

everything in such a scrape as that was. He swears *he* didn't turn it—probably he didn't; but how easy it would have been for that Lem to have had a line fastened to one of the steering-chains near the rudder, and have given it a little bit of a haul at just the right minute."

"That's so," ejaculated old Captain Dilman, whose singing and honest religious ecstasy had had so profound an effect upon Lem on the night of the Methodist meeting. "I've been around the world three times, and I know such a trick could be played, easy enough."

Everybody looked at the stove during a moment of silence, as if it were a source of ideas; then storekeeper Potts spoke up—

"I never liked that fellow's looks," said he. "Perhaps the Major and Captain's right; that accounts for the awful face Lem always had when he thought nobody was looking at him. There seemed to be something awful on his mind—remorse, like enough, for destroying so much property as a good steamboat amounts to."

"And for killin' his father," suggested a countryman, who was caressing the stove-pipe.

"Oh, yes!—of course—I forgot that," said the merchant. "No wonder he looked as he did. And who knows how many counterfeits he gave out in change from the Squire's store?"

"Guess the Squire wouldn't cry much if he knew it," muttered a man upon whom the Squire had recently foreclosed a chattel mortgage. One or two men laughed. Mr. Potts put on a deprecatory expression, but took care to say nothing in defence of his rival.

"I never *did* believe in sudden conversions," remarked a good, kind-hearted Presbyterian. "Here 'twas told all around town a month or two ago that that boy had been born again—now look at him!"

"There's counterfeit conversions, as well as counterfeit money," retorted the Methodist ex-sailor, with considerable warmth. "That peddler's waggon that gave short weights all round the county a year ago, was druv' by a Presbyterian in good standin'. My belief is that Lem was only playin' possum when he made out that he'd gave himself to Jesus. If the Squire hadn't set him agin' him so, like enough he'd have joined the Presbyterians—then what 'd you have got off about sudden conversions?"

"Mail open!" shouted the postmaster, in time to prevent these right-hearted champions from contending any longer for the faith as it was delivered unto themselves.

An hour later the conversation above had been welded into the symmetrical statement

that Lem had come to Mount Zion for the express purpose of issuing counterfeit money; that he had, with malice aforethought, destroyed the steamboat, and killed his own father during the excitement, to escape recognition by the parent who had tracked him everywhere in the hope of reclaiming him; then, his peculiar expression was due to remorse—that he had shammed conversion, that he had passed much bad money in change from behind the Squire's counter, and that the Squire had winked at the operation.

The news reached the Squire through his own pastor, who earnestly begged a denial of the imputation against his parishioner's honesty, and received one, couched in language so positive that it made him shudder and hurry away. The Squire's eyes flashed fire for a few minutes; then he lapsed into his accustomed religious melancholy, and started for his supper.

"What's wrong with yer now, and why wasn't you home to dinner?" was the greeting the Squire received at his own kitchen door.

"I was busy at dinner time," said the Squire, "and—O, Marg'ret, this is an awful wicked world!"

"You haven't been trustin' no other good-for-nothin' that's died without enough to pay his debts, I hope," exclaimed Mrs. Barkum.

"No, Marg'ret, I haven't," replied the Squire, with considerable peevishness, "an' it ain't fair for you to be all the time throwin' that one case up to me—every other storekeeper has done that twenty times. But Lem's turned out a counterfeiter!"

"An' passed some bad money on you?" asked Mrs. Barkum, setting down her teacup.

"I never thought *you'd* get caught at—"

"Oh! no, Marg'ret," groaned the Squire, "what makes you snatch me up so? I haven't took in a counterfeit for a year. But they *do* say that he smashed up that steamboat himself—it was insured in the Illinois Mutual, too, where we have to participate in ev'ry loss; an' that he helped kill his father, an' made-believe got religion, an' passed counterfeit money in makin' change at my store."

"Has any of it been sworn back to you?" asked Mrs. Barkum.

"No," said the Squire.

"Then I wouldn't believe a word of it," said Mrs. Barkum. "Besides," said the good lady, poisoning a spoonful of apple-sauce in mid-air, "'twouldn't cost *you* anything if he *had* done it."

The Squire groaned, and hurriedly whispered "ah—h—h!" Slowly, however, he seemed to realize that his wife had spoken the truth, and his face exhibited a resigned