

## *The Dumb Detective*

The virtues of Wiley Barnes were in everybody's mouth. Outwardly, he was a model of perfection. When Ellen Danforth slighted his cautiously proffered love, he bore the rebuff with equanimity, and his favored rival, Charley Tryon, seemed to find a special place in his esteem.

It was not in Charley Tryon's nature to be unaffected by conduct so magnanimous. He and Wiley Barnes soon became fast friends; and Charley's conscience sometimes halfway smote him for being the cause of blighting the affections of a man so good and noble.

One day Charley wanted a sum of money to meet a sudden demand.

"Certainly," was Wiley Barnes's answer to his friend's request of a loan of the required amount.

And when Charley said something about security:

"Pray, don't speak of it," interrupted the other. "Just give me a note to your own order, indorsed by yourself, and here's the money."

The affair was completed in five minutes, and Charley, after a warm clasp of Mr. Barnes's hand, went his way with an overflowing heart.

He was in better spirits than usual when he called to see his sweetheart that evening; but they were a little dampened, when, instead of Ellen, with her winsome, smiling face, it was Mr. Danforth, with a very grave and stern one, who met him as he entered.

"You borrowed five hundred dollars today," said Mr. Danforth, without inviting the visitor to be seated.

Charley bowed coolly, wondering that a matter so strictly private, should already be known in such a quarter, and disposed to resent what looked like a piece of officious intermeddling.

"You borrowed it on a note," continued Mr. Danforth.

Another bow, stiffer and colder.

"On which there was an endorsement."

"Yes, my own," answered the young man, wondering more and more, and with a touch of irritation in his tone.

"And *mine!*" exclaimed Mr. Danforth— "a *forgery*, by whom perpetrated you should be best able to tell."

Charles Tryon reeled and almost sank under the shock.

“What horrible falsehood is this?” he gasped, half inaudibly, and with a vacant and bewildered look.

“It is no falsehood,” returned Mr. Danforth. “Mr. Barnes, of whose friendship you have basely taken advantage, in a conversation between us casually mentioned the loan he had made you on my indorsement. I asked to look at the note, and saw my name upon it, forged below yours.”

“As God is my witness, your name was not on the note when I delivered it!” answered the young man, slowly and solemnly.

“Lofty words,” replied Mr. Danforth, contemptuously, “will scarcely convince people that a man of Mr. Barnes’s character committed forgery, merely for the sake of lending you five hundred dollars.”

Charles Tryon remained to hear no more. He was walking along hurriedly, unable as yet to collect his thoughts, when a friend touched his arm.

“This is bad business, Charley,” his friend said, as he accosted him.

“Surely, *you* do not believe me guilty.”

“Others do,” was the evasive answer, “and a warrant is already out for your arrest.”

For the first time, a full sense of his danger flashed on Charles Tryon’s mind. That Wiley Barnes had written the forged signature through motives of secret malice, he was well convinced; but, who would believe, as Mr. Danforth had suggested, that the crime had been committed, not by him who received its fruits, but by one who, so far from seeking gain by it, had been the first to expose it?

Charles Tryon took measures for the return of the borrowed money, and that night he was a hunted fugitive.

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Three years had elapsed. Wiley Barnes had renewed his suit to Ellen Danforth, but its rejection, this time, was so decided that even a more sanguine lover must have been discouraged. Mr. Barnes busied himself in speculations which went on swimmingly for a season. But evil came. Stocks in which Mr. Barnes had heavily invested fell with a crash, and he was forced to borrow money at ruinous interest, till, at last, he was fairly at bay with fortune.

“It is my only chance,” he said to himself, as he sat in his private office.

Then he took from his drawer several slips of paper, on one of which there was writing. From the latter he carefully copied something across one of the other slips, turned the paper over and wrote some lines upon the other side.

“This may save me for a month,” he said.

All this time a man, who had entered noiselessly, stood behind Mr. Barnes’s chair, looking over his shoulder with a sharp, keen glance.

At a slight movement of his watcher, Mr. Barnes turned about quickly, but already the look of the other had subsided into vacancy.

“Oh! it’s only John,” said Mr. Barnes, with a relieved expression. “It’s fortunate he’s deaf and dumb, and half an idiot besides.”

Then he handed John some letters to post, and pointed to the door.

Mr. Barnes had just returned from the bank, where he had gone with the slip of paper on which he had written, and was counting over a roll of notes.

“Safe for another month!” he exclaimed, a gleam of hope, for an instant, lighting up his features.

“Not another hour!” answered a stern voice, at which Wiley Barnes started with affright.

Looking around he saw a stranger whom John was showing in.

With a quick movement, the former got rid of his bushy beard and flaming red hair and eyebrows, and Wiley Barnes sat quailing in the presence of Charles Tryon.

“You sought to blast my name,” said the latter, “by fastening upon me a crime of your own commission. What you then did for hatred, I felt sure you would one day do for gain, and for a year past I have kept you under strict surveillance. My expectations was not disappointed. Today you passed at the bank the forged signature of Mr. Danforth.[”]

“Mercy!” pleaded the discovered criminal. “Only spare me, and I will right the wrong I did you,” implored Barnes, almost cringing at the other’s feet. “Give me but time to fly, and you shall have a full written statement that the forgery of which you have been so long suspected was my own act, which I now here confess.”

“I shall hardly need your vindication now,” replied Tryon. “I have a witness here,” turning to

John.

“But he is deaf and dumb,” said Barnes.

“You have heard this man’s confession?” said Tryon, to the porter.

“Certainly, sir,” the latter answered, in a clear, distinct voice.

“And you saw him forge Mr. Danforth’s name today?”

“I did.”

“Then do your duty.”

Whereupon the porter, who was a shrewd detective in disguise, clapped a pair of handcuffs on Mr. Barnes’s wrists, and led him off a prisoner. In due time he got his deserts, and all came out right between Charles Tryon and Ellen Danforth.

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