

SAVED ON THE BRINK.

I was seated in my office one afternoon in October, 1884, when an acquaintance, a merchant of this city, called. I had then acquired a fair experience in my calling, but my income from that source had been quite limited; hence my extreme gratification when my visitor announced that the purpose of his visit was "business."

The gentleman said that a friend of his, Mr. B., a merchant doing an extensive business on Lake street, had requested him to suggest the name of a reliable man to undertake a private investigation; that he had promised to comply with the request, and therefore came to me. I asked him if he knew anything about the character and details of the case. He replied that he did not. At my instance the gentleman wrote a letter of introduction to Mr. B., which he handed me, and after receiving my promise to deliver it without delay he departed.

I lost no time in communicating with Mr. B.—I sent my messenger the letter of introduction enclosed in a note of my own, requesting an interview, and in reply was invited to call at his residence that evening at 8 o'clock.

I was promptly on hand at the designated time, and was ushered into a comfortably and well appointed little library room.

Mr. B. received me cordially, but his face wore an expression of much concern.

"For what specific purpose is my service required?" I asked, making a dive at the business in hand.

"I wish you to investigate a little matter for me," he said, "and will give you the cause and details in a few words." After a moment's hesitation, which seemed devoted to deep thought, he said: "I presume you are aware of the character of our business, require a large clerical force in our counting room; we reward our efficiency and zeal with merited promotion, and many of our clerks have acquired their present advanced positions through this system. Among others in our counting room is one who has secured his desk by gradual promotion, a young man who seems possessed of the required qualifications and who has always, so far as I can judge, properly performed his whole duty. I speak of our cashier. He is young, intelligent, with a kindly disposition, prompt at his post, and indefatigable in his work. Because of these qualities and the fact that he has exercised economy I have felt myself gradually drawn toward him. I have taken deeper interest in him than in many others in our employ and was much gratified to find that he had to his credit a neat little sum, saved out of his salary. Recently, however, I have noticed that he wears a haggard expression, and the discovery has disturbed me. When first I observed this change it was but slightly depicted on his countenance, but it has grown more pronounced from day to day until now he seems little more than a shadow of his former self, and though prompt at his post and in his work, the old smile seldom lights up his genial face. I have taken occasion to look into his personal account in the ledger and find that from time to time he has drawn upon it until now very little remains of the \$1,900 to his credit a month ago."

"What is your idea of the cause of this condition of things?" I asked.

"I have no fixed idea," Mr. B. replied, and then added: "What puzzles and pains me is the fact that, though he has authority to pay out money standing to the credit of our employer's account and had a right to draw his money, he had several times invested in shares of building and loan associations, but never without first consulting me as to the advisability of doing so. Of course, I have been more than pleased with this mark of confidence, and was so favorably impressed with his worth that I had already determined that he would be the next to be admitted to a junior partnership interest in our establishment. My recent discoveries and the cashier's reticence have made me uneasy. I am determined, if possible, to learn the cause of this change, and therefore I have sent for you to look into the case for me. I desire you to ascertain what influence has caused the change in his appearance, and what he has done with his money. The only condition that I interpose is that you must make no move that will disturb him until you shall have reported to me. You may adopt your own time and method to reach the end in view, and you may call upon me for such assistance as you may require in the case."

"Do you suspect financial trouble in any form?"

"I have no data upon which to ground a suspicion; my trial balance sheet made three days ago proves the books and accounts in good shape, and the cash balance on hand at that time was correct."

"Does he complain of illness or overwork?"

"He does not; in fact, when I questioned him concerning the cause of his appearance, his answers seemed rather evasive."

After a few moments' further conversation I bade my client goodnight and departed. The next day I entered the counting room of Mr. B. and asked the clerk at one of the windows to give me silver coin for a \$20 note. Pointing to another window he said: "The cashier will give it to you." I was about to have a view of the cashier. This was the purpose I desired to compass. I had not up to that time had a glimpse of that gentleman's face.

Approaching the aperture designated I asked: "Are you the cashier?" Receiving an affirmative response I requested change for my paper currency, which request was silently granted.

The few seconds required by the cashier in which to gather up the coin and pass it through the window afforded me to "take in" that gentle-

man's face that I might know it when I should see it again.

I spent several days in quiet investigation and then sought a private interview with the accused. After a few commonplace remarks I took up the matter in hand.

"I am a messenger appointed to watch you and gain information concerning your habits," said I, looking steadily in his eyes.

The young man assumed a calmness, but could not conceal his alarm and deep concern. I had fully determined that the cashier was not a rogue at heart. I believed that he was not confirmed in any vicious practice, and it is his conduct during our interview warranted it intended to be his friend. I have always felt that it was our duty, if possible, to prevent crime. We effect a vast deal more good in this world by preventing our fellow man from being a criminal than by permitting the commission of crime in order to "detect" the criminal and punish him. How many lives and happy homes might be saved if this were more frequently practiced!

After a moment's pause my companion asked: "Who sent you to watch me?"

"One deeply interested in your welfare. Can you not guess who?" I replied.

"A lady?" he asked, much agitated.

"No," I answered, and taking the cue, I added: "Miss—, of—, avenue, so far as I know, is not aware of my employment, and I presume she does not even suspect that there is cause for it; indeed, I would deeply regret it if she did."

He turned his face full upon me and there was started an puzzled expression resting upon it. "What do you know about that lady, and why did you mention her when I asked if your principal was a lady?" he asked, hastily.

"I know that you visited her at her home this evening, and have reason to know your feelings toward the lady," was my response.

I had been right in my conjectures, and now knew that I had sent a shaft to a tender spot and felt assured that this hit would prove a valuable, though silent, adjunct to the successful execution of my hastily formed plan.

With a deep sigh of relief he said: "I am glad of it," and then, after a pause, asked again, "Who sent you?"

"Who else can be so deeply interested in you?" said I. "I will tell you who authorized me to follow your movements while away from the office, but I will precede the information by the statement that my employer is prompted by the deepest concern in your behalf. Mr. B.— is the individual," I said, but the young man's alarmed countenance urged me to add: "Yet he does not suspect what I have discovered; he is especially alarmed about the great change noted in your appearance, and commissioned me to adopt my own method and time in making the investigation. To execute this commission I determined to keep you under my surveillance, though I scarcely expected developments so soon."

"I presume you will report your discovery to Mr. B.— at once?" he interrogated, with apparent alarm.

"Not necessarily," I replied, briefly.

"Can my exposure be prevented?" he quickly asked.

"That depends," I answered. The cashier impulsively thrust his hand into the breast pocket of his coat and drew forth a roll of bills. Turning to me, with extending arm, the money in his hand, he said, excitedly: "You are welcome to this, but, for God's sake, don't expose me; it will ruin me forever!"

Restraining my indignation as much as possible, I said: "Your proposition is unworthy of you as it would be unworthy of me to accept it." My words were tuned him, and an expression of dejection and lost hope overcast his countenance. Seeing the effect my speech had, I added, earnestly: "I will be your friend and save you if you will comply fully with my demands."

A gleam of hope instantly shone on his countenance and he added, rather demurely: "What do you demand?"

Looking him earnestly in the eyes I answered, "That you tell me truthfully how you came to visit a faro bank; how long the visits had been indulged in; how often and with what result."

To sum up this statement briefly, but which he gave in detail, he said he went with a friend one night out of curiosity; that the game was fascinating; that he commenced by buying \$5 worth of checks; he won \$10; visited the place again a few nights after, and tried his luck, but this time lost \$25. He repeated his visit two nights following with a like result, then the fascination and a determination to recover his small loss impelled him to go again, each time meeting with a loss and each succeeding loss being greater than the last, until he visited the place almost nightly, and finally plied all of his cash balance in the office, besides having hypothesized some shares of stock owned by him. The loss caused him much regret, but he had spent many sleepless nights because of remorse when it fully dawned upon him that he was living a lie and that the confidence reposed in him by Mr. B.— and Miss— would be instantly withdrawn and summary dismissal from both follow, meaning, of course, disgrace. He had used his own money; he had not gone far enough in his recklessness to flinch.

"Are you satisfied now to cut short this recklessness?" I asked.

"Yes," he answered, determinedly.

"Pledge me your word that you will never again enter a gambling house or gamble, and I will agree to make a report that will not expose your recklessness. I feel assured that otherwise you are reliable. I believe there is ample chance for you if you will be wise as well as correct in your character; but I will warn you that if you prove unfaithful to your pledge I will see to it that you do not escape the logical consequences."

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A Kangaroo Round up.

A reporter met a gentleman who has been largely identified with pastoral interests both in Australia and New Zealand, and from him some interesting facts were ascertained in connection with the efforts of anti-podean agriculturists to combat the plague of the long eared pest.

"The idea," said the gentleman, "is an entirely new to Australians. They have for years employed a somewhat similar method of riding pastoral lands of the destructive kangaroo. The usual way was to build a capacious stock yard, with very high fences, for your able bodied is no slouch at playing leap frog. The location generally chosen was on the fork of a river, for kangaroos are not extra partial to water. Invitations to the round up would then be sent to neighboring farmers, and on a specified morning the farmers would all put in an appearance, mounted, an accompanied by what-some kangaroo hounds they chanced to possess. Dogs and owners would then get away back and scatter out in skirmishing order until a large section of country was covered, and then circumnavigation was in order, the object point, of course being the lofty stock yard.

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The Sun's Energy.

The most satisfactory way of arriving at an idea of the enormous energy of the sun is by measuring the amount of heat which his rays are capable of generating; and further, by our knowledge of the relation which exists between heat and mechanical work, we are able at once to estimate the amount of work which the sun is capable of doing, and also the quantity of energy he must be losing year by year. By suitable arrangements we can cause a certain quantity of his radiation to be absorbed by water or other substance, and note the rise of temperature which results, and as we know the mechanical equivalent of each degree of temperature in water, for instance, it is only a matter of calculation to arrive at a knowledge of the sun's total energy. Like everything else connected with this wonderful body, figures give us, says the Scotsman, no adequate conception of his energy, and various illustrations have been used by different investigators. Thus, Herschel considered it in relation to the quantity of ice which it would melt in a given time, and states that the amount of heat which the earth receives when the sun is overhead would melt an inch thickness of ice in two hours and thirteen minutes. From this it can be calculated that if the body of the sun were entirely surrounded by a sheet of ice on its surface of more than a mile in thickness, the sun's heat would entirely melt this coating of ice in the same time—namely, two hours and thirteen minutes. Prof. Young uses and even more striking illustration. He says: "If we could build up a solid column of ice from the earth to the sun, two miles and a quarter in diameter, spanning the inconceivable abyss of ninety-three million miles, and if this sun should concentrate his power upon it, it would dissolve and melt, not in an hour, not in a minute, but in a single second; one swing of the pendulum and it would be water, seven more and it would be dissipated in vapor." Of course, of this enormous quantity of heat the earth receives but a very small fraction. The remainder, except, of course, what the other planets receive, passes away into space and is lost forever, so far as can be ascertained, to the solar system. If we estimate in mechanical power what we do receive, we find this to be on each square foot of surface equivalent, on an average, to about fifty tons raised a mile high yearly, or to one-horse power continuously acting, to every thirty square feet of the earth's surface. It is by this enormous supply of energy that the whole world is kept alive and active. It keeps us warm and drives our steam engine and water wheels, it circulates our atmosphere and brings us rain and snow in due season; it grows and nourishes our plants and animals, and, in a word, is the source of almost every earthly blessing.

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HOW IT HAPPENED.

I got to thinkin' of her, both her parents dead and gone, and all her sisters married off, and none but her and John A-livin' all alone there in that lonesome sort of way.

And him a blamed old bachelor, confumder every day. I'd know 'em all from children, and their daddy from the time.

He settled in the neighborhood and hadn't ary a dime Er dollar, when he married, for to start housekeepin' on: So I got to thinkin' of her, both her parents dead and gone!

I got to thinkin' of her and a-wonderin' what she done That all her sisters kep' a gittin' married one by one.

And her without no chances, and the best girl of the pack, An old maid, with her hands, you might say, tied behind her back!

And mother, too, before she died, she used to say 'take on' When you see 'em was left, you know, but Evaline and John, And jes' declare to goodness 'at the young men must be on 'em.

To see what a wife they'd git if they got Evaline.

I got to thinkin' of her, in my great affliction she Was sich a comfort to us, and so kind and neighborly; She'd come and leave her housework fer to be 'n out little Jane.

And talk of her own mother 'at she'd never see again; May be sometimes cry together, though, for the most part, she Would have the child so reconciled, and hap-py as a pig.

Felt lonesome'n ever, she'd put her bonnet on And say she'd rally haf to be a gittin' back to John!

I got to thinkin' of her, as I say; and more I'd think of her dependance, and the burdens 't she bore.

Her parents both a-bein' dead, and all her sisters gone, And married off, and her a-livin' there alone with John;

You might say jes' a toilin' and a-lavin' out her life, For a man 'at hadn't pride enough to get hisself a wife.

'Leson Guy' married Evaline and packed her off some day; So I got to thinkin' of her, and it happened that a-way.

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.

HIS STEPMOTHER.

"Hush, Dorcas! is that rain? It sounds as if some genii were dashing pails of water against the casements."

"It's rain, Guy. The equinoctial storm, you know."

"And that dreary moaning down the chimney—is it wind?"

The bedclothes shivered a little, and drew the bedclothes up around his chin. The red flames from the blazing log on the hearth danced up and down like a magic lantern; the shaded lamp burned steadily on the table. Dorcas Wynter stiched quietly away at her sewing without looking up.

"It must be an awful tempest, Dorcas," uttered the lad, as a fresh gust of wind seemed to shake the octagonal tower to its very foundations.

"It is, Guy. I heard old Capt Lake say that the tide had not been so high since the year the Royal Victoria was wrecked off Paine Point."

"It is better to be here, even with a broken leg," said Guy Paley, slightly lifting his eyebrows, "than out at sea in such a blow as this!"

"A good deal better, Guy."

"Not that I am a coward, Dorcas," cried the boy. "There are worse things than a storm at sea, and I have an instinct that I shall be a sailor yet; but this sickness has taught me, this sickness and you, Dorcas, that it's better to go for a thing in an honest, straightforward way, than to try to reach it by sneaking. But I always supposed it was a fine thing to run away to sea, or else I shouldn't have tried the get-out-of-the-window-by-midnight dodge, and broken my leg. I'm wiser now!"

Dorcas smiled at him with melting hazel eyes and rose-red lips, revealing a line of pearls.

"Poor Guy!" said she. "It was a hard lesson, wasn't it?"

"I think I need it, Dorcas. If ever there was a thorough-paced young ruffian it was I!" groaned the boy.

"But, you see, nobody ever talked to me. Scoldings without end I got, I grant you, but no one tolled common-sense to me before. You are the only one who seemed to think me worth reasoning with; and you shall see, Dorcas, that I am worth the trouble. Once I'm up from this scrape I'll tackle my lessons in real earnest, and try to do something better. And I say, Dorcas—"

"Yes, Guy?"

"You're the prettiest girl I ever saw."

"Nonsense, Guy."

"Oh, but you are! and the sweetest and most sensible. I can't think how you ever came to be a housemaid in a place like this."

Dorcas colored a little.

"Shall I tell you, Guy? I came as governess to the primary department, but I had no discipline, they told me. The younger boys did exactly as they pleased. I've always thought that Mrs. Vall, who succeeded to the position, had something to do about the bad reports of my management that reached Dr. Delfer's ears. But that can't be proved, neither can it be helped. I was alone here and friendless, and was glad to accept a vacant position under the housekeeper to mend linen, care for occasional cases in the infirmary, and make myself generally useful."

"I knew you were a lady!" exultantly cried the boy. "I could see it in your face."

"I would rather you would call me a true woman, Guy, than a lady," said Dorcas, moving the lamp a few inches farther back, so that the light would not shine in Guy's eyes.

"But I say, Dorcas, how old are you?"

"Rather young, I am afraid, Guy—only nineteen."

"And I am fourteen, Dorcas. Will you wait seven years for me?"

"Guy!"

"I shall be twenty-one then, and my own master," eagerly added the boy; "and I'll work like a slave to get a good profession, and if you will marry me, Dorcas, I'll make the best husband that ever was to you, for

I'm desperately in love with you, that I am."

Dorcas burst into laughter.

"Guy," she said, "what a child you are."

"But you do love me, don't you?"

"Yes, of course I love you; but not a bit more than I do Cecil Parker or little Frankie Gaines."

"Dorcas!"

"Well, a trifle more perhaps, because I've had all the care of you these four weeks, and you've really behaved very decently, but—"

"I won't, Guy."

"We're engaged, all the same," said Guy, with a deep sigh of relief; "it's a bargain. And now you may get me my girdle."

"Yes, Mr. Paley," said Dr. Delfer, with a nod of his spectacled brows, "that wild boy of yours is a different. And the infirmary nurse has done it all. Not to mention the credit the doctor gives her for keeping down the fever and managing the troublesome splints. He was the worst boy in the school. I don't mind admitting to you now that I was contemplating expelling him from our members."

"Guy always was a wild sort of chap," admitted Mr. Paley. "But his antics spoiled him. He never had any bringing up to speak of."

"But this illness seems to have exerted a wonderful influence over his moral nature," added Dr. Delfer. "And I really think Dorcas has done it all. Her influence has been wonderful."

"She deserves a great deal of credit I am sure," said Mr. Paley. "I should like to see her and thank her. I've brought a few presents for her—a warm shawl, a silver snuff-box and a black stuff gown."

Dr. Delfer gasped a little.

"She—I don't think she takes snuff!" said he feebly.

"All these nurses do."

"Yes, but there she is now."

The door opened and Dorcas Wynter came in, carrying a student-lamp, which she had just filled and trimmed anew.

Dr. Paley dropped the silver snuff box in astonishment.

"I beg your pardon, I am sure!" stammered he.

And when the doctor suggested that the nurse had better accompany young Guy on the journey home she assented without remonstrance.

"Nurse, indeed!" said Miss Sophronia Paley, a giant high-featured dame of fifty. "As if a pretty simpering