

The Dishonest Clerk and the Fatal Slip of Paper

In an Ugly Mood with Myself—A Visit from a Cincinnati—A Loss Detailed—The Fate of a Banking-House Resting on “Collaterals” Stolen, Which Must Be Recovered—A Lawyer Figures in the Matter and is Baffled—The Thieves Speculating for a Settlement—The Scheme Laid for Their Detection—A Business Visit to the Banking-House—The Chief Clerk Sent to Chicago on Business—A Search Revealing Love Letters, and a Lovely Literary Lady—On Track of Mysterious “Papers”—The Fatal Slip of Paper—The Way the Stolen Bonds Were Recovered—The Chief Clerk, and How He was “Enlightened”—A Novel and Quiet Arrest in a Carriage—The Clerk’s Confederate Caught—The Property Restored—The Scamps Decamp—The Innocent Literary Lady’s Eyes Opened

I WAS sitting in my office one day, meditating over a case I had had in hand to work up, for some four months, off and on. An hour before one of the parties interested in the matter, and who had furnished considerable money to press the investigation of the affair had left my office in a state of dissatisfaction, evident enough to me, although his interest compelled him to express in words his pleasure at the course I had taken, and his hope that my theory of the case would soon be worked into practical demonstration. But I fancied, nevertheless, that he had secretly resolved to abandon the matter, or to abandon me, and procure some one else to undertake the job; and I was conjuring in my mind who this might be, whom he would secure to aid him; and resolving myself into a happy state of mind that this point, namely, that he could find nobody who could or would for the like slight encouragement I had had, undertake the affair, and into a somewhat unhappy state of mind on this other point, namely, that I had been induced to enter upon the work upon too slight amount of facts, and accusing myself of stupidity in so doing, I had resolved that I would never undertake a like case, involving so much work, with such little probability of success, for there are some things which may baffle the oldest detective’s skill as surely as the simplest peasant’s brain. I was in an ugly mood with myself, when there entered my office an excited looking man, who accosted me—“You are Mr.—?”

“Yes, sir.”

“The very man that worked up that case for Coe and Phillips, two years ago?”

“Yes, sir; I suppose I am *the* man,” said I, emphasizing the article “the;” “but what of it, what if I did?” said I, in a mood which I was conscious was not very attractive, and with a look, I suppose, not over-enticing, for the man “hitched” unpleasantly in his chair, and seemed confused. “What of it? Why do you ask?”

He still looked disconcerted, but taking from his pocket a file of papers, carefully thumbed them over, and drew out from them a letter of introduction to me from Mr. Coe, in which Mr. Coe said that his friend had an affair on hand in which he thought I could serve him, and he had commended me to his friend.

“Ah, you are a friend of Mr. Coe? Well, I see this note is dated over a month ago. Why have you delayed to bring it to me before?”

“O, I’ll explain. I live in Cincinnati, and was here on business at the time, stopping at Mr. Coe’s. I told him my story, got this note from him, and intended to see you in a day or two; but a telegram called me home,”—(or “telegraph message,” as he said, for this was before the days when some happy genius coined the felicitous word “telegram”), and I have come again on business, and so have brought the note.”

“Is it in Cincinnati that I must work, if I enter upon the matter you may have to relate to me?”

“Yes, sir, I suppose so; in fact, yes, of course, for there the robbery was committed.”

“O, a robbery, eh? Well, I don’t think you had better tell me of it. It’s too far away, and I have enough to do here; more than I wish I had of the kind which falls to my lot these days, and you can get detectives in Cincinnati who can afford to work for you cheaper than I could.”

“There you are mistaken,” said he; “I cannot get any detectives in Cincinnati who can do me any good. I tried the best, and they were baffled, and so I had told Mr. Coe when he recommended you.”

“I am greatly obliged to Mr. Coe for his good opinion, but your case is a desperate one, if the best detectives of Cincinnati have had it in hand; and I suspect I could not do you the least good. You’ll waste your money, I fear.”

The man looked for an instant as if he were shot; and then, suddenly recovering himself, he exclaimed, with an energy and fierceness of purpose which pleased me, “But, sir, something *must* be done, and we must spend all our ready money or go to the wall, at any rate; things are getting complicated in our business, and we must fail in more than one way, *if* we do not succeed.”

“You say ‘we.’ Are there others involved besides yourself?”

“Yes; my partners, two of them.”

“I see that Mr. Coe has not told me your business, merely calling you his ‘friend.’”

“Yes, I suppose he thought best to let me tell you my whole story myself; and I would like to do that, although you seem unwilling, sir.”

I smiled, and said, “O, no, sir, not unwilling, for it is my business to listen to all such things; but you found me in a grum mood when you came. Have you never passed days in which you wished you were out of your present business, and in some other that you envied.”

“Yes, yes,” said he excitedly; and of late I’ve wished so all the while, for reasons I shall give you.”

“Well, go on with your story, I am a good listener.”

“The whole matter is in a nutshell,” said he, “so far as the crime committed is concerned, and I’ll tell you that first. We are bankers, and have lost out of our safe ten thousand dollars in money, and negotiable paper, securities, collaterals, and the like for over thirty thousand more. We have obligations maturing; some have matured already, and we have been pinched to meet them, and the rest we cannot meet without these securities;” and then he went on to tell me when the loss was discovered, etc.

“Well,” I broke in, a little impatiently, “if you have *lost* those papers, what do you propose? To find them? “

“Yes, to get them back; that’s what we want. The money has gone, of course,—we don’t expect that or any part of it,—but we must have the papers—the collaterals; and here I must tell you, that about a week after our loss we received a note from a lawyer in Cincinnati, saying that he had been visited by parties claiming to reside in Kentucky, asking him to communicate with us, and saying that they were ready to deliver up ‘those papers,’ which they knew to be valuable to us, upon our coming to the terms which they left with him to communicate to us orally; that he did not know whether the story was all a hoax or not, but if we knew what it meant, we might call on him, and he would narrate the rest. I hurried to see him on receipt of note. He was a stranger to me personally, but I knew him by repute as a lawyer of fair standing, and a man of good social status. When he came to tell me the offer which these parties made, which was to deliver up the papers through their attorney—himself—for fifty per cent. of their face value (for at this point I had only told him that I knew what the parties meant, and had come to hear their offer), I asked, ‘Do you know for whom you are dealing? Do you know how these papers came into the possession of the parties?’”

“No; I know nothing of them, more than I tell you. But explain to me how the papers came into their possession.”

“By robbery,” said I; “those parties are burglars or worse.”

“Robbery!” he exclaimed, “and the villains wished to make me a middle-man in the transaction! Tell me all about it, and we’ll see if we can’t turn the game upon them. Consider me your attorney; it shall cost you nothing,—the scoundrels!”—and he brought his fist down upon his table with a blow that made it quiver. “If I’ve got to that pass,” said he, “that scoundrels dare approach me in this way, it is time I give myself a close examination, and reform, if need be. Please to tell me all about the affair.”

“I told him the facts of our loss, and our situation; how the money and papers must have been taken out of our safe by some one who had obtained knowledge of the numbers of the permutation lock; and he asked at once, as you will do, about the clerks, my partners, and so forth, and said some one of them was the villain. But no matter for this now. We laid plans which failed; and he concluded that after all, it must be the work of some one in the office, but how to catch him, was the question; and I cannot think that any of my partners or my clerks is the man, for we have exhausted all schemes in trying to fix the crime on any of them, and failed signally.”

“Well, is that all you’ve got to tell me?”

“No; I’ve not told you my story yet but in part. When shall I begin again?”

“When you please; but first tell me, perhaps, about your partners, and your clerks, each by himself; who he is, how long he has been with you, and what his age, his habits,—all about him.”

So Mr. Redfield—(the reader understands always that assumed names are given in these narratives, where there exists a proper reason for so doing)—Mr. Redfield, as we will call him, went into a minute description of the men, each by himself, and I confess I was baffled. I said to him that it must be that some one of those was the guilty party, yet that nothing he had told me would allow me to suspect one of them for a moment; that my impression of the guilt of one of them was solely the result of the common-sense reflection that somebody who understood the safe-lock, with its numbers, must be the man who took the money and papers: that was all. And in fact I suppose it was, because the case at this point became so desperate, or difficult of solution, that I undertook it all; for if I could have hit upon some expedient which would seem to me likely to work out the problem, I should, in my state of mind at the time, have given Mr. Redfield the advantage of it, for a small counsel fee at most, and declined to go on; but it was just enough unsolvable at this point to vex me, and pique my pride. I did not wonder that the best detectives in Cincinnati had failed, for I could easily see that the scoundrels had only to keep these papers hid in some unsearchable spot, and exercise ordinary care—indeed be quite careless—and never be found out, unless their greed should at last betray them.

It was evident to me, from what Mr. Redfield said, that the parties had become suspicious of the lawyer they visited, for some reason; for they never visited him again, and neglected to answer a rather ingenious advertisement that he published in one of the papers. But they had again managed to communicate with Mr. Redfield, and repeated their offer; and had sent him the form of an advertisement to put in the paper, if he concluded to accept. But he delayed beyond the day they named, unwilling to accept, and still hopeful of detecting the villains, and getting back the full papers for nothing; and thinking better of it, a day or two after, he had published the advertisement, but they had not regarded it; probably, as I judged, because they thought he had laid some plan to trap them. So when he went, “armed to the teeth,” he said, out to a lonely place, as indicated in their letter, about five miles, to meet somebody, there to make further arrangements, nobody came.

They were very wary then, and it was evident that they would, as they threatened in their note,—for the writer represented that there were two of them,—destroy the papers unless they got their price for them, and in a manner, too, secure to themselves. They could “afford,”—the wretches!—to lose the papers, for they had made ten thousand dollars in money, at any rate, they kindly wrote.

I insisted that this mode of proceeding on their part indicated an acquaintance with the bankers’ business,—showed that they knew the great value of these papers to the firm,—and that this was a further reason for suspecting some one in the office. But Mr. Redfield persisted in believing that the Cincinnati detective had settled that point against my opinion.

Well, it was agreed that I should go on and take my own way to work up the matter, and Mr. Redfield left. I followed him in a day or two, with my first plans matured, and with all such implements, clothes, etc., for disguises which I thought I might need, and met him at a place appointed. My first course was to go into the banking office, with papers in hand of business to be done with the chief, Mr. Redfield; to be delayed there with him talking a long while over the matter of loans on some Western lands, and to engage his assistance in raising capital for a manufacturing concern to be established at Minneapolis, Minnesota. His partners were to be kept profoundly ignorant of my real character, and one of them was to be called into our conference regarding the lands, etc., whenever I indicated. This was the plan I made for getting a chance to slyly study the clerks and the younger partner—for it was out of the question that the older partner could be engaged in the theft.

I went to the banking-house as arranged, called for Mr. Redfield, gave him my name; “made his acquaintance,” etc., rather rapidly; and while I was doing so, cast a listless glance around me, and chanced to find the chief clerk’s eyes staring at me in a manner not merely of ordinary curiosity. There was a gleam in them which I did not like, and in an instant I changed our plan of operations, and said, “Mr. Redfield, can’t I see you in private?”—taking an easy-going look about the room, and not neglecting to take in the clerk in the sweep of my eye. He was writing, and there was a nervousness about the shoulders, a flush in the face, and his lips seemed much compressed. “Guilt there,” said I to myself, as Mr. Redfield stepped into the private room.

The door was closed by Mr. R—, who asked, “Why do you change the programme? What have you seen?”

“Enough,” said I; “and now the question is how well can you play your part? I know that a man in your office is the guilty party.”

Mr. Redfield looked a little astounded at my rapid operations, and replied, “Well, you are to work up the case according to your own methods; but you surprise me.”

“Well,” said I, “let me alone, then; let’s talk up the Western lands, etc.,” and we did—I laughing outright, immoderately at times, telling Mr. Redfield a story or two, which made him laugh in real earnest; and after we’d fixed up a plan, he went out smiling, asked his older partner to come in to see me, saying, “He’s the queerest speculator I ever saw; come in, and see if we can do anything for him.” And the man came in. We talked, could not get near a bargain, and I finally left the bank, saying to Mr. Redfield that I’d “write in a week or so; perhaps they’d think better of the offer.”

I was not at a loss to see, by the clerk’s countenance and manner as I went out, that he was at ease again—which was all I wanted to then effect.

Mr. Redfield and I met that night in a place appointed. He told me they’d had much fun in the office over the “queer speculator,” and that his partner had no suspicion of my real business at all; and we entered into a serious conversation. I told him that the chief clerk was the guilty man in my opinion, and that I should proceed upon that theory, and pursue it till forced to give up in

that direction, and then drop the matter; that there was no use of attempting anything without the clerk in the programme.

We talked over the matter, and I learned where the clerk kept his private rooms—for he boarded at a hotel, and roomed in a block of business offices and dormitories; and what at first surprised me was to learn that he had left much better rooms within a month or so, since the robbery, and taken up with poorer ones. Mr. Redfield could give me no information as to his habits, save what he judged and what the detectives had reported—all good. But somehow I suspected that there must be a woman involved in some way—a mistress, perhaps, whose extravagance had led astray the clerk, whom we will call Childs, to need more money than he could legitimately make. So I told Mr. Redfield that we must search Childs's room and private papers, if he had any; and it was arranged that Childs should be sent on business to Chicago for two or three days. Mr. Redfield had no difficulty in arranging that, and Childs departed, highly honored with his chief's confidence.

We managed without much trouble to get into Childs's room, where everything but his trunks were first searched,—not excepting the minutest scraps of letters in a waste-basket,—where I found evidences of female correspondence. Further search among some books, on a little shelf at the top of a clothes-press or “closet,” revealed some more in the same handwriting—sweet little *billets-doux*, longer letters, etc.,—all passionate, very,—sometimes complaining, etc.

None of these had envelopes, and I therefore judged that they were written in the city, and sent through the post office, and that Childs probably always, at once, destroyed the envelopes. I should say that none, except some evidently old ones, had envelopes. There was no date or place, save “My little room,”—“Our dear boudoir,” or something like that,—and sometimes a further day,—“Thursday Morning,”—“Monday Evening.” It was evident to me that the charmer lived in the city somewhere; and I had already made up my mind that she must be tracked out as the first step, when, turning over a letter from this female, the rich, passionate, burning language of which, well-expressed, had led me on, I came to the conclusion, and found—“I have not received pay yet for that article. R— must not think that he can neglect me as he did Hattie; I will be paid for what I write—something, at least. I guess we shall have to visit him together;” and with very affectionate words of parting, the letter closed. And then came a P. S. “Every day I grow more uneasy about *those papers*. I wish you would take them away. What if I should suddenly die, and they should be found with me? You said they were very valuable—and you may lose them. I should regret that. Come *to-night*, dearest.”

Ah, ha! here was a literary lady,—a contributor to the story or other papers,—wrote a good hand, and in good style of composition; was evidently on loving terms with Childs. I was in doubt whether mistress or only ardent lover; could not tell that till I should see her, if then. She must be seen. How to find her? Easy enough, perhaps, but maybe not. We left Mr. Childs's room in good order, and separated for the night, I giving Mr. Redfield no more insight into the modes I intended to pursue next day than necessary.

The next morning I started for the newspaper offices with a portion of one of the letters I had found, made a proper story of wishing to engage the literary services of the writer of the letter if I could find her, but that I knew not her name; as her friend, who had given me the portion of the

letter to show her style, and had not yet given me her name, had been called off to New York by telegraph, I found,—wanted to find her that day.

At the first office I entered nobody could tell me anything. But on entering the second one, and finding the associate editor, and asking him if he recognized that writing, he looked up and smiled, as if he thought I had a joke for him.

“I guess I do,” said he.

“Well,” said I, “there’s a dispute about it.”

“Let’s see,” said he, in a hasty, nervous way, snatching it from my hand, and glancing at it again. “No dispute about it; that’s our — —” (using her *nom de plume*, which I won’t repeat, as she is probably living, and many old friends might recognize her in this tale, and learn more than they are entitled to know).

“Where can I find her?” said I; “I want to see her about some writing.”

“All right,” said he, making some marks on a paper, which I found to be name of street and number of house. “There’s where she was the last I knew of her, two months ago. I think you can find her through that.”

“Would you give me a note to her, as I am a stranger?”

“Why yes, such as I could. I don’t know your name; but stay—no,” said he; “give me that paper again;” and taking it, he put his initials to it, and the name of office and date of day. “That will be enough—good as a more formal note,” said he; and he caught up his pen, and proceeded as if something was on his mind. “You must excuse me, sir; I have a great deal to do to-day. Can I assist you any further now?”

I replied, “No; I thank you for your courtesy;” and bowed myself out. I was as confident now that I should trap Childs as if the thing was done; but there were two of them, and they must both be caught. Childs could not be carrying on this correspondence with the lawyer and writing to Mr. Redfield, that was patent. I would watch Childs that night, and see if he went to the lady’s residence. He did go, and as they took a walk out, I saw her,—got a good view of her face, and made up my mind that she was innocent of any intelligent complicity in the matter. I liked her looks very much. She was one of those impulsive, earnest creatures, who, when they love, love desperately, but who know not how to hate, as some women know, who also know how to love intensely,—a miserable class of women, in my opinion, although novelists love to paint them, and these women themselves are ever boastful of their twofold power of love and hate,—a mean boast of a mean character of soul. I saw that she loved Childs, and I was sure she respected him, and what I should do I knew not exactly; but following them in their walk and back, and waiting till he left her, and went on his way to his office, had given me much time to think, and I had resolved upon a course which I thought the next day would see consummated; when, returning to my quarters, I found a note from Mr. Redfield, begging me to meet him at a certain place that

night,—by no means to sleep without seeing him. He would be there at such an hour, and at such other hours till he met me. Something important had happened.

I sought Mr. Redfield as requested; found that he had that afternoon received a note from the parties, again requesting him to meet them, or one of them, next day, at a place near Covington, Kentucky, and to come prepared to “take up the papers, according to our offer,” in the afternoon, at six of the next day. Mr. R— was greatly excited; said that this was their “last call,” as they expressed it; that the papers would then be destroyed; “and that will be the last of our house,” he tremblingly muttered.

I had been looking the letter over carefully meanwhile, not at all disturbed, for I felt that Childs would not long be out of our hands, when I chanced to reflect that the paper on which it was written was like some of that on which the lady’s letters to Childs were written; and I said to myself, probably he has supplied himself and her some time with the same kind of paper; but this is not his or her handwriting. “No, she’s innocent,” I muttered to myself; “I am satisfied of that;” but the paper was like, and that, though a slight thing, helped to steady me in *my* opinion of his guilt. I handed the letter to Mr. Redfield to replace,—he having taken it from the envelope before giving it to me,—when, placing it back, a small slip fell out of the envelope as he turned it upside down.

“What’s this?” said I, as I picked it up; “we must scan everything.”

It was a narrow strip, and on it was written, “My dearest A—.” (It was the lady’s name, as it proved.) I was astounded, for I had seen Childs’s writing, and this was like it for all the world. It was his, indeed—so Mr. Redfield decided. But how came it in there? When Mr. Redfield opened his letter it had not fallen out. He had cut the end of the envelope. I took the envelope, and rounding it out, peered in, and satisfied myself, from its shape, that the writer had done what I frequently do, with the old-fashioned envelopes especially,—put in a piece of paper to keep the gluten from sticking to the letter, as it will, when wet and scaled, in many kinds of envelopes. In handling the envelope, and opening it a little to put back the contents, this paper, if stuck at all, had “chipped off.” But how came the address there in Childs’s hand? Either the letter had been written in a poorly-lighted place, or a careless or drunken confederate had slipped the strip we found into the letter, without noting both sides. But really *how* it came there I did not care—it was there.

“Mr. Redfield,” said I, “that clerk’s game is up. Give me the letter; ask no questions, but to-morrow morning, as soon as he comes in, make occasion to send him off on business which shall detain him till into the afternoon, if you can; or provide business for him here that shall occupy him beyond noon-time. Better send him out of town. I want to get over to-morrow noon.”

Mr. Redfield said that fortunately he could send him out of town to see parties about a mortgage, and he would send somebody along with him, — his servant,—and tell him to be sure to not get in before two or three. The boy will do what I say, and ask no questions and tell no tales. My word is law with him, and Childs will have to walk back twelve miles, or hire somebody to bring him in, for the boy won’t come till I tell him to.”

Next morning I was up betimes. Childs was out early before going to the office, taking a morning walk with his lady. He carried no bundle away from there, and I tracked him to the office. I felt safe now: and now for the final work, I thought, for I was sure that Redfield would pack off Childs duly, and the coast would be clear. I had gotten possession of the lady's name meanwhile, and proceeded to her boarding-place, called for her, introduced myself, talked with her about literary matters in my own way, not at great length, and was delighted with the innocence of the girl. I had formed no fixed mode of procedure when I entered the house, but I was resolved to wait till I saw her, and the longer I talked with her the more convinced was I that she was innocent and artless, and that a pretty direct way was the best to approach her by.

So I said, "Well, you'll pardon me, Miss—, but Mr. Childs told me I would be pleased to chat with you, and I have—"

"What! you know Mr. Childs? He's always saying flattering things of me."

"O, *is* he? Well, perhaps he didn't say anything especial to me, then; but I was going to say that I called on business. He's going out of town to-day, and he had to start earlier than he expected; just gone; wasn't going till afternoon—"

"Yes, he told me he was going over to Covington in the afternoon," she broke in.

"Yes," said I, "and he said that he wanted you to give me *those papers*; said you'd understand what he meant. I am to meet him, and this, he said, would be enough word for you" (handing her the slip of paper, 'My dearest A. .') He was in haste." She took it, blushed, and said, "Yes, this is his writing. He writes nicely—doesn't he? Excuse me, I will be gone but a moment," and she hied up stairs to her room, as unsuspecting as a dove. I was surprised at the success of my simple stratagem, but I had others behind it, which would have worked had that failed. She came down stairs, bringing a nicely sealed package.

"That is what he wants," said she. "You will be careful of it, of course, or he would not have sent you. You are his friend—a mysterious man I've heard him speak of; and I must tell you," she said, laughing heartily, "that I've told him I did not like that friend very well, keeping him away from me so much."

"O," said I, "no harm I hope. Men have their business arrangements together,— their speculations,—and can't always be as gallant as they would."

"O, I know it," said she. "I don't complain. I was only joking him."

It was evident to me that that woman had not the remotest thought of Childs's being aught than as noble and pure as she; and as I took the package, folded it in a newspaper, and left the house, I felt for her to the bottom of my heart, so much so, that I at first resolved to not tell Redfield how I had obtained the package, but to give him up the papers, tell him to dismiss the clerk, get my pay, and leave; for I thought it would break her heart to find Childs so great a scoundrel; that perhaps he, finding himself foiled, would never be guilty of a crime again; would seek some other spot, reform, and marry her, and make her ever happy.

These thoughts I revolved in my mind as I passed on to my lodgings, and when I got there I opened the package. Lo! all the papers, so far as I could judge, and something more, — a letter or two, in a scrawly hand, with some rude drawings of roads, a sort of diagram, on a page of one of them. I deciphered the letters, and found that Childs's correspondent spoke, in one of them, of that "little fool of yours," evidently meaning Miss A ; and said something else, which I knew he would never have said had not Childs given him occasion. In short, I saw that Childs's respect for her was feigned; that he was only fooling her, and my mind changed towards him; besides, there was his confederate, and we must have them both. I hurriedly repacked the papers, proceeded to the bank, called Mr. Redfield into the private room, and showed him what I had got. He was confounded, of course. I said, "What shall we do with them?"

"Seal them, and put them in the safe for to-day. I want to arrest that villain Childs now," said he, "for I understand how you've come by these. We've no time to lose."

We went out after sealing the papers, and leaving them in the safe, properly marked with my name—a deposit. As soon as we got out of the office we made our plan. It was to take an officer, ride out on the road on which Childs had gone, and wait for his return. But this would take too long. No, we'd ride right to the place he had gone to, all of us. We found the officer, took a two-horse carriage, and were on our way very shortly—drove to where Childs was.

"How do you do, Mr. Redfield?" said Childs, surprised to see him. "Couldn't you trust me to do the business? And so *you* 've come out? Ha! ha!"

"No," said Mr. Redfield; "some friends of mine wanted to take a ride, and I thought I might as well ride this way as any. Getting on well with the business?"

"Yes," said he, "all finished; but I couldn't find that boy of yours. He's gone off somewhere, and there's a part of the harness gone. Gone to get it mended, I suspect, for coming out here he said it was weak in places."

I gave Mr. R— a wink, and said, quietly, "That boy would make a good operator—wouldn't he?"

"He'll do his duty," said he.

"Well, he won't be back yet," said Mr. Redfield to Mr. Childs. "Get in here, and we'll all take a short ride. Mr. Wilson," said Mr. Redfield, "you proposed to ride on the front seat when we returned; perhaps you'd like to now? "

"Yes, I would," said I.

"Well, please get out, and let Mr. Childs take your place. Mr. Childs, these are Mr. Wilson and Mr. French, friends of mine, looking about Cincinnati for speculation."

I got out, Childs took my seat in back, under the carriage top—a sort of half buggy and half coach. The officer was considerably disguised, (because he thought he knew Childs, and that the latter knew him), with a pair of blue shaded glasses and false grayish whiskers and hair.

We chatted on together, rode off a mile or two, when Mr. Redfield said he guessed we'd return, and leave word at that place for the boy to come as soon as he got his harness mended. "And you can ride back with us, Childs," said Mr. R—.

Childs expressed his pleasure to do so. We returned to the place, left the boy, and proceeded on a mile or two, telling stories, looking at the land, etc., when Mr. Redfield gave me a touch with his elbow, and looked into my eyes, as much as to ask, "Shall we not arrest him now?" I gave the proper sign, and Mr. Redfield, stopping the horses, turned deliberately around, and said, "Mr. French is an officer of the law, Mr. Childs, and would like to have you give yourself up without any fuss about it—wouldn't you, Mr. French? Do your duty."

"Yes, Mr. Childs, I am sorry to disturb the pleasure of such a ride as we've had, but it is my duty to arrest you."

Childs was overcome with surprise, and said, "Yes, he would give himself up, but he didn't know what for—anything to oblige Mr. Redfield," and he gave himself up, and the officer thought best to handcuff him, at which Childs turned very pale, with mingled anger and fright.

"Now, Childs," said Redfield, "since you are secure, and the papers are all back in the safe, and your lady, Miss A—" (for Redfield knew I must have gotten the papers from her in some way), "has turned upon you, you've nothing to do but make a clean breast of it. We want your confederate, and you must help us to take him, or suffer alone. If you wish to escape, you must turn state's evidence—that's all. He probably has put you up to crime. You are not too old to reform, and may be allowed to go, and suffer nothing but the penalty of dismissal from our office; but you'll have to return the money you took, for I find that you are regarded worth considerable property, and I presume your confederate is."

Childs was so utterly taken aback that he had not a particle of courage or address left. He consented to everything we demanded, and said he would write to his friend whom he was to meet at Covington that night, but for some reason he could not come, and ask him to come over at night or next day to Cincinnati. When we got into the city, Childs was taken to a private room by the officer, who had taken off his manacles, and then manacled him again after writing the note, and telling us where to find his messenger.

The man came over, and was under arrest before he had time to think, and was taken to another place, and told that Childs had turned state's evidence.

"I always thought Childs was shaky," said the fellow, evidently not quite so subdued as he might be; but we threatened him with the extreme ends of the law, and he agreed to get money, and see that the bankers were paid back all that had been taken if Childs would do his part, and to clear out "down the river" (meaning to N. O.), and leave Cincinnati together. It appeared that he had done the *work* of the robbery, Childs having provided him with a key, of which he had procured

a counterfeit, and having told him of the changes of the lock, and selected a time when there was a good amount of money in the safe. He said he could “work” better alone than with Childs.

I needn’t lengthen out the story, except to say that Mr. Redfield got back all the money too, and enough besides to pay him and me for all our trouble; that Childs and his friend left for parts unknown, for Mr. Redfield said it would hurt his bank, shake faith in it so much, to prosecute the rascals, and expose the affair, or it would gratify him otherwise to punish them: on the whole he would let them go.

I took care that Childs had no opportunity to see Miss A— before his departure, or even to write her, I think; and as I spent two or three days more in Cincinnati, I thought, on reflection, she ought to know the facts, and in a delicate way got opportunity to disclose them to her, for which the innocent, sensible lady expressed her gratitude in tears. She felt that she had escaped a villain’s clutches; confessed her ardent love for him, but told me that sometimes she felt as if there was something bad in his nature; that he had given her much pain from time to time; and though they were engaged, she sometimes had thought he did not intend to marry; and now she could see that he had, at times, taken advantage of her love to require her to do things for him quite disagreeable.

“Why,” she exclaimed, “if I had known that package contained stolen things, I could not have slept in the room with it. He said they were private business papers of his, and he did not wish to ask to have them put in the bank safe, and thought they would be more secure with me than at his rooms, for everybody could get in there in his absence who liked; so I was glad to oblige him, of course.”

But my conversation with this lady need not be detailed. She was not informed how the slip, with “My dearest A “ on it, came into my hands. Probably it did not then occur to her to ask. If her eye happens to light on this article, she will now come at last to know how.

McWatters, George. *Knots Untied; or, Ways and By-Ways in the Hidden Lives of American Detectives*. Hartford: J. B. Burr, 1871.