

to the best jewelry store in town and had the most expert expert in that store appraise the stone. "Hundred and fifty dollars," was the instantaneous verdict. Semore was convinced. He produced the seventy-five dollars from a capacious wallet, wrote a receipt and an I. O. U. for eighty dollars — payable in thirty days — and pocketed the ring.

Both men were content. Semore was happy because there was more than an even chance that Cass would not redeem the ring and also because even if he did Semore would have profited at the rate of eighty per cent per annum, which is slightly more than is allowed under the Alabama usury laws.

Cass was happy because with Semore's loan he stood to clear two hundred dollars for himself and his pal . . . and he chortled with glee as he contemplated the day of the money's return, at which time he would tell Semore of the wealth begotten with his money.

Semore Mashby was about as popular with his coloured brethren as a policeman with a gang of crap-shooters. He was tall and angular and shifty-eyed — and had developed canniness to a high art. He loved to make money almost as much as he hated to see others do likewise. He was misanthropic and miserly. Each dollar that dropped into the pocket of his frayed coat clinked twice — once for itself and once for the dollar it was destined to earn.

But as heartily as Semore was disliked, just so heartily was he feared. His wealth — by dark-town standards — put that of Croesus into the also-ran class. He was the last refuge of desperate