

A Detective's Story

It was a dull, rainy day towards the end of August. One of those days when earth and sky alike are dreary, and the rain drops pattering against the window makes one feel so sad and lonely. The clock that hung against the wall pointed to the hour of three, when Mr. Gordon, our "chief," a dark, silent little man, entered the room.

"Wells," said he, "don't you feel like having a little excitement just now?"

Of course I had to say "Yes."

"I want you to arrest Bill Siddons, the forger," said Mr. Gordon, "and he was last heard of at C—. You had better start straight off at once."

My interest was aroused when told of the large reward I should obtain, and I readily undertook to ferret out the forger.

The rosy dawn was just flushing the eastern sky as I alighted wearily from the train and walked to the village hotel. In answer to my inquiries, I was told that with the exception of a young lady who had come the night before, there were no new arrivals.

At dinner time I sat opposite the young lady in question, and I noticed that when she saw me come in she smiled and blushed rosy red. Her dark brown eyes seemed to sparkle and gleam with fun and mischief, her long black hair, which she wore in curls, seemed created but to hide her [blushes]. But I, being fair specimen of the sterner sex, attributed all these little smiles and glances to my personal appearance, and congratulated myself upon having made an impression on such a beautiful creature.

Next day I prosecuted my search, but all to no purpose, for nowhere could I gain intelligence of the object or my pursuit. For one week I searched high and low, but no Bill Siddons could I find. All this time I had been stopping at C—, and had fallen deeply in love with Clara Armstrong, for such was my fair charmer's name, and I also flattered myself that she looked favorably on me.

On the night before my departure for the city, I was sitting with Clara.

"And so," she said, "you leave us tomorrow?"

I sighed and said—

"You will think of me sometimes, Clara?"

She smiled, blushed, and taking a pair of scissors from the table, she cut off one of those glossy curls and handed it to me.

"Keep that," she said, "to remember me by."

Was I foolish to press it to my lips before lying it next to my heart? Clara smiled and said nothing. Evidently she did not think me foolish.

The next morning I arrived safely in the city, and hurried to the office of the chief to report. As I was coming out of the office I met Gus B. When I told him my adventures he laughed.

“Charley,” said he, “you are taken in and done for this time, sure.”

I indignantly asked him what he meant.

“I bet you the best supper to be got in town that I fetch Bill Siddons in three days.”

“Done,” said I, and Gus immediately went to obtain leave of absence.

The “chief” willingly let him go, and that night he started.

Two [days] passed, and on the third day, sure enough Gus came.

“Well, what luck?” I asked, as I saw him come out of the office.

“The best in the world,” he replied, “come with me; I will show you the prisoner.[”]

I followed him into one of the strong rooms, and there sure enough, was the prisoner, leaning against the window. He was standing with his back to the door, but on hearing us come in, he turned around.

“By Jupiter!” said I, “Clara Armstrong!”

“The same, at your service,” said Bill Siddons, for it was he.

“I am much obliged to you, Mr. Wells, for your politeness, perhaps you would like another lock of my hair?”

I stood dumbfounded.

“A little too susceptible, Charley, my boy—a little too susceptible, that’s all.” said Gus, and, seeing my discomfiture, he burst out laughing.

“Hang it!” I muttered, and rushed out of the room, vowing to never have anything to do with females of any description whatever.

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