

The Marked Bills

A Little Key Bearing A Monogram Shapes The Destiny Of An Intelligent Man— How This Man Came To Be Involved In The Matter Of Which This Tale Discourses—My Partner And I—Far-Off Mysteries May Solve Nearer Ones—A Consultation—A Committee “Seek Light,” And Find Consolation—Burglaries And Highway Robberies By The Wholesale—My Partner Leaves For Europe—A Town In Ohio Infested—A “Doctor Hudson “ Appears In The Town—He Makes A Professional Visit To One Mr. Perkins A Colloquy; Seeking Light—A Callous Hand, And A Clue To Mysteries—“Doctor Hudson” Extends His Acquaintanceship—He Makes A Night’s Visit Out Of Town, And Gets Waylaid And Robbed, But Manages To Create The Fatal Evidence He Wants Of The Robbers’ Identity—A Council Of Principal Citizens— “Doctor Hudson” Makes A Disclosure—A Scheme Laid—A “Military Investment” Of A Domestic Fortress; An Exciting Hour—Breaking Into A House At Midnight And Surprising A Sleeper—The Thief Leaves Town To Go To Cincinnati To Study Medicine With “Doctor Hudson”—A Suicide—Puritanic Mercilessness—The Music Teacher’s Ingenious Letter To His Lady Love.

by George McWatters

It is of an occurrence, which took place seven years ago this very month in which I am writing this sketch, that I propose to tell the tale—at midnight; having been unable to sleep much of late, and having now risen from my bed, taken my pen, and set myself at work, with the hope that some continuous mental labor may bring on drowsiness by and by; which, by the way, will not, I trust, affect or infect my narrative.

Seven years ago, then, this month, my partner was called on to go into his native town in the southern portion of Ohio, to assist in ferreting out the perpetrators of sundry highway robberies, burglaries, etc., that were constantly taking place there, and whom it baffled the sagacity of the citizens of the place, and several constables, deputy sheriffs, detectives from Cincinnati, and so forth, to detect. As a *dernier resort*, the villagers had made up a purse, and appointed a committee to proceed to New York, and wait upon my partner, with the whole story of the countless robberies, and see if he could not lay some plan which should prove successful in the arrest of the villains.

My partner had left his native place in his sixteenth year, —a more than usually bright boy, — had wandered South, working out his own fortune by slow degrees; studied law, and been admitted to practice at Washington, Texas; tried practice for a year or so with some success, but disliked the profession; went to Galveston; made the acquaintance there of an iron-founder and machinist by the name of Hunt, if I rightly recollect, who, taking a liking to him, employed him in his office. My partner having excellent mechanical ability, passed much of his time in the work-rooms of the machine department, and became quite a skillful operator. One day some persons of foreign birth applied at the machine-shop, —as there was no other place in Galveston where they could get the work done, —to have some three or four keys made after certain patterns which they provided. The work was done for them, and in the course of time it came out that these keys had been used in the commission of an extensive burglary at San Antonio. One of

the keys had been lost, and by chance bore a peculiar mark—a sort of monogram, which Mr. Hunt caused to be impressed, when proper, upon any work which was issued from his establishment. The key being new, and it being evident that the skillful burglars must have had long acquaintance with the premises which they invaded, a sheriff of San Antonio surmised that the keys must have been made somewhere in Texas, perhaps to the order of some old residents of that State. In fact, he had his eye of suspicion upon some persons who had long borne unenviable characters. —In what place were, these made more likely than in Galveston queried he? So he sent the key to a sheriff of Galveston for his inspection, and asked him, if possible, to find out who made the key, and for what description of person it was made. The sheriff of Galveston instantly recognized Mr. Hunt's monogram. Taking down a pair of handcuffs which hung upon a nail in his office, said he to the messenger, "See here! These were made in England, but I had occasion to get Hunt's establishment to repair them a little, six months ago, and there, you see, (pointing to the monogram), he put on his stamp."

It was only the matter of a walk of ten minutes to Hunt's establishment, and as many minutes more spent in getting a detailed account from the workmen and from my partner—Hunt's then clerk—of the personal appearance of the two men who ordered the keys, when the messenger became convinced that the suspicions of the officers at San Antonio had fallen upon the wrong persons; and he thought he knew the real parties, —comparatively very respectable people, —one a well-to-do and educated middle-aged planter, living a little outside of San Antonio, —and so it proved. The parties were arrested and tried. My partner was called as a witness to identify them. The trifle of a lost key, and the little monogram almost carelessly stamped on it by the mechanic, having led to such results, touched the romantic, speculative nature of my partner, and he was never easy after that till, in the course of time, he had found his way into the business at New Orleans, from which city he finally came on to New York to reside.

Mr. Hunt kept up a correspondence with him for years, always trying to get him back into his employ, making him excellent offers, but he never returned to him, save on a visit. Now it happened that Mr. Hunt was a native of the same village, or its vicinity, in which my partner was born, and on his summer visits there, —which he made nearly every year, —he had often descanted upon the great talents and ingenuity of my partner. Thus was it that the committee came to wait upon him. But it was impossible for him to go there with them, or visit the place for a long while, for he was to take steamer the day but one thereafter for England, at the instance of Commodore Vanderbilt, to aid in investigations into some transactions in which it was believed that certain American scoundrels, whom my partner knew, were involved.

We had been introduced to the committee as the partner of the firm, and we had listened to a portion of the story, when my partner announced the fact of his intended visit to England, and added; "But, gentlemen, that need be no loss to you, for my partner here can be of as much service to you as I,"—being, in his kindness, pleased to add, —"and, I think, probably more. If you please to accept him in my place, I am sure you will suffer no loss. He will track out the villains if anybody can."

The committee expressed their great regrets at not being able to secure my partner's services, but said they would tell us their story in full, and if, after hearing it, I thought I could be of service to them, they would like to have me go out there.

He listened to their recital of the numerous burglaries, robberies from the person, and so forth, with great patience, each of us asking a few, but a very few questions, at different points of their narrative. Long before they got to the end of the doleful story, and after having asked not over a half dozen questions at most, my partner, I clearly saw from his manner, had formed his theory, and I saw that he thought it an easy case to work up.

When the committee had finished, my partner said to them, "Gentlemen, excuse us for a few minutes. I wish to consult my partner," and rising, stepped into the next room, whither I followed him, shutting the door behind me, when my partner, clapping his hand with an air of victory on my shoulder, whispered to me, "An easy case, old boy, eh? I suppose you've worked up the theory by this time? Don't you see straight through it?"

"No, I confess I don't see through it all; but I've got some glimpses of light."

"Well," said he, "I've told you about that San Antonio case, which first started me into the detective business—haven't I?"

"Yes; but I don't see the bearing of that on this exactly!"

"Don't see? Why there was only one peculiar feature about that, and there's the like in this case, if I am not mistaken; that is, these robberies are perpetrated, not by old, skillful burglars, but by raw hands, comparatively, who reside right about there, and are probably 'respectable citizens'—teach Sunday-school, likely enough."

With this from my partner, which struck me then as the true theory, we analyzed the stories of the committee in the light of it, and became perfectly assured that the theory was right, and were about proceeding to the next room to talk further with the committee, when my partner said, "See here, we mustn't tell these men our theory. Who knows but some of them, —O, that can't be: they are too old, too clumsy, not alert enough, and too honest too, for that, —but some of their relations, their sons or nephews, perhaps, are the villains who are doing all this work! No, we mustn't tell them." So we hit upon what we would say.

Stepping into the room where the committee sat, looking as sedate and somber, by the way, as if they were judges sitting upon some complex trial for arson, murder, and what not, they looked up, and one of them asked, "Well, gentlemen, what conclusion have you come to?"

My partner quietly replied, "We have worked out our theory."

"Pray tell us what it is?" exclaimed one of the committee, his face lighting up as if scales were falling from his eyes, and he was to be suddenly extricated from the "mystery of darkness."

"Well, gentlemen," he responded, "my partner and I have satisfied ourselves that we are on the right track. In our business, you must know, one case is often suggestive in unraveling another. We get to be able to track old offenders, as the Indian tracks his enemy through the forest. It would take me too long to explain the whole mystery to you. But you may be sure that we've got hold of some of the right 'ear marks' of these villains, and my partner is not only willing to

undertake the case, but I am confident that he will work it out all right. This is all I can say to you on that point. Shall he go ahead?"

"Certainly, certainly," responded the committee, one after the other, "if you think it can be done; our neighbors must have relief from these outrages."

"Well, one thing I wish to enjoin upon you, gentlemen. In calling a public meeting, and appointing you as a committee to come publicly to me, your citizens have taken false steps. Your business ought to have been kept private— known only to a few of you at most, and that in positive secrecy. Now the first steps toward undoing this false one, is for you to report, on your arrival home, that you couldn't get me; that I was on the point of starting for Europe; but that you told me your story, and I said it was all the work of some old burglars, whom the police had driven out from this quarter, and that there was probably connected with them an old London burglar by the name of 'Jerry Black,' or who bore that name once, and is now supposed to be living in Cincinnati; that I said further that 'twas a very hard case to work up, these old burglars understanding their business so well, and that the best way was for your citizens to defend their houses and themselves as well as they can, and wait for some accident to disclose the robbers, for 'murder will out' sooner or later."

The committee replied that they would heed the advice perfectly.

"Now, then, for the special injunction, which is this. Talk as little in general about your visit here as you can, each of you; but do you each be careful on this point, namely, not to mention the fact that you met my partner, or that I have one at all. Indeed, you can truthfully say that I have no partner, if anybody there should happen to have heard that I have; for although we are partners in the sense of companions, and cooperators sometimes, yet we are not 'partners' in the legal sense of that term, though we call each other so, in the style of the profession. Remember this!"

The committee promised to do so, and we went on talking together, laying our plans to the extent that I should duly visit the place; that none of the committee was to recognize me if he met me in his walks; and that I should probably appear there as a Cincinnati merchant; for the detectives of the best repute in Cincinnati had already visited the place unavailingly, and it would not be suspected that poorer ones would be employed from Cincinnati. I made inquiries of the committee about the various businesses transacted in the place, and asked the names of the other leading citizens, for the committee were all of them of the "heavy men" of the place. Learning all I thought of use of these gentlemen, I promised to appear, if my life was spared, in due time, and not at a late day at that, in the town and go to work; and the committee left.

It was a useless promise which we exacted of the committee that none of them should recognize me when in their village; for when they came to the office I had but a little while before returned from an expedition, in which I had worn a simple but effectual disguise. That removed, and my coat exchanged for another one in my closet, a few minutes after the committee left, they would not have recognized me had they returned at the time.

Duly after the departure of my partner for Europe I was on my way to Ohio. Before he left we had talked up the matter in all the possible phases it could present, and among the last things he

said to me, on our way down to the steamer, was, "That case *may* bother you; but it seems to me now as easy as going down hill. We have the sight of it, and if the committee report as I instructed them, you'll succeed at once. In your first letter to me" (which, by the way, it was agreed should be sent by the next week's steamer) "I shall not be surprised to learn of 'victory won.' "

"O, no, impossible; you forget the distance."

"Yes, truly I did. Say, then, by the next letter," for he expected to be gone for some three or four months, if not longer.

"But," said he, "don't let anything deflect you from our theory, whether you succeed in that time or not. It *will* work out on our theory some way, at some time."

I bade my partner good by, as the ocean steamer started on her proud course out into the bay, and returned to my office, to perfect my plans in detail for the work before me, and was, as I said before, duly on my way to Ohio. My first point was Cincinnati, where, arriving safely, I set myself about becoming acquainted with names of streets, then localities, public places, names of many citizens and their business—in short, I "booked" myself up in regard to Cincinnati, in order to be "at home" whenever talking with the citizens of the village to which I was going, and who would soon be told that I was from Cincinnati.

Leaving the latter place, I made my way to the village in question, arriving there towards evening, on a lumbering stage-coach, through—literally, not "over"—the deep clay-mudded roads, and alighted at the principal hotel of the place. The night before, or rather on the morning of the same day, for it was between the hours of one and two A. M., a citizen of considerable standing had been robbed on his way home from a house a little out of the village, where he had been to watch with a sick friend, a farmer. Being relieved from watching about one o'clock, and his wife wishing to take the early stage which left at the inhospitable hour of six, on the road towards Columbus, whither she was going, he thought to return. For a week or two the robbers had ceased from their theretofore almost nightly outrages, and it was with a sort of smile of contempt that Mr. Hiram Perkins, —for that was the citizen's name, replied to an old lady nurse, as he was departing, and who asked, "Ain't you afraid of the robbers, Mr. Perkins?" "O, no, 'aunty,' they won't touch me; besides, I guess they are all dead now, 'aunty.' We haven't heard 'em peep for a week or two—gone off to some better land."

But he encountered them, nevertheless, and lost four hundred dollars, and something over, which had been paid to him the evening before, at a time too late to make deposit of it in the little village bank, and which he had been foolish enough to not leave at home.

This amount of money was the largest which the robbers had yet secured. They had effected the robbery, to be sure, of some negotiable bonds of considerably greater value; but this was an extreme case, and was, of course, at the time of my arrival there the chief topic of excitement. Added to the robbery, was the fact that Mr. Perkins, who had made stout resistance, had been severely beaten, and though not fatally bruised, was lying quite feverish in bed: such was the report.

I had had a room put in order for me, neglecting to put my name on the dirty little register of the hotel, where I observed that everybody who could write, and who stepped in to the “tavern,” was in the habit of writing his name, and putting after it “City” (that was the town where I was), —a custom, probably, introduced by some joker, who had been to Cincinnati, and seen names registered in that way there.

But when I came down from my room into the “office,” or “bar-room,” properly speaking, the young clerk said to me, “Would the stranger enter his name?” I had reflected, meanwhile, that I must see this Mr. Perkins, and had changed my original plan of proceedings a little, so I entered my name as “Dr. H. H. Hudson, Cin.,” with a somewhat bold dash of the pen, and soon after found myself on the street, seeking the way to Mr. Perkins’s house. While in the hotel I encountered, and had quite a long talk with one of the committee who had visited us in New York.

He kept his promise, and did not “recognize” me, and perhaps he would not if he had known me. He told me the whole story of his visit to New York; what the detective said to him, and the rest of the committee; and, said he, “He was right when he said they were old burglars who were committing these outrages, for nobody but men hardened in crime could have robbed Mr. Perkins, as they did last night;” and when I went out of the tavern, after registering my name, to seek Mr. P.’s house, I encountered my committee-man. Again, as I was loitering on the street, hardly knowing what to do to learn the way to Mr. Perkins’s, he had evidently looked on the register after my departure from the office or bar-room, for he accosted me. “Ah, again! Happy to come across you again. Dr. Hudson, of Cincinnati, I hear?”

“Yes, sir,” I replied; “a doctor by profession, but retired somewhat from practice.”

“Yes, yes; yours is a pretty hard life, that of a doctor, sir. I suppose all you doctors in the city retire as soon as you get rich,” said the facetious committee-man.

I replied, “that I had not retired from business exactly, for I was engaged more or less in speculation; but had always pursued the course of registering myself as a doctor at hotels, for I found that I generally got better treatment than when I registered in my plain name.”

“Well, sir,” said he, “I was thinking of going to call at friend Perkins’s and see how he’s getting along. He’s pretty low, I fear. As you are a doctor, perhaps you would like to accompany me. You might suggest something for his comfort.”

I accepted the invitation with a half-reluctant manner, and we walked on towards Mr. Perkins’s house, my friend, meanwhile, telling me all about Mr. P., his wealth, family affairs, etc. We were bidden to enter the house on knocking, and the committee-man was invited into the “bedroom” to see Mr. Perkins, from which he came soon out, and said, —

“I dare say you’d like to see Mr. Perkins. He is pretty severely bruised; but says he’s better, and shall be out in a day or two. I told him I had a friend along with me, Dr. Hudson, of Cincinnati; and he says he don’t need a doctor, but that he shall be glad to see you as a gentleman, and friend of mine.” So I accompanied my friend to Mr. Perkins’s room; and had hardly been presented to

him before I made up my mind to take him into my counsels, for there was a certain frank nobility in his countenance, and an intelligence which quite won my esteem on the instant.

We conversed about the robbery, and, after that, about various topics of the day; and the more we talked, the more I liked him. By and by the committee-man recollected an engagement; said that he must go, but didn't want to interrupt Mr. Perkins's and my conversation; "for, doctor, I perceive," said he, "that you've made him very cheerful, without pills even. Sometimes I think there's more in a doctor than in his medicines," said he, with a very arch smile.

"O, no," said Mr. Perkins; "if you must go, you needn't take the doctor. He's a stranger here, and 't isn't late yet, and he can find his way back easily enough."

And so I staid after the committee-man went out; and I talked with Mr. Perkins more about the robbery, and the burglaries, etc.; but I could get no occasion for private conversation with him, as the bed-room door, opening into a "sitting-room," was constantly open, and the sitting-room generally occupied by one or more persons, females, or else they were flitting back and forth; so at last I told Mr. Perkins that I had come to him on some business in regard to which I should like to consult him in the morning a little while, if he were well enough. He very kindly consented, and I departed.

On returning to the hotel, I was accosted at once by a gentleman, around whom stood a dozen other eager ones.

"Doctor, you've been over to see Mr. Perkins, we hear; how's he getting along? Recover soon?"

"O, yes," said I; "he'll recover speedily if he is left quiet for a day or two. The neighbors, I hear, are running in to see him a great deal; but I think I shall order that nobody be admitted for a day or two."

Fortunately, Mr. Perkins's family physician had at this time gone to the funeral of his mother, whose home had been somewhere in Pennsylvania, and Mr. Perkins would not call either of the two other "doctors" of the place, styling them "blasted quacks." So that I could very properly say that.

I listened quite late that night to the villagers' talk about the robberies. Every new man who came into the barroom had something to tell, and everybody had a theory; but they all declared that the burglars were old heads at the business—hard to catch, "as that New York detective told the committee," they said. Things were working well, and I finally retired to rest, and slept very soundly, to my surprise; for strange beds generally vex me, and keep me awake.

The next morning I called on Mr. Perkins early, and found him quite comfortable; asked him to order that neighbors who might be coming in to inquire for the state of his health, should not be allowed to enter his room; and though surprised at first at my request, he granted it, and I felt secure of a good, uninterrupted talk with him. I sounded him, to my satisfaction, in that he was a man who could keep a secret profoundly, and then made known my business to him. He was glad I had come, he said, and he would give me all the information in his power.

I inquired of everybody and everything in the place which could have any bearing on the matter in hand; learned the size, tones of voice, style of language, as far as he could remember, of his assailants, the highway robbers; gathered from him all I could of what had been overheard from the robbers' lips on various occasions; and I learned one especially important matter of him, which was, that one of the robbers was dressed in "a loose sack, like," and that in his contest with him, he thought that he felt that one of his hands, off from which a glove became slipped in the fight, was callous on the back. This he had not laid up in memory, but my questions called it to mind. At this point I developed my theory that the robberies were committed by residents of the village; and told him that they were not what professional robbers would call "good work," skillfully done; and then I asked him, —

"Now, Mr. Perkins, do you know any man in or about this place who has a scarred, hard hand, such as you describe? "

"Yes; but I would not dare mention his name in this connection, for he is an innocent, elegant young gentleman, very mild in his manners; came here a few months ago with the best recommendations from a clerical friend, an old schoolmate of mine, in Massachusetts, and bore a letter to me from him. O, I won't allow myself to name him; it would be too bad," said he.

"But," said I, "the greatest scoundrels steal the livery of heaven to serve the devil in, you know; and I am here to work, and you want the full truth to come out, hit where it may—don't you?"

"Yes; but it can't be this young man: and yet the villain was about his size."

"And wore a 'sack, like,' you say. Do you know if this young man has any such garment?"

"O, no, it was quite like a hostler's work coat. He hasn't anything of the sort."

"Well—no matter: please give me his name, and tell me all about him. What is he doing here?"

"Teaching music, principally; teaches most anything—the languages, especially French; says he has lived in France a while; but 'tain't he—and—if 'twas, I don't know but I should forgive him, if I knew it, as far as I am concerned, and let him go, or send him off; for he's engaged to a beautiful niece of mine, and first made her acquaintance here at my house. They had but just left when you called last night, and were full of sympathy for me. He is very active in devising plans to catch the villains, and has been out frequently with others, keeping night watch."

"Were there any robberies on the nights of such watching?" I asked.

"No; but I never suspected there would be, when so many were watching."

"Yet," said I, "from what I learn, the robberies have been very bold at times—early in the evening, when people were abroad."

"True," he replied. "I didn't think of that before. I wish I could have got at the scoundrels' faces that night; but their caps were securely tied on, and their faces blackened."

“They were white men, you are sure, then?”

“Yes; no doubt of that.”

Finally, I persuaded Mr. Perkins to give me the man’s name, as he knew, of course, I could now find it out by inquiring of somebody else, if I thought prudent to inquire.

We talked over the matter still further: and Mr. Perkins agreed to keep to his bed for two or three days. I was to reconnoiter, and report to him what I found out, and we were to consult together, and I left. I avoided making the acquaintance of the young man in question, although I had twenty occasions for so doing for a day or two; but on the night of the third day after my arrival another burglary took place, of considerable amount, and there was evidence, too, of an attempt at arson. In listening to the investigation of the burglary, I thought I saw that the young music teacher was as likely as anybody to have had a hand in it: and was confirmed in my suspicions by his manner, when I heard him talk it over next day with some friends at the hotel.

I managed to get near him, and spoke of the robberies as the most daring outrages, and suggested that there must be a gang of villains—old offenders—secreted near the village somewhere, or else they must, if coming from abroad, perform herculean feats of riding. But he told me he thought my theory was a mistake, as no strange horses or teams had ever been discovered in or near the village on the occasions of robbery; and entered very intelligently into the question, declaring at last that the villains must be caught if he himself were obliged, with others, to lie in wait for a year. There was something a little bombastic in his style as he said this, which confirmed my suspicions of him more and more. He told me he had heard of my attendance upon Mr. Perkins; was glad he had such skillful care, and that he seemed improving; and as he resorted there much himself, had hoped to meet me there, but had not happened to; was glad to have made my acquaintance, etc.; all of which was uttered with a very innocent, and indeed pleasant air, yet I suspected him, somehow, only the more.

Mr. Perkins kept apparently ill, and I visited him regularly. Two nights after my interview with the music teacher, as related above, I was going home from Mr. Perkins’s to the hotel. (I should mention that the teacher, whose name in the village was Henry Downs, —but not his true name, —had called at Mr. Perkins’s, and left a quarter of an hour before.) Going to the hotel, as I have said, I passed two men standing beside a large tree on the line of the sidewalk. The evening was very dark, and I only saw them when within six feet of them, perhaps, and I heard one of them say, “Ah, ha! the old fool is unsuspecting; we’ll get another chance near home. A good night tonight, eh?” The voice was unmistakably that of the teacher, and I inferred that he alluded to Mr. Perkins. “Hush,” I heard the other man say, as I approached in passing them; and I saw that the other man had on a “sack-like,” such as Mr. Perkins had described. Of course I was now fully confirmed in my suspicions, and devised various plans to trap the villains, but nothing I could think of seemed likely to me or Mr. Perkins to prove practical. At last we hit upon this as a first step. I was to get ill enough to keep my room as Mr. Perkins got well. He was to visit me in turn, and was to consult the committee, who were greatly vexed all the while among themselves (as it appeared afterwards) that that ‘rascally New York detective did not come on.’ Mr. Perkins was to report me as a man of much wealth, with quite a sum of money, which I had brought intending to speculate, but having looked around, and not being satisfied with any real estate for sale there,

was going away as soon as I recovered. This was noised about, and a week or so passed before I got up and was ready to go. Mr. Perkins, in the mean while, had come to my opinion that the music teacher was indeed the villain, and believing it his duty to expose him rather than shield him on his niece's account, entered quite spiritedly into my plans.

The music teacher was more attentive to me than ever when I met him, after it was said that I was rich; and at a little party which Mr. Perkins gave me the night before I was to leave, the teacher was all attention to me. It was given out that I should leave the next night, on the way north of the village, to call on a relative living about twenty miles from that village. I must be there, it was said, that night, to meet my friend from whom I had had a letter, and who would leave by the stage the next morning after; and for the next day Mr. Perkins and I had a ride of twenty miles and back to take in another direction to look at some mills in which he was persuading me to take an interest. Mr. Perkins was to loan me his horse for the night trip.

The ladies present said, some of them, that they hoped Dr. Hudson would not think of going in the night. "Just think of the robbers." I replied that robbers never touched doctors; that doctors never had any money about them; that they would not take my pills, I presumed, if I were to prescribe them regularly; and so we joked over the matter.

The next day Mr. Perkins and I, having ridden out of town, returned after dark, and after a good supper at his house, I paid my bills at the hotel, took his horse and sallied forth on my "night visit." I had not ridden over three miles, and was passing along a dark avenue lined with trees, when suddenly two men appeared before me, each grasping at a rein, and one presenting a pistol as near my head as he could reach, exclaimed, in a husky voice, —

"No noise, you old villain! Dismount!"

"Stop, stop!" said I, in a low voice. "Have mercy! What do you want of me?"

"Nothing of *you*—but your money," answered the husky voice. "Get off your horse quick, or I'll blow your brains out."

"I will, I will!" I whispered, with a voice that intimated trepidation, "but my leg is a little lame. Give me your hand to help," and extended my left hand, which he took in his left, still holding the pistol in his right. He had to extend his left hand quite high to help me, and I could not only feel, but see the scarred, hard hand—the same which Mr. Perkins had felt, and a like of which deformed the otherwise handsome music teacher. Of course his face, as well as his comrade's in crime, was muffled.

Having dismounted, they insisted on my giving them all my money. I consented without resistance, and pulled out my wallet, and handed him fifteen dollars—a ten dollar and a five dollar bill.

"Give us the rest," said the husky voice.

"Gentlemen," I said, "I have no more."

“It is a lie, doctor,” said the husky voice. “We know all about you—we’ve watched you, and know that you brought hundreds of dollars to the village below.”

“I did,” I said; “that is true enough; but my patient, Mr. Perkins, and I took a ride to his mills today, and when there I invested what I had, all but enough to pay my bills about here and get back again.”

“But we must search you.”

I said “Very well,” and they did search me most thoroughly, and took my bull’s-eye silver watch (not very valuable in itself, but the gift of an old brother detective, who had since died. Said he, as he gave it to me, “Don’t let anybody rob you of that,” with a laugh; and I thought how funny it would seem to him, were he alive, to find *me* parting with it under *such* circumstances).

The robbers let me go, saying they had no use for the horse, and bade me have more money about me next time. Said they’d been called pretty severe and cruel on certain occasions, but that they were gentle enough with folks that didn’t make foolish resistance, etc. Indeed, they tried to be jocular with me; and I submitted to their course, and joined in it, as the best way. They bade me a hearty good night, but enjoined me not to stop anywhere and mention my loss till tomorrow, or they’d find some way to dispose of me if I did, with like threats; and then darted off into the side fields, bidding me to “go ahead,” however; and I rode on for some three miles, but fortunately, when riding with Mr. Perkins that day, I had noticed a cross road, which would lead into the road on which he and I had come out of and returned into the town. I was meditating, at the time I came upon it, what to do. Should I ride back furiously over the road on which I was robbed, the villain might waylay me again, for, perhaps, they were not far off— may be were watching. Perhaps they might fire upon me; but luckily here was the cross road, and I darted down it, and found my way back into the village by the old road, and you may be sure that my horse, if horses have memories, did not soon forget that night’s race, for I put him to the top of his speed. I alighted at the barn of Mr. Perkins, and fortunately found there his “hired man,” who clapped the horse into the stable at once, and I then felt secure. Getting access at once to Mr. Perkins, I narrated my adventure. He was not astounded at what I had learned, for he had for some time believed, as I, that the music teacher was the man, but he was confounded that the villains let me off so easily.

The next thing was to catch the scamps, and make the evidence against them sure; and Mr. Perkins, at my suggestion, sent his man out to call four of the most trusty citizens, two of whom chanced to be of the original committee who waited upon my partner and me in New York, to come to his house at once. To them, when they came, was intrusted his plan. “Dr. Hudson” was now announced as the partner-detective whom they had seen in New York. He, too, had been robbed, and he knew who were the robbers—or one of them! Greater astonishment than these gentlemen evinced at this disclosure could not well be expressed. But we did not speak to them of the music teacher. They were to remain at Mr. Perkins’s till we should call them. Making some change in my dress by aid of articles borrowed of Mr. Perkins, and of my countenance by assuming a pair of false whiskers which I had brought with me, besides a hat very unlike what I had been wearing in the village, and Mr. Perkins disguising himself, we went forth, and placed ourselves where we could readily perceive any comer to the house at which the music teacher

boarded. Patiently we watched. Two hours or more went by, when a man came from the opposite course by which we expected him, and, proceeding to the door of the house, evidently lightly tried it— could not get in; went around the corner of the house, noiselessly raised a side window, and as noiselessly mounted in. I was not over thirty feet from him as he entered, and notwithstanding the darkness, I felt sure I knew him, though he did not wear the sack. Mr. Perkins had seen his stealthy entry, too, from another point, and in a few minutes we came together, I having meanwhile slid up by the side of the house next to the window, and heard the in-comer open or close a window above. He had already gone to his room, which Mr. Perkins had told me was at the back of the house. He knew the way to it— had called on the young man there.

We proceeded at once to Mr. Perkins's, instructed our waiting friends what to do, —for we might need aids, —and asked them to follow. No man was to speak a word, but do as he was bidden.

My dark lantern was lit and deposited under my cloak, and we went out, along down the street, across another, —down another a little way, and I saw that the citizens were occasionally looking wonder into each other's eyes, as much as to say, Where are we going? We arrived at the house, entered the yard. Mr. Perkins, by our arrangements, was to take and post two of the men under the villain's window, to catch him in case he should try to escape, to one of whom he gave a pistol, saying, "Catch any man who tries to escape out of this house. Shoot him, if necessary."

Up to this point not a word had been said to them of the music teacher. We had thought best to not knock for admission, of course; and I got in at the window where the villain had entered, proceeded to the little hall, unlocked silently the front door, and let in Mr. P. and the two other men. "Follow me softly," whispered Mr. P., and be led to the villain's room.

An hour had passed since we saw him come in, and we concluded he'd be asleep, as he was. We carefully tried the door: it was locked by a button. Mr. Perkins whispered to me, "Shall we rap, and catch him when he rises?"

"No, no," I answered quickly ; and with a dash against the door with my shoulders, easily effected entrance. The villain started wildly. I threw the dazzling light of my dark lantern into his face, and rushed upon him in bed, clutched his throat, and cried, "Seize his clothes, and everything in the room! This is the man. Open the window, and call in the others to the show;" and Mr. Perkins did so.

In an instant the two men had found their way up to the room; and, in fact, the whole household was by this time aroused. We made speedy work of searching the wretch's clothes, and among other money found the five dollar bill taken from me. Without explanation, I passed it to Mr. Perkins, who recognized a peculiar mark we had made upon it, its date, etc. But the ten dollar bill was found in the villain's trunk, together with quite a sum of money. Mr. Perkins recognized the marks we had placed upon that: the watch was not to be found.

The teacher was a lithe, muscular fellow, and would have given me, alone, much trouble to hold him; but he was overwhelmed, and did little else but groan. We at once told him of the

marked bills, etc., and pointed out to him that his best course now was to expose his accomplice or accomplices; that the bitterest curses of the law would fall upon him if he did not.

The pale, trembling fellow, a real coward at heart, as many such villains are, made his confession on the spot, notes of which were taken down by me and by one of the committee-men in his diary. He told us that his accomplice was a son of a pretty well-to-do fanner, whose name I cannot mention, and whose relations still reside in the village—most estimable people, which is the reason why I have carefully avoided mentioning the name of the place.

When he named his accomplice, one of the committee-men groaned audibly (I should say that we had kept the inmates of the house out of the room during this confession), for the accomplice, it appears, was that committee-man's nephew! —a much-esteemed, industrious young man, led away by the brilliancy, dash, and superior education of the music teacher.

But where was the watch? The teacher told us. Under a barn belonging to his accomplice's father, and not ten rods from his residence, was a place of deposit for such things as they could not readily dispose of. Indeed, had disposed of but little: there he thought we could find it, and there, next morning, we did.

But here was a complication. The nephew must be saved if possible, and Mr. Perkins could not bear the exposure which would involve his niece in disgrace, and we were nonplussed what to do.

We arranged, finally, that since the inmates of the house did not *know* for certainty that this teacher was the villain, that we would let it go abroad that we had all been out together with the teacher, watching the villains; that the teacher had suffered a severe fall when getting over a high fence, and that we had come home with him—all this upon the condition that the avails of all his robberies should be restored to the rightful parties, and that he should allow Mr. Perkins to go and draw, on his order, all his money in a certain bank in Cincinnati, where he said he had at the time twenty-eight hundred dollars, which we found to be true; and that he should in the end accompany me to Pittsburg, Pa., which he declared to be the theatre of his first essays in crime, and where he said he was willing to deliver himself up to the authorities for old offences; for he was as penitent a man, in appearance, as I ever saw, and said he would rather go to State's Prison for life, than be longer pursued by terrible temptations to crime.

One of our party was left with him that night, armed, and bidden to shoot him if he attempted to escape; and the rest went forth. We found the place of deposit under the barn, removed everything therefrom to a safe place, and next morning Mr. Perkins called on the young farmer, took him out to the barn, and showed him my bull's-eye watch.

“Did you ever see that, sir.”

“No,” said the young man.

“No lies sir,” said Mr. P —; “we are going to do you no harm. The villain” (the music teacher) “has told us all about it. We have removed the things from down there” (pointing to the place of deposit), “and you are caught, beyond hope of escape.”

The young man turned pale, fell over upon Mr. Perkins’s breast, and groaned out, “O God, that villain, as you call him, has ruined me! I could not resist him; he dragged me along against my will. I have suffered tortures of conscience. I cannot resist him ! O, spare me!”

“Yes, yes,” said P—, affected to tears by the young man’s sufferings, “I believe you. You have been under a spell. We will see what can be done for you. As for myself, I forgive you.”

That day there was a private conference of the discovering parties at Mr. Perkins’s house. The whole matter was discussed, and it was concluded that the villain should suffer his just punishment in Pennsylvania rather than in Ohio; that he should leave with “Dr. Hudson,” and be no more heard of there; that the young farmer should be allowed to repent; and that so many of his relations, the committee-man with the rest, should not be put to the disgrace of his public punishment. He was sent for, and came; and a more harrowing case of an accusing conscience than was his, imagination, in its wildest flights, could hardly depict. I felt for him to the bottom of my soul. The teacher, who was so watched that he could by no means escape, was sent for too, and when he came, the poor young farmer looked at him with bewildering horror. The whole matter was discussed before him, his order duly made on the bank, and Mr. Perkins departed next day to draw the money. Meanwhile it was arranged that the other property should all be brought and deposited in Mr. Perkins’s barn at night, with a note accompanying it, that the robbers, having no use for it, wished it distributed to those to whom it belonged; which, becoming known to the villagers, there was a throng for hours at the barn next day, —one recognizing and claiming this silver spoon, —some old watch—this watch chain— that silver snuff-box (with the snuff and the veritable “bean” in it), as the owner said, and so on and so on, together with a few valuable books, all small articles, and many of them ladies’ ornaments. How they came to the barn, is, I suppose, a mystery still to the villagers.

Mr. Perkins returned with the money, was paid back all that had been robbed from him, and the teacher insisted that he should take a hundred dollars more. The teacher paid his bills in town, being all the time closely watched by some two of us, and the residue of the money was put into my hands. A strict oath of eternal secrecy was taken by Perkins and the other four gentlemen, on account of the penitent young farmer. (I wish I dare to tell what has become of him, but it might lead to his identification. Suffice it that he was, when I last heard about him, only a year and a half ago, regarded as the finest and best young man anywhere to be found. He had married a niece of Mr. Perkins, by the way. And here, perhaps. I ought to say that “Perkins” is not the proper name of my friend, but one I have used for convenience; for it would be a wretched thing to do to give any clue to the young farmer’s identification.)

Finally, all being settled, the music teacher consenting to the suggestion of the committee that I should be paid out of his funds one thousand dollars, then and there, and I keeping the rest of his money, we bade our friends good by, and started on our way to Pittsburg. I had no trouble with the teacher on my way to Cincinnati (it was given out, by the by, that he was going to study medicine with “Dr. Hudson”); but when we arrived in Cincinnati I took him aside, told him he

was my prisoner, and that I would give him a disguise, so that he need not be subject to shame in case we encountered, on our way, anybody he might know; but that he must submit to be manacled in travelling with me farther, for I feared he would escape. He consented to this.

I started with him from Cincinnati to Pittsburg, and arriving there, placed him in charge of parties at the hotel where I stopped. He wanted to write some letters, he said, and I let him do so. One of them was to the lady he had left behind, Mr. Perkins's niece. The letters could not go till the morning's mail, and I could not, of course, let those to others than the young lady go without reading them myself, for they might mean mischief. Intending to take proper legal proceedings the next day, I had him placed in a small room leading out from my sleeping-room, and without a door except that into my room, and with no avenue for light, save a small window at the top, divested him of his clothes, which I put back of my bed, and caused my door to be guarded outside all night. I suppose I slept with unusual soundness, for I heard not the slightest noise from his room. On awaking in the morning I called to him. There was no answer; and I jumped out of bed, and went into his room, only to find him hanging, cold and dead, from a clothes peg in the side of the wall in the room! He had somehow managed to strip a piece from a sheet without awakening me, rolled it into a small rope, and hung himself by this peg. He proved himself a young man of spirit in his last act, for his legs were bent up to keep his feet from the floor—the rope being too long, or having stretched evidently.

Such was the end of the music teacher; and not the least interesting fact touching him was, that he was from one of the first New England families, well educated, expelled college in his second year for some "romantic conduct" which bordered on crime, and was shunned by his high-toned Puritanic relations, —mercilessly treated, in short, —and to this fact, I conceive, may be attributed his downfall in part. Mercy and forgiveness, bestowed at the proper time, are among the best preventives of a course of crime once entered upon.

The music teacher's letters were never sent to their intended destinations. That to the young lady was very kindly, telling her that his love for her was an infatuation, from which he had broken away; that they were not suited to live together after all; that she would probably never hear from him again, for years at least (!), and that he hoped her every joy. I did not think it best to forward it to her. She married, in a year or two after his "desertion," to a fine man, so "Mr. Perkins," when I last saw him, told me, and was very happy, and still in blissful ignorance of the fate of the "heartless" but brilliant music teacher, and finally brave (?) suicide.

McWatters, George. *Knots Untied: Or, Was and By-Ways in the Hidden Life of American Detectives*. Hartford: Burr and Hyde, 1871 (848 pages)