

THE PRIZE STORY.

NO. 9.

One lady or gentlemen's Solid Gold Stem-Winding and Stem-Set "true Elgin Watch, valued at about \$50, is offered every week as a prize for the best story, original or copied, sent to us by competitors under the following conditions:—1st. The story need not be the work of the sender, but may be selected from any newspaper, magazine, book or pamphlet wherever found, and may be either written or printed matter, as long as it is legible. 2nd. The sender must be a subscriber to TRUTH for at least six months, and must, therefore, send one dollar along with the story, together with the name and address clearly given. Present subscribers will have their term extended an additional half year for the dollar sent. If two persons happen to send in the same story the first one received at TRUTH office will have the preference. The publisher reserves the right to publish at any time any story, original or selected, which may fall to obtain a prize. The sum of three dollars (\$3) will be paid for such story when used. Address—EDMUND'S PAULS BROS., "TRUTH" Office, Toronto, Canada.

The following attractive and well written story has been chosen as our prize story for the present week. The sender can obtain the Gold Hunting Case, Stem-Winding Elgin Watch offered as a prize, by forwarding twenty-five cents for postage and Registration.

AN EXTRAORDINARY CASE.

SENT BY JOHN HENDERSON, KINGSFORDS, OSWEGO, N. Y.

Dr. Aeneas Macbride was strong in comparative anatomy, and dissected everything that came in his way. His dissecting room was in the courtyard of the Palazzo, Carminali, Rome. But it was up-stairs in his library and alone that "Il Scorsoco" carried out his choicest manipulations, and made the more delicate of his "preparations" of human muscles, arteries, veins, and nerves, which, when completed, were displayed under glass shades on a large table in the centre of the apartment. It was at this table, having just finished the dissection of a very small hand, never mind to what kind of creature the hand, while it was a living one, had belonged, that he was sitting one evening in July, 1755, when it suddenly occurred to him that he had exhausted his supply of cochineal with which to tinge the melted wax which he proposed to inject on the morrow morning into the venous system of his "preparation."

Dr. Aeneas Macbride proceeded to the well-known druggist's shop kept by Signor Panciarotte, at the corner of the Viale Condotta. It was one of the largest and handsomest shops in Rome. He made his purchase, and placed the packet of cochineal in a side pocket.

"Stay," he suddenly exclaimed, pausing on the threshold. "I had forgotten something. You must make up, if you please, that admirably efficacious sleeping draught with the secret of the formula of which only you and I are cognizant, and which has given ease to so many of my patients. Will you prepare it for me at once? I must take it with me."

"With pleasure, illustrissimo ed eccellentissimo dottore," said the apothecary, as he hustled from jar to jar, pouring various ingredients into a glass vial. "This wonderful sleeping draught to be sure. I have tried it on my wife, who, poor soul, endures agonies from the toothache, and it never fails in producing alumber. To be sure, had you not told me that the potion was quite harmless, I should have been afraid to use it; for the sleep which it brings about is so deep and so long as to be really like the sleep of death."

He had soon completed his task, and Dr. Macbride, placing the vial in his side pocket with the cochineal, left the farmacia. He crossed the Piazza di Spagna, in the direction of the College of the Propaganda; when just as he had reached the spot where now is the monument, his path was crossed by a tall man who was wrapped up in a long brown cloak and who wore his broad flapped hat slouched over his eyes.

"It's all very well for you to slouch your hat over your eyes, my friend," said Dr. Macbride to himself; but I know that hat and coat very well, or I am grievously mistaken. They belong to the Nameless Man who lodges in one of the garrets at the Palazzo Carminali. I once nursed you through a fever, my friend, and gave you money to get your cloak out of pawn. I don't think that you would do me any harm, although folks do say that you are a spadaccio—a hired assassin!"

Scarcely had he thus mentally expressed himself, when he heard a low voice behind him, the single word, "Eccolo i here he is!" and immediately he was seized from behind by strong arms, a heavy cloak was thrown over his head, and he was lifted from the ground and carried some yards. Then he was thrust forward on what seemed to be some kind of a bench or seat; the arms

which had seized him had released their grasp, a door was slammed, and he became aware that he was in a rapidly moving vehicle.

Dr. Aeneas Macbride had in verity been kidnapped by two men, forcibly carried by them to a coach, one of the doors of which was standing open, huddled into the vehicle, and rapidly driven away.

The whole proceeding, indeed, had been watched with the liveliest interest by an individual who was clad in a long brownish overcoat and who wore his hat slouched over his eyes and who—there is no indiscretion in saying it—was the Nameless Man who lived in one of the garrets of the Palazzo Carminali, and whose profession was conjectured to be that of an assassin for hire. And as he watched the carriage rapidly retreating into the shadow, the Nameless Man was jingling some golden coins in his pocket and chuckling merrily.

"Ten ducats," he reflected. "Ten ducats only for pointing out the Signor Dottore to them. And they have sworn not to do him any harm. Of course if they had wanted to harm him they would have come to me; but I would not have stabbed the Signor Dottore; no, not for a hundred ducats. Let us go and drink a bottle of Chianti."

While the Nameless Man was thus congratulating himself on the successful result of this exceptionally bloodless night's work, unseen hands had relieved Dr. Macbride of the heavy cloak in which he had been muffled, and in which he had been all but suffocated. He sat up, to find himself indeed in the interior of what was evidently a carriage belonging to some person of rank. The blinds were closely drawn down, but a small lamp hanging from the roof gave sufficient light for him to see that the opposite seat was occupied by two gentlemen very richly dressed, but whose countenances were wholly concealed by masks of black silk, having deep fringes of the same material. One of the gentlemen hastened to inform him that he must submit to have his eyes bandaged, as the person in whose presence they were about to conduct him was a lady of rank, whose name and place of abode it was imperatively necessary to conceal. As he pulled the bandage out of his pocket and proceeded very adroitly to adjust it to the doctor's eyes his companion took occasion to remark that he and the other gentleman were fully armed, and should the doctor, at this or any other stage of the proceedings, offer the slightest resistance to any request which was proffered to him, he would be immediately stabbed to death. Upon this admonition Dr. Aeneas Macbride determined, like the canny Scot he was, to hold his tongue and see—when he was permitted to use his eyesight again—what came of it.

It seemed to him that the carriage was continually turning and was being driven through a variety of streets, possibly with the view to prevent him forming any accurate idea as to the part of the city to which he was being conducted. The coach at length stopped, and the door was opened for him. His two companions took him each under one arm, assisted him to alight and conducted him up a narrow staircase into a room, where after a moment's pause, the bandage was removed from his eyes. He found himself in a small drawing-room, or boudoir, dimly lighted by wax tapers and richly furnished, although sheets and pieces of tapestry had been thrown over some of the chairs or placed in

front of the picture frames, as though for the purpose of preventing a stranger from too closely identifying the contents of the room.

There was a flask of wine on the table and one of the gentlemen filled a large bumper of Venetian glass and offered it to Dr. Macbride.

"I want no wine," he said coolly, "it may be poison for aught I know."

The gentleman who had offered him the wine, and who was very tall and clad in a suit of dark blue paduasery, richly laced with gold, for all reply, put the goblet to his lips and tossed off the contents at a draught. Then his companion, who was shorter and stouter—neither had removed his mask—and who wore a green doublet and coat laced with silver, filled another glass with wine and offered it to the doctor, saying, "You had better drink it. Remember what I told you in the carriage. We allow no trifling in this house; and, besides, you have need to nerve yourself for what you have to do."

"I don't like Dutch courage!" replied Dr. Macbride, "and am not used to dram drinking to nerve me for my work. However, as I have not the slightest wish to have my throat cut, and you appear to be prepared to cut it,"—both gentlemen nodded their heads significantly—"at a moment's notice, if things do not go as you wish them to go, I will drink. And now," he resumed after a very moderate potation, "What is it that you require me to do?"

"To perform a surgical operation."

"When?"

"This instant."

"Where?"

"You shall see."

As the taller of the two masked men made this reply, he took the doctor by the arm and led him forward. The shorter person lifted a heavy velvet curtain veiling in an open portal, and the three passed into a vast bed-chamber.

Here everything in the way of furniture, and even the ceiling and the counterpane of a huge four-post bed in the centre of the room, had been shrouded in white sheeting. At the foot of the bed there sat, or rather there was half-reclining, in a large chair covered with crimson velvet, a young lady—she could be scarcely more than nineteen—exceedingly beautiful, and with golden hair that rippled over her shoulders. Her hands were tightly clasped, and she was deathly pale. She was clad in a long, loosely flowing undress robe of some white, silky material; and Dr. Macbride could see that her little feet were bare.

"You see this woman—this most guilty and unhappy woman!" said in a harsh voice the taller of the two gentlemen. "She has disgraced the noble family to which she belongs, and it is necessary that she should be deprived of life. Here is a case of lancets, and you will instantly proceed to bleed her to death."

"She is prepared to submit to her fate," added the shorter gentleman in green and silver, "and you will make the greatest possible expedition; I need scarcely say that you will be amply recompensed for your pains."

"I will do no such horrible and unmanly thing," cried Dr. Aeneas Macbride. "Do you think that I, a physician, whose bounden duty is to do everything that he possibly can do to save human life—be it that of the newborn infant or of the dotard of 90—would consent to put to a cruel death a poor lady who should be enjoying all the happiness that earth can give? Do your butchery work yourself; I'll have no hand in it."

"It is precisely," replied the latter gentleman, "because we are desirous that this indispensable work should not be done in a butcherly manner that we have brought you here. You are known to be the skillful surgeon in Rome, and you will perform the operation at once by opening the veins in her ankles; if you refuse, I swear that I and my Bro—" he checked himself before he could pronounce the word "Brother"—"my companion will fall on you with our poinards and hack you to death."

"Do their bidding," said, in a low, faint voice, the young lady in the armchair.

"Do I hear aright?" said the doctor.

"You do!" resumed the lady. "Do their bidding, or you will incur a fate as dreadful as my own."

Dr. Aeneas Macbride appeared to hesitate for a moment; then he said, "I will do your will, and may Heaven forgive me for yielding to you! But I must have a vessel, a large vessel of warm water."

"That shall be at once procured," replied the taller of the masked men, leaving the room.

You will remember that Dr. Aeneas Macbride was also tall of stature. He bent over the reclining lady and whispered something to her.

"I have told her," he said, drawing himself up to his full height, "that I will not hurt her much."

Presently two female attendants, each closely masked, entered the room, carrying between them a large silver tub full of warm water. This vessel they placed before the young lady who, without a word, immersed her feet in the water.

Then Dr. Macbride, once more bending over the victim, smoothing the hair on her forehead, and feeling her pulse, knelt in hand by the side of the silver foot-bath.

He rose, looked in the victim's face, chose a fresh lancet, and knelt again by the side of the foot-bath. The water was now deeply discolored. Ere long it was completely crimson.

"Bring another bath—a tub—a bucket—what you will!" said the doctor, "and more warm water!" Then he continued, hastily holding his wrists around the ankles of the patient while the first foot-bath was taken away and another substituted for it. "This will finish the work."

"How she bleeds!" said the tall man, who, with folded arms, was watching the scene.

The young lady had fallen back in her chair, her arms hanging loosely.

"She is insensible!" said the shorter of the masked men.

"She is dead!" said Dr. Aeneas Macbride, solemnly.

"How she bled!" repeated the shorter of the two masked men.

"She will bleed no more," said Dr. Macbride. "And now let me ask you what you intend to do with the evidence of your, and, I may almost say my guilt? How do you intend to dispose of the corpse?"

"Put it in a sack full of stones and sink it in the Tiber," muttered the taller gentleman.

"At the risk of the sack rotting, the weights becoming disengaged from the body, and of the corpse floating, or of being washed on shore and the features being recognized."

"Bury it in the garden," suggested the shorter man.

"It is still dangerous," resumed the doctor. "The bodies of buried people that have been murdered have been disinterred over and over again. One was, you know, last year in that vineyard close to the Appian Way, and the assassin was brought to justice."

"That is true."

"When you planned your little scheme, gentlemen," the doctor went on almost bitterly, "you should have planned the last act of your tragedy as well as the preceding ones. Let me tell you that a murdered dead body is, in a civilized city, one of the most difficult of imaginable things to get rid of. But since I have gone so far with you in this abominable business I will go yet further and help you to conceal this corpse. Bring it back with me to my surgery in the Piazza di Spagna—I am accustomed to have such burdens brought to me in the dead of night—and I'll dissect her. My which mean that in less than twelve hours no cognizable trace will remain of your deceased relative—if relative she be."

The victim was evidently stone-dead.

After a long consultation the masked men acceded to the proposition of the doctor who appeared to have become their accomplice, and who accepted with many professions of thanks, a large purse of gold sequins.

Again he submitted to have his eyes bandaged, and again he was conducted to the coach in waiting below; but something else accompanied the party, and was placed on the seat beside the doctor.

That something else was the body, wrapped up in many thicknesses of white linen of the lady who had been bled to death. The carriage made a route as circuitous before to the Piazza di Spagna; but it was then, at Dr. Macbride's request, driven round to the entrance of the narrow lane behind the Palazzo Carminali. Then a burden wrapped in white linen was carried by the doctor and the taller of the masked men by the back door into the dissecting room, and laid like a stone on the table. The doctor noticed that his fellow was trembling violently, and he had

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