

CHANGE FOR A BANK-NOTE
BY JUDGE CLARK

Archie Norton was a happy man that evening. He was paying his last visit to Marian Gilbert, who was to become Marian Norton tomorrow.

As the two sat together in the twilight, murmuring delicious words of joy and hope, they were interrupted by the entrance of a servant with the announcement that two gentlemen wished to see Mr. Norton immediately.

“Tell them they must wait till another time,” said Archie; “I am particularly engaged at present.”

“But I was to say, sir, if you please, that the business is very pressing, and they *must* see you.”

With an impatient gesture Archie followed the servant into the passage, where he found himself confronted by two rough-looking men.

“Mr. Norton, I suppose?” one of them accosted him.

Archie bowed assent, adding, with a touch of haughtiness, a request to be informed of the object of their visit.

“It’s along o’ that missin’ money,” replied the man, curtly.

It is necessary to explain that a packet of bank-noted, brought by a depositor a few days before to the bank in which Archie Norton was a clerk, had disappeared mysteriously from the receiving-teller’s desk, and though the most thorough search had been made, no trace was found of the lost money.

Suspicion pointed naturally to some of the *employés*, but fastened upon no particular one. All that could be done under the circumstances was to procure a complete description of the notes from the depositor, who, fortunately, had preserved a memorandum of their denominations and numbers, and to keep strict watch through all available channels, with a view to discovering by whom any of them might be put in circulation.

“The missing money!” exclaimed Archie; “has any clew been gained to it?”

“There *has*,” the man answered, “and you’re wanted right away.”

Archie had been among the most active in efforts to solve the mystery, and expressed his readiness to accompany his visitors at once, and render all the aid in his power, asking them to wait till he should step in and excuse his absence.

“Quite impossible,” said the spokesman of the two, in a low, dogged tone, at the same time placing his hand on Archie’s arm and leading him out of earshot. “Can’t suffer you out of our sight, you see.”

“Can’t suffer me out of your sight!”

“No; seein’ as you’re our prisoner.”

“Your—*your prisoner!*” the young man gasped, stupefied with amazement.

“Yes; and onless you want to make a scene,” rejoined the other, “the best thing you can do is to come along quietly.”

“But what is the charge?” asked Archie; “surely I am not suspected—“

“We don’t suspect nothin’,” interrupted the officer, “which aren’t our business, which is only to take your body.”

Seeing further parley was useless, with what composure he could command, after bidding the servant explain to Miss Gilbert that urgent business called him away suddenly, accompanied his custodians in silence.

At the police-office he learned that a note which he had paid out that evening had been identified as one of those stolen from the bank, which fact had led to his present arrest.

A search was then made of the prisoner, in whose pocket-book was found a number of bank-notes, every one of which was proved, by its number and other distinctive features, to belong to the missing packet!

At this revelation Archie Norton stood overwhelmed and speechless. The stunning force with which the blow had fallen bereft him of all power to make an explanation, if, indeed, he had any to offer.

Next morning I received a summons from the prisoner, with whom I had been on terms of friendly intercourse, and one of whose wedding guests I was to be. I found him in his cell, in a half-dazed, bewildered state.

“Surely,” I said, “you must be able to account for your possession of the notes found on you.”

“Certainly, I am,” he answered; “I got them yesterday from my uncle’s executor, Mr. Gordon, in payment of a legacy. I was too much confused last night to mention that.”

“Mr. Gordon is a very methodical man of business,” I replied, ‘and may be able to identify the notes he paid you. In that case, the affair will be easily cleared up; for no one will suspect Mr. Gordon, and if he remembers from whom he received the notes, not only

will your innocence be established, but a clew may be gained to the discovery of the real culprit.

“By the way,” I added, “in whose company were you yesterday after receiving the money from Mr. Gordon?”

“In Ralph Grayson’s” he answered.

“Indeed!” I said, a little astonished; for Ralph Grayson, a fellow-clerk of Archie’s, had been his rival aspirant to the hand of Marian Gilbert, and their relations had been far from friendly. “Then you and he have become reconciled?”

“Oh! yes.” he replied; “he came home with me yesterday, and remained till I started on my visit to Marian.”

“Where was your pocket-book meantime?”

“Why, in my pocket, of course,” said Archie, looking astonished at the question.

“All the time?” I continued.

“All the time,” he answered— “that is, all except a few minutes while I was in my bedroom changing my dress. I had taken out my pocket-book just before to consult a paper, and laid it on my sitting-room table.”

“And Grayson was in the sitting-room?”

“Certainly; but why do you ask? You do not think, surely—“

“I think nothing at present,” I replied, and encouraging my friend to hope for the best, took my leave.

My next step was to ascertain the numbers and description of the notes found in Archie’s possession; the next, to call on Mr. Gordon.

“You paid Mr. Norton some money yesterday,” I began.

“I did,” was the answer.

“Did you keep a memorandum of the numbers and denominations of the notes?”

“It s my invariable custom,” said Mr. Gordon, “and I followed it in this instance.”

“Then you will be able to tell whether this is a correct list and description of them,” I continued, handing Mr. Gordon a memorandum of the notes found on Archie.

After consulting his book, he shook his head.

“No; these are not the notes.”

My first hope was dashed, but I still had another.

“Will you suffer me to take a copy of the description of the notes you *did* pay Mr. Norton?” I asked.

The permission was given and the copy made.

Now for hope number two.

That evening found me in social companionship with Ralph Grayson. We had not been intimate hitherto; for Ralph was of a disposition too secretive and selfish to admit of much cordiality between us. For once, however, we got along famously. Ralph was in gleeful mood notwithstanding his friend’s trouble.

“Poor Archie!” he said, sipping his champagne daintily; “it’s a very ugly case they have against him.”

“Very ugly,” I assented.

“I’m afraid he’s guilty,” continued Ralph.

“It certainly looks so, at present,” I answered. “By the way,” I added, carelessly, “could you oblige me with change for a twenty-dollar bill, Mr. Grayson?”

Mr. Grayson could and did, in the shape of four fives. I excused my companion, and took my leave as soon as I could without rudeness.

On examining the four bills received from Grayson, I found them to correspond exactly with four of those described in Mr. Gordon’s memorandum of the notes paid to Archie. Hope number two was realized, and the problem solved!

I had previously learned from Archie that he had paid out no money between the time of receiving the sum from Mr. Gordon, and that at which he separated from Grayson; and that the note that led to his arrest, he had paid at a jeweler’s, while on his way to visit Marian, for a ring which was to figure in the coming ceremony. It was clear now that Ralph Grayson had embraced the opportunity offered him of replacing the contents of Archie’s pocket-book with an equal amount of the stolen money, without reflecting that means might exist of tracing and identifying the former.

Acting on this conviction, I lost no time in procuring a warrant for Grayson’s apprehension, in whose possession most of the purloined notes were found; and, within a

brief space, he was in Archie's cell, and the latter was at Marian's side, consoling her for the hours of bitter suffering she had passed on his account.

The New York Ledger, October 28, 1876
Burlington [VT] Daily Sentinel, October 30, 1876
Mansfield [PA] Advertiser, November 1, 1876
The Selingrove [PA] Times, November 3, 1876
Sunbury [PA] Gazette, November 10, 1876 & October 18, 1878
The Weekly Star [Plymouth, PA], November 15, 1876
Spirit of the South [Rockingham, NC], December 16, 1876
The Moulton [AL] Advertiser, December 21, 1876
Saint Mary's Beacon [Leonardtown, MD], January 4, 1877
Orangeburg [SC] News & Times, February 3, 1877
Journal & Herald [Springville, NY], March 3, 1877
The Xenia [OH] Gazette, March 13, 1877
The Cincinnati [OH] Daily Star, July 12, 1878
The Columbus [NE] Era, July 20, 1878
Fitchburg [MA] Daily Sentinel, October 14, 1878
Claiborne Guardian [Homer, LA], November 6, 1878
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