

A Detective's Experience

A Female Forger

Not many years ago, said Mr. F——, the mercantile community were annoyed by an immense amount of spurious paper most industriously put into circulation. Checks were presented at the principal banks signed by the firms of prominent houses, and money in the aggregate amounting to nearly \$50,000 obtained upon it. The peculiar circumstances of the case disclosed the fact that the forger resided in the city, and for months we were on the *quivive* to detect the criminal. Every new face, every stranger, whose occupation and pursuit were not thoroughly understood, were subjected by Mr. I—— and myself to a most rigid scrutiny. Still! we were at fault. It is not difficult to find out the who is not guilty of an offence: the trouble is to discover who is. And thus our search went on. Baffled in one direction, we took another. Aside from the reward, which was ample, our pride was interested in detecting the person who, almost before our eyes, practiced such open frauds. One day I saw a lady paying for a bill of goods with a check. Before she had time to leave the store I obtained a look at the paper, and was satisfied it was not genuine. Still I was not certain. The lady was deeply veiled, and I was subjected to the alternative of following her. This I did and traced her home.

It was a beautiful little cottage, with a large yard and garden. Taste and culture had fashioned the gravel walks, and trained the dense but beautiful foliage into parterres, as curious as novel and pretty. Vines crept over the portico and trailed along the network of the gallery. The white and red hollyhock bloomed at the gate, and the margin of the walks was bedded with violets and sweet-scented verbena. The perfume of orange blossoms mingled with the odor of the rose, and the senses were delighted with the evident beauty that pervaded the place.

I hastened back to the place where the check was passed; and which Mr. I—— had already ascertained to have been forged. We had now obtained a [clue] which if carefully pursued, we were satisfied would lead to the detection of the criminal.

We waited until morning, and it was then determined that I should visit her alone. I did so, and found the lady seated in a pleasant little parlor, looking out on the miniature lawn. The room was exquisitely furnished and breathed an air of evident refinement. It was fitted up as a pleasant lounging place, half library, half music room. Beautiful paintings hung from the walls, and in a recess was an elegant piano. Near it was a statue of the *Titaness Mnemosyne*, and opposite it stood a marble creation of the dance-loving Terpsichore, and from the centre of the richly carved writing desk rose a Polmnia, with her finger pressing the lips, brimming with song.

Cases filled with books and vases of Arabesque, of gold, were scattered through the room. The lady reclined in an easy chair, and received the announcement of my name with evident embarrassment. Still she received me with great politeness, and inquired to what circumstance she was to attribute my business.

“I do not know, madam, that it is to you, as yet; but may I inquire if your husband is in?”

“I am a widow, sir.”

“But you have a business agent.”

“No, sir; I live on a small annuity.”

“Indeed.”

“It is true, sir; but you will pardon me if I inquire the purport of all these questions!”

“Madam,” I rejoined, “there is no doubt some mistake about it, but the draft you gave yesterday to Messrs. H & Co. is a forgery.”

“Sir!” the tone was indignant, and the face was white with terror rather than passion.

“It is as I stated, Madam: here is the paper,” and I took from my pocket the check and showed it to her.

“What is the purport of all this?”

“To inquire from whence you obtained it.”

“That I cannot tell you, sir.”

“I trust, madam, that you will reconsider your last remark, for otherwise it will be my duty to arrest you as the criminal.”

“And you would do this?”

“It would be my duty.”

Her eyes lost on the instant their eager look, and she turned aside her head. I could perceive from the workings of her countenance that she was thinking intently – rapidly. Emotions, first of terror, then of determination, and then of entreaty, chased themselves over her face with the rapidity of thought. It was a grand face – noble in expression – evincing intellect of no common order.

I could not believe she was guilty. I did not, until she turned to me with the words:

“Take me to jail. I alone am guilty.”

“But madam, reflect; you are condemning yourself!”

“I know it – lead me away – I say to you I am guilty.”

It may seem strange to you, but even despite her words I could not believe this strangely beautiful lady was in earnest. There was to my mind a great wrong somewhere; the lady was

sacrificing herself to some one else. Still I had no alternative but to take her into custody. I placed her, however, in charge of an officer, and still left her at her own house. While I was gone to the city, but a few hours, she contrived to send a note away. It reached the person it was meant for – an hour after the lady was dead. She had perished by her own hand, from shame and a broken heart!

Years afterwards we ascertained that the real culprit was her son! She had confessed a sin that she had never committed, to give him an opportunity of escape. – *New Orleans Picayune*.

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