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### A LUCKY DETECTIVE.

THE STORY OF HOW ONE BANK THIEF  
WAS CAPTURED.

After All Trace of the Absconder  
Was Lost an Innocent Question by  
an Innocent Man Put the Officer on  
the Right Trail.

"One of the most remarkable and interesting cases I ever had anything to do with," said an ex-detective of New York, "was the robbery of the Townsend Savings bank of New Haven, which occurred in 1903, I think. At any rate, it was shortly after the end of the civil war, in which great conflict the principal in the affair had distinguished himself and won many highly prized laurels. His name was Jerry Townsend, a son of the cashier and a nephew of the president of the Townsend Savings bank of New Haven.

"Jerry, soon after his return from the war, was given a minor position in the bank, and being a clever, well educated fellow he rapidly advanced until he was made paying teller.

"Well, things ran along all right for some time, until one fine morning the cashier discovered that about \$100,000 in cash and bonds had been taken from the safe the preceding night. The safe had not been blown open. It was simply unlocked by some one having the lock combination. Now, according to the bank's rules, only the president, the cashier and the assistant cashier had this combination, hence suspicion was not directed toward any other person at first. Jerry was hardly mentioned in connection with the robbery until his father, the cashier, remembered that some days prior the former had suggested the expediency of his having the combination, so that in case of the absence of all the other officers at the same time he could have access to the safe if necessary. And the old gentleman, regarding the proposition reasonable, gave his son the combination; yet, strange to say, he had neglected to inform the president that he had done so.

"Now, Jerry had sent word to the bank the day before the robbery was discovered that he was so ill he feared he would not be able to attend to his duties for a day or two. So he was not expected at the bank the day of the discovery. But as soon as his father had admitted that his son also could open the safe a messenger was sent to the latter's home. I hardly need say that he was not there.

"Hitherto the bank officers had conducted the examination in their own way and as secretly as possible, yet when the paying teller could not be found by them and the story of the big steal was getting out they saw that other steps must at once be taken in the case, and so it came about that I was called to take a hand in the game.

"After getting all the information possible at the bank I struck out after the thief. I soon found that there was a girl in the case and that Jerry had spent part of the evening of the robbery at her home. From there he probably went to the bank and got away with the swag before midnight, for about that time he called at a restaurant near the railroad station, and leaving a large valise with the bartender, he went away and did not return until just before the 2 o'clock train left for New York. He was seen to board that train, yet then and there the trail of the robber was lost—entirely lost. Indeed, the man vanished as completely and suddenly as if the earth right there had opened and swallowed him. Not in New York or anywhere else could any trace of the absconder be found. The search was kept up for weeks, but all our efforts were fruitless.

"After several months had passed I began to lose interest in the Townsend case, for, having other important professional matters to look after, I seldom gave it much thought. Of course the strange, mysterious disappearance of the culprit still excited wonder and speculation.

"One day six or seven months after the robbery as I was walking leisurely up Broadway, New York, just below Wall street, I was approached by a man who requested me to direct him to a money broker, as he wished to dispose of some United States bonds and was a stranger in the city. My mind being pretty well occupied with another matter at the time, I gave this incident but little thought. We were near Wall street, and I pointed to the house of a well known firm in that street, and, assuring the man that it would be all right there, I walked on. But I had gone scarcely a block when the recollection of the Townsend bank robbery flashed like lightning through my mind. Might not this man have some of the Townsend bonds? I turned and fairly flew back to the broker's office to which I had just directed him and reached it barely in time to meet the stranger coming out. Showing him my authority and taking the chances, I arrested him and took him back into the office. He had sold one bond there, which upon examination I found to be one of the Townsend bank bonds. On searching the man two or three more of these bonds came to light; but, what was of vastly more importance, he had on his person a letter from Jerry Townsend, dated Havana, to his sweetheart in Connecticut. This letter was to be delivered by the bearer to the lady in person, and it contained instructions to meet the writer at a certain hotel in Liverpool at a certain future time.

"That my prisoner was thoroughly scared I need not assert. He pleaded utter ignorance of the robbery and declared that he had made the acquaintance of the man who had given him the letter and the bonds some months before in Havana, where the latter had posed as a captain of the United States army. Of course he went under a fictitious name there. The prisoner was held and the matter kept from the newspapers until I and some others, including an uncle of Jerry, had crossed over to Liverpool. All but some \$11,000, I think, was recovered, and the prisoner was brought back, tried, convicted and sentenced to prison for seven years."

### NEGRO MINSTRELSY.

THE INFLUENCE CHRISTY'S TROUPE  
HAD ON ITS FAME.

John B. Gough, Edwin Forrest and Joseph Jefferson Appeared in Burnt Cork—Thomas D. Rice, the Man Who Created Jim Crow.

Negro minstrelsy today has settled into a regular thing. People go to a show, enjoy it, memorize the "gags," work them off with an unconscious and spontaneous air on less fortunate friends, and then wait for the return of the show to lay in a new supply. But there was a time when minstrelsy had a beginning, just like the earth and Adam and Eve, and it was a beginning with a boom, and everything else gave way before it.

There is some disagreement as to which was the first minstrel organization, but undoubtedly it was Christy's minstrels that first spread the fame of the organized troupe and made an impression on the country. And as for its impression on the old world, where the band made its home for several years, Thackeray himself stands witness. Christy became synonymous with the word minstrel, as my own experience well attests.

A minstrel in this country has the satisfaction of knowing that he is working in a kind of amusement that is the genuine product of America. I suppose, however, that Shakespeare put the first negro on the stage in Moor to him was a negro, but Othello was not a minstrel; he played a heavier line of business. From almost the beginning of American stage history there were negroes of the minstrel variety impersonated on the stage, though it was not until about the forties that they were organized into bands. Some of the greatest actors of later days had their experience as minstrels, among them Joe Jefferson and Edwin Forrest.

Forrest was given a negro "song and dance act" to do when he was very young, and after he had studied it up he asked where was the "old negro lady" that was to act as his assistant in the piece. The management tried several of the women who were members of the company, but none of them would consent to blacken up, and, in fact, they were very indignant over the proposition. The actor, however, was not easily discouraged, and on the night of the last performance he blacked up and went around the corner to an old negro woman who did his washing.

"Hello, Dinah," he said on entering. "How you be er feelin dis bery fine evening?"

"Hello, yo!" replied the African lady. "Pears to me yo' am er bery fresh nigger."

"Ize no nigger," answered Forrest. And then, time being rather short, he assumed his natural voice and told Dinah, much to her surprise, that he was Forrest, the actor, and that he wanted her to go on the stage with him that night and laugh loudly at frequent intervals, which was all the female part called for. The two made a great hit and were kept on for some time, which goes to show that Forrest might have been a good minstrel had he been of an ambitious nature.

The point is that when the minstrel bands were taking on character and shaping themselves for the future the women refused to take part, which, without being ungallant, I think was just as well.

The minstrel organization as it is known today was brought about by the wonderful success that certain men made as individuals. Most of these men are but faintly remembered today. One of them, curious to relate, was John B. Gough, afterward famous as a temperance orator. Another was the famous Thomas D. Rice, whose Jim Crow he owes to the history of nations. How Jim Crow found his way on the stage is an interesting part of the story of minstrelsy.

In 1829, while Rice was doing a small negro act at the Louisville theater, he happened to look out of the back window, which faced a stable kept by an old and broken down negro called Jim Crow. One of Crow's shoulders was much lower than the other, his left leg was stiff and crooked at the knee, so that when he walked he went up and down in a most ludicrous fashion.

This day he was standing in the yard humming a peculiar tune to himself, the words of which were his own. When he had finished a verse, he would give a jumping step, which has since become famous as "rockin de heel." The refrain of his song was:

Wheel about, turn about,  
Do jes' so,  
An' every time I wheel about  
I jump Jim Crow.

Rice saw that here was something new. He studied the old man, made the tune a little bit more lively, wrote a number of new verses and copying the original very closely in make up appeared as Jim Crow at the Louisville theater. He was recalled more than 20 times the first night and always after was known as Jim Crow Rice.

In 1833, when Joe Jefferson was only 4 years of age, Rice appeared at a benefit at the Jefferson theater in Washington and carried the little fellow on the stage in a bag, costumed and blackened exactly like the Jim Crow Rice. As Rice shambled on the stage he sang this couplet:

Ladies and gentlemen, I'd have you for to know  
I've got a little dicky here to jump Jim Crow.

Whereupon he emptied the bag, and those who were present say that little Joe immediately assumed the attitude of the elder Jim Crow and danced and mimicked Rice in a way that caused the audience to cheer.

So there was a great minstrel lost to the world.

Had Them All.

Professor (to student of surgery)—Please inform the class the names of bones forming the skull.

Student—Ah—er—I do not at the present time remember, but I know that I have them all in my head.—Exchange.

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