

THE GANSTER.

him to spare your feelings. Perhaps you will say that it was his fault that you took the check.

"No, I shan't," I put that blame where it belongs—on the man that kept honest men out of their due. If I could have got my pay I had no need to do what I did, and I never should have done it, either. I'm not such a scamp as you think me, ma'am."

"Perhaps not," she said, coldly.

"But what I think of you is of no consequence, Mr. Stebbins. You come, I believe, to return the money which you misappropriated. I am here to give you a receipt for it."

She sat down as she said this in an arm-chair that was drawn up before a library table, and motioned me to take a seat opposite her. There was paper on the table and an inkstand, and she took up a pen and held it, looking at me in a waiting sort of way. I pulled out my forty dollars and tossed it down before her, not as civilly as I might have done it, I must confess. But I was reckless, for her hard way took the last spark of hope from me.

"That's all I've got," I said, doggedly.

"It's only forty dollars, and the check was seventy-five. I've done my best to get the whole of it, and if I was to be hanged for it to-morrow, I couldn't raise another dollar."

She looked at me with those clear, steady eyes of hers for half a minute, and I looked straight back at her, for I was telling her nothing but the truth now.

"Of course, you know," she said presently, "that Mr. Blacklock has paid the money out of his own pocket?"

"Yes, I know it," I answered.

"And you can't expect that he will bear the loss quietly. He has given you an opportunity to save yourself, and shown you more forbearance than some others might in his place."

"Much more than you would, I've no doubt, ma'am. It takes a woman to be hard on a fellow-creature," I said, savagely.

Her face flushed as if I had struck her, and she gave me a look that made me feel like dirt under her feet.

"Does offering a gratuitous insult help to redeem your self-respect?" she asked, gently.

"If it does, I can excuse you—more readily, perhaps, than you would excuse yourself, by and by."

The look, and the words, and the tone, were so different from what I'd expected for an answer that I was upset completely. The stubborn, reckless spirit in me broke down somehow, and a kind of light seemed to shine in. I can't put it into story-book words, you know, but I seemed to feel all at once that she understood me, and that she would help me if I had the sense to let her. Somehow or other, I contrived to stammer out an apology, and to beg her to listen to me.

"If you'd only let me tell you how I happened to get that check, and to use it," I entreated her. "Mr. Blacklock wouldn't hear a word—but you'll understand, I know you will, if you'll only listen to me."

Well, she said she would, and she did. I began at the beginning, and it was such a relief to speak out plain, after all the shuffling and concealing I'd been through with, that I let my tongue run on as if it would never stop. She stood it like an angel and I might as well say here that she looked like an angel, too—one of the sort that rejoice in heaven, you know, when a sinner repents. Her eyes shone soft and sweet when I told her about Molly, and somehow or other I found myself taking out Molly's picture presently, and showing it to her. She looked at it and smiled—the sunny kind of smile that makes one's heart warm—and she said:

"It's a sweet little face—honest, and sensible, and brave. If I were the man that loved her, I would have no secrets from a face like that."

"Wouldn't you, I said, "Not even if it was such a thing as this I'm telling you?"

"Not even such a thing as this. She doesn't look like a girl that would quarrel with her lover for a fault confessed. She would love you more for trusting her, and have a stronger motive for bringing all her good influence to bear on you."

"I'll tell her this very night before I sleep," I cried out.

"Mr. Blacklock can't have me arrested till Monday morning, anyhow, and I'll make a clean breast of it to Molly before then."

"It is the best thing you can do," she said. "As for Mr. Blacklock, I may as well tell you frankly that he directed me to accept no compromise in this matter; if you were not ready to pay the money, he said he should certainly have you arrested, as you say."

"I expected that," I answered forlornly.

"But I shall take it upon myself for once," she went on, "to go contrary to his directions, or rather to act independently of them. You have but forty dollars, you say; well, I will lend you thirty-five." And she took out her purse and counted seven five dollar bills, then pushed them toward the forty that she hadn't touched.

"Now you have the amount required for Mr. Blacklock. I will give you a receipt for it, and trust to your honor to repay what I lend you as soon as you are able."

She began to write the receipt directly, and put it into my hands before I could even blunder out a word of thanks. She didn't do things in halves, you see, God bless her! I didn't either. I was rawly to cry before, and you can say what you please about it, but I ain't ashamed to own that I blubbered out then; and she, though she was such a fine lady—and I was only a poor devil of a clerk that she had just saved from State prison, she came round to where I sat, shaking all over, and patted my big shoulder with her little white hands as if she had been my mother.

"There," she said, "there, there," soft and gentle as you'd soothe a child. Not a bit of preaching, to grind the thing into me. Just womanly kindness and sympathy, and that sort of noble confidence that would have put heart into a stone, and made a man out of a Digger Injun! I don't brag on Jack Stebbins—not anything to signify—but if he could have gone back on a trust like that, he wouldn't have been worth saving from Sing Sing, or another place not polite to mention.

At any rate, he wouldn't be spinning this long yarn about himself here to-

JACK STEBBINS' STORY.

"If your name is Stebbins," the second auditor said, "there's a message for you from Mr. Blacklock."

"That's my name, sir."

"Well, he expected you here before noon to-day, and, as you didn't put in an appearance, you're to report at his house to-night. There's a messenger going up in an hour or so, and you can send any word you like."

"I'll write a note if you'll lend me a pen," I said.

And he told me I'd find one at Mr. Blacklock's desk. So I sat down in his chair, and wrote that I would be at his house by 9 o'clock in the evening, and hoped to make things satisfactory. I took care not to sign my name, or say anything that could be used against me. And I went off, feeling as if I had a lease of life for a few hours longer, anyhow. Tom Lippincott might get home before I had time to see Mr. Blacklock, and Higginson had promised to be on the watch for him and let me know. I might be all right yet, I tried to believe. And I put it out of my mind as well as I could till night came, and I got word from Higginson that it was all wrong. Tom Lippincott hadn't come, and, worse still, didn't expect to come for a week. Something had got away in Pittsburgh, and Black & Gise had telegraphed for him to go on at once and wait instructions.

This knocked everything, of course, and I gave up beat. There was nothing to do but to go and tell Mr. Blacklock that I couldn't pay, and let him do his worst. I was so tired, and discouraged, and disheartened, that I didn't seem to care much for anything except Molly, at least. It was rough on her, poor little woman! And there was her ring in my pocket still, the unlucky ring that had cost me so dear.

I went up to Mr. Blacklock's house a little before the time I had named, with a dogged feeling that I'd best get to the bottom of things as quick as possible. A servant girl showed me into a beautiful library, with books all along the walls, and pictures, and easy chairs, and everything warm, and bright, and elegant. Nobody was there, and I looked around me, as curious and bitter enough, I can tell you.

"He needn't be so hard on a poor devil like me, I wouldn't, if I could sit down in such a nest as this," I thought. "But what does he care, confound him! I wish he'd hurry along and put me out of my misery one way or another."

The door was partly open, and I heard a movement on the stairs; presently the soft rustle of a lady's dress; and the next moment, very much to my surprise, a lady came in and spoke to me.

"You wish to see Mr. Blacklock," she said, "but he has gone out with a friend, and will not be in for some time. If you are the person who sent him this note to-day, I will attend to the business. I am Mrs. Blacklock."

She held out my letter to me, and I took it and looked at it all in a flutter, for this was something that I hadn't bargained for. I could stand having a man blow me up for a rogue, when there was no help for it; but how was I going to talk to this lady about my own disgrace? The first thought was to get out of it with a lie.

"I don't want you to think, ma'am," I said, "that this is any of my affairs. I came here at the request of a friend of mine—"

"Then I've nothing to say to you, sir," she interrupted me, very quick.

"If you're not the person who wrote this letter and brought Mr. Blacklock a check with a false signature, two weeks ago, I advise you to go back to your friend who did and tell him to speak for himself. Mr. Blacklock will not deal with any go-between."

She looked straight at me, with a flush in her eyes that said plain as words, "You need not try to lie to me; I know the truth." And I hung my head, tongue-tied for shame, and my face like fire to the tips of my ears.

She looked at me—I could feel her look all over me, though I didn't raise my head—and said presently, in a gentle tone:

"If you would be honest with me, it would make the matter easier for us both. I'm quite sure that what you said just now was not the truth. You can't look in my eyes, and repeat it."

"No, I can't," you're right there!" I cried out, hot and angry, and not caring now what I said. "But it's Mrs. Blacklock's fault if I told you a lie. He wouldn't be called upon to expose me to a lady!"

"Indeed!" she answered, scornfully. "I do not see why you should expect

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John Charles La Mort, notwithstanding his ominous name, is pronounced the most wonderful man in the United States. He lives at Fort Kent, in Maine, and was born in Canada in 1769, the same year which gave birth to Napoleon Bonaparte, and the Duke of Wellington. Mr. La Mort has had twenty-three children. He is a great-great-grandfather, and the head of seven generations now living. The old man's health is good, his hair is not white, and his teeth are still in his head. He has always been an inveterate user of tobacco. Last year he walked fifteen miles at one stretch. The secret of this long life has been cheerfulness.

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Two Hundred Thousand Dollars Lost in Five Weeks—Where a Chicago Official Deposited the City's Money.

Mr. B.—It's about three years since Von Hollen commenced gambling at the Hankins Brothers' place, in Clark street. Jeff, Al and George Hankins were all there then. George switched off from them about a year ago, and set up for himself over Brown's building. Von Hollen gambled in both places, but mostly in Jeff's.

R.—How much have you known him to lose?

Mr. B.—Oh, as much as \$30,000 in Jeff's alone, and several thousand in George's. He lost from \$1,000 to \$1,500 nightly. He would play until he lost all the currency he had, and would then draw a check for any sum he wanted to settle the deficit with. They would never let him go until they had filled him full of wine and liquor and plucked him to the last dollar.

R.—Did Von Hollen go into the rooms voluntarily, or did they entice him there?

Mr. B.—Sometimes he went himself, generally when tight, but oftener he was taken in by John McOmber, a brother-in-law of Jeff's, who attends to the banking, and always went with Von Hollen to his office and collected the money due on the checks. I dealt on the cards at the faro table while he played. I know it as a fact that Von Hollen lost \$30,000 in cash, and checks for \$3,600. Do you recollect the talk in the papers about Buffalo Miller's losing a thousand or two last fall, and what a hullabaloo there was about counting the money in the county treasury?

R.—Yes, I do.

Mr. B.—Well, the next day after the publication of that business, Jeff, Al, McOmber and Coyle, a dealer there, thought the papers would raise such a row that it would lead to an investigation into Von Hollen's matters. They talked over the business, and concluded to send for Von Hollen, who had kept away for some time on account of the talk. It was on the 23d of November, I think, when Von Hollen came into the rooms, and after some conversation received from them checks for \$3,600.

R.—How much do you think Von Hollen lost in all?

Mr. B.—About \$300,000. They got him so drunk he didn't know whether he won or lost. When he was sober he wouldn't play; and they knew their game, you bet.

R.—Do you think any of the other officials knew about Von Hollen's gambling practices?

Mr. B.—Of course they did. Six months ago Comptroller Hayes received an anonymous note stating that Von Hollen was losing large sums of money. Hayes called him into his office, and expressing confidence in him, handed him the letter. It wound up by advising the Comptroller to examine Von Hollen's accounts. Von Hollen acknowledged to Hayes that he did gamble, but said that he wished the Comptroller and his friends to understand that he had means of his own. To substantiate this he pulled out a lot of express packages marked with sums varying from \$800 to \$1,000, and said he received them from his brewery at Naperville. Then Von Hollen went right over into Jeff Hankins', and pulling out the identical envelopes bearing the express company's marks, told how he had fooled Hayes. Of course Von Hollen didn't let on that he was gambling on the city's money, but we knew it around Jeff's.

Perils of House Cleaning.

An Iowa correspondent of the Chicago Tribune writes:

"A clergyman in Corning, the other day, joined in marriage a highly-estimable couple. The statutes of this State require the officiating minister to make return of the same to the clerk of the circuit court within a certain date thereafter, under penalty of a fine of \$50. The certificate was made out, and laid aside for a more convenient season to be filed in the court. In the meantime, the preacher's wife was seized with house-cleaning fever. When it had subsided, the certificate could not be found—it having probably gone into the store with waste paper and rejected sermons. Here was a dilemma; the recorded certificate is the only record evidence of marriages. To be sure, the preacher might remarry the couple; but would the second marriage certificate, under its date, cover contingencies which might arise? And here let me say that the time is coming when the litigation in this State which will arise in consequence of neglect of persons solemnizing marriages, mostly ministers, will be heavy and expensive. In every such case, the rights of heirs to estates are involved. Unless the certificate is returned and recorded, no official record of the marriage exists, and the marriage can only be proven by living witnesses, which will not be easily done a few years after the marriage. There is probably not a county in the State where scores, and even hundreds of marriages and estates are not imperiled by this neglect; and so important a violation of duty should call for the enforcement of the full penalty upon each delinquent; and, further, persons getting married should see to it that their certificate is returned to the court clerk, or know the reason why."

The Teeth of Americans.

An Englishman, named Chas. A. Cole, has recently written a book about Americans, in which is found, among other paragraphs, the following: "Two or three dentists may be found in a village of less than 800 inhabitants. The very common consumption of candies and lollipops by grown up women leads to frequent attendance on the dentist, and the younger male and female children soon begin to follow the fashion of their elders. Coming out of New York on the Hudson River railroad in a drawing-room car—that is its fitting name, for it is a 'drawing-room' on a car—out of a bevy of five handsome grown up girls, three were filling up the pauses in reading serials or newspapers by sucking sticks of candy, with open and undisguised satisfaction. The candy shops in New York are a marked feature in the streets, more so than in Paris, Vienna, or Milan; there are many at which candies and sugar stuff, chocolate bonbons, and their varieties are alone obtainable. Nothing else is sold in the stores. At the country dances and gatherings the swain

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What the Chicago Hotels Do and Are.

A reporter recently visited fifteen of the leading Chicago hotels in search of statistical information that would prove of interest to the general reader and show how closely identified with the growth and prosperity of Chicago their hotel interests were. In his rambles fifteen of the one hundred and seventeen hotels were visited, and from information gleaned from the proprietors the following figures are produced. The hotels of this city occupy ground valued at \$6,500,000, the cost of the buildings aggregating \$5,200,000, the furnishing of the same \$2,500,000.

The fifteen hotels contain nearly 4,000 rooms; and will in case of emergency accommodate nearly double that number of guests, without resorting to "cots." In the course of a year these hotels are visited by 400,000 transient persons, and these persons, aside from mercantile purchases, expend, at least, \$10 each, or \$4,000,000. These hotels employ 530 female servants and 478 male servants, making a total of 1,008, who receive in a total some \$35,000 in salaries.

These hotels consume annually 1,200,000 pounds of fresh meat, 270,000 pounds of salt meat, 225,000 pounds of fish, 20,400 pounds of tea, 100,000 pounds of coffee, 230,000 pounds of sugar, 700,000 pounds of flour. The total amount expended annually in the stewards' line is \$800,000. They, combined, burn 4,600,000 cubic feet of gas yearly, and consume 18,000 tons of coal in the same line.

A Maine Centenarian.

John Charles La Mort, notwithstanding his ominous name, is pronounced the most wonderful man in the United States. He lives at Fort Kent, in Maine, and was born in Canada in 1769, the same year which gave birth to Napoleon Bonaparte, and the Duke of Wellington. Mr. La Mort has had twenty-three children. He is a great-great-grandfather, and the head of seven generations now living. The old man's health is good, his hair is not white, and his teeth are still in his head. He has always been an inveterate user of tobacco. Last year he walked fifteen miles at one stretch. The secret of this long life has been cheerfulness.

Stewart's Successor.

The late A. T. Stewart died April 10. To-day the same carriage and the same span of bay horses, at the same hour in the afternoon, comes down Broadway and circles round the marble store into Chambers street, there to wait at the door precisely as formerly, when the great millionaire merchant was in active life. The only difference is that now another man gets inside, and there is another man on the box. The world moves on as usual. "Another man inside" tells the whole story. Such is life.—*New York Commercial Advertiser.*

TEXAS gets her supply of flour from Kansas instead of St. Louis, as heretofore.

THE GANSTER.

him to spare your feelings. Perhaps you will say that it was his fault that you took the check.

"No, I shan't," I put that blame where it belongs—on the man that kept honest men out of their due. If I could have got my pay I had no need to do what I did, and I never should have done it, either. I'm not such a scamp as you think me, ma'am."

"Perhaps not," she said, coldly.

"But what I think of you is of no consequence, Mr. Stebbins. You come, I believe, to return the money which you misappropriated. I am here to give you a receipt for it."

She sat down as she said this in an arm-chair that was drawn up before a library table, and motioned me to take a seat opposite her. There was paper on the table and an inkstand, and she took up a pen and held it, looking at me in a waiting sort of way. I pulled out my forty dollars and tossed it down before her, not as civilly as I might have done it, I must confess. But I was reckless, for her hard way took the last spark of hope from me.

"That's all I've got," I said, doggedly.

"It's only forty dollars, and the check was seventy-five. I've done my best to get the whole of it, and if I was to be hanged for it to-morrow, I couldn't raise another dollar."

She looked at me with those clear, steady eyes of hers for half a minute, and I looked straight back at her, for I was telling her nothing but the truth now.

"Of course, you know," she said presently, "that Mr. Blacklock has paid the money out of his own pocket?"

"Yes, I know it," I answered.

"And you can't expect that he will bear the loss quietly. He has given you an opportunity to save yourself, and shown you more forbearance than some others might in his place."

"Much more than you would, I've no doubt, ma'am. It takes a woman to be hard on a fellow-creature," I said, savagely.

Her face flushed as if I had struck her, and she gave me a look that made me feel like dirt under her feet.

"Does offering a gratuitous insult help to redeem your self-respect?" she asked, gently.

"If it does, I can excuse you—more readily, perhaps, than you would excuse yourself, by and by."

The look, and the words, and the tone, were so different from what I'd expected for an answer that I was upset completely. The stubborn, reckless spirit in me broke down somehow, and a kind of light seemed to shine in. I can't put it into story-book words, you know, but I seemed to feel all at once that she understood me, and that she would help me if I had the sense to let her. Somehow or other, I contrived to stammer out an apology, and to beg her to listen to me.

"If you'd only let me tell you how I happened to get that check, and to use it," I entreated her. "Mr. Blacklock wouldn't hear a word—but you'll understand, I know you will, if you'll only listen to me."

Well, she said she would, and she did. I began at the beginning, and it was such a relief to speak out plain, after all the shuffling and concealing I'd been through with, that I let my tongue run on as if it would never stop. She stood it like an angel and I might as well say here that she looked like an angel, too—one of the sort that rejoice in heaven, you know, when a sinner repents. Her eyes shone soft and sweet when I told her about Molly, and somehow or other I found myself taking out Molly's picture presently, and showing it to her. She looked at it and smiled—the sunny kind of smile that makes one's heart warm—and she said:

"It's a sweet little face—honest, and sensible, and brave. If I were the man that loved her, I would have no secrets from a face like that."

"Wouldn't you, I said, "Not even if it was such a thing as this I'm telling you?"

"Not even such a thing as this. She doesn't look like a girl that would quarrel with her lover for a fault confessed. She would love you more for trusting her, and have a stronger motive for bringing all her good influence to bear on you."

"I'll tell her this very night before I sleep," I cried out.

"Mr. Blacklock can't have me arrested till Monday morning, anyhow, and I'll make a clean breast of it to Molly before then."

"It is the best thing you can do," she said. "As for Mr. Blacklock, I may as well tell you frankly that he directed me to accept no compromise in this matter; if you were not ready to pay the money, he said he should certainly have you arrested, as you say."

"I expected that," I answered forlornly.

"But I shall take it upon myself for once," she went on, "to go contrary to his directions, or rather to act independently of them. You have but forty dollars, you say; well, I will lend you thirty-five." And she took out her purse and counted seven five dollar bills, then pushed them toward the forty that she hadn't touched.

"Now you have the amount required for Mr. Blacklock. I will give you a receipt for it, and trust to your honor to repay what I lend you as soon as you are able."

She began to write the receipt directly, and put it into my hands before I could even blunder out a word of thanks. She didn't do things in halves, you see, God bless her! I didn't either. I was rawly to cry before, and you can say what you please about it, but I ain't ashamed to own that I blubbered out then; and she, though she was such a fine lady—and I was only a poor devil of a clerk that she had just saved from State prison, she came round to where I sat, shaking all over, and patted my big shoulder with her little white hands as if she had been my mother.

"There," she said, "there, there," soft and gentle as you'd soothe a child. Not a bit of preaching, to grind the thing into me. Just womanly kindness and sympathy, and that sort of noble confidence that would have put heart into a stone, and made a man out of a Digger Injun! I don't brag on Jack Stebbins—not anything to signify—but if he could have gone back on a trust like that, he wouldn't have been worth saving from Sing Sing, or another place not polite to mention.

At any rate, he wouldn't be spinning this long yarn about himself here to-

JACK STEBBINS' STORY.

"If your name is Stebbins," the second auditor said, "there's a message for you from Mr. Blacklock."

"That's my name, sir."

"Well, he expected you here before noon to-day, and, as you didn't put in an appearance, you're to report at his house to-night. There's a messenger going up in an hour or so, and you can send any word you like."

"I'll write a note if you'll lend me a pen," I said.

And he told me I'd find one at Mr. Blacklock's desk. So I sat down in his chair, and wrote that I would be at his house by 9 o'clock in the evening, and hoped to make things satisfactory. I took care not to sign my name, or say anything that could be used against me. And I went off, feeling as if I had a lease of life for a few hours longer, anyhow. Tom Lippincott might get home before I had time to see Mr. Blacklock, and Higginson had promised to be on the watch for him and let me know. I might be all right yet, I tried to believe. And I put it out of my mind as well as I could till night came, and I got word from Higginson that it was all wrong. Tom Lippincott hadn't come, and, worse still, didn't expect to come for a week. Something had got away in Pittsburgh, and Black & Gise had telegraphed for him to go on at once and wait instructions.

This knocked everything, of course, and I gave up beat. There was nothing to do but to go and tell Mr. Blacklock that I couldn't pay, and let him do his worst. I was so tired, and discouraged, and disheartened, that I didn't seem to care much for anything except Molly, at least. It was rough on her, poor little woman! And there was her ring in my pocket still, the unlucky ring that had cost me so dear.

I went up to Mr. Blacklock's house a little before the time I had named, with a dogged feeling that I'd best get to the bottom of things as quick as possible. A servant girl showed me into a beautiful library, with books all along the walls, and pictures, and easy chairs, and everything warm, and bright, and elegant. Nobody was there, and I looked around me, as curious and bitter enough, I can tell you.

"He needn't be so hard on a poor devil like me, I wouldn't, if I could sit down in such a nest as this," I thought. "But what does he care, confound him! I wish he'd hurry along and put me out of my misery one way or another."

The door was partly open, and I heard a movement on the stairs; presently the soft rustle of a lady's dress; and the next moment, very much to my surprise, a lady came in and spoke to me.

"You wish to see Mr. Blacklock," she said, "but he has gone out with a friend, and will not be in for some time. If you are the person who sent him this note to-day, I will attend to the business. I am Mrs. Blacklock."

She held out my letter to me, and I took it and looked at it all in a flutter, for this was something that I hadn't bargained for. I could stand having a man blow me up for a rogue, when there was no help for it; but how was I going to talk to this lady about my own disgrace? The first thought was to get out of it with a lie.

"I don't want you to think, ma'am," I said, "that this is any of my affairs. I came here at the request of a friend of mine—"

"Then I've nothing to say to you, sir," she interrupted me, very quick.

"If you're not the person who wrote this letter and brought Mr. Blacklock a check with a false signature, two weeks ago, I advise you to go back to your friend who did and tell him to speak for himself. Mr. Blacklock will not deal with any go-between."

She looked straight at me, with a flush in her eyes that said plain as words, "You need not try to lie to me; I know the truth." And I hung my head, tongue-tied for shame, and my face like fire to the tips of my ears.

She looked at me—I could feel her look all over me, though I didn't raise my head—and said