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THE MYSTERIOUS ROBBERS. A DETECTIVE'S STORY.

While sitting alone in my London office on a dull, drizzly October afternoon, I was engaged in the luxury of a quiet smoke, when a knock opened in a timid hesitating manner, a wrinkled, grey-headed, grey-bearded man, poorly and shabbily dressed, shuffled in, and throwing the glance of what was yet a restless, suspicious black eye over my person, said, in a subdued and what sounded like a humble tone, that he had called to see Mr. George Larkin.

"That is my name, sir," returned I; "pray forward and take a seat."

The old man seemed to hesitate a moment, and then observed, as he walked forward and sat down near me:—

"I hope we are alone, Mr. Larkin, for my business concerns only our two selves."

"We are quite alone, sir, as you see."

"But sometimes, I am told," he continued, "these kind of places—I beg your pardon! I mean no offence to you—sometimes, I say, I am told, these places are covered for secret listeners."

"But I have assured you, sir," I replied, "that we are alone here, and you need not doubt my word, perhaps you had better carry your secret, whatever it is, away from me."

"Well, well," he rejoined somewhat hastily, "never mind—I will take your word—trust you. And I have good authority for doing so, too," he added partly acquiescing and partly addressing me.

"I see, Mr. Larkin, as there is to be done between us, it is no more than fair to tell you that I have been to a magistrate, and for a trusty and select police agent, well versed in cunningness and intelligence, and that Mr. George Larkin was named as the individual on whom I could rely in every particular."

"I am much obliged to the magistrate for ever he is, for his good opinion and recommendation," I answered with a slight smile.

"And now, sir, if you are satisfied, I am prepared to hear your communication."

Again the old man hesitated, and eyed me keenly, and turned somewhat pale at the thought what he was about to divulge; but as if pressed by necessity, he seemed to himself to scruple, and said:—

"Mr. Larkin, I am an old man, as you may perhaps a rather eccentric one as you may discover. Old as I am, I am alone in the world, having neither wife nor child, and some distant relations, who do not care for me nor I for them. Poor as I look, and everybody believe me, (here he glanced at my eyes suspiciously around him, leaning forward, and whispered in my ear, I will gold—much gold—enough to—well, no matter.")

"I looked at the old man as he paused and said, while debating in my own mind whether he was sane or a monomaniac:—

"Well, sir, what has this gold to do with you?"

"Let me confess to you," he pursued, "I have never told to mortal ear, what I love—adore gold—worship gold—and call it my life. The world, if it knew, would call me a miser."

"Heavy you are to be pined!" said I.

"He fastened upon me a strange, startled, searching look, as if he doubted the sincerity of my words, the sentiment of which was beyond his comprehension, it being impossible for him to understand how a miser, an having actual heaps of gold, could be in any degree a subject of pity.

"Yes," he resumed at length, "I never see any human being that I liked as well as myself; but gold, silver, money, the coin of the realm, of all realms, I like better."

"Well I do not see what this has to do with me," returned I.

"Ay, ay, I am coming to that Mr. Larkin—I am coming to that. You see being alone in the world, and loving nothing but my gold, I naturally live alone with my gold—years ago—a great many years ago—you see—I bought an old, tumble-down house on the outskirts of the town. Heavens! what a price I had to pay for it, too!—two hundred pounds, sir—for that house and a bit of land—and that in hard gold, too—two hundred pounds. Well, as I was saying, I bought the house, and then went to work myself, and my own hands, that I might not pay out any more money, and have anybody know my secret I constructed a fire-proof safe—and then had an iron door made for it, with a banklock that no one could open without the key, and secret of him who had locked it. This done, I sold all the property which I had inherited for gold, put the gold into leather bags, (another expensive luxury!) and secretly deposited them in my safe. Since then I have dressed like a beggar, and lived alone with my gold, the sight of which has given me hours of rapture, and the jingle of which has filled

my ears with a delight which I cannot express.

"Well, sir—well, sir," continued the old man, fairly trembling at the thought, "I now come to the painful business which has brought me here! Ah me! ah me! I wonder it has not driven me mad! For years Mr. Larkin—for years sir—I have lived alone with my gold, and kept my own secret, and nobody found me out; but of late sir, (I have been merciful!) I have been robbed—robbed, sir—of my gold—of my gold, Mr. Larkin."

"Then I suppose you are now a poor man!" said I.

"How was your house broken into? Give me the most minute particulars—for it is often able to get the clue that leads to the greatest results."

"Ah! there it is sir—there is the mystery!" groaned the old man.

"Mr. Larkin, you are mistaken, in supposing that I am literally a poor man, or that my house has been broken into at all, so far as I can discover. No, sir, no! The money has been taken—several times—a bag at a time—and yet nothing has been disturbed. My doors and windows, which I have always bolted as well as locked, I have never found unbolted or unlocked, which must have been the case if any one had come in that way. And then my safe is always found just as I leave it, and the key fastened to my body by its iron chain. The first bag of gold I missed (O Lord be merciful!) was about two months ago, and I could not believe it was gone till I had counted the remaining bags over and over, perhaps fifty times. Then I tried to believe I had taken it out myself, and I spent two days in searching the whole house—every nook and cranny—every likely and unlikely place. Well, sir, a week went along, and another bag was missing. Horrible mystery! Since that I have lost three more—the last one last night—and human nature can endure it no more! Oh, sir! find out the thief, and restore me my missing gold, and I will—will worship you, sir!"

I smiled at the idea of getting a miser's worship in return for my trouble in detecting a mysterious thief and restoring the owner a large amount of gold, and I said facetiously:—

"Unquestionably what you offer is very valuable in your estimation, but neither a miser's blessing nor curse, will pass current for rent, food or clothing. No, Mr.—"

"Brandish—Stephen Brandish."

"No, Mr. Brandish, if I undertake this business of detecting this secret thief, and getting back your money, or any portion of it, I must be paid in gold—gold, sir—gold—for I, too, like gold—though for what it will buy, and not to worship."

"For a long time we could not agree upon terms; but at last, having got the matter settled to my satisfaction, I entered with great zeal into the penetration and unravelment of what was really a very wonderful mystery. That night, after dark, I made my appearance at the miser's house, and being admitted and the door secured, I began my inspection of the premises. I went up to the roof and down to the cellar, searching minutely all the walls floors and ceilings, for some possible place where a thief might enter or secure himself. The house was an old, crazy structure, sure enough; but I found nothing to give me a clue to the mystery. The doors and windows were all bolted on the inside, and the bolts, I assured myself by a close examination, were all sound and in good order. In the cellar was a well, from which the old man drew what water he used, and I satisfied myself there was nothing suspicious about that. Then I went round the walls, and tried every stone of any size, to see if it might be removed; but all were fast and solid. At last I came to the money safe, which was curiously built in the ground, with the door upward, like that of a scuttle, and which was effectually concealed by scattering dirt over it."

"I must see the inside of this!" said I.

"There may possibly be an excavation underneath."

"Oh, sir," returned the old miser, trembling at the thought of exposing his riches, "you will not take advantage of an old man; you will not betray me! you promise that you will swear it."

I might get offended at this question of my honesty from another; but I took into consideration the peculiarities, idiosyncrasies of the afflicted miser, readily promised all he required, even going so far as to take an oath of secrecy. At last, after much hesitation and demurring, he ventured to expose the interior of the safe to my gaze. It contained twenty-five heavy bags of gold, and a large amount of silver thrown in loosely; but the bolts, stones, and all parts of it, save the iron door, were composed of thick granite, perfectly cemented, and had never been disturbed since being put together.

My inspection of the premises was now completed, but without gaining the slightest

clue of the mystery of the robberies. I could discover no place where any one could have entered, and there was certainly no one now concealed in the house. I questioned the miser as to who had visited him; but he positively declared that himself excepted, I was the only one he had permitted to cross his threshold since taking up his solitary abode there. I was at a stand—I knew not what to suggest. Had but one bag been missing—or had he only been robbed once—the matter would have seemed susceptible of some rational solution; but to be robbed five several times, at irregular intervals, and the thief to be so forbearing as to take only a comparatively small portion at each time, and then withal leave no trace, save the loss, of his having been there,—this it was that puzzled and perplexed me exceedingly. I finally went away, at a late hour, promising to give the matter my serious consideration, and the old man agreeing to communicate with me immediately on the occurrence of anything new.

Three times after he appeared, in a half-distracted state, and declared that, during the night previous, he had been robbed of another bag of gold. Again I repaired to his house, and made a thorough search, going from cellar to roof and from roof to cellar, examining everything, even to his old rotten straw bed, but only to end as wise as I began. I made him open his safe again, and saw with my own eyes that only twenty-four bags remained; and I knew from his appearance that the missing money was really lost, since it was not possible for any one to counterfeit such wretched grief and terror as his countenance, language and manner expressed. The money was gone; but who was the thief? and by what mystery had he made his entrance and exit, and opened and closed the safe?

In a few days the miser was robbed again; and in spite of all I could do, he continued to be robbed at longer or shorter periods, for several months—until, in fact, only ten bags of gold remained. By this time he was waivered almost to a skeleton through grief at his loss, and I had become so nervous and superstitious that I looked to see a ghost every time I visited the dwelling. What could it mean? I had spent days and nights in the house—had arranged matters so that I could come and go as I pleased, at all hours, secretly and openly—and yet, though I had staid my freedom, and been an almost constant spy upon the premises, I had failed to detect the slightest clue to the thief. Surely it could not be the work of human hands; and the thought of the supernatural made my blood run cold.

One night I retired to bed, terribly perplexed with this mystery, and after rolling and tossing about for a long time, I fell asleep, and dreamed I was in the miser's house, on the watch, and that I saw him get up, to his safe, unlock it, take out a bag of gold, drop it in the well, relock his safe, and return to his bed.

"That is it!" I cried, leaping out upon the floor. "I have it now! The wretched man is a sleep-walker, and has all along been robbing himself! Why have I not thought of this before?"

I dressed in haste, and set off, night though it was, to ascertain the truth of my new conjecture. I reached the miser's house, went in, and found the miser was not in bed. I hurried down stairs, and by the light of my lantern, beheld him stretched out on the ground, near the well with a bag of gold in his hand. I spoke to him, but he did not answer. I touched him, but he did not stir. I stooped down, took hold of his wrist, felt his pulse, and started up in horror.

"He was dead! He had died in the act of robbing himself! By the false god he had set up, the God of Heaven had destroyed him!"

It was a case for the coroner, and I summoned him.

But the mystery was solved, my dream had revealed the truth, and the missing bags of gold were all found at the bottom of the well. The whole was taken possession of by the authorities, and I received my just due for services rendered.

FROM THE STATES.

BANNOCK, April 9.

Confederates on vacating Island No. 10 fled to Tipton, where Gen. Pope pursued and routed them. He has captured 3 Generals, 6000 men, 1000 siege guns, several field batteries, and an immense quantity of tents, wagons, small arms and supplies.

Army of Island No. 10 wholly routed, captured and demoralized.

Federal loss none!

Confederates sunk several of their transports and gunboats.

On Sunday Beauregard's army advanced in overwhelming numbers from Corinth, and attacked the combined force of Gens. Grant and Buell at Pittsburg landing. Battle very severe, lasting till afternoon.

Confederates were routed and driven back to their fortifications. Loss heavy on both sides.

St. Louis, 8th.

Gen. Pope pursued the retreating Rebels from Island No. 10 to Tipton, where he attacked and routed them, capturing three Generals, 6000 prisoners, 100 siege guns, several field batteries, with an immense quantity of small arms, tents, wagons horses, &c. our victory is complete.

CHICAGO, 8th.

A private despatch read to-night says we fought and won the hardest battle ever fought on this continent.

A dispatch dated Pittsburg landing, 5th, says:—

"In response to a serenade, Halleck said Beauregard with an immense army advanced from Corinth and attacked the combined forces of Grant and Buell, the battle began at daybreak yesterday and continued until late in the afternoon, with terrible loss on both sides. We gained complete victory, driving the enemy within their fortifications."

A special dispatch to the Herald, dated Pittsburg via Fort McHenry, April 7th, 2 22 a. m., says one of the greatest and bloodiest battles of modern days has just closed resulting in the complete route of the enemy, who attacked us at daybreak on Sunday morning, and continued undecided until 4 o'clock in the afternoon when the enemy commenced their retreat, and are still flying towards Corinth, pursued by a large force of our cavalry. The slaughter on both sides is immense. We have lost in killed, wounded and missing from 18 to 20,000 men, that of the enemy is estimated at from 35 to 40,000. It is impossible in the present confused state of affairs to ascertain any details, I therefore give you the best account from observation having passed through the storm of action the two days that it raged. The fight was brought on by a body of the 25th Indiana regiment of Gen. Prentiss' division, attacking the advance guard of the Rebels, which were supposed to be the pickets of the enemy, in front of our camps. The rebels immediately advanced on Gen. Prentiss' division, on the left wing, pouring in volley after volley of musketry, and riddling our camps with grape, canister and shot; our forces soon formed in line of battle and returned their fire vigorously, and by the time we were prepared to receive them they had turned their heaviest fire on the left of Sherman's division, and drove our men back from their camps, and bringing up a fresh force opened fire on our left wing which was under command of Gen. McClellan.

Gen. Hurlbut's division was thrown forward to support the centre, when a desperate conflict ensued. The rebels were driven back with terrible slaughter, but soon rallied and drove back our men in return. From about nine o'clock, until night closed on the bloody scene, there was no determination of the result of the struggle. The rebels exhibited remarkably good generalship, at times engaging the left wing, apparently with their whole strength, they would suddenly open a terrible and destructive fire on the right or centre. Even our heaviest and most destructive fire upon the enemy did not appear to discourage their solid columns.

The fire of Major Taylor's Chicago artillery raked them down in scores. The smoke would no sooner be dispersed than the breach would again be filled.

The most desperate fighting took place in the afternoon. The rebels knew that if they did not succeed in whipping us this time, their chance for success would be extremely doubtful as a portion of Gen. Buell's force had by this time arrived on the opposite side of the river, and another portion was coming up the river from Savannah. They became aware that we were being reinforced, as they could see Gen. Buell's troops from the river bank a short distance above us on the left, to which point they had forced their way.

At five o'clock the rebels had forced our left wing back so as to occupy fully two-thirds of our camp, and were fighting their way forward with a desperate degree of confidence in their efforts to drive us into the river, and at the same time heavily engaged our right.

Up to this time we received no reinforcements—Gen. Lew Wallace failing to come to our support until the day was over, and having taken the wrong road from Campus landing, and being without other transports than those used for quarter masters and commissary stores, which were too heavily laden to ferry any considerable number of Gen. Buell's forces across the river, those that were here having been sent to bring up the troops from Savannah. We were therefore contending against fearful odds. Our forces not exceeding 39,000 men, while that of the enemy was upwards of 60,000. Our condition at this moment was extremely critical, as large numbers of our men were panic struck, while others were worn out by hard fighting; with the average percentage of skul-

kers, who had straggled towards the river and could not be rallied. Gen. Grant and Staff, who had been recklessly riding along the lines during the entire day, amid an unceasing storm of bullets, grape, and shell, now rode from right to left, inciting the men to stand firm until our reinforcements could cross the river. Col. Webster, chief of the Staff, immediately got into position the heaviest pieces of artillery pointing on the enemy's right, while a large number of batteries were planted along the entire line, from the river bank northwest, to our extreme right, some two and a half miles distant.

About an hour before dusk a general cannonading was opened upon the enemy from along our whole line with a perpetual crack of musketry. Such a roar of artillery was never heard on this continent. For a short time the Rebels replied with vigor and effect, but their return shots grew less frequent and destructive, while ours grew more rapid and terrible. Gunboats Lexington and Tyler, which lay a short distance off, kept raining shell on the rebel hordes. This last effort was too much for the enemy, and ere dusk had set in the firing had nearly ceased, when night coming on all combatants rested from the awful work of blood and carnage.

BALTIMORE, 9th.—The old point boat has arrived. She left there at 5 o'clock last night. The Merrimac is confidently expected with 7 other gunboats on the first favorable day. The latest news from Yorktown by telegraph is up to the 8th. Everything was progressing satisfactorily. A battle is not expected within a day or two.

NEW ORLEANS, 9th.—By 5 o'clock the whole Rebel army was in full retreat to Corinth with our cavalry in full pursuit. We have taken a large amount of artillery and a large number of prisoners. We lost a number of our forces yesterday among whom is Gen. Prentiss. The number of our force taken has not been ascertained yet. It is reported at several hundred. Gen. Prentiss was reported as being wounded. Among killed on rebel side was their General in chief, Albert Sidney Johnson, who was struck by a cannon ball on the afternoon of Sunday, of this there is no doubt, as the report is corroborated by several rebel officers taken to-day.

It is further reported that Gen. Beauregard had his arm shot off.

Provincial Parliament.

FREDERICTON, April 7.

The House has been discussing, all morning, the Report of the Select Committee relative to the claim of Alexander Fraser, for expenditure on the Ferry Slip, Newcastle, &c. Report is favourable to claim.

Williston moved to carry out recommendations of report. This was negatived 16 to 10.

Privileges Committee report that they cannot recommend the House to take any action against Perley for not having obeyed the summons of the Scrutiny Committee, as they entertained grave doubts of the power of the Legislative Council to be examined.

The report is signed by Waters, Allen, and Stevens. Fisher and Williston did not sign.

On Fisher's motion that the question of making molasses the subject of duty, be put first:—Yeas—Kerr, Williston, Costigan, McClellan, Skinner, M'Phelim, Stiles, Allan, Scovil, Glazier, Desbrisay, Anglin, S. H. Gilbert, W. J. Gilbert, Fisher, Ryan, Grimmer, Gillmor, Boyd—19.

Nays—Tilley, Smith, Waters, M'William, Steadman, Hatheway, Perley, Meahan, Stevens, Raymond, Landry, Young, Crocker, Ferris, Lindsay, Monroe, Montgomery, Dow, Cudlip, Jordan—20.

Johnson did not vote.

Anglin then moved to fill the blank with 0.—which was lost—Yeas 14. Nays 26.

On filling with one cent—Yeas 18; Nays 22.

On 2 cents—Yeas 23; Nays 17.

April 9.

Menro introduced a Bill to amend Cap. 5, Title 111, Revised Statutes, of Territories and Casual Revenue. This is another Lumber License Bill.

Smith introduced a Bill relating to Gold Mines. It is to empower the Governor in Council to make regulations, &c. for mining and digging gold on ungranted lands.

The petition of Stephen Tracy, of Woodstock, relative to a claim of £49, on Canada Disputed Territory Fund, was referred to a Select Committee.

We learn from the Cape Breton News of the 22nd ult., that the "Adriatic" is locked in at the port of Sydney with ice, and that there is no probability of her departure for at least a week or ten days.