lining of his vest, and he walked straight to the best hotel, registered himself as from Georgia, and put in a good night's sleep. In the morning he procured a change of clothing and sauntered around with the greatest unconcern, carrying the idea to some extent in Richmond on a government contract, and to others that he was in the secret service of the Confederacy.

Shortly after dinner he was arrested on Main street by a squad of provost troops who had his description to a dot. But he lo! no sooner had they put hands on him than the prisoner was seen to be cross-eyed and to have his mouth drawn to one side. The men were bewildered, and Hancock was feeling "for letters to prove his identity," when the hotel clerk happened to pass and at once secured his liberty.

"It had to be done," said the man, in a husky, apologetic tone, as his eyes met Dick's. "The rogues meant to light out, and he has some of the missing property about him. I warned

postoffice he was again arrested. This time he drew his mouth to the right, brought a squint to the left eye, and pretended to be very deaf. He was, however, taken to the castle, and there a wonderful thing occurred. Guards who knew Hancock's face perfectly well were so confused by his squint that no man dared give a certain answer. Prisoners who had been with him for four months were equally at fault, and it was finally decided to lock him up and investigate his references.

For seven long days the scout kept his mouth skewed around, and his eye on the squint, and then he got tired of it and resumed his accustomed phiz. The minute he did this, he was recognized by everybody, and the Confederates strained his nerve and perseverance fully as much as did his fellow-prisoners. The close of the year gave him his liberty with the rest, but ten days longer would have seen him shot as a spy.

Home Enterprises.

A correspondent of the Dover Delawarean makes the following pertinent remarks on the subject of home enterprise:

"The great amount of clothing, house-furnishing and Christmas goods displayed in the store windows has suggested a thought or two about the absurd custom of going to the large cities to make purchases of articles which can be purchased as cheaply and of as good quality in our own town. We say of as good quality, because it is not the habit of our merchants to keep a stock of inferior goods, neither is it for their interest to do so—and on the other hand it is bad policy to discourage them from doing so by sending abroad for that which they will sell at as cheap a rate. Those who think that in order to get a good carpet, or other article of furniture, or a servicable coat, they must go to the city, do not reflect upon the probability that they will fare worse in making their purchases there than they would at home—for the simple reason that they are not as good judges of what they buy as our merchants are who make it a business and consequently are not as likely to be deceived in the quality of goods. We know, not long ago, an instance of this—a lady purchasing a carpet in Philadelphia and paying \$c. a yard more than exactly the same goods was selling for in this town. And when the time, traveling expenses and freight are considered it makes a material difference in favor of home purchases.

"In the one case you purchase of those who have no more interest in you than to sell you the goods and have to depend upon your own inexperience. In the other, you avail yourself of the experience of your neighbor, whom you really make your agent to buy your goods for you. And in the majority of cases you save enough by this course to give him a living profit. You are thus, to say the least, as well off by your home purchases, while you are helping to build up the prosperity of your own town. Besides, it does not seem quite fair to expect our merchants to keep their wares at the depths of the market for our convenience what we are compelled to buy at home, and not encourage them to do so by buying other articles of them which they will sell us of as good quality at as low prices as in the cities.

"Of course there are exceptions to this rule. We frequently desire a wider range of choice than can be afforded us at home. And some of us, though not many, have the means of buying more costly articles than our merchants can afford to keep. But the rule, as such, is a good one for ourselves. There is no one thing which drains the country of the proceeds of our industry so effectually as this sending money abroad not to return again.

"A ten dollar bill used in the purchase of goods in our own town will sometimes come back to us in twenty-four hours in the payment of some debt to ourselves, by the person to whom the merchant has paid that money. The same principle applies to the importation of labor instead of employing our own mechanics, whose families will expend here the wages which they receive—while in the other case it will be sent away. There are other reasons which might be mentioned for keeping in circulation at home all the money that we can. But not wishing to write an essay on political economy we forbear.

[Chillicothe, (Ohio) Ross County Register.]

A LADY IN THE MATTER.—That "woman's wit is often superior to man's wisdom," was convincingly proved in a circumstance that occurred in this city recently. It appears that Mr. Ludwig Schwarzer, a widely known Grocer on Station Road, suffered with a very painful rheumatic headache to such a degree, that he was obliged to seek the aid of a physician. All medicines he used were of no avail. This induced Mrs. Schwarzer to buy St. Jacobs Oil. She procured a bottle for her husband. With the second application he found relief. The pain left him, and he is as well as ever again. A remedy acting as promptly as this certainly deserves universal patronage.

The Rising Deacon.

In one of our Puritanical towns in New England, says an eastern paper, lived Deacon Brown, a very staid, dignified sort of Christian, and a perfect model of propriety. Deacon Brown had the misfortune to lose his wife, and at the age of forty found himself with a family of four small children, without a mistress to his farm house. As he could not immediately take another wife and avoid exciting scandal, and could not get along without some one to take charge of the kitchen and nursery, he had recourse to employing a young woman as house-maid. Nancy Stearns was a laughing, rumping girl, who delighted in experimenting upon the deacon by way of testing the strength of human nature. For a long time the deacon was invulnerable; but at last, in a moment of unguarded weakness, he was led into temptation, and into committing a slight indiscretion with his beautiful house-maid. When in his wretched presence of mind, he was horrified at the enormity of his sin. In vain he grieved over lost virtue. Finally, as a last effort for relieving his conscience, at the conclusion of the services on the following Sunday, he arose and requested the forbearance of the brethren and sisters a few moments, when he electrified them by making the following confession:

"My Christian friends, you all know that I lost my dear wife some months ago, and that Nancy Stearns has been keeping house for me; and you know that I have a little child not a year old. Well that child would cry in the night and it would be a long time before I could quiet it; and last Tuesday night—God forgive me!—the child cried so bad that Nancy arose and came into the room, and leaned over the bed to hush the child—and, rothens and sisters, her leaning over me made me forget 'Christ!'

Here the worthy deacon broke down entirely, and stood weeping, wailing and blowing his nose.

"What did you do?" sternly demanded the minister.

"I—I—ki—kissed her!" stammered out the deacon between his sobs, "but I have been very sorry about it and prayed to be forgiven—and I want you to forgive me and pray for me, brothers and sisters."

As the deacon bowed himself upon his seat like the mighty oak before the tornado, Deacon Goodfellow arose and astonished the audience still more by saying—

"Brothers and sisters, you have heard what Deacon Brown has said, and now he wants our forgiveness. For my part, I think Brother Brown is truly penitent and I am willing to forgive him with my whole heart. And, brothers and sisters, I add still farther, that if I had no wife, and a pretty girl like Nancy Stearns should come to my room and lean over me, I'd kiss her and abide the consequences."

Deacon Brown having met forgiveness, and with the assurance raised by his brother deacon, that similar circumstances might induce him to commit the same alluring indiscretion, the good Deacon Brown proposed further within the depths of the matter enjoyment, and had it announced in church that on Christmas Eve he would be pleased to see his friends, and on that night, by the aid of the head of the church, Deacon Brown made Nancy Stearns brother instead of house-keeper.

THE TIDES OF THE CHESAPEAKE.

The subject of the tides has been one of interest to mariners and landmen for a long time. A curious fact, as stated, is that it is always ebb tide at Cape Henry at moon rising or setting; it is always high tide at New Point Comfort at moon rising or setting; it is always low tide at Hoopes's Straits at moon rising or setting, and high tide at Sandy Point at the same time, and flood tide at all points above Sandy Point when the moon rises or sets. A vessel entering the capes with a strong fair wind at the beginning of flood tide may carry the same tide to Baltimore. But a vessel leaving Baltimore for the capes will encounter three flood tides on her way, no matter how fast she may sail, and it may be that she will have to contend against several more if she has a head wind. Every flood tide that enters the Chesapeake bay goes to the head of every tidewater stream or tributary of the bay, while the same ebb tide does not run more than sixty miles, and sometimes a great deal less, so that there are always two ebb tides and two flood tides in the Chesapeake bay at the same time, and sometimes three of one or the other.

[Fort Wayne, (Ind.) Sentinel.]

WILL WONDERS EVER CEASE?—Mr. John G. Fielderman, the well-known Merchant Tailor, in Union Block, writes: "I was a sufferer some years with Neuralgia and Rheumatism, and found no relief until I used St. Jacobs Oil. After using several bottles I was entirely cured."