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## TWO MESSAGES.

A message from the Sacred Heart:  
What may its message be?  
"My child, my child, give me thy heart.  
My heart has bled for thee."  
This is the message Jesus sends  
To my poor heart to-day,  
And eager from His throne He bends  
To hear what I shall say.

A message to the Sacred Heart:  
Oh, bear it back with speed:  
"Come, Jesus reign within my heart—  
Thy heart is all I need."  
Thus, Lord, I'll pray until I share  
That home whose joy thou art;  
No message dearest Jesus, there—  
For heart will speak to heart.

M. RUSSELL.

## THE GOLD WULFRIC.

He walked up and down the room once or twice irresolutely, and then he turned round to me with a very fixed and determined aspect, which fairly terrified me.

"Mr. Tait," he said, "I am straining every point possible to save you, but you make it very difficult for me by your continued falsehood. I am doing quite wrong in being so lenient to you I am proposing, in short, to compound a felony. But I cannot bear; without letting you have one more chance, to give you in charge for a common robbery. I will let you have ten minutes to consider the matter; and I beseech you, I beg of you, I implore you to retract this absurd and despicable lie before it is too late forever. Just consider that, if you refute, I shall have to hand you over to the constable out there, and that the whole truth must come out in court, and must be blazoned forth to the entire world in every newspaper. The policeman is standing here by the door. I will leave you alone with your own thoughts for ten minutes."

As he spoke he walked out gravely and shut the door solemnly behind him. The clock on the chimney-piece pointed with its hands to twenty minutes past three.

It was an awful dilemma. I hardly knew how to act under it. On the one hand, if I admitted for the moment that I had tried to steal the coin, I could avoid all immediate unpleasant circumstances; and, as it would be sure to turn up again in cleaning the museum, I should be able at last to prove my innocence to Mr. Hardbourne's complete satisfaction. But, on the other hand, the lie—for it was a lie—stuck in my throat; I could not humble myself to say I had committed a mean and dirty action which I loathed with all the force and energy of my nature. No, no; come what would of it, I must stick by the truth, and trust to that to clear up everything.

But, if the superintendent really insisted on giving me in charge, how very awkward to have to telegraph about it to Emily! Fancy saying to the girl you are in love with, "I can't go to the theatre this evening, because I have been taken of to jail on a charge of stealing a valuable coin from the British museum." It was too terrible!

Yet, after all, I thought to myself, if the worst comes to the worst. Emily will have faith enough in me to know it is ridiculous; and, indeed, the imputation could, in any case, only be temporary. As soon as the thing gets into court, I could bring up the Litchfield ploughman to prove my possession of a gold Wulfric; and I could bring up Emily to prove that I had shown it to her that very morning. How lucky that I had happened to take it out and let her look at it. My case was, happily, as plain as a pikestaff. It was only momentarily that the weight of the evidence seemed so perversely to go against me.

Turning over all these various considerations in my mind with anxious hesitancy, the ten minutes managed to pass away almost before I had thoroughly realised the deep gravity of the situation.

As the clock on the chimney-piece pointed to the half-hour, the door opened once more, and the superintendent entered solemnly.

"Well, Mr. Tait," he said in an anxious voice, "have you made up your mind to make a clean breast of it. Do you now admit, after full deliberation, that you have endeavored to steal and clip the

gold Wulfric!"

"No," I answered firmly, "I do not admit it; and I will willingly go before a jury of my countrymen to prove my innocence."

"Then, God help you, poor boy," the superintendent cried despondently. "I have done my best to save you, and you will not let me. Policeman, this is your prisoner. I give him in custody on a charge of stealing a coin, the property of the trustees of this museum, valued at 175l. sterling."

The policeman laid his hand upon my wrist; "You will have to go along with me to the station, sir," he said quietly.

Thrilled and stunned as I was by the awfulness of the accusation; I could not forget to overlook the superintendent's evident reluctance and kindness.

"Mr. Hardbourne," I cried, "you have tried to do your best for me. I am grateful to you for it, instead of your terrible mistake, and I shall yet be able to show you that I am innocent."

He shook his head gloomily, "I have done my duty," he said with a shudder. "I have never before had a more painful one. Policeman, I must ask you now to do yours."

III

The police are always considerate to respectable looking prisoners, and I had no difficulty in getting the sergeant in charge of the lock up to telegraph for me to Emily, to say that I was detained by important business, which would prevent me taking her and her mother to the theatre that evening. But when I explained to him that my detention was merely temporary, and that I should be able to prove the whole story as soon as I went before the magistrates, he winked most unpleasantly at the constable who had brought me in and observed in a tone of vulgar sarcasm:

"We have a good many gentlemen here who says the same, sir,—don't we, Jim? But they don't always find it so easy as they expected when they stands up afore the beak to prove their statement."

I began to reflect that even a temporary prison is far from being a pleasant place for a man to stop in.

Next morning they took me up before the magistrate, and as the museum authorities, of course, proved a prima facie case against me, and as my solicitor advised me to reserve my defence, owing to the difficulty of getting up my witness from Lichfield in reasonable time, I was duly committed for trial at the next sessions of the central criminal court.

I had often read before that people had been committed for trial, but still that moment I had no idea what a very unpleasant sensation really is.

However, as I was a person of hitherto unblemished character, and wore a good coat made by fashionable tailor, the magistrate decided to admit me to bail if two sureties in 500. pounds each were promptly forthcoming for the purpose. Luckily, I had no difficulty in finding friends who believed in my story, and as I felt sure the lost Wulfric would soon be found in cleaning the museum, I suffered perhaps, a little less acutely than I might otherwise have done, owing to my profound confidence in the final triumph of the truth.

Nevertheless as the case would be fully reported next morning in all the papers I saw at once that I must go straight off and explain the matter without delay to Emily.

I will not dwell upon that painful interview. I will only say that Emily behaved as I, of course, knew she would behave. She was horrified and indignant at the dreadful accusation; and, womanlike, she was very angry with the superintendent.

"He ought to have taken your word for it, naturally, Harold," she cried through her tears. "But what a good thing, anyhow, that you happened to show the coin to me. I should recognise it anywhere among ten thousand."

"That's well daring," I said, trying to kiss away her tears and cheer her up a little. "haven't the slightest doubt that when the trial comes, we shall be able triumphantly to vindicate me from this terrible groundless accusation."

IV

When the trial did actually come on, the museum authorities began by proving their case against me in what seemed the most horribly damning fashion. The superintendent proved that, on such and such a day, in such and such a case, he had seen a gold coin of Wulfric of Mercia, the property of the museum. He and McTavish detailed the circumstances under which the coin was lost. The superintendent explained how he had asked me to submit to a search, and how, to avoid that indignity I had myself produced from my waist coat pocket a gold coin of Wulfric of Mercia, which I asserted to be a duplicate specimen and my own property. The counsel for the crown proceeded thus with the examination:

"Do you recognize the coin I now hand you—

"I do."

"What is it?"

"The unique gold coin of Wulfric of Mercia, belonging to the museum."

"You have absolutely no doubt as to its identity?"

"Absolutely none whatever."

"Does it differ in any respect from the same coin as you previously saw it?"

"Yes; it has been clipped round the edge with a sharp instrument, and a slight dent has been made by pressure on the obverse side just below the W of Wulfric."

"Did you suspect the prisoner at the bar of having mutilated it?"

"I did; and I asked him whether he had a knife in his possession; He answered no, I then asked him whether he would submit to be searched for a knife. He consented; and on my looking in his pocket I found the pair of nail-scissors I now produce, with a small file on either side."

"Do you believe the coin might have been clipped with those scissors?"

"I do. The gold is very soft, having little alloy in its composition; and it could easily be cut by a strong-wristed man with a knife or scissors."

As I listened, I didn't wonder that the jury looked as if they already considered me guilty, but I smiled to myself when I thought how utterly Emily's and the ploughman's evidence would rebut this unworthy suspicion.

The next witness was the museum cleaner. His evidence at first produced nothing fresh, but just as counsel set before him a paper containing a few scraps of yellow metal, and asked him triumphantly whether he recognized them. He answered yes.

There was a profound silence; The court was interested and curious. I couldn't quite understand it all, but I felt a terrible sinking.

"What are they?" asked the hostile barrister.

"They are some fragments of gold which I found in shaking the coco-nut matting on the floor of the gallery 27 the Saturday after the attempted theft."

I felt as if a mine had unexpectedly been sprung beneath me. How on earth those fragments of soft gold could ever have got there I couldn't imagine, but I saw the damaging nature of this extraordinary and inexplicable coincidence in half a second.

My counsel cross examined all the witnesses for the prosecution, but failed to elicit anything of any value from any one of them. On the contrary, his questions put to the metallurgist of the mint who was called to prove the quality of the gold, only brought out a very strong opinion to the effect that the clippings were essentially similar in character to the metal composing the clipped Wulfric.

No wonder the jury seemed to think the case was going decidedly against me. Then my counsel called his witness. I listened in the profoundest suspense and expectation.

The first witness was the ploughman from Lichfield. He was a well-meaning but very puzzle-headed old man, and he was evidently frightened at being confronted by so many clever wig-wearing barristers.

Nevertheless, my counsel managed to get the true story out of him at last with infinite patience, dexterity and skill. The old man told us finally how he had found the coins and sold them to me for five

pounds; and how one of them was of gold with a queer head and goggle eyes, pointed, full face, upon its surface.

When he had finished, the counsel for the crown began his cross-examination. He handed the ploughman a gold coin. "Did you ever see that before?" he asked, quietly.

"To be sure I did," the man answered looking at it open-mouthed.

"What is it?"  
"It's the bit I sold Mr. Tait there—the bit as I got out o' the old basin."

Counsel turned triumphantly to the Judge. "My lord," he said, "this thing to which the witness swears is a gold piece of Ethelwulf of Wessex, by far the commonest and cheapest gold coin of the whole Anglo Saxon period.

It was handed to the jury side by side with the Wulfric of Mercia; and the difference, as I know myself was in fact extremely noticeable. All that the old man could have observed in common between them must have been merely the archaic Anglo-Saxon character of the coinage.

As I heard that I began to feel that it was really all over,

My counsel tried on the re-examination to shake the old man's faith in his identification, and to make him transfer his story to the Wulfric which he had actually sold me. But it was all in vain. The ploughman had clearly the dread of perjury forever before his eyes and wouldn't go back for any consideration upon his first sworn statement.

"No, no, mister," he said over and over again in reply to my counsel's bland suggestion, "you ain't going to make me for swear myself for all your cleverness."

The next witness was Emily. She went into the box pale and red-eyed but very confident. My counsel examined her admirably; and she stuck to the point with womanly persistence, that she had herself seen the clipped Wulfric, and no other coin, on the morning of the supposed theft. She knew it was so, because she distinctly remembered the inscription, "Wulfric Rex;" and the peculiar way the staring open eyes were represented with barbaric puerility.

Counsel for the crown would only trouble the young lady with two questions. The first was a painful, one but it must be asked in the interest of justice—were she and the prisoner at the bar engaged to be married to one another?

The answer came slowly and timidly, "Yes."

Counsel drew a long breath, and looked her hard in the face. Could she read the inscription on that coin now produced! handing her the Ethelwulf.

Great heaven! I saw at once the plot to disconcert her, and was utterly powerless to warn her against it.

Emily looked at it long and steadily. "No," she said at last, growing deadly pale and grasping the woodwork of the witness-box convulsively; "I don't know the character in which it is written."

Of course not, for the inscription was in the peculiar semi-runic Anglo-Saxon letters! She had never read the words "Wulfric Rex" either. I had read them to her, and she had carried them away aguely in her mind, imagining, no doubt, that she herself had actually deciphered them.

There was a slight pause, and I felt my blood growing cold within me. Then the counsel for the crown handed her again the genuine Wulfric, and asked her whether the letters upon it which she professed to have read were or were not similar to those of the Ethelwulf.

Instead of answering, Emily bent down her head between her hands, and burst suddenly into tears.

I was so much distressed by her terrible agitation that I forgot altogether for the moment my own perilous position, and I cried aloud "My lord, my lord, will you not interpose to spare her any further questions!"

"I think," the judge said to the counsel for the crown, "you might now permit the witness to stand down."

"I wish to re-examine my lord," my counsel put in hastily.

TO BE CONTINUED