

the bet, and then Dacre, with a great show of the conjuror's usual gesticulations, spread forth his empty hands, and said that we should find the spoon in Innes' pocket, and there, sure enough, it was. It was a clever trick, but we were never able to get him to repeat it."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Gibbs; I think I see daylight now."

"If you do you are cleverer than I by a long chalk," cried Bentham Gibbs as I took my departure.

I went directly downstairs and knocked at Mr. Dacre's door once more. He opened the door himself, his man not having yet returned.

Ah, Monsieur," he cried, "back already? You don't mean to tell me you have so soon got to the bottom of the silver spoon entanglement?"

"I think I have, Mr. Dacre. You were sitting at dinner opposite Mr. Vincent Innes. You saw him conceal a silver spoon in his pocket. You probably wait-

ed for some time to understand what he meant by this, and, as he did not return the spoon to its place, you proposed a conjuring trick, made the bet with him, and thus the spoon was returned to the table."

"Excellent, excellent, Monsieur; that is very nearly what occurred, except that I acted at once. I had had experiences with Mr. Vincent Innes before. Never did he come to these rooms without my missing some little trinket after he was gone. I am not a man of many possessions, while Mr. Innes is a very rich person, and so if anything is taken I have little difficulty in coming to a knowledge of my loss. Of course, I never mentioned these disappearances to him. They were all trivial, as I have said, and so far as the silver spoon was concerned, it was of no great value either. But I thought the bet and the recovery of the spoon would teach him a lesson; it apparently has not done so. On the night

of the twenty-third he sat at my right hand, as you will see by consulting your diagram of the table and the guests. I asked him a question twice, to which he did not reply, and, looking at him, I was startled by the expression in his eyes. They were fixed on a distant corner of the room, and following his gaze, I saw what he was looking at with such hypnotizing concentration. So absorbed was he in contemplation of the packet there so plainly exposed that he seemed to be entirely oblivious of what was going on around him. I roused him from his trance by jocularly calling Gibbs' attention to the display of money. I expected in this way to save Innes from committing the act which he seemingly did commit. Imagine, then, the dilemma in which I was placed when Gibbs confided to me the morning after what had occurred the night before. I was positive Innes had taken the money, yet I possessed no proof of it. I could not

tell Gibbs, and I dared not speak to Innes. Of course, Monsieur, you do not need to be told that Innes is not a thief in the ordinary sense of the word. He has no need to steal, and yet apparently cannot help doing so. I am sure that no attempt has been made to pass those notes. They are doubtless in his house at Kensington at this present moment. He is, in fact, a kleptomaniac, or a maniac of some sort.

"And now, Monsieur Valmont, was my hint regarding the silver spoons of any value to you?"

"Of the most infinite value, Mr. Dacre."

"Then let me make another suggestion. I leave it entirely to your bravery; a bravery which I must confess I do not myself possess. Will you take a hansom, drive to Mr. Innes' house on the Cromwell Road, confront him quietly, and ask for the return of the packet? I am anxious to know what will happen. If he hands it to you, as I expect he will, then you must tell Mr. Gibbs the whole story."

"Mr. Dacre, your suggestion shall be immediately acted upon, and I thank you for your compliment to my courage."

I found that Mr. Innes inhabited a very grand house. After a time he entered a study on the ground floor, to which I had been conducted.

He held my card in his hand, and was looking at it with some surprise.

"I think I have not the pleasure of knowing you, Mr. Valmont," he said, courteously enough.

"No. I have called on a matter of business. I was once investigator for the French Government, and now am doing private detective work here in London."

"Ah! And how is that supposed to interest me? I have nothing that I wish investigated. I did not send for you, did I?"

"No, Mr. Innes, I merely took the liberty of calling to ask you to let me have the package you took out of Mr. Bentham Gibbs' frock coat pocket on the night of the twenty-third."

"He wishes it returned, does he?"

"Yes."

Mr. Innes calmly went to a desk, which he unlocked and opened, displaying a veritable museum of trinkets of one sort and another. Pulling out a small drawer, he took from it the packet containing the five twenty-pound notes.

Apparently it had never been undone. With a smile he handed it to me.

"You will make my apologies to Mr. Gibbs for not returning it before. Tell him I have been unusually busy of late."

"I shall not fail to do so," I said with a bow.

"Thanks so much. Good morning, Monsieur Valmont."

"Good morning, Mr. Innes."

And so I returned the packet to Mr. Bentham Gibbs, who pulled the notes from between their pasteboard protection and begged me to accept them.

Scotticisms.—A great many Scotsmen speak the "English" they found in their books at school, but, after all, pronounce it in their own way; such words as active, motive, native, they pronounce as "acteeve," "moteeve," "nateeve," and wonder that people "pick them out" for "Scotch." But the funniest thing in that line for a long time was in St. Catherine's, Ont., when an Armenian, a native of Asia Minor, was telling us of the needs, spiritually, of his countrymen in our North-West. He had a good and fluent mastery of English, but he must have learned it from some Scotsman in the North-West, for in many of his words there was a strong and distinct "Scotch" sound. An old Scotsman in a pew near me would give me a wink occasionally to remind me of it.

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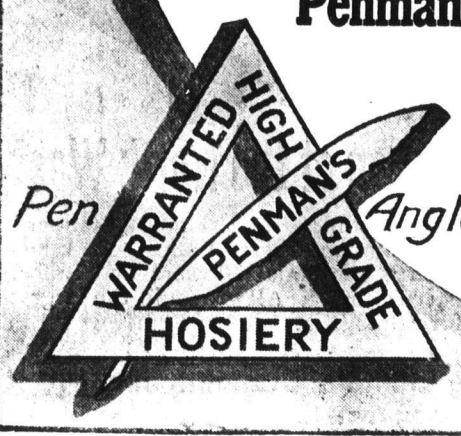
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