

## *The Detective's Story*

by Frank Lee Benedict

“The neatest case that ever came under my personal knowledge?” questioned Detective Sparkle, in a meditative tone.

I nodded, looking interested in advance.

“Well, I don't know that I could decide as to that, on the spur of the moment, but I'll tell you one that ranks high on my list of tidy things. It happened ten years ago, and the only person to whom I promised secrecy is dead. The truth was kept so quiet that nobody except the people concerned would recognize the facts, even if you put them in a story; and what's more, nobody that read it would ever believe but what you made the thing up out of your own head.”

Mr. Sparkle indulged in a brief meditation, apparently collecting his memories, and presently began his narrative, in these words:

“I was summoned one morning from Scotland Yard to go to the residence of Colonel Helstone, near Kensington Gardens. It was the finest house in the street, standing in grounds of its own, with a carriage-drive in front, hen-houses and grape-vines in the rear, and every other outward sign of wealth and luxury.

“I rang the bell, and when I mentioned my name to the servant who opened the door, he said that Mr. Helstone was expecting me; but I saw by the expression on his face that he had no idea of my identity, or of the business that brought me there.

“I was shown directly upstairs, and ushered in to a library on the second flight. The man tapped on a door at the farther end, entered in obedience to a summons from within, and in a few moments returned, asking me to go into his master's dressing-room. Between natural aptitude for my profession, and long practice therein, I can take a comprehensive view of details much more rapidly than most people. Before I had spoken a word, or Mr. Helstone had even finished his first sentence, I think I could have told every stick of furniture, down to the ornaments, and had had a good look, not only at the owner of all that magnificence, but at a young gentleman of twenty-eight or so, busily engaged in writing a letter, who struck me as about the finest and handsomest specimen of a London 'swell' that I had ever set eyes on.

“Mr. Helstone was a handsome man, too, of about sixty, with features which were at once gentle and determined, and a head that I think I should have recognized as remarkable, even had I not known its possessor by reputation as one of the shrewdest and most fortunate financiers of our day.

“ ‘Glad to see you, Mr. Sparkle; much obliged for your promptness,’ were his opening words. ‘Pray sit down, and I will explain the business which made me send for you. My nephew here,

Captain Tevis, knows all about the matter: indeed, it was he who advised me to choose you, happening to have heard of your skill and discretion.’

“The Captain glanced at me with a smile, and nodded as if this were an introduction; and I thought to myself that at least I had two real gentlemen to deal with. And let me tell you that though my duties have often led me among the high and mighty, I’ve not found the genuine article any too common.

“It would take too long to repeat the conversation which put me in possession of the entire case, so I will give you the plain facts as briefly as I can.

“Although Mr. Helstone had in a measure retired from business, he was still interested in numerous stock and mining companies, and usually found his way two or three times a week over to a certain office in Lothbury. A few days previous, a fire had broken out in the building, which had done a good deal of damage; and the owners chose that opportunity, since repairs must be made, to undertake numerous alterations which had long been contemplated.

“Mr. Helstone had kept there in a safe, certain transferable bonds to a large amount, and besides these, what would seem quite a fortune to you or me, in the way of diamonds and other valuable jewelry, which had belonged to his late wife. It became necessary to remove these, and as his own home was warranted fire and burglar proof, he decided to transfer them to a safe which stood in a large light closet off from his library. He put the papers and boxes in a valise, along with a sum of money lately paid him, carried them home in his carriage, and laid them away without confiding his secret to anybody. He chose a new combination for unlocking the fire-proof, and, too methodical to trust to his memory jotted down a reminder in a note-book which lay in a drawer of his writing-table. He chose the name ‘Wilson’ for the word, and wrote under it ‘Papers to return,’ and below that the date. You will see presently why I am so particular about what seems a mere trifle.

“That very evening, he slipped on the doorstep, as he was leaving the house, and sprained his ankle so severely that he had to be carried upstairs and put to bed. The pain was excessive for the time, and, into the bargain, he was suffering torture from a neglected tooth: so the doctor administered a liberal narcotic, which had the effect of partly stupefying him, and at the same time filling his head with all sorts of half-delirious fancies.

“His niece, Miss Rose Halsey, who lived with him, had gone to dine with a relative; but it chanced that George Carlton, a young *protégé* of Mr. Helstone’s, was in the house, and took the management of matter into his own hands when the servants turned imbecile, as servants in fine houses have a trick of doing in the presence of sudden disaster.

“This Carlton was the son of an old friend of Mr. Helstone’s, and he had befriended him from boyhood, defraying the expenses of his education, and helping him to a situation later. The young man had disappointed his benefactor in one particular: instead of taking to business, his inclinations all turned towards literature; but finding that he had great talent as well as fondness for the profession, Mr. Helstone had aided him in his plans. Thanks to his influence, Carlton had a position on a leading newspaper, which afforded him a reasonable livelihood, and left him

leisure for what was probably the most congenial work of story-writing—plays too, I believe, though he had never got to the point of having one produced. Besides these occupations, he came to the house several times a week to assist Mr. Helstone in his numerous correspondence, and things of that sort, dined there frequently, and was firmly on the footing which might have been accorded a relative.

“After the physician had gone, Carlton remained alone with Mr. Helstone until past ten o’clock; then Miss Halsey returned, and a few moments later, Captain Tevis called, having heard at the club of his uncle’s accident. Both niece and nephew spoke rather reproachfully to Carlton because he had not sent for them at once; and he replied that, having the doctor’s assurance that the accident was not serious, he had thought it better not to alarm the young lady, and he had believed the Captain down at Greenwich.

“The following morning, Carlton sent Miss Halsey a note, asking news of her uncle, and full of regrets at his own inability to be of service for two or three days to come. He had been suddenly ordered to Liverpool on business for the newspaper; and any delay would peril his position, he said. In fact, he was forced to take the next train; and his messenger had orders to meet him at Euston Square station, with Miss Halsey’s reply.

“Two days elapsed. Mr. Helstone could hobble from his bed to an easy-chair; and late on the afternoon before I was summoned, he received a letter from the director of some company with which he had dealings, requesting certain papers which he had neglected to forward. These documents lay in the fire-proof. Mr. Helstone sent his servant down with order the clerk to wait till he rang; and when alone, he limped into the library and opened the safe. After taking out the package he wanted, some impulse led him to glance in to the drawer in which he had secreted the bonds, jewels, and money. To his dismay, they were all gone.

“He dispatched his business with the clerk; then, as anybody would, went back to institute a second and third examination of the safe, unable to believe the evidence of his own eyes. Before he had recovered from the first stupefaction caused by the discovery, Captain Tevis called, and his uncle acquainted him with the facts. There was only one person to whom suspicion could point with any degree of weight, and that was George Carlton; though until his nephew pointed this out, Mr. Helstone had not admitted the idea to his own consciousness. On his way to the house, Tevis had met a man connected with the paper whom he knew slightly, and had said it was hard of the firm to send Carlton off just then; and had received for answer a look of wonder and the reply that Carlton had been sent nowhere. On the contrary, he had written two days before to the editor that he was called away on business for Mr. Helstone. At his uncle’s request Tevis drove at once to Carlton’s lodgings and learned that he no longer lived there. He had given warning some time before, as, indeed, the whole Helstone family knew; but the woman said that although his things were packed and his bill paid, she had expected him back to pass the night. He did not return; and the next morning—the day Miss Halsey got his note—a man had called with a written order to take his luggage, and in reply to the woman’s question, said he was to carry it to the Euston Square station.

“Now, of course, details which would not otherwise have recurred to Mr. Helstone came up to swell the count. He recollected that when he entered the house with the valise, George Carlton

was in the hall. As he finished writing the combination-word in his note-book, he heard a sound, looked up, and saw Carlton standing in the half-open door; and the young man observed, rather confusedly, that he had thought Mr. Helstone bade him enter. Also, in his partial delirium, the old gentleman remembered distinctly twice waking from a doze by calling 'Wilson,' and then babbling something about having dropped his wife's wedding-ring, and wanting it searched for.

"It was plain that Mr. Helstone suffered keenly from the conviction forced upon him of the worthlessness of the young man he had loved and trusted; but it was equally clear that he would pursue the course he had commenced, without a shadow of weakness or relenting. He asked me if the suspicious evidence was strong enough to warrant Carlton's arrest, if he could be found; and to that I unhesitatingly answered in the affirmative. I inquired if the matter had been confided to any other person, and was told that Miss Halsey knew, but that she utterly refused to believe in Carlton's guilt.

"I saw Captain Tevis shrug his shoulders; and when he caught my eye he said:

" 'In fact, nobody but me was prepared to consider him anything but a model of all the virtues.' "

" 'You were not?' "

" 'The truth is,' returned the Captain, with his winning smile, 'I was only too ready to suspect him, because I never liked the fellow. Still, I must do myself the justice to say that I don't think it is in my nature to be mean or revengeful.' "

" 'No, no,' Mr. Helstone said.

" 'You see,' continued the Captain, 'I have been rather a scape-grace—got in debt and worried this best of uncles a good deal. But I held my tongue, though I could have told of certain gaming adventures and suppers with actresses, which certainly his salary could not have paid for.' "

"After a little more conversation, the Captain left us together, saying to his uncle that he had promised to see Miss Halsey. When Mr. Helstone and I had arranged upon the plan I deemed it best to pursue, I bade him good-morning, promising to call the next day. He gave me permission to look over the house; to hold any conversation I pleased with the butler; not that I expected to obtain information, but it is always my habit to leave nothing neglected.

"I glanced into the apartments on the upper floors, then went down to the drawing-room flight, entering a salon directly under Mr. Helstone's chambers. Heavy curtains hung over the doorway leading into the front room, and I could hear voices in excited conversation. My sense of honor as a man is one thing; my duty as a detective is another. Here I was simply the detective. To know all and everything possible about every person in that house was my duty; and I had no idea of hesitating to use any means that came to hand.

" 'Rose, Rose, do you realize what you are saying?' I heard Captain Tevis exclaim, in a voice so changed from the indolent tones in which he had spoken in my presence that it was scarcely recognizable.

“ ‘Perfectly,’ a clear ringing girl’s voice replied; ‘and I mean every word that I have uttered. You always hated George Carlton. But for you, my uncle would never have suspected him.’

“ ‘My belief had nothing to do with it,’ he interrupted. ‘The evidence is there—plain, conclusive: ask the detective.’

“ ‘What should I care for the opinion of all the detectives in London?’ she cried. ‘George Carlton is innocent—’

“ ‘He was a gambler and a libertine, and I can prove it.’ Tevis broke in again, a fierce anger now sounding in his tone.

“ ‘When I said you always hated him?’ she cried, contemptuously, ‘No proofs could move me: they can be bought by any unscrupulous man with money enough at his command.’

“ ‘Good God Rose! do you know what you are accusing me of?’

“ ‘I accuse you of nothing: I state my convictions.’

“ ‘And this to the man who has loved you so truly and so long!’

“ ‘I have told you again and again that I would not hear this language from you’, she said, slowly and sternly. ‘I consider it an insult. Repeat it, and I will appeal to my uncle for protection. If he cannot give such, I will leave his house: I am of age, and free to act.’

“ ‘Good heavens, Rose! can this be you?’

“ ‘I scarcely recognize myself,’ she answered; ‘but I warn you that while you are fighting against George Carlton, I shall be fighting for him.’

“ ‘Ah!’ gasped Tevis, ‘you said I hated the villain. No wonder, when I knew he presumed to love you—’

“ ‘He never told me so,’ she cried, before he could finish his sentence. ‘I wish now that he had.’

“ ‘You love him—you do—oh! you dare to admit it?’

“ ‘Leave this room!’ she said, in a voice scarcely above a whisper, but fuller of scornful indignation than any I ever heard. ‘Leave this room, or I shall go at once to my uncle, and he shall decide between you and me.’

“ ‘Rose!’ he cried, pleadingly.

“ ‘Go!’ she repeated and I could fancy the gesture which accompanying the tone.

“In another instant I heard Captain Tevis descend the stairs; and before I could move, the draperies were swept back, and Miss Halsey entered. I suppose people in general would have expected to see a tall black-eyed Juno of a creature; but my experience in the way of determined women made me quite prepared to see what I did: a medium-sized person, with hair like spun gold, a complexion so delicate and a figure so fragile that, but for the suppleness and grace of every movement, they would have given the impression of ill-health. She stopped short at the sight of me, her great eyes still black with excitement, fixed full on my face.

“ ‘You are Mr. Sparkle’ she said, inquiringly. I bowed. ‘You heard our conversation?’ I bowed again. ‘I am very glad of it. Perhaps my third bow exasperated her—though I had not intended it should—for she said, with somewhat of the contemptuous intonation in which she had addressed her cousin: ‘So your opinions are already formed? You have saved yourself trouble by accepting Captain Tevis’s theory?’

“ ‘I have no opinion, madam’ I said, quietly; ‘what I want is evidence: so far, it is very much against Mr. George Carlton!’

“She turned and left me without a word—without even deigning me a glance; for which I was sorry, though I thought, after all, that nothing could come of further conversation.

“During the next few days I was busy enough. I had unlimited means at my command, and I used them freely. A person answering to the missing man’s description had sailed from Southampton for Havre on the day Carlton’s luggage was sent to the Euston square station, and I dispatched a trusty agent to search Paris and the continental cities for him, not neglecting, to telegraph due information to America and Australia. For myself, I was occupied in London, and though I found no clue to the gentleman, I learned that Captain Tevis’s accusations in regard to his gaming, and other little weaknesses, were quite correct; and I learned, too, certain other things—and very mysterious they were—in regard to Miss Halsey herself. She had an income of two thousand pounds a year, and was at no expense whatever, as her uncle insisted upon providing for her dress while she acted as the mistress of his house; yet I discovered that Miss Halsey had, months before, been obliged to raise the sum of three thousand pounds secretly, being unable to touch her income without her uncle’s knowledge.

“Before the week ended, Miss Halsey discharged her maid: a faithful person, who had been in her service for years; and Mr. Helstone mentioned to me, incidentally, that his niece had declined to give him her reasons; but I learned from the butler that, after a stormy interview with her mistress, the woman was sent out of the house at a quarter of an hour’s notice.

“Nearly three weeks elapsed, and no trace of George Carlton could be gained. During that time, though I was frequently at the house, and often encountered Miss Halsey, no conversation passed between us; and beyond a slight bow of recognition she never appeared aware of my presence. She grew thin and pale; but before her uncle she bore up wonderfully—though my friend the butler could tell a different tale. Every step she took was carefully watched; and at last my mind was made up. I went to the house one morning, and sent her a message that I desired to see her. She came down in a few moments into the reception-room, and through her assumption of calmness I could detect a burning anxiety, for which I was not slow to find a reason.

“ ‘Have you some message you wish me to give my uncle?’ she asked, after wishing me a good-morning.

“ ‘No,’ I said ‘my errand is to you.’

“She sat down, and motioned me to take chair. Decided as I was, I felt it a formidable undertaking to speak. If she told her uncle, I should undoubtedly be at once dismissed. But that was of little consequence; for my efforts had so signally failed, that unless I could succeed in getting a hold on her, I might as well relinquish the case. She sat quietly looking at me, and I knew she was enjoying my perplexity. Finally she said, with a smile:

“ ‘You find it difficult to begin, Mr. Sparkle.’ I took refuge in a bow, vexed at my own hesitation. ‘Then I will help you,’ she went on. ‘ You have watched my movements very carefully—don’t look surprised denial.’

“ ‘I didn’t mean to,’ I answered bluntly.

“ ‘Your theory is: that I know something of George Carlton’s whereabouts: that I have means of communicating with him. You are mistaken; I am only trying to find such. Ask me any questions you like. I may answer freely. I may refuse to reply. I shall not even prevaricate. I never told a lie in my life.’

“She spoke slowly—like a person repeating words learned by heart; but she looked me full in the face with eyes that blazed like an eagle’s.

“ ‘Some months ago you raised secretly three thousand pounds,’ I said. “For whom?”

“ ‘Not for George Carlton. That is all I can tell you, because I gave my word; and I can’t break it.’

“ ‘Not even if your telling would help Mr. Carlton?’ I asked.

“She grew deathly white, closed her eyes for a moment to check a sudden rush of tears, then shook her head. So I knew that if hitherto as truthful as she boasted, she had begun to lie now.

“ ‘Then with your permission I will ask another question.’ I said. She bent her head assentingly. ‘During the past year you have been in the habit of paying frequent visits to a certain house in Paddington—Mr. Carlton went there, too. Of late your visits have ceased.’

“ ‘Yes. The person I used to visit is dead. She was a poor girl whom I had known in the country when we were children. She sought me out, with a sad tale of having been married in Italy. Her husband deserted her, after stealing the proofs of the marriage, and she found her way to London. I helped her till she died. Mr. Carlton, the only person to whom I confided her story, assisted me.’

“ ‘Will you tell me the name of the man she declared to be her husband?’

“ ‘Captain Arthur Tevis.’

“ ‘And you never told your uncle?’

“ ‘It would have been useless. The plot was so carefully arranged, that my uncle would have believed Arthur.’

“ ‘Miss Halsey, in the conversation I overheard, that first day, you insinuated that you suspected your cousin.’

“ ‘I did,’ she replied. ‘I do still.’

“ ‘On what grounds?’

“ ‘Captain Tevis was in the house, the day my uncle brought home the valise. I had opened the door, intending to go out into the grounds. I met him on the steps. We went into the breakfast-room; he angered me and we quarreled. I left him, and, as I got to the drawing-room floor, I heard my uncle ring; heard him tell Jackson to take the valise; from my window I saw Arthur Tevis go away.’

“ ‘Anything else?’

“ ‘Yes. After I had gone to bed the night of my uncle’s accident I woke suddenly from a bad dream. I was nervous and went down to listen at my uncle’s door. I heard a step on the stairs, looked down, and saw Mr. Carlton in the half-light. “You left uncle alone?” I said. “Oh, no,” he answered: “Johnson was in bed, and Captain Tevis agreed to wait till I got back. We broke a bottle of medicine: and I’ve been a full hour hunting the chemist who had the prescription. The Captain mistook the name.”’

“ ‘Why didn’t you mention this?’

“ ‘Because Johnson is certain the Captain left the house before he went to bed. You all would have said Mr. Carlton told a falsehood.’

“ ‘Is that all?’

“ ‘No. Yesterday, Captain Tevis paid gaming debts to the amount of five thousand pounds. He is ruined; has only his pay and an allowance from my uncle. There isn’t a soul who would lend him five hundred.

“ ‘You have told me what my theory is. Will you confide yours to me?’

“ ‘I believe George Carlton has been kidnapped and hidden somewhere in London.’

“ ‘But you received a note from him the morning after the –’



“ ‘He never wrote that note! The suspicion did not occur to me for days; then I compared it carefully with other notes, and I could see a difference. I have the letter in my pocket. I have carried it ever since. Look at it; and look at this page, which *is* his writing.’

“ ‘I took the sheets she held out: but after a rigid scrutiny, was certain the same hand had penned both. I asked her if I might entrust them to an expert for examination, and she consented, on my giving a solemn promise that I would return them.

“ ‘What is your opinion now?’

“ ‘I told you that I never have opinions.’

“ ‘Is there any ground for suspecting Captain Tevis?’

“ ‘I can see none whatever; though I want an explanation as to how he paid his indebtedness.’

“ ‘He will be here presently. My uncle asked him to come at once, not remembering that he was obliged to go out. Go into the next room, and you shall hear me ask him.’

“ ‘Good! One question more. You sent your maid away –’

“ ‘For personal reasons, which I do not choose to give. There is the bell—that is Captain Tevis.’

“ ‘I hurried into the adjoining chamber, and hid behind the portiere. Presently the Captain entered. His cousin cut short his salutations by saying, curtly:

“ ‘Have you unexpectedly come into a fortune?’

“ ‘I felt as if I had, yesterday,’ he answered, ‘when I was able to pay the last five thousand pounds I owed.’

“ ‘Yet uncle settled your debts less than nine months ago. You must not trust to my generosity to keep from him the fact that you have been gambling.’

“ ‘My God! Rose, how you treat me,’ he cried. ‘I have not touched a card since I gave my promise. The truth is, I kept dark about the five thousand. I dared not put it in. I’ll tell you how I paid it: I sold two of my best horses, and the pictures that were saved from the fire at my old den in Hampshire.’

“ ‘There were none saved, except in a ruinous state.’

“ ‘I thought so at first. But three of the Wouermans were restored as good as ever. I said nothing as I meant to sell them to help me out. Now do, for once, believe me.’

“ ‘Uncle wished me to tell you he was unexpectedly called out. He won’t be home till dinner,’ was all she said.

“ ‘That means you want me to go?’

“ ‘It does.’

“ ‘Rose—Rose!’

“She passed him and went into the hall. He followed. I heard the outer door close behind him. As I reached the corridor, Miss Halsey was ascending the stairs. She waved her hand, in a sign more of utter discouragement than of leave-taking and passed on. I waited until I was certain the Captain had time to reach the street. Then I left the house.

“As I was going down the road, to my surprise he came out of the shrubberies, where he had been gathering an autumn flower.

“ ‘You—Mr. Sparkle?’ he said. ‘Why, my cousin did not say you were there.’

“ ‘Did not remember, perhaps,’ I answered carelessly.

“He stopped short and looked at me fixedly. An expression of terrible pain crossed his face.

“ ‘She asked me that question for you to hear,’ he said. ‘Great heavens, I cannot bear this any longer. I have loved that woman better than my own soul, and she hates me for it! Why, one would think she wanted to put her lover’s guilt on me. It is too awful.’

“I had no doubt that she did want to, but I kept my own counsel. After a little more talk, he indicated that the next day, I should go with him and I should have convincing proof that his story in regard to raising money was true.

“ ‘Rose has West Indian blood in her veins,’ he said: ‘she never forgives. Sparkle, she loves that man. She would hang me, if she could, to save him. It is dreadful to say; but I must speak to somebody. I’d die sooner than say a word to my uncle. But she will never rest till she has ruined me with him—and oh! How I loved her—did—I do! Well, I needn’t make a fool of myself. I must endure it all.’

“I was genuinely sorry for him; and what was unpardonable in my excitement I let him see my suspicion that Carlton was hidden in London, that Miss Halsey knew it, and that the maid, who had been dismissed as a blind, was in their confidence.

“He looked like death when he seized my idea. I made him go into a public-house and drink a glass of wine. He did not seem angry or revengeful – only broken-hearted, but determined to save his cousin. He proposed a score of wild plans for discovering the fugitive.

“Another week went by. I had seen the men who had purchased the horses and pictures, was working away unremittingly, and now with Captain Tevis’s full assistance. I left the watching of his cousin to a trusty agent of his; sent him daily a list of my engagements, and the places at which I could be found at certain hours, so that if he got upon any clue, no time would be lost.

“And on the seventh day a summons came in hot haste. George Carlton had been found. Miss Halsey’s former maid had been recognized, in spite of her careful disguise. She had been watched. She and Miss Halsey were in the house. The address was a street of ill-repute, over in the heart of the city. The underground rail took me there speedily, accompanied by a couple of officers in plain clothes.

“When I rang at the door Captain Tevis’s man admitted me. The Captain himself hurried down the stairs. He was wildly excited, but struggled hard for composure.

“ ‘My cousin and her maid are upstairs,’ he said. ‘They refused to go. Oh do urge Rose to get away! This is how it was: my man got on the woman’s track; then saw her and Rose. He pushed his way in. The old man who has the house seems half an idiot; says he didn’t know there was anything wrong; the young man came here to lodge, gave him money, and then was taken ill – very ill. That’s why he wasn’t moved. He can sit up now. Even his luggage is here.’

“A few more hasty explanations, then I saw the old man, who wrung his hands and told a plain story. Then Tevis and I went up to a garret; and there we found George Carlton, worn to a shadow by a terrible fever; and beside him were Miss Halsey and the maid.

“The young lady glanced up as we entered.

“ ‘He is found, you see, Mr. Sparkle,’ she said.

“ ‘Saved!’ murmured Carlton, looking only at her.

“ ‘Captain Tevis has told you his story?’ she asked. ‘Then Mr. Carlton shall tell you his.’

“ ‘Has there been time to make one up, Rose?’ the Captain asked. ‘I warn you it will be useless. My agents are trustworthy men, known to Mr. Sparkle.’

“ ‘Will you listen to Mr. Carlton?’ inquired Miss Halsey of me.

“This was Mr. Carlton’s story: As he left Mr. Helstone’s house, he had been knocked senseless by a blow on the back of his head. When he came to, he found himself lying in that garret-room. He was very ill; was left unattended, but water and coarse food were placed daily by his bedside. He lived on, however, only from sheer physical vitality. When he began to get better, he was confined so that he could not reach the windows. Several times a man came and made offers of his freedom if he would go to Australia. He refused. He believed that there had been an idea of murdering him. He was certain he had recognized Captain Tevis’s voice as one of the masked men who were his visitors. He supposed he had been kidnapped because Tevis believed that Miss Halsey loved him.

“The Captain and I both listened quietly. Then I said:

“ ‘Mr. Carlton, you will have to come with me. I promised that if you were discovered Mr. Helstone should see you before your arrest. We will go to his house. Miss Halsey, I should

advise you to leave this place at once. Captain, has any search been made for the missing property?'

“ ‘Yes; and successfully,’ said a voice. If a thunderbolt had fallen, I could not have been more astounded. I turned; and in the doorway stood John Drew, a detective whom I knew well. I remember glancing at Captain Tevis: I thought he was dying.

“ ‘Mr. Carlton’s story is correct in every particular,’ continued Drew. ‘When you would have nothing to do with her theory, Sparkle, Miss Halsey communicated with me through her maid, who, of course, went away from Mr. Helstone’s at once. It has been a long fight, but we have won: though we had against us the neatest plot and the cleverest man I ever encountered. You really are, Captain,’ he added, bowing to that gentleman, who sat motionless and white as a stone image; ‘and as a forger you are unequalled. Sparkle, he wrote every one of those letters signed with Mr. Carlton’s name! I think his idea in getting the luggage here was to persuade his prisoner to leave the country, but I don’t know. Anyhow, he bit on your idea, and let the maid discover the house, thinking that for you to discover Mr. Carlton here, luggage and all, would be proof enough, and that the valuables were too safely hidden to be in danger. Luckily, I had a hold on the old codger downstairs, which ruined his little game. Come, Captain, we’ll all go together and visit your uncle. Sparkle, don’t look so crestfallen. Better luck next bout; and remember, nine times out of ten, it’s wise to trust a woman’s intuition.’

“Well, that happened ten years ago. Mr. Helstone kept his nephew’s shame a secret, and sent him to Australia, where he was killed in a drunken brawl. Mr. and Mrs. Carlton live in Italy, and the old gentleman always winters with them.

“As for Drew and myself, we are the best friends in the world: which proves that I am not a bad sort, else I never should have forgiven his pushing me to the wall in that fashion.”

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