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# "The Man Who Disappeared."

## CHAPTER IX. Mr. Bud's Dark Hallway.

"Yes, an' that about lets me out. The cabman driv' 'im to somewhere on South Street, by the wharves. It was dark by that time, and the driver didn't notice the car's spot—he just drove along the street till the man told him to stop, that was his orders—an' then the man got out, took out his parcels, an' carried them across the sidewalk into a dark hallway. Then he paid the cabman, an' the cabman driv' off. The last the cabman seen of 'im, he was goin' into the hallway where his goods were, an' that's the last any one seen of 'im in New York, as far as known. Probably you've got enough imagination to give a guess what became of him after that."

"No, I haven't," said Larcher. "es" think it over. You can put two and two together, can't you? A new outfit of clo'es, first of all. Then a stock of provisions. To make it easier, I'll tell you this much: they was the kind o' provisions people take on yachts, an' he even admitted to the salesman they was for that purpose. And then South Street—the wharves; does that mean ships? Does the whole business mean a voyage? But a man don't have to stock up extra food if he's goin' by any regular steamer line, does he? What for, then? And what kind o' ships' lays off South Street? Sillin' ships; them that goes to South America, an' Asia, and the South Seas, and God knows where all. Now do you think you can guess?"

"But why would he put his things in a hallway?" asked Larcher.

"To wait for the boat that was to take 'em out to the vessel at night. Why did he wait for dark to be driven down there? You bet, he was makin' his fittin' as silent as possible. He'd probably squared it with a skipper to 'ake 'im aboard on the dead quiet. That's why there ain't much we can know; what vessels sailed about that time. I don't know, but much good we'll get out o' that. What port he gets off at, wholl ever tell! It'll be sure to be in a country where we ain't got an extradition treaty. An' when this particular case comes shows up again at this port, innocent enough he'll be; he never took no passenger aboard in the night, an' put 'im off somewhere below the 'quator. I guess Mr. Bagley can about consider his twenty thousand to the bad, unless his young friend takes a notion to return to his native land before he's got it all spent."

"And that's your belief?" said Larcher to Bagley, "—that he went to some other country with the money?"

"Ab-scounded," replied the ready money man. "Yes; there's nothing else to believe. At first I thought you might have some notion where he was; that's what made me send for you. But I see he left you out of his confidence. So I thought you might as well know his real character. Lafferty's going to give the result of his investigation to the newspaper men, anyhow. The only satisfaction I can get is to show the fellow up."

When Larcher left the presence of Bagley, he carried away no definite conclusion except that Bagley was an even more detestable animal than he had before supposed. If the man whom Lafferty had traced was really Davenport, then indeed the theory of suicide was shaken. There remained

the possibility of murder or flight, especially when viewed in association with South Street, South Street? Why, that was Mr. Bud's street. And a hallway? Mr. Bud's room was approached through a hallway. Mr. Bud had left town the day before that Wednesday; but if Davenport had made frequent visits there for sketching, was it not certain that he had had access to the room in Mr. Bud's absence? Larcher had knocked at that room two days after the Wednesday, and had got no answer, but this was no evidence that Davenport might not have made some use of the room in the meanwhile. If he had made use of it, he might have left some trace, some possible clew to his subsequent movements. Larcher, thinking thus on his way from Bagley's apartment house, resolved to pay another visit to Mr. Bud's quarters before saying anything about Bagley's theory to any one.

He was busy the next day until the afternoon was well advanced. As soon as he got free, he took himself to South Street; ascending the dark stairs from the hallway, and knocked loudly at Mr. Bud's door. There was no more answer than there had six weeks before; nothing to do but repair to the saloon below.

"Is Mr. Bud in town, do you know?" inquired Larcher, having observed the usual preliminaries to interrogation.

"Not to my knowledge."

"When was he here last?"

"Not for a long time. 'Most two months, I guess."

"But I was here five or six weeks ago, and he'd been gone only three days then."

"Then you know more about it than I do? So don't ask me."

"He hasn't been here since I was?"

"He hasn't."

"And my friend who was here with me the first time—has been here since?"

"Not while I've been."

"When is Mr. Bud likely to be here again?"

"Give it up. I ain't his private secretary."

Just as Larcher was turning away, the street door opened, and in walked a man with a large hand-bag, who proved to be none other than Mr. Bud himself.

"I was just looking for you," cried Larcher.

"That so?" replied Mr. Bud, cheerily, grasping Larcher's hand. "I just got into town. It's blame cold out. He set his hand-bag on the bar, saying to the bartender, 'Keep my grip-sack back there awhile, Mick, will you? I got to get something into me 'fore I go up-stairs. Gimme a plate o' soup on that table, an' the whisky tle. Will you j'in me, sir? Two plates o' soup, an' two glasses with the whisky bottle. Set down, set down, sir. Make yourself at home.'"

Larcher obeyed, and as soon as the old man ready for conversation, plunged into his subject.

"Do you know what's become of my friend Davenport?" he asked, in a low tone.

"No. Hope he's well and all right. What makes you ask like that?"

"Haven't you read of his disappearance?"

"Disappearance! The devil! Not a word! I been too busy to read the papers. When was it?"

"Several weeks ago," Larcher recited the main facts, and finished thus: "So if there isn't a mistake he was last seen going into your hallway. Did he have a key to your room?"

"Yes, so's he could draw pictures while I was away. My hallway? Let us go and see."

In some excitement, without waiting for Larcher—the farmer rose and led the way out—'twas already quite dark.

"Oh, I don't expect to find him in your room," said Larcher, at his heels. "But he may have left some trace there."

Mr. Bud turned into the hallway, of which the door was never locked till late at night. The hallway was not lighted, save as far as the rays of a street-lamp went across the three-

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load o' parcels—what 'ud become o' them?"

"The criminal might convey them away, too, at his leisure during the night. They would be worth something."

Evidently to test the resourcefulness of the young man's imagination, Mr. Bud continued, "But why should the criminal go to the trouble of 'movin' the body from here?"

"To delay its discovery, or create an impression of suicide if it were found," ventured Larcher, rather lamely. "The criminal would naturally suppose that a chambermaid visited the room every day."

"The criminal 'ud risk less by leaving the body right here; an' it don't stand to reason that, after makin' such a haul o' money, he'd take any chances for the sake o' the parcel. No; your the-ry's got as much ash' as the detective's has fur it. It's built on nothin' but random guess-work. As fur me, I'd rather the young man did get away with the money—you say the other fellow'd done him out o' that much, anyhow, I'd rather that than somebody else got away with him."

"So would I—in the circumstances," confessed Larcher.

To be continued.

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