

Wanted for passing forged check on the National Bank of this city. When last seen had on a light gray suit, tan shoes, etc., etc."

"Keep your eyes open for him, men," concluded Captain Schmidt. "The Commissioner has determined to round-up all the crooks and forgers, and his orders are strict. It might just happen that your man is in this precinct. I may say, unofficially, that it will be good work for the man who happens to run him in."

The men saluted and filed out. They were accustomed to such orders. They seldom resulted in anything. The Central Office men had all the show when it came to trailing high-class game. It would be owing to luck if the forger came their way. He had formerly lived in their precinct, and it was not likely that he would return to his old haunts for some time. More likely he was in Baltimore or Chicago by now.

A month passed, and the forger was still "wanted" by headquarters. Every time John Hogan had gone out on his detail he kept freshly dusted in his mental Rogues' Gallery the picture of "Sport" Fairchild. He had come to know the characteristics of that face by heart. His soul was concentrated upon it, his ambition. Once let him make this capture and his promotion would be won. Captain Schmidt could no longer withhold his recommendation. But though Hogan narrowly scanned each face he passed in the street, the face that meant his promotion never met his eyes.

Two months, three months slipped away. Then one evening as Hogan was standing on Fifth Avenue his attention was attracted to the opposite corner. Patrolman Mullaney, of his precinct, had a small boy by the hand. The boy was about four years old and dressed in a short reefer jacket and leather leggings. Hogan crossed idly over.

"Lost?" he asked indifferently.

"Shure," said Mullaney, a perplexed look wrinkling his Milesian countenance. "Been lost for four hours, I guess. Faix, the bye don't know his own name at all, nor where he lives. Oi'll have to be after takin' him to th' station house."

Hogan had a way with children.

"Let me try," he said, and lifted the little chap in his strong arms. The violet glare from a neighboring arc light struck full upon the child's frightened eyes. Large, gray eyes they were, and as they met Hogan's a vague memory thrilled through the latter. But it was not the eyes that had sent the blood pounding in the plain clothes man's breast. It was the sight of three moles formed like a triangle upon the child's right cheek.

Hogan's voice was steady and soothing.

"And where were you going when you got lost?" he asked.

"To—to see favver," said the boy struggling to keep back the tears.

"And don't you live with your father?" pursued Hogan gently.

The child shook his head.

"I live wiv—wiv Muvver. Favver's been away—a long way."

"Oh," said Hogan. "And so your father has just come back, eh?"

The boy nodded slowly.

"Well, why didn't he come home to see mother and his little boy? All fathers do that the first thing, you know," suggested the plain clothes man.

The child eyed him in grave surprise.

"Oh, but you know, favver—favver can't."

"Better let me take him to th' house. Ye're wastin' time quizzin' th' lad," interrupted Mullaney.

But Hogan impatiently shook his head.

"And why can't father come home to see mother and his little boy?" he asked gently.

"Muvver says there is a lot of bad men who want—want to hurt favver."

"Oh," considered Hogan. "And so you were on your way to tell your father to come home? That the bad men had gone away? Is that it, eh?"

The child nodded.

"Favver was going to take us away, away."

Hogan turned to Mullaney.

"I guess I know who this kid belongs to. I'll see him home," and taking the boy in his arms, he started toward Sixth Avenue.

"Have you ever been to your father's house before?" he asked, while on his way.

"Yes," said the boy. "Once muvver says favver's been home for four, five, days. You're not a bad man?" he finished suddenly, looking trustfully into Hogan's eyes and tighter ng his hold.

A queer thrill of self-contempt shot into the plain clothes man's heart. For six years now he had been a stranger to that feeling. It was dirty work he was engaged in—but duty and ambition stifled his conscience.

"No, I'm not a bad man," he answered hurriedly. "And what does your father's house look like?"

The boy considered.

"It's awful big and—and dark and I have to go up an awful lot of stairs."

"Flat house," mused Hogan. "And I suppose you have lots of fun looking out of the windows at the cars? You know, the cars that run past on a high bridge," and he pointed to the elevated overhead.

The boy said "yes," with his head.

"I'll risk it as a flat house on Sixth Avenue," said Hogan to himself. "But where?"

He and his little charge had reached the glare of the avenue.

Hogan considered, scratching his chin. How could he find the elusive flat house?

"Don't you know where your own home is? Your mother's?" he asked presently.

"N—no. It's that way. A long way," and the child pointed up the avenue.

"And can't you remember where your father lives? Try," persuaded Hogan.

The boy shook his head, finger in mouth.

"Then how did you find your way to your father's house the last time you visited him? And how did you get home again?" grimly persisted the plain clothes man.

"I went wiv muvver. Muvver came wiv me today but when we got off the big car I—I got lost," and the tears would not be denied.

"He can't have wandered far," The father must be in this precinct," mused Hogan, his pulse quickening. He had set the child on the sidewalk but now he stooped and lifted him again in his arms. Once more those gray eyes stirred a vague memory in his heart.

"Now tell me child," he said impressively. "How did you know whenever you were near your father's house? Wasn't there anything you used to like to watch, like the cars that went by the window? The cars on the high bridge?"

The boy suddenly clapped his hands.

"Oh, you mean the car? A—a big, a great big house on wheels all golded, and favver would get a funny fat man wiv funny red hair to give me pies—"

But Hogan, recognition pulsing in his eyes started up the avenue.

"Dan's Pantry" on Thirty-seventh Street, by all that's holy."

"Are we going to—to favver's?" asked the boy happily, laying his drowsy head upon the broad shoulder of the detective.

"Yes," said Hogan. But his eyes would not meet the trusting gray ones so near his own.

On the way up to Thirty-seventh Street Hogan's big heart was raked by many feelings. For the first time since joining the force he despised his calling—and yet he was about to earn the much coveted step in promotion. The boy, whose golden head was so near his own, had touched a chord in his nature that had not actively vibrated for many years. It brought to his mind his mother's face and her heritage of duty, honor, love and charity. But he was only doing his duty. Yes, his duty, not his ambition. He crushed down the momentary spasm of weakness, of self-contempt.

The boy was very tired and happy when they reached Thirty-seventh Street, and after a brief period of indecision he finally located "favver's house." Hogan, a grim smile on his lips, pushed open the hall door and ascended the narrow, meanly carpeted stairs. At the boy's instructions he mounted three flights, then knocked at "favver's" door. There was silence, then footsteps sounded and the door was opened half an inch.

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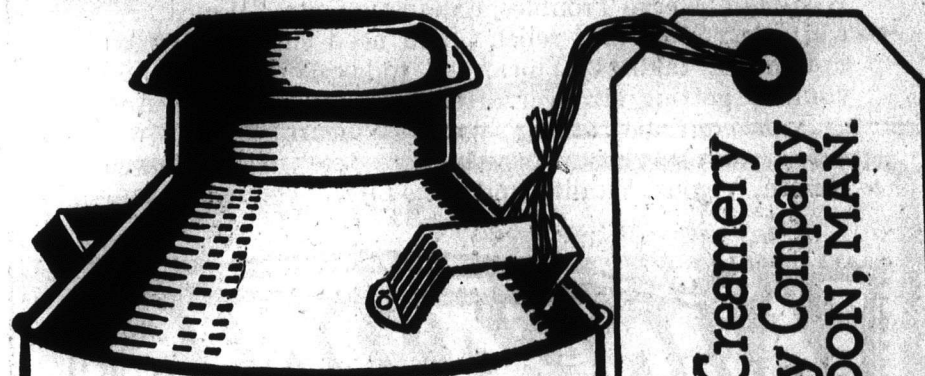
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