

A Detective's Story

The Sad Surprise from which He Never Fully Recovered

I was over at the Central station yesterday and met one of the detectives who was off duty. In a ramble he wound up with this story:

“I sometimes tire of the business. It is such a succession of surprises that any man who sticks to it, unless he is a hardened creature, must sooner or later break down with nervous prostration. I had one of these surprises once from which I have never fully recovered.

“There was a man who held an honorable place in a railroad office. Besides being trusted and faithful, he was one of the biggest-hearted men I ever knew. To come in contact with him was to feel that one was younger—to feel that there was something in life worth living for. When I knew him I was a boy. I used to go to his train to meet him and carry his band-bag for him just to be in his company. When I became of age I drifted into this business, and have been in it ever since. One day I was in the police court waiting for my case to come up—one that I had against some poor devil. The clerk was calling the docket in a solemn sort of way. He came to one name in the list which was familiar to me. After he had called it the officer to whom the arrest was credited stepped up before the court and said in a mechanical sort of way, I thought, “‘Found dead this morning in his cell.’

“The judge drew a mark across the name on the docket and said:

“‘So far as the jurisdiction of this court is concerned this case is settled forever.’

“After my case was disposed of I went down to the cell where the dead man was. He was the faithful old friend of whom I told you in the beginning. It seems that he came down-town one night and in some way—I don't know how—he got to drinking; got in bad company. One of the chaps hit him on the head. He was brought to the station on a charge of being disorderly and locked up. The wound was more serious than was supposed and he died—alone in his cell.

“I have seen a good deal of the hard part of life, but the sound of that of officer's voice—‘Found dead in his cell this morning’—when the name of my friend was called, has never ceased to ring in my ears.”—*Chicago Tribune*.

Indian Chieftain [Vinita, Indian Territory (OK)], June 19, 1890

The Redwood Gazette [Redwood Falls, MN], June 26, 1890