

*How My Pocket Was Picked,*  
—or—  
*THE MAN WITH THE FOXHEAD RING*

“Ain’t you afraid somebody will pick your pocket?”

The speaker was my cousin Frank, with whom I was going to see Forrest.

It was the first appearance of that tragedian for over a year, and a tremendous rush when the doors were opened, was the consequence. Expecting this, we had started early, my cousin who by the way, was a young Countryman, when he saw the struggling crowd that entirely filled the lobby, knowing that I had about two hundred pounds, in bank notes, in my breast pocket, very naturally asked me the preceding question.

The inquiry [irritated] me.

The idea of my pockets being picked, when I had been in the densest crowds that had ever been packed together, and had never lost a penny by pickpockets!

It was simply absurd; so I replied, carelessly—

“Don’t worry yourself about me, Frank. I guess I can take care of myself in a [crowd,] by this time.”

Frank [didn’t] reply, for we were forcing our way through the throng that surrounded the ticket office.

The bills, as I said before, were in the breast pocket of my coat; so, to be perfectly secure, I placed one arm carelessly across the pocket.

We made very little progress, as the doors had just been opened, and the [crush] was terrible.

As we slowly worked our way through the crowd, I noticed a slender, wiry little fellow, just on one side of us, who wore a very curious ring.

It was a plain gold ring, and where the crest usually is, there was a fox’s head apparently of some dark stone.

I looked at the ring several times, and couldn’t help admiring it, the head of the fox stood out so boldly and was so distinctly cut.

Just then I noticed the wearer turn around as if giving up all hopes of reaching the ticket office.

At the same time there was a sudden rush of the crowd, my hat was jammed over my eyes, and while I was struggling to put it straight, I felt the pocket, containing the money, ripped and torn open by some sharp instrument, and in an instant, before I could speak, the bills were gone.

This took place so suddenly, that I could hardly realize what had happened.

But a glance at my mutilated coat put an end to all uncertainty.

Crying "stop thief!" I made my way out of the crowd as quickly as possible, but not without observing that the fellow with the ring had disappeared.

It at once flashed upon my mind that he was the man, and I recollected how he had seemed to be watching me.

I found an officer near the entrance, and having stated my case, was informed that he had noticed the man in the crowd, and knowing his haunts, thought he could recover the bills before morning.

Then telling me to be at the station-house as soon as the performance was over, he left us.

Knowing my presence at the station-house until then would do no good, we went in and heard Forrest, as we had intended.

Listening to thrilling tones of the great tragedian, the evening flew quickly away.

As soon as the curtain fell, after the last act, we started for the station-house.

We arrived there, and were hardly seated when the door was thrown open, and I beheld, to my delight, my friend, the officer, and a detective, with the rascal who had spoiled my coat, between them.

It seemed that the officer had met the detective soon after leaving the theatre, and fearing the pickpocket might conceal the bills, before he (the officer) could reach his retreat, he sent the detective on ahead, while he donned a suit of plain clothing.

And it was lucky for me that he did so for just as the detective came opposite the house frequented by the nimble-fingered fellow, he beheld that same individual hastily turn the corner and enter a side door.

To cross the street and dash in after him was the work of an instant.

The rascal hearing somebody pursuing, made a spring for the stairs, but being caught by the collar, and a pistol leveled at his head, he was forced to stop, and allow himself to be searched.

He must have fancied himself perfectly safe from the nearness of his retreat, and the rapidity with which he had got away, for he hadn't even attempted to hide the bank notes, which were found in the lining of his coat, tied up as they had been when in my possession.

The rogue had made several desperate attempts to escape; and very nearly succeeded in the first one.

But the officer arrived just in time to prevent his flight, and after that it was all up with him.

On examining the ring he wore, a tiny razor-like blade was found concealed in the head of the fix.

It was thrown open by pressing a spring.

With this he had opened my breast pocket.

Being questioned, he remarked that he knew I had "some rocks" in that pocket by the way I kept feeling it with my arm.

You can imagine my relief at the recovery of the bills, for they were not all mine, and their loss would have been very inconvenient.

Giving the officer and the detective something as a reward for their success, I left the man with the foxhead ring to the tender mercies of the police.

The next morning I had the pleasure of hearing the pickpocket sentenced to five years imprisonment.

Frank, like a good fellow, never let anybody know of my narrow escape, but whenever I put on "too many airs" he has a very disconcerting way of asking me if I remember "how my pocket was picked."

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