

THE THOUSAND-DOLLAR BILL

A MYSTERY OF THE UNITED STATES TREASURY—A SHORT STORY

BY LEONARD O'BRYEN

CHAPTER I.

They were out on the verandah in the cool of the evening, old Caleb Loring, in a rocking chair, smoking his corn-cob pipe; Bertha, his daughter, swinging in a low hammock, and her husband, Edmund Hackett, who was perched upon the wooden balustrade. Wilton Loring was there, too, lounging in a canvas chair and smoking a "Gonomic" cigar. The verandah ran round three sides of a modest frame house, all painted white, with the exception of its bright green shutters. Edmund and Bertha, recently married, lived here in the outskirts of Washington with the head of the family. Wilton had run down from Philadelphia, where he was cashier of the Bankers' National Bank. They were all gazing over their meagre incomes.

"Uncle Sam," remarked Edmund Hackett, a quiet, steady going sort of fellow, well advanced toward middle life, "Uncle Sam is not generous to us boys and girls of the Civil service. We handle between eight upon a million dollars every working day, and give our lives to the mill horse business for a bare subsistence."

"Since I've been cashier of the Bankers' National," said Wilton Loring, "I've had enough money pass through my hands to make me crazy with thirst for it. It's like being—"

"Don't like to hear you talk like that, Wilton," remarked Old Caleb, with a quick shake of his head, as if a mosquito had settled on him. "Thoughts of that kind sometimes materialize into deeds you'd be sorry for."

"Humph! I'm not so sure I shan't one day try to pinch something," pursued Wilton, with a wink at his sister. "But big steals are the sort to succeed nowadays. To make a corner in something or other; to float a salted mine, or a bogus building society. That's the game."

"Tut, tut!" protested the elder Loring, with fierce expectation; but Bertha mischievously took up her brother's humor.

"There's a fine chance now I've got into the counting division at the Treasury," said she. "Say now, why not make up a family combination? You, Wilton, are cashier at the Bankers, and you're constantly having old bills to send into the Treasury for redemption. You 'pinch,' as you call it, a thousand-dollar greenback, and forward the packet to the Treasury endorsed as containing one more bill than it actually does. That packet comes to me to be counted and examined. I just pass it as containing the number of greenbacks specified. On it goes to Edmund, my husband, whose duty it chances to be to check my count. Smart Edmund finds one bill short; but seeing his Bertha's initials on the wrapper, he just winks a little, and the packet, with say ninety-nine bills instead of one hundred bills against the new ones to that value which he sends back in exchange to the Bankers' National through the Division of Issue. See?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Edmund Hackett, disposed to enter into any joke conceived by his adored little wife. "How we could bleed Uncle Sam and help ourselves to the salaries he ought to pay us!"

"Have done! Have done!" burst out the old man. "If I believed my son and my daughter and my daughter's husband were capable of such roguery I'd fetch out my gun and fill you full of holes, every one!"

He meant it. His usually placid features were distorted and purple with indignation, and the stem of the pipe he held snapped in the angry grip of his fingers. Wilton flung himself back in a fit of hearty laughter, but Bertha, perceiving that the joke had gone too far.

"Father! dear father!" she exclaimed soothingly. "You know us all better than that, sure. We were just joking fun; weren't we, Edmund? Besides, such a combination as I figured out couldn't be anyway."

"Quite impossible!" averred Wilton, getting over his mirth.

"Well, I reckon it's improbable in the last degree," said Edmund Hackett. "So, as opportunity makes the thief, and we shall have no opportunity," added young Loring, "the whole three of us'll have to be honest, will we, or won't we?"

"You know, father," urged Bertha, to calm the old man, who muttered and protested still, and seemed to have taken fright at the very thought of a breach of trust. "There are nine ladies in the Counting Division besides myself, and Wilton's imaginary short packet might go to any one of them instead of to me."

"And if Bertha did get it and pass it," remarked Hackett, to clinch the argument, "there are plenty of fellows in the Secretary's office who check the counts beside me, and one of them would spot her oversight." Even if the short packet came to me, it would be useless for me to wink, for I should have one-half the bills. They are cut longitudinally," he added for Wilton's information, turning to his brother-in-law; "one half—the lower section—comes to the Secretary, and the upper goes to the office of the Register, to be checked there."

"We should need another confederate in the Register's," put in Bertha. "The steal would be caught to a certainty in the Register's office."

"Unless—by Caesar! we've the whole bag of tricks. The combination you figured out is not only possible, it is here in our hands. Dad is the Senior Counter in the Register Division. The big bills go to him. This is marvelous. If fortune is disposed to do us a good turn, here's the method all ready, cut and dried. I nab a thousand-dollar bill at the bank, and send a packet of ninety-nine into the Treasury endorsed as 100. Bertha passes it through the Counting Division. Edmund gets the lower half in the Secretary's office, notes his wife's initials and swallows the shortage with connubial submission; and Mr. Loring, who spots the game in the Register's, out of respect for—"

"His trust, his country's confidence, the honor of his name," burst out the old man, "reports the matter instantly. Yes, gives the lot of you away, to ruin, to disgrace, to the huks. No

words about it! That's what I would do, mind that!"

Wilton laughed lightly. "The bundles of rubbish; ninety-nine or a hundred bills; what would it matter to Uncle Sam? And I should send each of you \$250. Think it over, dad."

"Think it over? I shall never forget this talk of yours, Wilton. A crime conceived is half executed. May I never hear more of this combination of yours, in joke or in fact, will be my prayer from this day to God in Heaven."

And shaking his head angrily, the father strode into the house.

CHAPTER II.

A few days after this conversation Bertha Hackett sat in the office of the Redemption Division assisting Mrs. Lawson, the senior lady of the department, to count a packet of "big bills." Greenbacks of large denomination were allotted to the senior lady in the ordinary course, and the juniors would take it in turn to work with her for the sake of becoming accustomed to every kind of note, and by such familiarity detecting any forgery that might fall into their hands. Bertha was serving her apprenticeship in this department, and that day she sat at Mrs. Lawson's desk to learn all that this good lady could teach her.

Now among the packets of old bills sent in from all parts of America to be canceled and exchanged for new currency, it was not unusual for the Bankers' National Bank of Philadelphia, to contribute to its quota. Bertha's bright grey eyes took a sidelong glance at the heap of parcels before her companion, wondering whether chance would so far realize their fancied combination as to bring into her hands a consignment from her brother, Wilton. Like a pestilent tune that keeps echoing in the brain, that family talk of a conspiracy to defraud Uncle Sam could not be dismissed from her thoughts. These slips of dirty paper authorizing the payment to bearer of large sums of money, what a pity they should all go to the macerating machine to be ground into pulp! One more or less would make no difference to the wealthy nation, but would work wonders for an underpaid official who found it hard to make both ends meet.

She told herself it was horribly wicked to think of misappropriation, but she could not control her thoughts and they pictured for her persistently the staff of the three departments reduced to herself, her father, and her husband, and figured out the fortune they might accumulate by the aid of slick fingers. While thus musing she was startled by a remark from Mrs. Lawson, as that lady placed before her a heap of thousand-dollar bills which she had been critically examining with a magnifying glass. "That's a big charge from the Bankers' National—a hundred bills of a thousand each. I make them right; but you go over them again one by one, count them in two packets of fifty each, and bind them with a paper band in the usual way for me to initial and pass forward."

Mrs. Lawson proceeded with another packet, so absorbed in her work that she did not notice how strangely young Mrs. Hackett stared for a moment at the task before her. With the heap of bills lay the paper band that had enclosed them when they came from the Bank at Philadelphia. It was endorsed with the number and the denomination of the notes, and bore the signature, "Wilton Loring, Cashier." Mrs. Lawson vouched for them as correct, and yet Bertha's fingers trembled as she turned them over. She counted half of them backward, from 100 to fifty, and made a packet of them, as instructed, and the other half she counted in the usual way, beginning one, two, three, four, and so on. When she came to the end of the count she paused, and counted this second half again backward. Then she slowly fastened a band around the packet.

"You're not very smart at present, my girl," remarked the elder lady, observing her sluggish action. "I have to hunt for counterfeiters; but should never get through if I took so long as you have done with that simple cheque. But maybe you reckon to find I've passed a wrong count," she added, with a little touch of irony. "After thirty-four years at this work, my dear, the bills that have passed through Rosina Lawson's hands can be taken as right if she says so."

Mrs. Lawson was rather tetchy, and had a good conceit of herself, born of long infallibility. Bertha in silence wrote her own initials on the wrappers of the two packets, and this action modified the senior lady, for by thus taking responsibility for the correctness of the packets, Mrs. Hackett seemed to convey an impression of confidence in her. But something else was in Bertha's mind, for she muttered to herself as the packets were taken away to the cutting machine to be further checked in the offices of the Secretary of the Register. "There is just a chance!" (To be continued.)

Usefulness of Great Lakes.

The great lakes have become a great artery of our richest commercial blood. One-third of the population of the United States is dependent on these lakes for their export and import trade. This waterway taps the richest and most prosperous agricultural territory on this continent of ours, together with our most productive mines, and it is worth while noting that within a radius of 400 miles of Cleveland lies one-half the population of the United States. It is a well-established fact that deep-water transportation is, and necessarily must be, far below the cost of transportation by rail; indeed, it is computed that the cost of water transportation by steam, when the voyage is of any considerable length, is about one-quarter of the average cost of transportation by rail, while by sailboat it is only one-eighth of the latter. As this question of transportation determines to a great extent the existence or non-existence of a possible industry, and enhances or diminishes the value of every article of export in proportion to its efficiency and economy, the battle cry of the west for "twenty feet of water between Duluth and the sea" is no great problem to account for.—*Alnslee's Magazine.*



WHERE WASHINGTON LIVED.

A wealth of historic recollection hovers about the world-famous Mount Vernon, where Washington, the first president of the American republic, lived and died. The magnificent old estate on the banks of the Potomac river, but a short distance from the capital city, annually attracts thousands of visitors from all over the earth—visitors whose chief aim when coming to Washington for the first time is to look upon the spot where the "Father of His Country" spent his life. No one could conceive a more charming spot for the location of a mansion at once so grand and so historic. High above the southern bank



THE RESIDENCE OF WASHINGTON.

of the river Potomac the estate is located. It rests on the highest part of the hilly territory which characterizes the vicinity, and the mansion with its barns and surrounding buildings is half hidden from the gaze of river pilgrims by stately trees which have stood there scores upon scores of years. Closely trimmed lawns and carefully pruned shrubbery give an added touch of beauty to the environment of the old-time mansion and the snug-clipped hedges which surround the court at the rear of the house remind one strongly of the days gone by.

Mount Vernon is an imposing relic of the century past; a reminder of the days when colonial architecture was at its height. Eight tall pillars guard the broad piazza at the front of the house, and a picturesque balustrade of lattice-work ornaments the edge of the piazza roof. From the front veranda one may catch a glimpse of the silver river as it sweeps onward to the sea. The rear of the mansion is typical of old Southern days. A broad courtyard, with gravel walks and well-kept lawns, stretches away from the white-painted mansion to the woodland at the rear. Roomy horse sheds extend back from the main building on either side, and lead the eye to where greenhouses and immaculate dairy and carriage sheds stand. The hothouse is stocked with the rarest of plants, and is one of the points of



THE COURTYARD.

interest which always attracts visitors. The stable wherein is kept the famous chariot in which Washington rode is another attraction for the excursionists, and although the coach is fast dropping into a state of dilapidation, and is so shaky that no one is allowed to touch it, it remains a point of great interest nevertheless. Down near the steamboat landing, where the crowds of sightseers are landed from the river steamers, is the tomb wherein are interred the remains of Washington and

his wife, the caskets encased in marble sarcophagi, and kept from the public by means of iron bars over the doorway of the otherwise open tomb. The interior of the mansion is filled with relics of the great man who lived there, and from papers in his own handwriting to the bed on which he died, mementoes of Washington are everywhere.

The Washington Monument. Oh, pure, white shaft upspringing to the light. With one grand leap of heavenward-reaching might. Calmly against the blue forevermore Lift thou the changeless tye of souls that soar Above the common dust of sordid strife Into the radiant ether of a life Shepherded by the vastness of eternity! A hero's quickening spirit lifteth thee Unto the skies that claim thee for their own: In those vast fields of light, sublime, alone, High commune holdest thou with the young day. With sunset's glowing heart ere twilight gray Hath stilled its throbbing fires, and with dim night That folds thee softly in the silver light Of many a dreaming moon. In majesty. Serene, like the great name enshrined in thee. Thou dost defy the all-destroying years. Smite with thy still rebuke our craven fears! Point us forever to the highest height, And in our nation's peril-hours shine white. With thy mute witness to the undying power Of the high soul that lives above the hour! —Julia Larned, in the February Scribner's.

Followed No Creed. One of the most characteristic of Washington's traits one that a student of his character expects to find, is the indifference with which he treated religious controversy. He was the most tolerant of men. Tom Paine, hounded to death by priests and people, never received anything but real kindness from him, and although in a fit of "righteous anger" he spurned the dedication of the deist's famous or infamous attack on Christianity, going even so far as to order the public hangman to burn the book, it is doubtful if in his heart he cherished any real disdain. He had been born and bred in the Established Church; it never occurred to him to inquire into the why and wherefore of any religious dogma. This easy-going tolerance perhaps contributed as much as anything to his success; for even as he was not sufficiently orthodox an Episcopalian to antagonize the sects, so his broad, all-embracing Christianity could forgive even the unbeliever. And it is not indubitable that he had not thought. Some men have there been whose greatness has lain in that they held their tongue.

Washington As a Youth. The early age at which Washington developed the tender passion has been noticed. In fact, it was despair at the uncompromising attitude of a certain "Lowland Beauty" that he fled to the domain of Lord Fairfax, afterward his patron. The noble gentleman had left England and buried himself in the wilderness on account of a disappointed passion; perhaps George, who was then coming fifteen, felt there might be a bond between two such "wounded hearts," at any rate, before he had been many months under Fairfax's eye, just as he was completing his sixteenth year, he set out on a surveying expedition. The Englishman's ground included thousands of acres of the most fertile country in the world, extending in a wide strip from the sea

to the Alleghanies. It was no small sign of confidence to allow a youth to lay out such a country. This position is merely a sample of the many important places he held. At 19 he was major of the Virginia militia; at 21 he commanded an important expedition to Du Quenne. Small wonder is it that his first love came so young.

For the second time since its erection in 1827 the first monument ever raised to the memory of George Washington is in ruins. It was originally built by the united efforts of the people of Boonsboro, Md., on the top of South Mountain, a lofty cliff commanding a wide view of the surrounding country. On July 4, 1827, almost all the adult population of the village, headed by a band, marched on the steep path to the top of the mountain and there went to work. There were stonemasons and builders among them, and every man did his best to help. The foundation had been laid previously, but on that one day the entire superstructure of the monument was built. It is fifty-four feet in circumference at the base and fifteen feet high, composed of a wall made up of large stones, the interior being filled with the same material. In the center a stairway led up to the top of the pile. Twelve feet from the base, on the side facing Boonsboro, a white marble tablet was inserted bearing a fitting inscription. Many soldiers who fought in the revolutionary war took part in the erection of the monument, and the oration was delivered by a clergyman who had served as chaplain in the continental armies.

In 1872 nothing was left of the original monument but the foundation and a few crumbling fragments. At that time a movement was started to restore the monument and in 1883 it was rededicated, having been raised to a height of fifty feet and surrounded by an iron framework and balcony. The site of the monument is so exposed, however, that even the restored structure has fallen a prey to the elements, so that now it is again in a condition of ruin. Historical investigation has shown that this was the first monument ever raised in honor of the Father of His Country, and a movement is again on foot to restore it to its original condition.



FIRST MONUMENT TO WASHINGTON AS BUILT.

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What Joseph Was. The Sabbath-school teacher had been telling the class about Joseph, particularly with reference to his coat of many colors, and how his father rewarded him for being a good boy, for Joseph, she said, told his father whenever he caught any of his brothers in the act of doing wrong. "Can any little boy or girl tell me what Joseph was?" the teacher asked, hoping that some of them had caught the idea that he was Jacob's favorite. "I know," one of the little girls said, holding up her hand. "What was he?" "A tattle-tale!" was the reply.—*Baltimore News.*

Instead of an engagement ring, the Japanese lover gives his sweetheart a piece of beautiful silk for her sash.

A CAPE TOWN JAIL. HIGH PRICE OF PAPER. TARIFF TAX ON WOOD PULP A COSTLY ONE.

Special Punishment Inflicted Upon Many of the Cosmopolitan Population.

Cape Town, Africa, has among other novelties a prison containing about 1,000 prisoners, where almost every nation of the earth is represented. There are American miners and sons of the English aristocracy, French, Italians, Russians and Hebrews. A great many of the prisoners are serving political sentences. Most of these prisoners are employed in building forts and fortifications. The hillside overlooking the city of Cape Town is a veritable Gibraltar. Tier upon tier of modern guns have been placed here by the government, and the work has nearly all been done by the convicts. The convicts who are not employed on public works are hired out to farmers. Farmers of South Africa much prefer convict labor to that of the natives, because the convicts do not have an opportunity to become intoxicated. Beside being provided with food and fuel, each convict is paid for at the rate of 36 to 60 cents a day. The government furnishes guards to prevent criminals from escaping from their employers. All prisoners are divided into three classes, according to the length of their terms and their behavior. Those known as the first class are distinguished by a black band around their hats. When they first enter the prison they are thus marked and remain so for three months. If they behave they are then put into the probation class and marked with a yellow ribbon. Here they remain for eight months. If they continue to behave well they are transferred to the good-conduct class and marked with a red band. In this class they remain until their sentence has expired. There are no paroles. The classes are not permitted to mix, but each class has an opportunity after working hours for social intercourse among its own members. All prisoners are housed in wards, none being confined in cells. Prisoners are kindly treated as long as they behave themselves. Dungeons are never used as punitive agencies, and only now and then is solitary confinement resorted to. Canning and flogging are sometimes found necessary, but no prison official is allowed to inflict either of these. They must be imposed by a magistrate, who visits the prison once a week. Among the prisoners in Cape Town jail who have attracted special attention recently was a young native, educated at Oxford, who headed his father's tribe against an insurrection against the British authority. He was captured and sentenced to fifteen years in this prison. At the end of five years he was liberated and immediately returned to his tribe. Another prisoner went to Cape Town as a missionary and secretary of the Young Men's Christian association, which annually handled immense sums of money. He became secretary of the Cape Town Building and Loan association, and manipulated the books so that he was enabled to steal \$183,000 before being caught. He is now doing seven years in this prison.

Two-thirds of the wood pulp used in the manufacture of paper for American consumption should come from Canada, but it is excluded by a tariff tax, and we are now rushing headlong in the destruction of our forests, while Canada, with its almost limitless supply of timber, cannot reach our markets because of the tax imposed by the tariff.

The time has come when any trust that makes arbitrary profits by tariff duties must cease to be protected by the government. Where American industry needs protection it is reasonable to permit it, but where alleged protection is used only for systematic robbery, it must be overthrown.

We can now manufacture paper as cheaply as any country in the world. There is no excuse whatever for a tax upon the manufactured articles, and the raw material should be free, not only because the general principle is correct, but because if it shall not be done promptly our forests will be practically destroyed within a few years by tariff taxes excluding the lumber of Canada from our markets.

Paper and pulp must be made free of all taxes, as the paper trust has demonstrated that these taxes serve only a single purpose—that is to invite robbery under color of law.—*Philadelphia Times.*

FASHION IN GAMBLING.

Roulette Is Now the Fashionable Game of Sportive New Yorkers.

"There is a fashion in gambling as in everything else," said C. K. Bundy of New York, "and just now the sporting rage in Gotham is all in the direction of roulette. One hears a lot of poker yarns, but they are mostly hoary with antiquity, for the big games of squeeze played nowadays are like visits of angels. I was talking to the proprietor of a swell gambling house in the heart of New York city the other day, and he confirmed what I have said as to the popularity of roulette. He has in his place faro, baccarat, and the wheel, a conclusive showing that bank and baccarat had both been superseded by the seductive game of roulette. As to poker, he doesn't countenance it in his establishment, for the reason that it is a tedious way for the house to make money, however large the rake-off, as compared with any of the other games. He told me that it was a common thing for men to come into his place and bet him \$500 to \$1,500 on a single turn of the wheel, and I know he was telling the truth, for many of his patrons are known to me and they are among the high rollers of the city who look on betting \$500 about as the average poker regards the risking of a \$2 note. These plungers like roulette for two reasons—they get quick action for their money and they are satisfied that the game is absolutely square. In the first place, though the percentage in favor of the proprietor is not large, being only 5-19 in 100, it will beat the player in the long run, and therefore there is no reason to operate a dishonest machine. Secondly, the wheel is constructed so that the lifting of its top displays the interior and the presence of wires would be readily detected. Without wires there is no chance for fraud. The bigger the bets the better for the house, although there are times when the plunger will make the professional sick. There has been so much crooked work done in baccarat and faro that both have steadily lost in popularity. Of course there are fiends at both who will take chances on being robbed, though I do not mean to imply that all bank games are of the skin variety. Today in New York a citizen with sporting blood in his veins can get all the amusement he wants at swell establishments, where entertainment as luxurious as any Delmonico can furnish is provided gratis for those who feel disposed to try the fickle goddess of fortune."—*Washington Post.*

A Hard Rain. "It rains a great deal in the Puget sound country," said the man from that section, "and I heard of a funny incident not long ago about it. Some chap had come from the Mississippi valley to take up his residence at Whatcom, on Bellingham bay, where there are very high tides. When the boat landed him at the end of the long pier extending over the tide flats the water was low and the new man didn't notice anything but a wide stretch of sand between the boat and the town. It was in the evening about dark and was raining, and he went to the hotel on the front street and stayed there, going to bed without having gone out for a walk. The next morning when he got up he looked out and the tide was in, the water coming up close to the hotel. He gazed at the widespread waters for an instant, and, throwing up his hands in astonishment, he exclaimed, 'Gee whiz, but it must have rained hard last night!' Then he hurried down stairs to the office to find out if there was any danger from the flood, and the clerk smiled four or five times and gave him some much-needed information."—*Washington Star.*

Both in the Same Box.

A parson who occasionally preaches in South London arrived to take the place of the vicar, who had been called away on account of some family bereavement, and found an old and rather asthmatic lady struggling up the steps which led to the front door. He courteously gave her his arm to assist her and when they reached the top the dame asked him if he knew who was going to preach. "Mr. So-and-So," replied the parson, giving his own name. "Oh, dear me," exclaimed the old lady; "help me down again, if you please; I'd rather listen to the groaning and creaking of a windmill than sit under him," and she prepared to descend. The parson gently assisted her downstairs and signally remarked as he bade her good-by: "I wouldn't go in, either, if I weren't the preacher."

New Method of Lighting Tunnels.

A new method of lighting tunnels is about to be adopted in one constructed in Paris for an electric road. Electric lamps will be turned on automatically as the train enters the tunnel and cut off automatically as it emerges. The lights are arranged on each side on a level with the windows of the cars, so that during daytime it will not be necessary to turn on the light in the cars. This mode has been devised by a French inventor, and doubtless will be found of great utility.

Domestic Reminders. Wife—Do you know what you remind me of? Husband—No, but I do know what you remind me of. Wife—What? Husband—Of every little thing I forget to attend to that you ask me about.—*Detroit Free Press.*

The Dictionary Habit. Friend—What queer language your husband uses. He pronounces every word a half a dozen different ways. Wife—Yes, he has a dozen different dictionaries.—*New York Weekly.*