

manner and amused his companion; and now he racked his brains to think of common-places with which to pass the time.

Samela answered his remarks with monosyllables. He thought it was useless to try to force on a conversation, and for a long time they walked on in silence; but at last this silence became oppressive to him and almost unbearable. They had come to a woody bit of the road which lay in deep shadow, the moonbeams not yet being strong enough to force themselves through the firs. Here Samela stopped suddenly. Gibbs thought she must have dropped something. "What is it?" he asked, going close to her. It is not often that one person can plainly hear the beating of another's heart; he heard it then. A feeling of tenderness and sympathy, such as he had never known before, came over him, and—without taking a thought of what he was doing—he put his arm round her waist. "Samela!" he whispered.

For one moment—for one moment—and the remembrance of that short passage of time will thrill him till he dies—he believed that the pressure was returned. Then she started from his grasp, and sprang from him half across the road; her breath came short and quick, and she seemed to shake as a patient does in an ague-fit.

"Samela!" he cried again, frightened at her intense agitation. But she could not speak, and the thought ran through his brain that he had been ungenerous in taking advantage of her as he had done.

"You will forgive me?" he asked gently. "I will never offend you so again. I did not know that you disliked me—so much."

"Oh no! no! no!" cried the girl, and her wailing voice would have told him, if there had been any need of telling, whose cry it was he had heard in the room at the inn. "It is not that. Go on! go on! You must go on! I must go back!" She pointed forwards and then herself turned back.

"You cannot go back alone," exclaimed Gibbs; "I must go with you. Nay," he went on, as she shook her head and quickened her step, "I will not speak a word, but just walk behind you. You will trust me to do that?" But still she waved him off; he advanced towards her and then she began to run.

"Good Heavens!" cried Gibbs in an agony of despair, "what have I done to frighten her like this!"

"Do not follow me!" she implored; "I beg you!" Then John Gibbs stood still in the middle of the road and watched the shadowy figure till it was lost in the blackness beyond.

Our fisherman was in a poor state to consider an intricate business matter the next day. The lawyer wondered at his absence of mind, that such a one should have been chosen for so important a trust. But at last what had to be settled was settled, and the afternoon found him hurrying back as fast as the Highland Railway would carry him. He experienced in Inverness one of those minor calamities which are not very much in themselves, but which, when great misfortunes happen to be absent, come and do their best to embitter our lives. In a word, he lost his bunch of keys and had to have his portmanteau cut open. The loss was to him inexplicable. He always carried them in his coat pocket, and he had felt them there after leaving the inn, rattling against his pipe. Now, as may easily be imagined, his mind was too heavily burdened with a real sorrow to give more than a passing thought to this minor trouble.

Gibbs looked forward with great apprehension to his return to the inn. He dreaded meeting Samela; he could not imagine on what footing they could be now; he thought that she must have resented his conduct to her the more because he was, as it were, her guardian that night; perhaps she imagined that the whole affair had been arranged between her father and himself. At all events he felt it would be very difficult to know how to carry himself before her. And still, at the bottom of his heart, the man had some kind of a feeling that all might come right yet.

The landlord was waiting for him at the station, and as they drove up the glen was eloquent on the

glory of the wedding which had taken place the previous day. Such a feast! so many carriages! so many presents! and such a good-looking bride!

"How is the professor's foot?" asked Gibbs, who could take no interests in brides that day, and was anxious to find out if the landlord had noticed anything wrong.

"There's no muckle the matter with his foot, I'm thinking," replied the landlord; "at any rate he's gone."

"Gone!" cried Gibbs.

"Ay," replied the landlord, "he is that. He went off in a great hurry to catch the first train this morning."

"And his daughter, is she gone?" gasped Gibbs.

"Gone, too," answered the driver cheerfully, evidently enjoying the sensation he was causing. "Indeed, I understand it was on her account they went; he told me that she was not well, and that she must see a London doctor at once." And as the worthy man said this he turned round and looked hard at his companion.

This intelligence was a terrible blow to Gibbs.

The place looked sadly deserted and lonely. He could not fish that evening; he went to the rock where Samela had made her sketch and stared long at the pool; then he went back to the house and took out her handiwork; he felt some queer sort of satisfaction in touching things that she had touched. So short a time had passed since her joyous presence had lighted up that room; how different it seemed them! He could not bear the sight of his books.

The next day he fished, and came to a resolution, which was to go south at once; his month was nearly up, and he had lost all pleasure in the river. The landlord understood something of the cause which lost him his guest, and indeed far and wide the gossips were at work. Accounts varied, but all agreed that Gibbs had behaved extremely badly and had lost his bride.

He had left some money in the big chest, and it was necessary to get it out. It was then for the first time that he remembered the loss of his keys. He tried to pick the lock but failed, and Archie, who was called in, had no greater success; so they had to force lid. Gibbs put the money in his pocket, and then stood gazing at the little collection of volumes which had given him so much pleasure; now it pained him to look at them.

Of a sudden he saw something which made him start, and for a moment disbelieve the sight of his eyes. There, on the top of a book, lay his bunch of keys, the keys which he had had in his hand the night he walked down to the station! He picked them up and examined them, as if they could tell him something themselves. They were quite bright and fresh. By what legerdemain or *diablerie* had those keys found a resting-place there? It was an unfathomable mystery—a mystery which it seemed to him could never be explained.

Abstractedly he took up the calf binding, remembering as he did so whose hand had touched

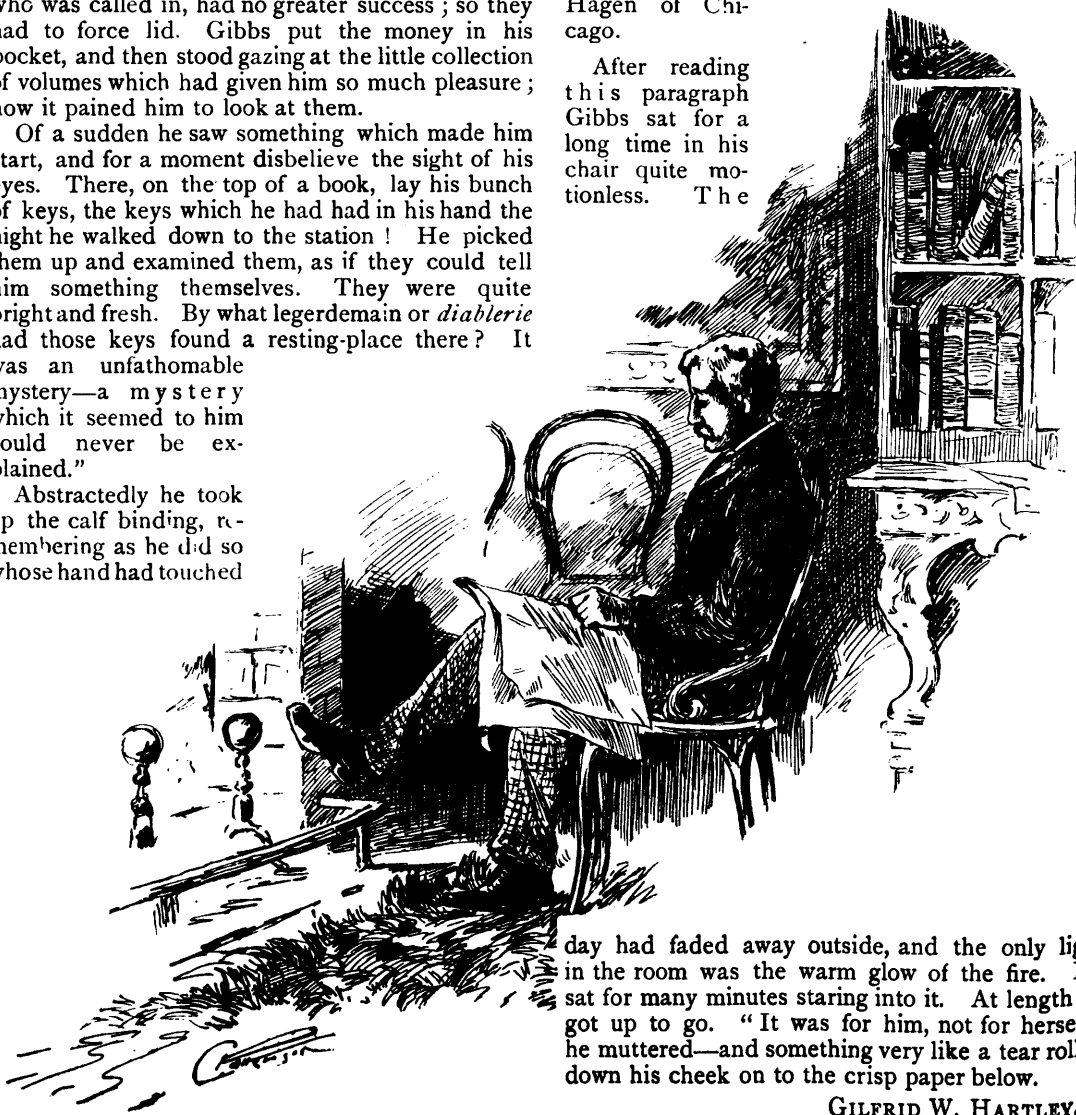
last. It seemed strangely light; he quickly opened it it, and then as quickly let it fall—the quarto was gone!

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Some five years after the events we have been at so much pains to relate, John Gibbs was sitting alone in the reading-room of a northern county club; he was just putting down the *Times*, when the heading of a paragraph in a corner caught his eye. It was as follows:—

"HIGH PRICES FOR BOOKS IN AMERICA.—On Friday last the library of the late John Palmer of New York was disposed of by public auction. This collection was especially rich in early works relating to America, in histories of the English counties, and in early dramatic works. Mr. Palmer was well known for his enterprise and energy. In company with his daughter, and travelling often under assumed names, he searched all Europe for rare books; no journey was too long for him, or price too high, if anything he wished to add to his collection had to be secured. . . . Under a somewhat acrid exterior lay a kind and sympathetic core. By his death many of the great booksellers of London and Paris lose a munificent customer. . . . There were fine copies of the second, third, and fourth folios—curiously enough the first was wanting. But the great glory of the collection were the quartos, which have been allowed to be, by those best qualified to judge, by far the finest in America—perhaps barring those in the British Museum, and at Chatsworth and Althorp—the finest in the world. [Then followed a long list of prices.] The greatest excitement was reached when a copy of 'Love's Labour Lost' was produced by the auctioneer. No one seems to have known of the existence of this copy in the world. Not only was it in beautiful condition and perfectly uncut, but the last ten leaves were *unopened*—a state which is, we believe, quite unique. It measures [so many inches]. It was enclosed in a magnificent crimson morocco case, without lettering on it, made for another work by the English Bedford. This most precious volume was sold for \$3,900, and was bought by Mr. Cornelius Van der Hagen of Chicago.

After reading this paragraph Gibbs sat for a long time in his chair quite motionless. The



day had faded away outside, and the only light in the room was the warm glow of the fire. He sat for many minutes staring into it. At length he got up to go. "It was for him, not for herself," he muttered—and something very like a tear rolled down his cheek on to the crisp paper below.

GILFRID W. HARTLEY.