

A Brief Disappearance

'Cronkite,' said Judge Marcellus one day, 'my old client, Thomas Blount, is deeply distressed about his wife?'

'His young wife, sir?'

'Yes, his young wife,' repeated the Judge impatiently, 'but that is beside the question. She is a good, true woman, sincerely attached to her husband, who raised her from the daily struggle for bread of a copyist to affluence, while her happiness is now the one ambition of his life. Hence, seeing her consumed by a secret grief, which, so far from explaining, she denies, he is distressed and comes to me for advice and assistance.'

'She must say something.'

'Oh, yes; she belittles his anxiety by saying that she is run down and nervous; but when he goes to her physician, the best in the land, they ask, "Who can minister to a mind diseased?"'

'And yet every motive of gratitude and affection should cause such a woman as you say she is to confide in such a husband.'

'True; unless those very motives induce her silence. Mr. Blount believes, and I agree with him, that she is convinced that the trouble, whatever it is, would affect him more than her failing health can; and so he persists in silence. Now, he is determined to help her even against herself.'

'You lawyers say,' he said to me, 'that every wrong has its remedy. Find out, then, this wrong for me and remedy it. For such a purpose money is absolutely no object. The world, I know, is full of wicked people who prey on the good, sometimes converting their holiest feelings into weapons against them. If such be the case, pay the price and end it. I want no publicity, no punishment, no information even; it could not reassure me; it could not disillusion me. I want the happiness of my home restored; and that happiness is dependent on my dear wife's peace of mind.'

'Such are his instructions, Abe. I don't say whether I consider them foolish or not. But his connection with our firm is so important that they must be carried out; so the sooner you get the work the better.'

And then, after learning the few details of Mrs. Blount's past, which her husband had been able to give to the Judge, the detective set out on his mission. A week later he returned to report progress.

'After a quiet investigation here,' he began, 'I went over to Mayfield, where Mrs. Blount worked as a copyist when her husband first met her. That was about three years ago. Her name then was Estelle Sanger. I soon learned that the only mail she received in the very secluded life she led was postmarked Alvadene; so thither I proceeded. It is unnecessary to make a long story out of what was after all mere commonplace inquiry. There is no doubt that at the time of her meeting Mr. Blount she was a married woman, and that her husband's name was Albert Chidsey.'

'But he, her former husband, he was, he is dead?' asked the judge excitedly.

'Yes, in a way,' replied Cronkite, slowly. You must, if you reflect a moment, recall the Chidsey case. He was tried and convicted for the murder of his uncle, Reuben Chidsey, and is now undergoing imprisonment for life.'

'Ah, I see,' exclaimed the judge. 'That relieves her from bigamy at all events; since conviction of murder in the second degree freed her from him absolutely as death. After all, she is not so culpable; a poor young woman with such a disgrace attached through no fault of her own. You learned nothing to her discredit?'

'No, indeed. Every one in either place with whom I spoke described her in your words as a good, true woman. I have found no reason to dispute it.'

'She met Mr. Blount naturally,' the judge went on. 'He came across her in a business way; was struck with her appearance. He sought her out, wooed her, married her; from first to last rather against her inclination. Up to a month ago she has been unfeignedly happy with him. Evidently, then, it is not her venal fault of concealment that has wrought this change. But what else can it be? Her former husband is as safe in prison as in his grave. Let me see; let me see. You didn't hear, did you, Abe, of any efforts being made to pardon him?'

'On the contrary, it is generally thought that he got off luckily. There is no public interest in his behalf.'

'But I can't imagine.'

'Follow it up, sir,' interrupted Cronkite, eagerly. 'I'm sure you've got hold of the right idea. That's just the way I began to

figure. Let's see if it won't lead you to the same possible solution.'

'Admitting her blameless life, her domestic happiness,' reflected the Judge, 'the natural inference must be that fear of her secret's being divulged is the source of her sorrow. Can it be that some blackmailer has discovered her and is blessing her?'

'No,' replied the detective, decidedly.

'I looked into that phase, the first thing. She has received no strange letter, she has met no strange person. Besides, under our reading of her character, blackmail is not an adequate cause. We agree that she is silent on Mr. Blount's account. Now, would her confession of the circumstances which caused her to marry under an assumed name and condition be such an awful lasting shock to him? I doubt it. The case is forgotten; the first husband safely immured. Probably during courtship Mr. Blount assured her that he did not wish to know of her former life. Hence, I say, she would confess rather than be coerced by any stranger; they would quickly come to an understanding, and the unpleasant episode be put aside forever, if not forgotten.'

'But the appearance of Chidsey on the scene is a far different matter. Women have but a shadowy idea of the law. She might believe that his pardon or vindication would restore him as her husband, break up her happy home, and drive out into the darkness of despair the one who has so tenderly loved her, at the same time exposing him to the ceaseless exactions of an unworthy Enoch Arden. There is an adequate cause. Sir; and, in the circumstances, I believe, the only adequate cause.'

'Vindication, vindication?' repeated the judge, clinging to the one word which had impressed him. 'Vindication implies proof of Chidsey's innocence. Who, then, would have any such knowledge? You say that no efforts have been made for a pardon; that is general acquiescence in the mercy of his sentence?'

'Exactly, sir; but suppose that she alone has the proof; suppose that she alone knows something that will establish his innocence and release him; something lately discovered, if you will, neglected, hidden in that past which she shuns. What then?'

'My God, it must be so!' cried the judge. 'No wonder the poor creature is wasting away. She is on the horns of a horrible dilemma, bound in all good conscience to see that justice is done; and yet with every tender emotion pleading that Blount should be protected from mortifications, persecutions, agonies, which we cannot foresee. Remember, she knows the man; knows how stout or frail a barrier his nature would oppose to the boundless temptations of such a situation. Tell me, Cronkite, what sort of a reputation had Chidsey at his home town?'

'The very worst, sir, for a cold-blooded, greedy villain. He is known to have been cruel to his young wife, while the uncle, whom it is supposed he murdered for the sake of a small property, had brought him up and even then was giving them a home and supporting them. You see it was this way. Reuben Chidsey, who had been out of health and very low-spirited, was found dead in his bed, with a glass by his side, containing traces of poison. It was taken for granted, at first, that he had committed suicide; but little by little circumstances came out, rendering such a theory untenable.'

'For instance, the autopsy showed that he must have died shortly after the time he retired; while the effects of the poison are so slow that the quantity he had taken must have been in his system for several hours before death. Reckoning this time back, he was found to have been then in the company of his nephew, who had almost forced a drink upon him, which he had pronounced strangely disagreeable. Then it was discovered that Albert Chidsey had had some of this poison in his possession, and arrest and trial followed.'

'Where was Mrs. Blount at the time this tragedy occurred?'

'It was she who had discovered the body, sir, and the shock was so great as to throw her into brain fever, from which she didn't recover until after the trial was over. She never saw Albert again. He made great assertions that he could prove by her old Reuben's suicidal tendencies, but there was no motion for delay when the case was called, no attempt to take her evidence by deposition. The story prevails at Alvadene, without any definite source, that while the case for the people was not over strong

the District attorney had in his possession certain proof which would render nugatory any attempt of the defence to bolster itself up with Mrs. Blount's supposed knowledge, and that a compromise was at length quietly effected by which the defence made no serious fight on this phase of the case, in return for which the prosecution did not oppose the evident drift toward a verdict in the second degree, which the lack of any direct testimony as to the administration of the poison seemed to justify. In a word, sir, it was considered a compromise verdict and that is why I told you that the general impression was that Chidsey got off luckily.'

'If there was any such arrangement, why didn't you have a talk with the District Attorney?' asked the Judge.

'He is dead, sir.'

'Ah; and of course Chidsey's lawyer would refuse any information which might militate against his release. Well, Abe, your solution seems to stand the test, but I don't see that we are any better off for it. With such a fixed idea, Mrs. Blount will either worry herself to death or yield to her conscience. There is nothing money can do; nothing that will save my old client.'

'Nothing,' interrupted Cronkite, 'unless Mrs. Blount can be made to realize that she has been deceiving herself.'

'I catch your idea,' cried the judge hopefully. 'You say that the proof on which Chidsey first relied and which he afterwards repudiated, must have been factitious. Likely enough; but how can we convince her? The information must come naturally, from a direct source, without a suspicion of our cooperation.'

'Chidsey has now been in prison,' explained the detective, 'for a period long enough to convert a man of his evil nature, unassisted, too, by any intellectual resources, into a typical convict. A main characteristic of the typical convict is vanity; he can't refrain from boasting to his mates, even in despite of his better judgement. Suppose, then, that Mrs. Blount should overhear a man like Shorty, the head hallman, for instance, of whom I have often told you, relating as a mere matter of prison gossip what Chidsey says about his case?'

'It can be, it must be arranged,' broke in the Judge eagerly.

'Shorty comes out in about a week, I hear,' continued Cronkite, 'now if we can only keep her from acting prematurely.'

'Her first step would be to confess to Blount,' suggested the Judge, 'and that I can obviate by sending him out of town for a few days.'

'That is prudent precaution,' assented the detective, 'and I on my part, will attend to the other danger I fear, which is that she may conclude to disappear—become once more the wife of the convicted murderer Chidsey, and in that capacity advocate his pardon—thus saving Mr. Blount from any possible knowledge of her first husband. I think we have covered the ground pretty well, sir, and having done our best can leave the rest to the hand of Providence—a hand that often holds the joker in detecting us.'

One evening a week later, a closely veiled, plainly dressed young woman crept out of the side entrance of Mr. Blount's handsome residence, and after pausing discreetly on the threshold like Eve outside paradise, entered a cross-town car which took her over into the vast East Side, so mysterious, so unknown to the residents of the wealthy district she had left behind. She proceeded quickly and resolutely after she had alighted until she came to one of those obscure lodging houses, which scattered here and there, together constitute the modern city of refuge. She evidently had made her simple arrangements in advance, for obtaining a key from the women in charge, she went up the stairs to a room sparsely furnished but whose unusual cleanliness bespoke the express directions of a lady.

This young woman had plainly determined to waste no time in homesickness or vain regrets. She took from her reticule certain modest writing materials; she drew from her bosom a folded paper and read over its message again and again, though she shuddered as she did so. Then, as she seated herself at the rickety table, pen in hand, from the adjoining room, through the thin partition, there came voices, mentioning a name, which held her fixed and enraptured, the very personification of suspense.

'Cert'ny, Abe,' said Shorty, the perennial head hallman, 'anny thin' to oblige. I know you're square and I kin talk free with you; so go ahead with your inquisition about Albet Chidsey.'

'I simply want to know what he has to say about his case,' explained Cronkite. 'I mean him no harm.'

'You can't harm a lifer,' asserted the other doggedly; 'he's as exempt from trouble as old Metusally himself.'

'Unless he happens to be innocent!'

ventured Cronkite.

'Innocent, nothin,' retorted Shorty; 'he scoffed his uncle, all right all right; I've heard him tell all about it a thousand times. You know how it is up at the old soup house. Abe; the longer the term, the softer the graft. Naturally, thin Chidsey has the choicest cell in Bankers' row pick of 'ospital returns, and the freedom of the hall until the 9 o'clock gong strikes. Why, he's as fat and healthy as a holiday capon afore the eatun, with nothin' on his mind except to square himself with the push as a deam game lag.'

'You jest orter hear him tell, Abe, of how he had everythin' cut and dried to get off scot free. The idea wasn't a bad one; it was to have his wife, a reg'lar same-singer, Abe, with the respect of every one, find a note written to herself by old Chidsey, who it seems was very fond of her, sayin' as how he was troo with life and a goin' to poison himself. This was to be pointed so she wud come across it accerdentally perdue it, as wud be her juty in court, and git him off a kikin'.'

'Well, it seems, Albert Chidsey prepared this note all right, and hid it in a proper place but like every odder smarty queered himself for all that. The beaks got hold of some specimens of his writing, whin he was teachin' himself to imitate the old man's hand; and so whin his trile came on and he wanted to set about his wife findin' it all right, what does the District Attorney do but notifes his lawyer that anny attempt to prove suicide wud slip up in a noose and no mistake; and so, in the ind, Chidsey got life, and has been t'ankin' his stars iver since, the invied of all beholders.'

'My God, Abe, what's that; you ain't springin' no game on me, are you?' cried Shorty, breaking off abruptly, as his trained vigilance caught the sounds of a sob, the closing of a door and fleet, soft steps in the hallway and down the stairs!

Abe Cronkite smiled, as he reassured his frightened companion, blotting the incident from his mind with an astonishing gratuity, for he recognized in the sounds the agitated yet joyous homeward flight of one to whom good tidings had unexpectedly come.

The Hotel Sandwich.

How dear to our hearts are the things of our childhood, as fond recollection presents them to view. The relics of past generations still linger along with the modern, the strange and the new. The oldest of all is the dry hotel sandwich, its dust covered sides still held firmly with glue; its battered old top so suggestive of granite and the dark strip of ham that our forefathers knew. The ages may pass and the dynasties crumble; the earth may dissolve in a whirlwind of flame; the sky may roll up as a scroll and then vanish, but the old hotel sandwich is ever the same. The hoary old sandwich, the petrified sandwich, the pleiocene sandwich is ever the same.

Each Sunday its place is an honored one surely, for thousands rush up and demand it in view. They sit 'round the table where still it reposes and gaze at the sandwich our forefathers knew. Though parched dry with thirst and all craving refreshment (a liquid refreshment forbidden by law), they must reverently wait on the sandwich, the same weary sandwich that past ages saw. While stern police rules call for dinners of courses, or lost semicolons make laws void or lame, our old friend the sandwich is not at all bashful. The chances are, still, it will stay in the game. The hoary old sandwich, the petrified sandwich, the pleiocene sandwich is ever the same.

A Fearful Struggle.

'There goes a man who is having a fearful struggle with his appetite.'

'What, that clear-cut, healthy-looking chap over there?'

'That's the one.'

'Why, he doesn't look like a slave to any appetite.'

'He is, though; and he's having an awful time of it. He grinds his teeth, and succeeds in subduing it for a whole day, maybe, but the very next it conquers him, and he's just as bad off as ever.'

'What is it—whiskey?'

'Oh no! He never drinks.'

'Morphine?'

'No indeed.'

'Well, what is it that has such a hold on him?'

'His appetite, I told you.'

'For food?'

'Certainly.'

'Well, what's the matter with it? Why has he any struggle over it?'

'Why, he says that if he could only go without eating for about a month he could get the girl he's engaged to on an Easter present as elaborate as she expects.'

A Little Stronger Than Usual.

'One day back in Detroit,' remarked a man from Omaha, 'I accidentally left some aqua fortis in a glass and soon afterward was horrified to find the glass empty. I

inquired as to what had become of it, and some of the boys in the store said that Bill Webster—a tough old sot who dropped in on us occasionally—had just gone out, and maybe he had drunk it, supposing it to be liquor. In a short time he came in and I said:

'Bill, did you drink that stuff in the glass on my table?'

'He said he did, and I then told him that he had drunk poison, and that he'd be a dead man in five minutes.'

'Oh, I reckon not,' said Bill, 'but I knowed it was somethin' a little stronger than I'd been a-havin', for every time I blowed my nose I burned a hole in my handkercher.'

Eyes and Nose ran Water.—C. G. Archer, of Brewer, Maine, says: 'I have had Catarrh for several years. Water would run from my eyes and nose for days at a time. About four months ago I was induced to try Dr. Agnew's Catarrhal Powder, and since using the wonderful remedy I have not had an attack. It relieves in ten minutes.' 50 cents.—17

'Her rich old uncle isn't a bit nice to her, is he?'

'Nice! He's horrid! Why, he threatens her awfully.'

'Threatens her?'

'Yes, threatens to leave all his money to a hospital for asthmatic cats.'

When Rheumatism doubles a man up physician and sufferer alike lose heart and often despair of a cure, but here's the exception. Wm. Pegg, of Norwood, Ont., says: 'I was nearly doubled up with rheumatism. I got three bottles of South American Rheumatic Cure and they cured me. It's the quickest acting medicine I ever saw.'—18

'Bilkins's wife found some poker chips in his pocket.'

'Yes?'

'Well, Bilkins told her they were cough lozengers.'

'Clever of Bilkins, wasn't it?'

'Very—the swallowed two and very nearly died.'

Heart relief in half an hour.—A lady in New York State, writing of her cure by Dr. Agnew's Cure for the Heart, says: 'I feel like one brought back from the dead, so great was my suffering from heart trouble and so almost miraculous my recovery through the agency of this powerful treatment. I owe my life to it.'—19

Know his business: Hostess—Dar me the conversation is flagging. What can we do to amuse our guests? Host—I don't know, unless we leave the drawing room for a few minutes, and give them a chance to talk about us.

Death or lunacy seemed the only alternative for a well-known and highly respected lady of Wingham, Ont., who had travelled over two continents in a vain search for a cure for nervous debility and dyspepsia. A friend recommended South American Nerve. One bottle helped, six bottles cured, and her own written testimony closes with these words: 'It has saved my life.'—20

Born lucky: Bilks—Lucky man, that fellow Jones.

'Bilks—I don't see how you make it. Blinks—Why, he took out a life insurance policy for \$5,000, and died six days before the company failed.'

Never Worry.—Take them and go about your business—they do their work whilst you are doing yours. Dr. Agnew's Liver Pills are system renovators, blood purifiers and builders; every gland and tissue in the whole anatomy is benefited and stimulated in the use of them. 40 doses in a vial, 10 cents.—21

A schoolmistress in New York wants a divorce because her husband will not talk to her. Those who have, in their younger days, attempted to 'sass back' the teacher, may know how the poor man has felt all along.

South American Kidney Cure is the only kidney treatment that has proven equal to correct all the evils that are likely to befall these physical regulators. Hundreds of testimonials to prove the curative merits of this liquid kidney specific in cases of Bright's disease, diabetes, irritation of the bladder, inflammation, dropsical tendency. Don't delay.—22

Ann't Geeshaw (of Hay Corners). 'Jist think of it, Jeshaway! them city wimmin git a noo bonnet every Easter!' Uncle Geeshaw (soothingly). 'Well, M'rah, you git a noo bonnet about every three or four years yourself!'

Piles cured in 3 to 6 nights.—One application gives relief. Dr. Agnew's Ointment is a boon for Itching Piles, or Blind, Bleeding Piles. It relieves quickly and permanently. In skin eruptions it stands without a rival. Thousands of testimonials if you want evidence. 35 cents.—23

Miss Laffin—'What has become of Mr. Clay?' Mr. Rand—'He has taken employment in a powder mill for six months.'

'How strange!' 'Not at all. He wished to break himself of smoking.'

To Starve is a Fallacy.—The dictum to stop eating because you have indigestion has long since been exploded. Dr. Von Sta's Pineapple Tablets introduced a new era in the treatment of stomach troubles. It has proved that one may eat his fill of anything and everything he relishes, and one tablet taken after the meal will aid the stomach in doing its work. 60 in a box, 35 cents.—24

Uncle Josh—'Mean to tell me that when I sit in a draft an' git cold, that cold is caused by microbes?' Uncle Silas—'Of course! It's caused by microbes that like to sit in a draft.'

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