

A Detective's Story

For perhaps a month I had lounged about the various hotels in A——, in the luxury and expense of idleness, being entirely out of employment, and stopping with a particular friend of mine, whose success in business enterprise admitted of his boarding me until I obtained something to do. I had been beating the town in every possible manner to secure a situation, not feeling justified in entering my friend's office upon the conditions which would become necessary in case I did; and these were that his only clerk, an energetic young fellow, should be discharged to make room for me. This I would not for a moment think of, as the widowed mother who depended on him[,] would be robbed thereby of her only means of support.

I was becoming tired of this state of affairs, and not a little discouraged, and was already resolving in my mind whether it would not be better to use what money I had left in seeking another field, for all my efforts thus far had proved a failure, when at last an opportunity presented itself in quite an unexpected way.

After leaving the reading room of the hotel, feeling disgusted with all mankind and myself too, I sought the residence of my friend, Schuyler Bree.

When I entered his cozy little parlor—made neat and tidy by the hands of the prettiest, most loving and affectionate wife I ever saw—I found Schuyler seated alone in smoking cap, gown and slippers, enjoying a fine havana, as was his custom, before retiring, for it was then about 10 p. m.

We had been old “chums,” at college and when my father failed in business and died leaving me almost penniless in the world, Schuyler would listen to nothing but that I should make my home with him until fortune opened a door to me. Turning to me as I came in, he said in a most cheerful voice:

“Well, Lem, old fellow[,] I've got you a situation.”

I stared at him incredulously, for such good news seemed to me impossible as true. Nevertheless I managed to inquire:

“Where?—what at?” and took a seat near him.

“I don't know whether you'll be satisfied with it either,” he continued.

I hastened to assure him that as long as it was honorable, I had no choice.

“Well, Lem,” he said at length[,] “I have secured you a position in the detective corps.”

“In the detective corps?” I repeated wonderingly.

“Yes. Now, I'll tell you all about it. I met the mayor today, with whom I am acquainted and never till that moment did it occur to me that I might do something for you through him. I

succeeded after a great deal of talking, in getting his promise for the appointment telling him you possessed great powers of penetration, were a thorough physiognomist, shrewd, sharp, careful—in short, fully fitted for the duties of that office. So it's all fixed. I took the responsibility entirely upon myself in the matter. And now, how do you think you'll like it, eh? Will you take it?"

Of course I would, and so I told him.

From my boyhood nothing had occupied a more prominent part of my thoughts than love of adventure, and here to my imagination was a chance to realize the dreams I had indulged in.

Next day found me at the mayor's office where in due time I was invested with all the authority of my calling—told to hold myself in readiness for any emergency.

I was anxious for something to happen and waited for an opportunity to display my ability, with an eagerness that increased hourly.

Early one morning I was summoned to police headquarters in great haste, and was ushered into a room, where were seated the sergeant of police and a well known jeweler of A——.

The sergeant introduced me—saying to the other:

"This is Mr. Lemuel Horsk, sir, our detective force, and I think the very man to help you in your present trouble.[?]"

The whole thing was made known to me in a few words. The jeweler's store had been opened the previous night, and many valuables stolen, the sum total being estimated at about ten thousand dollars. Among the articles missing was a large, heavy gold watch valued at \$300. The burglary was committed by two men. One of them had been captured and was safely lodged in jail, and from him the following facts were gleaned.

His companion in the theft, who had all the booty, was a tall, rather slim individual, with light, straight hair, silken [moustache], of a pretty heavy growth, and light color; eyes of a deep blue, hand quite lady like; a voice of truly feminine sound. His name I could not learn.—The prisoner stated their destination, which when possible to leave, had been Chicago. The reward offered for the return of the property was \$1,000.

I told them I would do my best, and then going home I packed my carpet bag for the journey. I then procured a letter of identity and business to the mayor of Chicago, in case I should be compelled to call upon him for assistance.

At eleven o'clock I was at the depot, though I had missed the first train by full two hours.

Soon however I was on my way, and when I reached Chicago, instead of putting up at a hotel, sought rooms at a private boarding house. Then I commenced my search.

A week slipped by without anything transpiring to arrest my attention as having connection with

my search. I had looked over the book of arrivals at every hotel, and made numerous inquiries to no end. At one place was the name of Freeman Bowey, and the person had neglected to write opposite where he was from. This struck me, but it being Saturday evening, I thought I would wait until Monday before ascertaining more about it.

Saturday afternoon I strolled down town [leisurely], smoking my cigar, when I paused at a street corner to note the passers by, who at the time were thronging homeward from church.

I could not explain why, but my attention was attracted by a young couple advancing towards me. They were chatting gaily, and I took them for lovers. The lady was charming beyond description, and I almost envied him the prize. But the man, oh! what was it that held my eyes to his face? Some powerful influence prevented me from turning away the gaze I had fixed upon him. It seemed as though an invisible magnetism bound me to the exact position which I occupied when I first saw them. They came opposite to me, and at that moment the young lady asked:

“What time is it, Freeman?”

“Exactly half past four, Carrie,” he replied, at the same time looking at a magnificent gold time piece.

I started. His voice was that of her who walked by his side. Now I knew why I was so taken with his appearance. The whole thing was the work of a second, and in that time I noticed the light, silken moustache, pomaded and twirled at the end, *a la francaise*; dark blue eyes, feminine voice, straight light hair, &c.

“By Jingo!” I exclaimed mentally, “here’s the very man I’m after.”

He was dressed in the very height of fashion, and I was not a little surprised, for, while as an indescribable thrill pervaded for an instant my whole system, I concluded within myself that, in spite of all his fineries and apparent gentility, it must be him, though almost perfectly concealed beneath the garb and manners of an honest citizen.

I followed after them determined to wait for a favorable opportunity when I might secure him.

He escorted the young lady home, and luckily for my stock of patience, which was not over large, immediately left her[.]

I kept at a convenient distance behind him, until he entered a hotel, when I hurried off to procure assistance. I had no difficulty in procuring the services of two policemen, who immediately went with me when I had shown them my authority.

We repaired to the hotel, and I looked again at the book of arrivals. Yes, there was the name, Freeman Bowey—and I asked the number of his room.

“Forty-nine,” was the reply; and then, with a staring domestic at our lead, we were shown up.

Before allowing the servant to depart, I strictly enjoined of him to say nothing about our presence down stairs—likely to make discussion or excitement.

Bidding the officers wait outside until I should give the word, I knocked.

“Come in,” answered the occupant of 49 promptly, and I entered, closing the door after me. He was seared near the window, smoking, both feet cocked up on a small table.

“Ah! good evening, sir,” he said, rising, as he perceived I was a stranger.

[“]Good evening,[”] I returned as pleasantly as he, laying off my hat.

[“]Be seated please. I believe I have not the honor of knowing—[”]

[“]I address Mr. Freeman Bowey, do I not? [”] I interrupted, handing him my card, while I narrowly watched his features. Upon the card was engraved in full ‘Lemuel Horsk, S.S.C.’

[“]Happy to make your acquaintance, Mr. Horsk; what can I do for you? [”]

His nonchalance balked me for an instant, but quickly recovering myself, I said:

[“]I have called, Mr. Bowey, to see you upon some very important business; will you please sit nearer, that no one may possibly by eaves dropping overhear our conversation. [”]

[“]Certainly, [”] drawing up a chair as he spoke.

[“]I am here, [”] continued I, [“]in search of a tall, rather slim person, with dark blue eyes, light hair and moustache, feminine voice, and hands delicate and white as a woman’s. [”]

[“]Well what do you want of such an one? [”] he asked paling slightly, for my description was an exact picture of himself.

[“]To arrest him for burglary committed in A———, [”] was my reply.

[“]The h— you do, [”] he cried, leaping to his feet like a flash.

I started up also, and instinctively my hand found its way to my breast pocket, where I carried a six shooter. But he was before me. In *his* hand was already a like weapon, and backing against the wall, he yelled defiantly.

[“]Then come and take him if you can! [”]

I raised my hand to stay him, for I saw he meant to fire, and said calmly, though I felt none the less in what great jeopardy my life hung.

[“]You may as well put up your pistol, sir. Even did you kill me, you’d be taken none the less. [”]

Clapping my hands thrice, the two policemen entered quickly, each carrying a Colt's revolver, cocked and ready to deal out bullets, for they had heard his defiance and already anticipated some trouble.

At sight of them his countenance fell somewhat, and casting down the weapon which had threatened my life, he assumed quite a different exterior.

[“]Gentlemen,[”] said he submissively, [“]for God's sake, don't take me to jail! Listen to me for a moment. You are not afraid—three to one?["]

We assuredly were not and seated ourselves to hear what he had to say. He spoke briefly and hurriedly as follows:

[“]I'll own up to stealing the things.—But [I've] got everything in my trunk here, just as I took it. You can have all, right now,[”] (laying on the table the watch and rings which he wore.) [“]I was prompted to the act through love for a young lady, whose father is very wealthy, and will receive no visitors at his house except they be of moneyed worth. I have money of my own, but by far insufficient to keep up the required display and had recourse to the means which have resulted in your presence here to arrest me. I never was guilty of such a thing before in my whole life, and will make every reparation in my power—give you back all that was taken—if you will not take me to jail, I entreat you, grant me this.”

I remained silent for several moments weighing the matter in my mind when one of my assistants said:

[“]Guess you might as well let him off, if nothing's lost and he promises to mend.[”]

[“]You say you never did such a thing before in my life?["] was my interrogation, looking full into his eyes.

[“]No; this is the first thing of the kind I have been guilty of,[”] he replied.

While we conversed at length, I found him to be highly educated in every particular, and a model of a gentleman, and this forced upon my mind the oft occurring cases of proud, aristocratic families losing for their daughters husbands who would ornament a home and prove a happiness to them through the false pride of those whose fortunate circumstances—nothing more—would not permit of a marriage with one whose every dollar is an honorable relic of toiling hours.

I concluded to let him off on promise, and have never since heard of his doing anything in violation of the laws.

We secured the things, and the next day I set out on my return to A———.

The articles, to the value of a dollar, were restored to their owner, and I received the reward very gratefully. I made known to the Mayor the course I had pursued, which met his entire approval.

From beginning to end the name of the offender was kept concealed; and after all, it mattered but little, since I was so successful in my first experience of a detective's life.

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