

[Written for the Golden Era]

A Detective's Yarn

by McN.

I am a New York Detective.

Being such, not many months since I was accosted one fine morning on the street with:

“How d’ye do, Mr. B—? Heard the news? Col. Brown’s been murdered!”

“Good gracious! wonder who did that?”

“Suspicion rests on the Col.’s son, who has just been arrested,” replied my informant.

Proceeding at once to headquarters, after a short consultation with the Chief, I received instructions to go immediately with another officer and endeavor to ferret out the perpetrator of this foul deed.

Arriving at the scene of the late tragedy—about a mile out of town on the Bloomingdale road—we soon began a thorough search of the premises. The body had been found just on the inside of the front door, and directly at the foot of the stairs. A single glance was sufficient to see that the bloody deed had been accomplished by the aid of the “Bowie” or some other similar sharp-cutting instrument. The next step was to visit the room, lately occupied by the suspected murderer of his own flesh and blood. Opening the door of a closet which apparently stood ajar, a pair of boots and several articles of wearing apparel were found more or less stained with blood. Turning up the carpet near the closet mentioned, there lay the fatal instrument, still clotted with the gore of its victim. The handle was of very peculiar and beautiful workmanship, on the top of which were to be seen the two initials “J.B.” in handsome silver letters. A thought struck me. *I had seen that knife before.*

“That’s only more proof against young Brown,” exclaimed my companion, who almost from the moment of entering the house had insisted the guilty one was in custody.

“On that point we differ, my friend, and soon you will be fully convinced your suspicions are without any foundation whatever,” I rejoined.

My mind was now decided, as to the perpetrator of this most atrocious deed.

Turning over the leaves of my diary, as I expected, appeared the following:

“Prison—Aug. 16th, 18— Jack Black, alias Jack Smith, Jones, etc., the notorious pickpocket and burglar, ‘brought up’ for stealing; among the many articles found on his person was a very

handsome 'Bowie' knife marked with Jack's initials, 'J.B.' on the handle, for such he claimed them to be."

"Would he do so now?"

Leaving my companion in charge of the premises, I immediately posted off for town, after securing the services of other officers to render assistance in case of necessity.

Directing our steps to a low grocery in the "Five Points," kept by the notorious Jack, we had little trouble in finding our man. Upon being taken into custody, Black professed utter ignorance of the whole transaction, but was a little uneasy upon being questioned.

Arriving at the Prison with our charge I took the earliest opportunity to pay him a visit in his cell. Drawing the knife out of my pocket, I remarked in a careless manner:

"No doubt, Jack, you 'spose you're safe? Perhaps *you've seen that, before?*"

"Oh, God! I'm lost," yelled the culprit, and fell senseless to the floor.

Young Brown was at once released. Soon after Black was tried by a jury of his countrymen, convicted, and two months thereafter terminated his wicked and eventful career by suffering an ignominious death at the hands of an offended Justice.

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