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SELECT STORY.

A DRAWN GAME.

Edgar Allen Johnson was sitting on a May afternoon in the private room of his office, in Exchange court in the city of Liverpool. The sunlight slanted across a sleek brown head and made the splendid diamond which adorned the little finger of his left hand sparkle. Mr. Johnson's was an aristocratic hand, slender and white, for the possession of which he was indebted to some remote ancestor whose name was not Johnson. "Gentleman" was stamped upon every feature of his calm, clean-shaved, expressionless face, "Scoundrel," by some unaccountable omission on the part of nature, was not written there. His features, though well shaped, were small.

After a time he desisted from his occupation of absently covering the blotting pad before him with tiny dots, and rising abruptly took up his position on the hearth rug, with his back to the fireplace.

He was a tall man, slimly built, with a well poised head and square shoulders; and as the light fell more strongly upon his face it was noticeable that his eyes—which were blue, and very closely set together—were clear and guileless as a little child's. He found those eyes very useful upon occasions, useful beyond the ordinary use of eyes. They were eyes that could look straight into yours while their owner was concocting or relating statements or incidents which might be absolutely false. They had had a good deal of practice. He was thirty years old, and during all his life had never yet told the truth when a lie would do as well.

The glib falsehood flowed from his tongue with a smoothness and air of truth which would have deceived, and did deceive, the most wary and suspicious of the fascinating Johnson's friends and associates.

In the eyes of the commercial world Mr. Johnson was a rich man. In the eyes of his confidential clerk and himself his firm was tottering on the brink of ruin. Nothing short of a miracle could save it, and Edgar knew that the days of miracles were past.

He was evidently thinking deeply as he stood there on this May afternoon. His forehead was contracted, his thin, well-cut lips pressed closely together. Suddenly an indescribable agitation passed over his features, accompanied with a quiver, slight and fleeting as the trembling of a calm lake stirred by some passing breeze. He advanced quickly toward the table and touched a small bell which stood thereon.

A clerk entered the room.

"Saunders—a hansom."

"Yes, sir," and the door closed again.

Mr. Johnson got into his light overcoat, drew on his gloves in the same calm, gentlemanly manner in which he did most things, took up his hat and stick, went down stairs and leisurely entered the hansom, which he directed to a certain house in James street. In a few minutes the hansom stopped at at dingy ground-floor office in James street. The most prosperous firms sometimes carry on their operations in the dingiest of offices, and the firm of "Levi, Dorrell & Co." brokers and shipowners bore this out faithfully. It was a very prosperous firm and had during the past year made some very lucky speculations.

Mr. Johnson, having instructed the cab man to wait, treaded the tortuous maze of passages which led to the sanctuary where Levi & Co. transacted their mighty business and made their piles of gold. He handed his card to the sunny-looking clerk, and after a minutes delay was shown into the room where, in attitudes of conscious wealth and power, sat the senior partner, Mr. Levi, and his colleague, Mr. Dorrell. Mr. Levi was a short, stout, dark man, with the features of his race, and an eye, which in a horse would have been called "wicked." Mr. Dorrell was also dark, but tall and thin, well shaped and gentlemanly. The third occupant of the room, seated at a distant desk in the corner, was a Mr. Skimp—presumably the "Co." He was, however, the mere echo of the two senior partners, and never appeared to take any part in the business of the firm. He did not even look up as Mr. Johnson entered, but went on writing with a very audible quill pen.

Mr. Levi and Mr. Dorrell were rather impressed with the manner and bearing of their visitor, who had an air of deferential yet dignified courtesy which told in his favor at once. His voice, as he remarked upon the chilliness of the weather for the season of the year, had a cheery, high-bred tone, which was not the least striking of his many charms. The partners were surprised to learn that he was only a cotton broker. After a few preliminary remarks—in which, as his name, calling and place of business were chiefly concerned, Mr. Johnson did not find it necessary to employ his inventive talent he proceeded to enter into the particulars of his projected business with Levi & Co.

"I understand, Mr. Levi," he said, with his clear blue eyes fixed upon the "glittering monocule," which added luster and efficacy to Mr. Levi's left eye, "that you grant advances upon cargoes in transit, if shipped in your vessels. I think," he continued, deprecatingly, "I need not mention the position my firm holds in the mercantile world; but, like many others in these times, my captain is locked up to a degree which prevents my extending my business as I should like."

"Quite so," assented Mr. Dorrell blandly.

"Quite so," said the faint echo-like voice from the corner desk.

Mr. Levi bowed slightly, and indicated a wish that Mr. Johnson should proceed. Mr. Johnson crossed one leg lightly over the other and went on—.

"I have been in the habit of shipping cotton from Alexandria by the vessels of Jones & Co., but if you, gentleman, can see your way to make to me the necessary advances on cargoes, I propose transferring my business to your firm. At present I have 2,000 bales of cotton ready to ship here from Alexandria, for which I want an advance of £20,000. This only, of course, on your receipt of the usual bills of lading from Alexandria; and," with a courtly bow, "should you desire to make any inquiries regarding the standing of my firm, etc., I trust that you will find all things satisfactory."

"We know your firm well by reputation, Mr. Johnson," said Mr. Levi, "though we have not had the pleasure of knowing you personally until to-day."

"Then," said Mr. Dorrell, "after due inquiries—which in your case, Mr. Johnson, are a mere matter of form—we shall be pleased to make you the required advance on receipt of the formal bills of lading from our agents in Alexandria."

Mr. Johnson bowed gracefully and took his departure.

That night Mr. Johnson had important business which detained him in his private office until the small hours of the morning. He was writing not in his rapid and continuous style, but laboriously and haltingly. Had you stood behind his chair for a second you would have seen that he was carefully copying a signature which read thus: "Abdul Pinero." He spared no pains with his work, and it was long after midnight when he leaned back in his chair and inspected the result of his labors with keen scrutiny and critical approval. The imitation was perfect. It had been a troublesome signature to copy. Abdul had an awkward knack of spreading the capital P backward, entwining it round his Christian (!) name in a style which was rather a ticklish thing to imitate; but it was not too ticklish for Edgar Allen Johnson—few things were. Having locked this precious document, with a duplicate—and also the genuine bill of lading from which he had copied the signature—carefully into his safe, he tore up and burned the various spoiled and smeared sheets of letter paper which lay about the floor. Then he turned out the lights, locked the doors and went down stairs.

As he walked along the almost deserted street he took out a cigar and lit it. And as the match sprung into a sudden brilliancy it lighted his face, and showed that the expression on every feature was as serene and tranquil as if his night's work had not been the preparation of a dastardly crime. He did not go direct home, but strolled down by the river and finished two more cigars. He carelessly threw a shilling to a little crouching, blue tipped beggar lad who stood shivering in the chill May wind on the pavement.

"God bless you, sir," gasped the astonished waif gratefully.

Two days later he received a note from Messrs. Levi & Co., requesting him to call—a request with which he lost no time in complying. The interview was brief, and conceded all he wished. The firm was willing to grant him the advance he required—upon the receipt of the duplicate bill of lading from Alexandria, which they now awaited.

Mr. Johnson took his leave and repaired to his office, where he told one of his clerks, in a preoccupied tone, to address an envelope to Messrs. Levi & Co. He subsequently placed in this envelope the forged bill of lading and sealed it up. Then he wrote a long, gossipy letter to a friend in Alexandria—an easy-going, "head-in-the-clouds" kind of fellow who would suspect nothing—and in a postscript asked him as a special favor to post the enclosed letter for him in Alexandria on the day when the ship Estrella "cleared." Having dispatched this letter he strolled along to castle street, and gave orders at a certain shop where he was not in the habit of dealing, for a small iron-bound box to be made and sent to his rooms with as little delay as possible.

Three weeks later Mr. Johnson was again in Messrs. Levi & Co's. office. The bill of lading had been received and all preliminaries having been satisfactorily arranged and the necessary documents as to interest having been duly signed, Mr. Levi drew his check-book toward him and signed a check for $20,000.

"And I trust, Mr. Johnson," he said, pompously, as he tore off the precious slip, "that though it is our first transaction, it may not be our last."

"Our last!" repeated the echo in the corner.

Mr. Johnson bowed with grace, but as he took the paper from Mr. Levi's hand, that gentleman might have noticed that Johnson's hands shook.

The Estrella was signalled in due course and Messrs. Levi & Co. dispatched a clerk to the dock for the ship's papers.

The captain was on deck as the clerk—who, by the way, was named Davis—crossed the gangway.

"Good morning, Captain Marsh," he said, pleasantly.

"Good morning," returned the captain gruffly.

"Had a fine passage?" pursued Davis.

"Middling. Roughish in the bay."

"Rather a heavy cargo this time, haven't you?"

"No, lighter than usual," was the reply.

"But," said Davis, with an air of surprise, "you've got 2,000 bales of cotton on board from Pinero & Co."

"Haven't a bale of cotton on board," returned the other, briefly.

"What!" said the astonished clerk. "Are you sure?"

"Sure? Of course I'm sure," answered the captain, in surly tones. "Who should know if I don't?"

"Well I may just go back again," said Davis.

"You'd better," observed Captain Marsh, grimly; "you'll not find what you're looking for here."

Davis made his way back to his employer's office and with considerable trepidation informed them of the non-arrival of the expected cargo. Dorrell turned pale and Levi became perfectly green.

"There must be some mistake," said the former, hurriedly.

"I don't know, I'm sure, sir," stammered the clerk.

"Don't you know, you idiot!" roared Mr. Levi. "Who expected you to know? Leave the room!"

A hurried telegram was dispatched to the agents in Alexandria, and in the course of a few hours the terse answer was flashed back:

"No such consignment dispatched to you. Some mistake."

The parties looked at each other—aghast!

"Holy Abraham!" gasped Mr. Levi.

"Good Heaven!" ejaculated Mr. Dorrell.

"Good heavens!" echoed the Co.

In five minutes Mr. Levi was driving furiously up to Exchange court, where it is needless to say he did not find Mr. Johnson. Nor did he find anyone else connected with the firm. The door leading to the offices was locked, and a card neatly tacked thereon, bearing the inscription:

"On the Continent for an indefinite time."

Upon reading this announcement Mr. Levi burst into the next office with such sudden violence that the clerks jumped from their stools in dismay. Here he learned, in answer to his almost inarticulate inquiries, that the offices of Johnson & Co. had been closed for rather more than a week.

Upon arriving again in James street, Mr. Levi was in a state of antagonized rage and excitement baffling description. He was a singularly choleric old gentleman, and threw himself into his chair, flinging his hat upon the ground.

"We have been swindled!" he almost shouted, excitedly, "swindled!"

"Swindled!" echoed the "Co.," faintly.

Mr. Dorrell sat for a few minutes pale and silent; but in all firms of two or more partners there is usually one who talks and one who acts, and in this firm Mr. Dorrell was always the one who acted.

"We had better send for Bolton," he said at last, and Bolton, the celebrated detective, was sent for. Bolton said little, but listened gravely and respectfully to Mr. Dorrell's calm statements and with seeming sympathy to Mr. Levi's incoherent ravings. Mr. Skimp meekly ventured the remark that "he hadn't thought much of Johnson from the first" which irritating remark was repaid by the senior partner with a withering glance at Skimp which caused that worthy to subside at once into his corner.

All the documents were produced and most carefully examined by Bolton. The detective—after the manner of his kind—looked inscrutable, and said very little.

The affair was placed entirely in his hands and after some days' inquiry the firm of Levi & Co. found that it had been very successfully swindled, all the documents being forgeries. Mr. Levi's check had been cashed on the day it was received—all in Bank of England notes, none of which had been passed or changed in Liverpool. The inference was that Mr. Johnson had taken them with him to London, with the intention of changing them into gold. It was for this purpose, Mr. Bolton said, that the previously mentioned iron-bound box had been honored by the thoughtful and accomplished Mr. Johnson (£20,000 in gold being, as the detective dryly remarked, rather an awkward sum to carry on the person.) It was also ascertained that Mr. Johnson had left his rooms more than a week ago, at a late hour in the evening, and that a gentleman answering his description had on that same evening taken the night express for London. Upon hearing these details Mr. Levi delivered himself of some fine Hebrew expletives.

"But how," said Mr. Dorrell, "did he get Pinero's signature to copy?"

"A simple matter," replied the detective. "He has had some small shipping transactions with Pinero & Co. before, which enabled him to possess himself of one or two of their forms of bills of lading. This plot was not hatched in a few days."

"The scoundrel!" stormed Mr. Levi—with several strong and effective objectives—"I'll trace him, I'll hunt him down, if I spend every penny I have in the world. Find him, Bolton, and I'll make your fortune."

Mr. Bolton did his best, and it was usually a very good "best." He traced him first to London, thence to Paris, then to Irun, and thus across the Spanish frontier, beyond which it was, of course, useless to follow him. The celebrated detective therefore returned to Liverpool baffled and considerably crestfallen, and presented himself once again in Levi & Co.'s office, and with unwelcome tidings.

"Follow him through Spain, drag him back by force—drag him to the dock!" almost screamed Mr. Levi.

"Dock!" echoed Mr. Skimp faintly.

Mr. Dorrell and Mr. Bolton, between them evolved a subtler plan, which was finally adopted.

"Spare no expense," were Mr. Dorrell's last words to the detective. "We give you carte blanche—but bring him back with you."

"I will do my best," said Mr. Bolton and he bowed himself out.

II.

Two men were lounging one hot August evening on the veranda of the Fonda Alameda at Malaga. Both were smoking, and from their conversation they were evidently recent acquaintances.

"Yes," the elder of the two men was saying, with a strong American twang, "I'm traveling for pleasure. I've made a pretty tall sum in mining and I mean to enjoy myself. I intend running pretty well over Europe during the next month. I don't take sudden fancies now, as a rule," he went on, "but I've taken a fancy to you. I like your sort. What did you say your name was?"

"I didn't say," answered the other, in clear, high bred tones, "but my name is Frederick Steyne."

"Thank you. My name is Kemp—Josiah Washington Kemp—at your service. Here's my card. You are an Englishman, I calculate?"

"Yes. You are an American, I presume?"

"That's so," returned the other, sticking his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat—"Josiah Washington Kemp, of New York city, United States. I guess you are traveling for pleasure, too, Mr. Steyne?"

"Well—no," said the person addressed, carefully selecting a fresh cigar; "I am only here on a little matter of business. A relative of mine—an uncle, in fact—died here lately and left me a small fortune. I thought of starting business, either here or in Seville." And Mr. Steyne's blue eyes, as he spoke, looked clear and guileless as a child's.

He was a tall, well-made man, with a short, fair beard and a heavy fair mustache. His manners were winning, exceedingly; his hands were slender and white, with filbert nails.

His companion was tall, too, but stoutish and dark, with a clean-shaved lip and jaw, and a pointed black beard.

He looked at Mr. Steyne attentively as that gentleman nonchalantly lit his cigar. He admired the perfect repose of his manner—his utter tranquility and self-possession—so very English!

"I feel we are going to be friends," he said and Mr. Steyne handed him a cigar from an exquisitely mounted case. "I'm sorry now we didn't get to know each other sooner. I've been here for three days."

Then he went on to give his companion a frank and rambling account of his life and adventures, and how he had made his "pile." Altogether he was very communicative. And Mr. Steyne soon became confidential, too; telling how he had come out to Spain six years before; how he had lived for the last three years in extreme poverty and ill health, and how thankfully he had hailed the small windfall which had lately befallen him. He spoke, too, in affecting terms of a much-loved younger brother, who had died of cholera the preceding Summer, and whose death had been an acute and terrible grief to him.

"You haven't been in England lately, I suppose?" said Mr. Kemp, looking attentively at a pretty little Spanish girl who was crossing the street below.

"Oh, no," replied the other. "I have not seen England since I left it six years ago. I hadn't the means, even had I wished it. Besides, I have no longer any interests there."

As he spoke he flicked the ash from off his cigar and sighed.

"Ah," said the American. They talked on indifferent subjects until 11 o'clock; then they parted for the night.

As the days went on they became friends, apparently, and the one was rarely seen without the other.

"Look here, Steyne, my boy," said Mr. Kemp, one afternoon, as they sat on the shady verandah. "I have an idea!"

"Surely, for Mr. Kemp that is nothing uncommon," remarked Mr. Steyne, with a courteous smile.

"I've been thinking," went on Mr. Kemp. "You say you have never seen much of Madrid. Neither have I, and I guess it's rather an interesting little place. Why shouldn't we take a run up there together; not straight up but doing all the places of interest on the way?"

"My dear sir," said Mr. Steyne, blowing a tiny curl of smoke into the air as he spoke, "you have misunderstood me, I fear. The little sum my uncle left me—though a fortune to me—does not admit of such extravagance as you mention. Much as I should enjoy the trip you propose—"

"Pooh!" broke in the other, brusquely, "don't have any nonsense. My dear Fred—excuse me calling you Fred; you are so like a friend I once had of that name, I can't look on you as a stranger—I've more money than I know what to do with. Let me do the thing—I guess you'll be doing me a favor—it's flat enough traveling alone, and I tell you I don't know when I felt so drawn to any one before. That's so."

Mr. Steyne at this moment was leaning his elbow upon the back of his chair, his clear eyes fixed unwaveringly on the eager good natured face of his companion. It was an intense, penetrating gaze, and the American, after a second or two, said with not unnatural surprise:

"What are you looking at?"

"I was trying to remember who you remind me of," said the other. "I know now."

Mr. Kemp poured out a full glass of Manzanilla, and took a long drink before he spoke.

"Yes?" he said then interrogatively.

"It was," went on Steyne, dreamily, "up in Santander. A man was killed there some months ago; he was knocked down by a runaway horse. Your face reminds me of his."

"Ah!" said the other. "Well, what do you say to my little scheme? Will you come?"

"My dear fellow," replied Mr. Steyne, objectively, "I really should enjoy it extremely, but—"

"Then that's settled," said the American, in brisk tones. "No, I'll take no refusal. We'll start this very day, or to-morrow. We'll have a right royal time; and we'll give the Spaniards fits all round."

Mr. Steyne made no further objections. They did start the next day; and they certainly had a royal time. They went from Malaga to Granada, Cordova, Seville, Badajos, Cindid Real and Toledo, and took countless other places en route. They visited the Alhambra by moonlight; they ogled lovely black eyed senoritas; they attended bull fights by day and masked balls by night; and they spent money like water. Finally they arrived in Madrid and took their quarters at the Fonda de Paris, in the Puerta del Sol.

On the second day after their arrival in the Spanish capital, Mr. Kemp, who had been out for some time, entered the cool marbel-tiled apartments where his traveling companion was stretched upon two chairs with a cigar between his lips and a small glass of curacoa at his elbow, and said, in accents of pleased surprise: "Now, isn't this the most fortunate thing? I've just had this"—holding out an open letter—"sent on from Toledo. It's from an old friend of mine—a countryman, too—he's been yachting about for the last few months and is going to put in at Bayonne. He's very anxious I should meet him there and take a short cruise; and when he hears we are together he'll be just as pleased to see you. He's a regularly hospital fellow and as rich as a Jew. Let me see now," running his eye over the letter; "we'll have just about time to get there by the time he arrives. We'll start at once. He says he has some very pretty girls on board, too. Why, Fred, it'll be a considerable bit of fun."

"I hope you will enjoy your cruise, Kemp my dear fellow," said Mr. Steyne; "but I am sorry I cannot accompany you. I must really get back to Malaga this week. I was thinking so when you came in."

"Pooh!" retorted the other, "a couple of weeks or so won't make much difference. Your business can stand, I guess. We'll give up our rooms to-night and start in the morning."

"No, really," persisted Mr. Steyne, "I couldn't thing of intruding on your friend's little circle. It's very kind of you, Kemp; but really—I had rather not."

"Oh, bosh! I won't take any denials," said Mr. Kemp, good humoredly. "If you were once there, I bet I wouldn't get you away again in a hurry," he went on with a sly wink. "All the ladies would fall down and worship that Senor Ingles way you have. You're a sad fellow among the ladies, Fred."

But Fred's mind was made up apparently. Malaga and not Bayonne, was his "ultima Thule," and not all the American's persuasions, remonstrances and finally bad language, had any effect upon his determination.

"But—hang it all—why not?" said Mr. Kemp in exasperating tones, as he sat astride on a chair, leaning his chin on the back, and looking puzzled and mortified.

"Shall I tell you?" said the other, settling himself more comfortably in his chair and leisurely lighting a fresh cigar. "I think you'll admit my reasons are good ones. Have a cigar?"

"No,' impatiently. "Well—your reasons?"

Mr Steyne examined the end of his cigar attentively, and then said, fixing his clear eyes on his companion's.

"I am indebted to you for a very enjoyable trip—I think the most enjoyable trip I ever had. You have been most generous—princely, indeed. I think I may say I shall never forget you; and should we meet again—which unhappily is, I fear, a remote chance, I trust we may renew our—hitherto—very pleasant intercourse."

"Yes yes; that's all very well" interrupted Mr. Kemp, with a wave of his hand. "But it's not to the point, I want to know why you won't go."

"I'm coming to that," said the other tranquilly. Unforeseen accidents sometimes happen. Your friend's yacht, for instance, might take a run over to England—while I was on board. Now the climate of England doesn't suit me. That is one reason. The other is this: I like you, nay, I am fond of you—as Mr. Kemp, the American, in Spain—but," in slow, deliberate terms, "I don't think I should like you quite so well as Mr. Bolton the detective—across the frontier."

For fully a minute there was a dead silence.

Mr. Kemp—or rather Mr. Bolton, rose from his chair and moved mechanically to the window. He felt literally stunned and speechless with rage and chagrin—added to the mortifying consciousness of being as completely "done" as if he had been the veriest novice in the profession.

"You look faint," observed his companion courteously. "Pray allow me to ring for some brandy. It will be only a small item in Messrs. Levi & Co's already—I fear—rather heavy expenses!"

Mr. Bolton felt as if he could cheerfully have strangled the calm, polished, gentlemanly looking villain, who leaned back in his chair with such easy, unstudied grace, and with that half-mocking smile in his deceitful frank eyes.

"You are an infernal scoundrel, Mr. Johnson," he gasped, as soon as he could speak—shaken out of all his usual imperturbable self-possession.

Mr. Johnson shrugged his shoulders gently.

"Possibly," he answered, with an exasperating smile. "Had I been otherwise I will conclude that you would not have taken such an interest in me. Do have a cigar; you will find them really good. No? Then have a turn outside. You look rather upset."

Mr. Bolton left Madrid within an hour—but he did not join his friend at Bayonne.—*Temple Bar.*

A Scene of Confusion.

COL. SELLERS IN TROUBLE AMONG HIS FRIENDS.

They tell some funny stories of Raymond, the actor, whose death was announced lately. He was fond of a joke, but had them perpetrated upon himself as often as he played them upon others. One story they tell is great. "Raymond was playing Colonel Sellers at the Grand Opera House, and some of the lambs put up a job on him to pay back certain debts in the joking line that he was always incurring. Steele Mackaye, Walden Pell Scrymser, Mara, an artist, Jack Miley, and some others made up their minds to go on in the last act in the court scene of the "Gilded Age." They first ordered a fine supper for Raymond, as it was the first night of the engagement. Then they arrayed themselves in dress suits, went over to the theatre and, having previously fixed matter with the stage manager, filed into the jury box, unknown to Raymond before the curtain rose. He entered soon after, sat down to business of talking to Laura Hawkins and happened to cast his eye on the jury box.

His jaw fell, his eyebrows lifted, and he shook his fist and went through a pantomine of the most bloodthirsty threats. It was a tough crowd, however, and they did not weaken an inch. No sooner had the trial begun than Mara jumped to his feet, exclaiming:

"I no speaka da Inglis. You getta interpret."

"Sit down," cried the Judge.

"I can no hear. I want interpret," screamed Mara.

Miley choked him off, and he subsided. With some difficulty the cue was found, but no sooner had the scene commenced than Miley arose:

"Yer Arn'r," said he.

"What."

"He's not tarkin Oirish. Av he don't tark Oirish how'll I undhershtand the ividence!"

Raymond was pale with anger. Everything was in confusion. Scrymser tried to speak, the Judge was hammering with his gavel and the audience was simply petrified. They could not make head or tail of the matter. The actors, outside of Raymond, however, were in tears of laughter. The trial ended and the jury went out. Mackaye was foreman. When they filed back a few minutes later, the Judge said:

"Gentlemen, have you agreed upon a verdict?"

"We have," said Mackaye, solemnly. "We find the defendant guilty."

"You mean not guilty," roared Raymond.

"We mean guilty," roared the jury.

Raymond made frantic signs in the wings. "Ring down, ring down," he commanded in a hoarse whisper. Then he grabbed a bottle on the table, rose, and threw up his arms crying:

"Gentlemen, I appeal to you. For the sake of the eye-water say not guilty."

And the curtain fell on the maddest Raymond that anybody ever knew. He would not see the jokers or the point of the joke, and the supper passed off without its only guest.

Spontaneous Combustion.

Some observations made in France by M. Cosson may throw light upon many mysterious fires. In one instance spontaneous firing arose from an air current heated to seventy-seven degrees only. The wood slowly carbonized at that temperature, and being thus rendered extremely porous, a rapid absorption of oxygen resulted, and sufficient heat was then produced to inflame the dry material. In another case the warmth from the air-hole of a stove-door was sufficient to set fire to wood-work.