

## A Detective's Experience

### *An Adventure*

The night was rainy and disagreeable, a misty and chill atmosphere intervening between the showers that swept in gusts along the streets. The fog from the river rose dense and gray, and the lamps flickered on the corners, weird and shadowy. The city had grown still, and nothing but the sullen murmur of the river, as its waters, fretted with foam—its billows like winding sheets, lashed the shore. The houses were ghostly in the gloom, and the heart of the observer felt a thrill of fear as the eye looked upon the scene.

Nothing but dire necessity could bring any one out on such a night. “Naught could have persuaded me,” said Mr. F., “but the business I was on. I knew my life was not in peril, and no physical fear made me tremble. Unquiet spirits seemed to haunt the air, and in the graveyard just beyond us, the shafts from many a tomb shone through the misty air like phantoms.

We stood upon a pier far down in the old French town; the long rows of houses crept up to the Levee's edge, and the tall masts of many a ship rose above them. But not on these—the houses, or the tombs beyond—did our eyes turn longingly.

A dark object lay at our feet—a moment before rescued from the flood. Mr. I. was bending beside it, chaffing a jewelled hand that gleamed from the dark robe like a snowflake on a ground of jet. Tenderly we raised her in our arms, and bore her to the shelter of a building, where the light from a lamp cast a brighter radiance. Thick masses of dark wet hair hung from the beautifully rounded head—the dark robe clung closely to the slender limbs. It was a fair face, young and lovely as the *Medician Venus*. The lips yet wore a crimson stain, and the long black lashes lay like meshes of silk upon the waxen cheek.

One hour before, as we stood on the pier watching for a criminal, this young girl had stolen silently by us, and before an arm could be stretched out to save her, with a cry of despair had plunged into the river. What motive excited the deed we had yet to discover, but to save her we tried our best. And now she lay before us apparently dead. Again we exerted ourselves to restore animation. Near us was a dwelling, and there we conveyed her. Kind hands assisted in the work of mercy, and as the day dawned, life crept back into the stiffened frame. Promising to return again, we were turning to leave, when the old woman to whose house we had carried the girl, touched me on the shoulder.

“You know her?”

“No.”

“It is a Spanish girl—a stranger, too,”

“How do you know?”

“I saw her when she landed from the ‘Black Maria!’ She came with two men. One of them acted like her father.”

Even as she spoke, I saw a quiver of emotion pass over the girl’s face and her eyes opened inquiringly. She either understood or suspected the [conversation] related to her.

“I have no name!” she said in Spanish. The musical tongue had in it a trace of sadness, as if the words sprung from the heart weary to death.

I begged her to be quiet, and left her[.] As soon as we regained the [street][,]

Mr. I. said to me:

“Do you remember the recent robbery in Havana? These are the persons.”

“What makes you think so?”

“Because this girl is the original of the picture sent with the description of the two men who fled from the island.”

“I did not notice it.”

“Look, then;[”] and he held the picture before me.

It was the same. In every feature of the beautiful miniature I could trace a semblance to the original. Wondrously beautiful the smiling face looked from the ivory—the proud head—the haughty curve of the neck—the glorious eyes—all were there. Of course we must see her again. A few weeks before diamonds and jewelry, worth nearly a million of dollars, had been stolen from a banker. The parties engaged in the robbery were two men and a girl. It was believed they had fled to this city, but until now we had failed in discovering them.

When we returned to the house the girl had so far recovered as to be able to sit up. She rose as we entered, and advancing, said in a tone of unutterable weariness:

“Gentlemen, you have saved my life; I was mad; it would be useless to tell you of my sorrow or the wrongs that drove me to despair; I am not wholly bad, although my career has been one of evil; I trusted—loved—and was betrayed; it is a simple story briefly told.”

“But have you no protector, no friend?” I asked.

“None!”

“No acquaintance?”

“Yes—in the hotel yonder are two men—one of them calls himself my husband; he is my evil genius; a criminal and a robber.”

As she spoke animation came back to her frame, and the tall form rose like a Nemesis denouncing woe. Her eyes flashed, and her rapid utterance evinced an excitement ungovernable as it was reckless.

“He has betrayed me, maddened my brain, killed all the generous impulses of my heart, made my life an insupportable regret, and on him in turn will fall my sense of outrage and the cruel wrongs he has heaped upon me; robber, murderer, an enemy of society, blackened with crime, let him suffer the penalty of his misdeeds. I tried to die, but could not. This expiation will tend to lessen guilt and save me the memory of at least one act of virtue.”

All the information we desired she gave us, and before the sun went down we had the men in custody.

What became of the girl I never knew. She refused to see us again, and one night went away, no one knew whither. It is possible that weary of life, sad and sorrowful, she perished in the dark river, no one by to rescue her, no one to listen to her cry of despair as the waves settled above her.

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