

# "The Man Who Disappeared."

CHAPTER XVII.  
Bagley Shines Out.  
(continued)

The criminologist evinced a polite but not enthusiastic willingness to hear, and at once took an attitude of grave attention, which he kept during the entire recital, his face never changing; his gaze sometimes turned penetratingly on Bagley, sometimes drooping idly to the table.

"There's a young fellow in this town, a friend of mine," Bagley went on, "of a literary turn of mind, and together what you'd call a queer Dick. He'd get down on his luck, for one reason and another, and was dead sore on himself. Now being the sort of man he was, understanding, he took the most remarkable notice you ever heard of." And Bagley gave what Larcher had inwardly to admit was a very clear and plausible account of the whole transaction. As the tale advanced, the medicolegal expert's eyes affected the tale and Bagley's countenance more. By and by they occasionally sought Larcher's with something of some inquiry that those of Barry Tompkins had shown. But the courteous attention, the careful heading of every word, was maintained to the end of the story.

"And now, sir," said Bagley, triumphantly, "I'd like to ask what you think of that?"

The criminologist gave a final look at Bagley, questioning for the last time his seriousness, and then answered, with cold decisiveness:

"It's impossible."

"But I know it to be true!" blurted Bagley.

"Some little transformation might be accomplished in the way you describe," said the medico-legal man; "but not such as would insure against recognition by an observant acquaintance for any appreciable length of time."

"But surely you know what criminals have done to avoid identification?"

"Better than any other man in New York," said the other, simply, without any boastfulness.

"And you know what these facial surgeons do?"

"Certainly. A friend of mine has written the only really scientific monograph yet published on the art they profess."

"And yet you say that what my friend has done is impossible?"

"What you say he has done is quite impossible. Mr. Tompkins, for example, whom you cite as having once met your friend and then failed to recognize him in ten seconds after any transformation within possibility. If he failed to recognize the man you take to be your friend transformed, make up your mind the man is somebody else."

Bagley drew a deep sigh, curiously thanked the criminologist, and rose, saying to Larcher: "Well, you better turn over the stakes to your friend, I guess."

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"You're not going yet, are you?" said Larcher.

"Yes, sir. I lose this bet; but I'll try my story on the police just the same. Truth is mighty and will prevail."

Before Bagley could make his way out, however, Turi, who had been watching him, managed to get to his side. Larcher, waving a good night to Barry Tompkins, followed the two from the room. In the hall he turned to the stakes to Turi.

"Oh, yes, you win all right enough," admitted Bagley. "My fun will come later."

"I trust you'll see the funny side of it," replied Turi, accompanying him forth to the snowy street. "You haven't laughed much at the little foretaste of the incredulity that awaits you."

"Never your mind. I'll make them believe me, before I'm through." He had turned toward Sixth Avenue.

"You'll have them suggesting rest-cures for the mind, and that sort of thing," said Turi, pleasantly.

"And the newspapers will be calling you the Great American Identifier, put in Larcher."

"There'll be somebody else as the chief identifier," said Bagley, glaring at Turi. "Somebody that knows it's you. I heard her say that much."

"Stop a moment, Mr. Bagley," Turi enforced obedience by stepping in front of the man and facing him. The three stood still, at the corner, while an elevated train rumbled along overhead.

"I don't think you really mean that. I don't think that, as an American, you would really subject a woman—such a woman—to such an ordeal, to gain so little. Would you now?"

"Why shouldn't I? Despite his default look, Bagley had weakened a bit.

"I can't imagine your doing it. But if you did, my lawyer would have to make you tell how you had heard this wonderful tale."

"Through the door that's easy enough."

"We could show that the talk couldn't possibly be heard through so thick a door, except by the most careful attention—at the keyhole."

"You would have to tell my lawyer why you were listening at the keyhole—at that keyhole of that lady's parlor. I can see you now, in my mind's eye attempting to answer that question—with the reporters eagerly awaiting your reply to publish it to the town."

Bagley still glaring hard, did some silent imagining on his own part. At last he growled:

"If I do agree to settle this matter on the quiet, how much of that money have you got left?"

"If you mean the money you placed in Murray Davenport's hands before he disappeared, I've never heard that any of it has been spent. But isn't it the case that Davenport considered himself morally entitled to that amount from you?"

Bagley gave a contemptuous grunt; then, suddenly brightening up, he said: "Suppose Davenport was entitled to it. As you ain't Davenport, why, of course, you ain't entitled to it. Now what have you got to say?"

"Merely, that, as you're not Davenport, neither are you entitled to it."

"But I was only supposing. I don't admit that Davenport was entitled to it. Ordinary law's good enough for me. I just wanted to show you where you stand, you not being Davenport, even if he had a right to the money."

"Suppose Davenport had given me the money?"

"Then you'd have to restore it, as it wasn't lawfully his."

"But you can't prove that I have it, to restore."

"If I can establish any sort of connection between you and Davenport, I can cause your affairs to be thoroughly looked into," retorted Bagley.

"But you can't establish that connection, any more than you can convince anybody that I'm Murray Davenport."

Bagley was fiercely silent, taking in a deep breath for the cooling of his rage. He was a man who saw vistas of probability in a moment, and who



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them to their homes in it. But they preferred a walk, and left him waiting for his cab.  
"Well!" exclaimed Larcher, as soon as he was out of the saloon. "I congratulate you! I heard Bagley would give trouble. But how easily he came around!"  
"You for get how fortunate I am," said Turi, smiling. "Poor Davenport could never have brought him around."  
"There's no doubting your luck," said Larcher; "even with cards."  
"Lucky with cards," began Turi, lightly; but broke off all at once, and looked suddenly dubious as Larcher glanced at him in the electric light.  
To be continued.

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