

## *An Exiled Bank Cashier*

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### His Mysterious Conduct in a Wild Retreat

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The Pretty Widow's Escape – A Detective  
Forbids the Ban, and Arrests the Bridegroom  
at the Altar

A LITTLE village named Trenton is located in the mountains of North Georgia, where the breezes are always fresh and invigorating. The nearest railroad station is twenty-five miles, and the only means of communication with the outside world is furnished by the stage line which carries the mails and passengers three times a week to and from the station.

Trenton is like the average country town. The merchants are not too busy but what they can sit in front of their stores and whittle white pine as they discuss politics and religion—two subjects upon which discussions are never brought to a final close. Another matter in which Trenton did not differ from other villages was that everybody was perfectly familiar with the business of his neighbor. They knew what went on at the breakfast table next door, and if a stranger visited the town his business was known to the entire community before the setting of the sun.

I never knew them to be baffled but once. When the stage arrived one Friday evening a middle-aged stranger of prepossessing appearance alighted and entered the hotel, followed by his baggage, which consisted of an ordinary traveling trunk. The only inscription that appeared upon the register was J. Doster. No place of residence to indicate who Mr. Doster was or to furnish any clue as to his business.

The next day Mr. Doster appeared upon the streets and strolled around for a while, after which he visited the office of the Trenton *Budget* and immediately placed himself upon good terms with the editor by paying for six months' subscription. Mr. Doster was a polished gentleman, and it was not long before he was on quite friendly terms with the editor of the *Budget*. He had a decided preference for the city dailies, and while the editor was engaged in his labors Mr. Doster would spend several hours each day scanning the columns of the New York and Boston papers.

Every man, woman and child in Trenton inquired of the landlord at the hotel, and of the editor, who Mr. Doster was, but without gaining any information. Days passed into weeks and weeks into months, and still Mr. Doster lingered, evidently pleased with his surroundings. He had become quite a favorite with the hotel proprietor and was so useful in fashioning odds and ends in the shape of bric-a-brac for the hotel that he was no longer regarded as a boarder but an honored guest.

Every afternoon he took long strolls in the woods and created some interest among the good country people, who wondered why the stranger could find so much delight in tapping rocks with the little hatchet he always carried with him or picking up such curious looking stones that struck his fancy.

At the expiration of a year the people of Trenton knew no more of Mr. Doster than they did on the day of his arrival in their midst. Some of the more inquisitive had ventured to ask Mr. Doster where was from, but they met with no success, as Mr. Doster made it a point never to hear a question that related to his past life. He alluded occasionally to mining in California and digging oil wells in Pennsylvania, but further than this no allusion to his former life and habits ever escaped his lips.

The people of Trenton were completely outdone and they looked upon Mr. Doster with suspicious eyes, nearly all of them agreeing that any man who was ashamed to own his native home or to acknowledge his business must be a bad man and they predicted all manner of evil to befall the mysterious stranger.

About two years after Mr. Doster's arrival in Trenton he found, in one of his evening rambles, traces of gold on the farm of Mrs. Jernigan, a most estimable widow who lived three miles from the village.

Doster kept his own counsel, but made convenient in a few days to call at the widow's and make her acquaintance, which he found but little trouble in doing, as Doster was handsome and courteous, while the widow had not grown too old to lose all interest in the sterner sex.

Mrs. Jernigan had a valuable farm outside of the prospects of developing a gold mine upon it. Of course she was elated with the idea of increasing her worldly possessions, and as Mr. Doster seemed to be the medium through which she was to develop her new-found wealth he rapidly grew in her favor.

The widow furnished the means to erect temporary works and agreed to give Mr. Doster all the help he required to develop the new-found mine. He labored faithfully and each day as he called at the widow's house to report his progress, the friendship between the two increased and it soon began to dawn upon the widow's mind that she entertained more than a business interest in the mysterious stranger, while Mr. Doster, though ever courteous and gallant, could not conceal his admiration for the attractive willow.

Mrs. Jernigan's friends cautioned her and did everything in their power to discourage the match, but fate seemed to be against them, and gradually but surely the couple were drawn together, and so strong become their affection for each other that friends decided to let love take its course and the two who were most interested take the consequences.

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The marriage day had arrived and the Jernigan household was all astir making the final preparations for the happy event. Mr. Doster had succeeded in convincing the widow that the gold mine was valuable and that it would eventually yield her a handsome fortune.

Notwithstanding Doster had been in the village three years, nothing more was known of him now than on the day of his arrival, and having failed to gratify the curiosity of the citizens of

Trenton he did not make any friends except the landlord, the editor of the *Budget* and the widow Jernigan.

Doster was as sharp as a briar, and took the precaution to make a marriage contract with the widow before the consummation of the marriage. By this contract Doster was to have a half interest in the gold mine and all the other worldly goods with which the widow was endowed.

The guests had nearly all arrived and the grounds and mansion were ablaze with light. The widow was a lady of exquisite taste, and she had determined to make this the most brilliant social event that the people of Trenton and vicinity had ever witnessed.

The hour for the ceremony arrived and the couple entered the parlor, the bride looking exceedingly lovely as she leaned upon the strong arm of the handsome and distinguished looking stranger. The minister had proceeded with the ceremony and in his solemn voice said:

“If any person can show sufficient cause why this ceremony should not proceed let them now speak or hereafter hold their peace.”

“I forbid the bans,” said a tall, athletic stranger entering the room hurriedly and placing his hand upon Doster’s shoulder, said: “I arrest you in the name of the commonwealth of Massachusetts.”

The widow shrieked and fell to the floor fainting. The guests were greatly excited and the house was in an uproar. As soon as quiet could be partially restored and the widow removed from the room, the stranger who had created the disorder asked permission to explain his conduct.

“I am a detective.” said he, “and have been looking for this man for three years. His name is not Doster, but Henry B. Johns, formerly cashier of a bank in Boston. Three years ago he was found to be over a half million dollars short in his accounts, and while an investigation was being made he absconded, choosing this quiet and out-of-the-way place as a safe retreat. While passing through your town last week in search of another criminal I got a glimpse of Johns and hastened back to Massachusetts to get requisition papers for his arrest.

The detective left with his prisoner and the crowd dispersed, having been greatly disappointed in not seeing a marriage, but comforted to some extent by having at last found a clew to the mysterious stranger’s history.

Arriving at his hotel Doster asked permission to pack his trunk before departing for his old home in Boston. The detective granted it and stood at the door as Doster began his preparations for the journey. The work was nearly completed when the sharp report of a pistol rang through the room and the lifeless form of the defaulting cashier lay stretched upon the floor weltering in a pool of blood.

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Mrs. Jernigan was so humiliated at her narrow escape that she closed her doors to all visitors and as soon as her affairs could be wound up removed to a distant state, where in a quiet, retired

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cottage she is spending her days, and with new faces and new surroundings is endeavoring to forget her experience with the exiled cashier.

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