

Why I Resigned.

An Ex-Detective's Story.



"**W**hy did I retire from the force?" The speaker was a well-knit, clean-shaven man, whose face, without being handsome, revealed the possession by its owner of intelligence and a sensitive nature. His eyes were frankly observant, and his demeanor was one of alertness and vigor.

"Yes," proceeded ex-Detective Morrison, "I suppose it will ever be a bit of mystery to my late colleagues of the Criminal Investigation Department that I who had confessedly done much excellent work should have renounced my career when my prospects were most promising. 'What! Going to resign?' exclaimed the Commissioner. 'You who largely assisted to secure the arrest of the authors of the De Mallincourt pasted-jewel frauds, who discovered the Hampstead prisoners, and who successfully traced the international banknote forgers to their den?'"

"It certainly did seem strange, and I dared not explain. Are you listening? Well, what mystified Scotland Yard shall be made clear to you.

"Early in life I became enamored of the idea of a detective's career. I was eternally picturing myself as an avenging instrument of outraged justice, rescuing innocent beauty from the grasp of remorseless scoundrelism, winning the plaudits of the world and the smile of virtue—you know the kind of thing that springs from the imagination of sensitive youth.

"My sister and myself had been left orphans. We had been given into the custody of a half-brother of my father's, as good and generous a fellow as ever lived, considerate as a father, and naturally less exacting in checking any of our original sins. He had a daughter, Ethel; and it was Ethel, sweet Ethel—here the narrator made an emotional pause—"who unconsciously weaved herself into all my imaginary acts of heroism.

"I lived the ordinary life of a young man, helping my uncle in his business and taking part in no more escapades than do most fellows of twenty. I wasn't what's termed a mollycoddle—not at all; but the mere presence of Ethel and my sister Rose was a restraint upon any extravagant foolishness.

"They were a strange contrast in appearance. Rose was as dark as any Egyptian, with heavily arched brows, eyes that sparkled with vitality, hair that nestled low upon the forehead; she was impetuous, eager, a child of impulse. Ethel was as fair as the morning sun—a clinging, easily-moved, trusting maid who seemed to lean for support on Rose.

"Rose was my elder, and she lavished a passionate affections upon me. Ethel apparently reflected it in a less vehement and in a more regulated manner.

"When I quitted Northington to join the force I little thought that Rose's passion must have another outlet, and that in its turbulence it might overwhelm my darling Ethel, now secretly half-plighted to me.

"Yes, Morrison," said my chief, "these are the cutest and cleverest frauds we have had to deal with for some time. The notes are so accurately executed as to deceive even the smartest of bank-clerks. Of course a thorough expert, if he were to examine them closely, could detect a variation in the water-mark if not in the typographical peculiarities of a counterfeit note; but that variation is so slight that even he might be deceived. By the way, quite a few of these notes have been in circulation in your native place, Northington. However, you have got charge of the case."

"My heart leapt at the thought of Northington. My sister Rose had been suddenly married to a gentleman whom I had never seen, but whose name did not impress me. It was Hubert Featherstone Maitland. I had not been able

to attend the wedding because I was in Paris inquiring into the De Mallincourt frauds. Rose was wildly enthusiastic about her husband; she rhapsodized over his goodness, generosity, affection for her, and his unvarying devotion. How had she met him? He was staying at the county hotel and so ingratiated himself with some of the townsmen that he got invited to the annual bachelors' ball. Within five months he and Rose were married. Didn't I know something about his family? Well, Rose wrote enthusiastically about his brother, Hugh Featherstone Maitland, and somehow I began to fear for Ethel.

"I did not go to Northington, for on arrival at my lodgings, after the interview with the chief, I had a wire from Rose—or rather from Mrs. Maitland—saying that I might expect a call from her at any moment. She was then in London. Besides, news had come of these notes having been given an increased circulation at several West End establishments. Rose's wire gave no address. It was a bald note announcing her arrival, and was despatched from Charing Cross.

"I was in Bond Street, where as yet the forger had not commenced his depredations. I was persuaded that he would not relinquish so happy a hunting-ground, but was moody over my non-success.

"Don't forget I shall want some change!"

"These words fell on my ears. They had been uttered by a well-dressed handsome man who was just getting into a cab from which a lady had only a second before alighted. He drove away, and the lady entered a jeweller's shop.

"I always act upon impulse. I was attired in fashionable clothes, and I too went into the shop. The lady bought a pair of links for her husband and gave a ten-pound note in exchange. She received seven pounds twelve shillings from the cashier. I had completed my inquiries as to the price of a hunter-watch which I did not want. When she left—her close veil had never been raised—her very movement was reminiscent. Who could she be? I saw her enter another shop eight or nine doors away. I returned to the jeweller's called the manager, showed my authority, and asked to see the note. I was certainly unable to discover any flaw in it, but was not convinced of its genuineness.

"In another minute I was standing outside the second shop which the lady had entered. I dared not gaze too intently at her as she left. However, by lounging near the cab I was able to learn the address she gave the call-man. It was 61 Overchurch Mansions—one of the best-known suites of maisonettes in the West End.

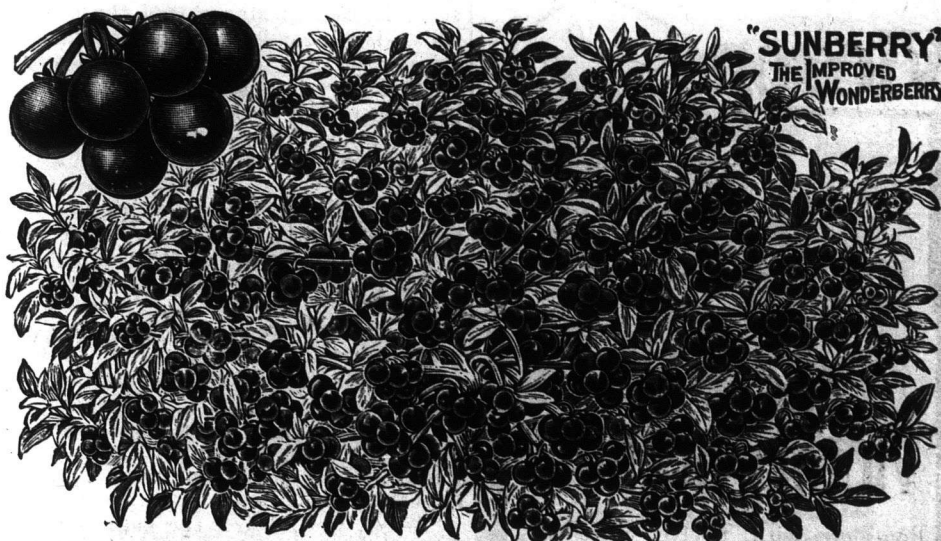
"I followed her closely in another cab. She had not entered the mansions ten seconds before I had resolved to make some inquiries at the office on the ground floor.

"She was actually leaving the office as I approached. 'Yes,' I heard an obsequious clerk say, as she entered the lift, 'I can assure you that to-morrow a man shall come and see what is the matter with your gas service. We cannot understand it.'

"The lady still left an impression on my mind—an impression that her form and manner were not new. I imperatively dismissed the notion from my mind, for I had now a scheme in view. I hurried back to the jeweller's; he had in the meantime taken the note to the bank. After very careful examination the expert had come to the conclusion that it was a flash note. I went to the other shop—a similar note had been passed there. The manager laughed to scorn the idea that it was not a genuine one.

"The housemaid at 61 Overchurch Mansions was in a very unpleasant mood.

"'Ere's the missus says as 'ow you wasn't comin' till to-morrer! It's most haggardin'! An' master's bringing



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