

“Earless Bill,” the Detective
by Bill Squibb

I AM known on the force as Earless Bill.

A name I gained on account of being minus my ears.

And I intend placing before the reader, in the following words, the manner in which I lost them.

At the time of which I write, the City of B— was thrown into an unusual state of excitement, occasioned by numerous heavy robberies, which had been committed with unheard of daring.

And in two cases, where resistance had been offered, the robbers had added to their crimes by dyeing their hands in the blood of their fellow beings.

At that time I was in the zenith of my profession.

Consequently the case was placed in my hands to work up.

I examined the places which had been broken into, and I knew by the obstacles which had been overcome, that there were more than one engaged in the robbery.

In fact, I was certain that the different crimes were planned and committed by a regular organized band of desperadoes.

I threw my whole energies into the case.

And on several occasions I thought that I had the clue, but on following it up, found that I was on the wrong track.

And even while I was endeavoring to discover their rendezvous, they broke into a large jeweler’s store, killed the watchman, and safely escaped with a large amount of very valuable jewelry.

They laughed at the civil authority, and sent notes to the mayor, defying him to ferret them out.

No place was safe; the police force was doubled; every private citizen was his own watchman, and the best detectives in the country were endeavoring to entrap the villains.

I had been nearly three weeks trying to fathom the mystery, when one day a plan entered my head, and I resolved to put it into execution that very night.

The plan was this:

I would change my boarding place, assume another name, and disguise, and in this manner try and throw open to the public their rendezvous.

Well, when night threw its sable mantle over the city, it found me loitering about a low groggery in one of the worst localities in the city.

I had colored my face a deep brown, and put on a false wig and whiskers, while my clothes were of the cheapest material, and worn in the most slovenly manner.

And taking all in all, I would have passed for as first-class cut-throat as ever went unhung.

I had been there but a short time, when three men came in, and hurrying up to the bar, said to the bartender: "It is all fixed, we are going to crack the crib tonight."

"Hist," returned the bar-tender, shaking his head, and nodding to where I sat at a table, apparently deeply engaged in perusing a paper, which I had taken out of my pocket.

They then commenced talking in an undertone for some time, when at length, one of them, a brutal looking villain crossed over to me, and giving me a vigorous slap on the back, said:

"Hello, stranger, how do ye do?"

I knew that to show any fear would seal my fate; so assuming an air of braggadocio, I replied, jumping to my feet, at the same time drawing a murderous-looking knife:

"See here, boss, don't make your hands so mighty handy, for if you do, there will be one less in the world uncommon sudden!"

I saw my maneuver had been a success; for, with a laugh, the ruffian replied:

"You are made of the right stuff, anyhow; but put up your knife, and come and liquor up."

I put away my knife, and returned:

"All right; I am the man that can get away with a glass of gin as quick as any other man this side of Jordan."

By this time we were standing round the bar; and after taking our drinks, one of the men said to me:

"Well, I say, boss, what are ye driving at now?"

“Nothin’,” I replied: “but I am waitin’ fur a job, and don’t care a pin what it is.”

After a great deal of talk, interspersed with drinks, the bartender said, referring to me:

“You can trust him—he is all right.”

With this, one of the men turned to me, and said:

“Well, boss, the fact of the thing is, we belong to the crowd of these ‘ere fellers that has been a cuttin’ up [such] a shine lately; and if ye want to become a member of the aforesaid gang, why say the word, and it’s all right.

“I am your man,” said I.

“Well, then, follow me, and I will introduce ye to the rest of the gang.”

With this, he led the way to the back part of the store; and stooping down, he brushed away with his hand the sawdust on the floor, bringing to view an iron door, disclosing a ladder, down which he descended, I following, but not without some misgivings.

For here I was in one of the worst dens of the city, and among the very villains whom I had been endeavoring to bring to justice for the last month.

How easily they could murder me? And my mode of death would forever remain a mystery—simply a notice in the papers: “Missed from his home since,” etc., etc.; and that would be all.

These were the thoughts that chased each other through my brain with lightning rapidity, as I descended the ladder.

Upon reaching the bottom, my guide took my hand, and led me through what seemed to be a cellar.

I say seemed, because everything was shrouded in Egyptian-like darkness.

After leading me a short distance, he stopped and gave a shrill, peculiar whistle.

The next moment a door opened in front of us, and we entered a large, square room, brilliantly lighted with numerous gas jets.

There were at least fifty to sixty men lounging about, some drinking, some playing cards, others dominoes, and all swearing at a fearful rate.

Upon our entrance, all eyes turned on us.

“A new Chicken,” said my guide, by way of introduction.

I then had to submit to a general shaking of hands all round.

After being duly initiated, I signed my name on the roll as a member of the Chickens of Darkness.

That night I was sent out with another of the gang to reconnoitre a store which was going to be robbed.

While out I managed to give him the slip.

Hurrying to the station I told my story, and requested the captain to detail one hundred men, and let one-half surround the place, while the rest rushed down and captured the gang.

I then hastened back to the den, to avoid suspicions.

The man I came out with came in a few minutes after, and walking up to me, said:

“Well, my fine covey, ye are not so smart as ye thought.” And then turning round to his pals, yelled out:

“Boys, this new Chicken, here, is a spy!”

“What!” shouted the ruffians with one voice, jumping to their feet.

“He is a spy,” returned the man, and with a quick movement he pulled off the false wig and whiskers; and there I stood uncovered, in the full view of all.

“It’s Bill Squibb, the detective,” they shouted, “kill him, kill him.”

I was instantly bound and placed in a chair.

“Your time has come,” said one of the ruffians, “and you’re not the first that has tired to entrap us; but they all disappear *very* mysteriously, the same as you will. We don’t kill you at once,” he continued, with a brutal laugh, “but we bleed you to death scientifically.”

A sudden hope shot through my brain; it was evident that they were not aware that I had been to the station. And in all probability the detailed force would arrive in time to save my life.

One of the men now advanced, with a large, murderous-looking knife.

“This is the surgeon of our establishment,” said one of the villains, with a coarse laugh.

He glided up to my side, and brandishing the knife before my eyes, with one blow severed one of my ears close to the head.

This action was greeted with shouts and yells of approbation from the rest of the gang.

And then, with another flourish, my other ear shared the same fate. I nearly fainted away. The blood ran down each side, in perfect streams, completely saturating my clothing.

“Will they never come?” I mentally ejaculated.

“Now for is nose,” yelled some of the gang.

The incarnate fiend again advanced to do their bidding. But with superhuman strength I broke my bonds, and jumping to my feet, shouted:

“My God! Am I to be brutally butchered in this manner and by these fiends? Is there no help?”

“Yes, Bill, here we are!” and in rushed a posse of police.

A desperate fight ensued, in the midst of which, overcome by excitement, and loss of blood, I fell to the floor in a swoon.

When I came to, I was lying in bed at the station-house, my head all done up in bandages. A number of my brother officers were standing round, and in answer to my look of inquiry, I was informed that after a desperate resistance the entire gang of villains were captured and safely lodged in jail.

And in a few weeks I was able to appear against them, when all had sentences passed upon them as their crimes merited.

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