

SMITH IN TROUBLE.

"YES, I consider him a tip-top fellow, in almost every respect; he has but one fault," I said in a reply to a question from Bob Smith.

"Nonsense," said Bob. "How can you make such a foolish statement as that? The man is not alive who has but one fault; we all have scores of faults. It is only when a man practices one particular vice that we put all other frolics out of sight, and say, 'he has but one fault.' I myself used to be one of these first-rate fellows who had but one fault, and a most unlovely course of sprouts did I have to go through to effect a cure. The rock upon which I split was a darling sin that did most easily beset me.—From boyhood I was afflicted with an almost irresistible propensity for indulging in practical jokes; many a troublesome scrape did I get myself into, and many a friend did I lose by this means. But nothing, however serious might be the result, could deter me, when an opportunity offered, for practicing my absurd sport. If the victims were angry and indignant, I only laughed the louder, and wondered that they could not see the fun of the thing. But at length one of my most exquisite jokes recoiled on myself with so much force that I can never even think of a practical joke without a squirm at the disagreeable recollections the thought suggests.

"As I was ascending the steps of the Exchange reading room, one day about two years ago, I saw, a little in advance of me, my intimate friend Dick Jones.—Accelerating my pace to overtake him, I observed the corner of a large pocket-book protruding from his coat pocket.

"What a careless fellow that Dick Jones is!" I said to myself. "I'll give him a lesson that will make him more careful in future. And coming close behind him, I adroitly transferred the well-filled wallet from his coat pocket to my breeches pocket; then falling back among the crowd that is always coming and going 'change hour, I entered the room by another door, waiting the moment when he should discover his loss, to step forward and give him his wallet, and a strong lecture at the same time.

"I had some little difficulty keeping him in sight, as he rushed hastily hither and thither, bowing to this man shaking hands with that, and having a few words with another. I managed to follow him, however, taking care that he should not recognize me, and chucking at the consternation it would occasion him to find his pocket-book missing. Presently he put his hand behind him, started, and turned round, for the first time giving me a view of his face. Great Jupiter! it was not Dick Jones at all, but a gentleman I had never seen before in my life. Here was a predicament. As the enormity of the act of which I had been guilty presented itself before me, I was completely overwhelmed; the blood rushed to my head as though I was about to have an attack of apoplexy, and for a moment everything swam before my eyes. Recovering myself with an effort, I started forward, but only to see the gentleman I had robbed vanish through the door at a high rate of speed, and almost instantly become lost in the hurrying crowd.

"What was to be done? Why return the gentleman his pocket-book at once, of course. But how? I didn't know who he was? True, the contents of the wallet might reveal that, but with what face could I seek out the injured man and say, 'My dear sir, here is your pocket book which I stole from you a short time since. I am sorry for the theft, and now return the property. The only apology I can offer, is, that I mistook you for another gentleman, whom I supposed I might rob with impunity?' What would the deeply-injured and badly-frightened gentleman say? and, above all, what would he do? Would he not, with righteous and just indignation say, 'You confounded, contemptible thief, and pick-pocket, you have been the cause of my having a note protested to-day; you have occasioned me a shocking loss of valuable time; you have prevented a splendid bargain; in short, there is no end to the evils that have resulted from your atrocious crime. Your story of the mistake is a palpable humbug and you only return the property because you feel certain of being detected before you leave the city. This sort of crime is becoming too common, and I feel it my duty to give you in charge of the police.'—Yes—undoubtedly, that is what he would say; he would then open the door, beckon to an officer and have me arrested; I should be dragged to prison, examined and committed without bail. At my

trial, the plea of insanity would be set up, of course; the intelligent jury would consider the defense lame, and shake their heads gravely at the story of the mistake; the judge would say that every other pick-pocket might plead a mistake if this was admitted; and I should be found guilty, and every body would exclaim, 'How easy the fellow got off! only three years in the State Prison!'

"With these and similar thoughts running through my head, I paced back and forth across the hall with agitated steps, endeavoring to think of some method of extricating myself from my unpleasant predicament.

"What the deuce am I to do?" I kept repeating to myself, as I fingered the confounded wallet, which felt like lead in my pocket, and weighed much heavier than lead upon my mind. "How can I get the infamous calfskin back to its lawful owner?" Such things have been done; we often read of similar restitution in the papers. Let me see how it is thieves and pick-pockets manage such things without being discovered? Ah, I have it!" I exclaimed, almost aloud, in my intense satisfaction at the idea. "I'll just do the thing up in a neat package and send it by mail. What a goose I was not to think of that before!"

"With a heart much lightened I eagerly started to leave the hall. Horror of horrors! At the entrance I beheld the gentleman I had robbed, engaged in conversation with a couple of policemen, who stationed themselves at each door, narrowly watching every person who left or entered the hall. Words cannot express the utter hopeless despair into which I was thrown at this terrifying sight. Any attempt at restoring the property under these circumstances would be sure to be considered the effect of fear and not of honesty. Here I was, as it were, imprisoned with the most convincing and damning proof of my guilt about my person, and with a couple of lynx-eyed detectives barring the entrance from which I kept as far as possible, pretending to be absorbed in the perusal of a paper, for I was conscious my flushed and agitated countenance would betray me at the first glance. What would I not give to have been as free from guilt and as much at liberty to go and come where I choose, like other honest men, as I was an hour before! But no; there I was, a trembling, skulking thief, watched by the police, and liable at any moment to be arrested, with the evidence of my crime. O, that accursed pocket-book! how I searched the hall with my eyes for some place where, unobserved, I might hide it! But an instant's thought convinced me that such a proceeding would only render matters worse, doubtless I was already watched, and would be seized upon the first suspicious movement.

"And suppose they do arrest me?" I said to myself, making a desperate effort to reason myself into a calmer and bolder frame of mind.—"Suppose they do arrest me? I am well-known in the city; no one would suspect me of being a pick-pocket. I can produce any quantity of evidence as to my character; I can prove that I am a gentleman and an honest man; only it so happens that I have got another gentleman's wallet in my breeches pocket, and cannot deny that I stole it from him an hour or two ago. Mighty honest and gentlemanly, that is, certainly; No; I'm a thief beyond all remedy. No one would believe me; it is so improbable that I scarcely credit it myself.

"At this moment, a heavy hand was laid upon my shoulder. I felt the blood leave my face and rush back upon my heart; my knees trembled and smote together, and involuntarily I stretched out my wrists for the expected handcuffs.

"Why, what in the world is the matter with you, Smith?" asked a familiar voice; and with an inexpressible sense of relief, I perceived that it was not a policeman, but an old acquaintance.

"Good heavens, Spencer!" I exclaimed, frantically clutching his hand; I have got myself into the most deplorable scrape. Will you give me your advice, and assist me to get out of it?"

"What kind of a scrape?—going to have a note protested or anything of that kind? I'm a little short myself to-day; but I suppose I might make a raise if it isn't too heavy."

"No; it's worse than that; a thousand times worse."

"Worse than that! Why, what in the name of wonder can be worse than a protest?"

"Spence," I said, blushing clear to the tips of my ears with shame and confusion, "I have got another man's wallet in my pocket. I thought to play a good joke upon Dick Jones, but found when

too late, that I had picked the pocket of an entire stranger. Now what shall I do?"

"Why return it, of course," replied Spencer, coldly, bestowing upon me a glance of contempt.

"It is too late to do that," I groaned. "There are a couple of policemen watching the door, and I cannot pass them without being detected."

"It's a very awkward affair certainly—very awkward," he returned, glancing uneasily toward the door. "For my part I don't know as there is anything I can do; and as matters will probably take a serious turn, you must be aware that I am rendering myself liable to suspicion by stopping here talking with you. So good-morning, Mr. Smith. I wish you well, and out of your trouble."

"For Heaven's sake, Spencer!" I exclaimed observing his look of contempt and suspicion, "you don't suppose that I am guilty of this thing,—that I did it intentionally, and for the purpose of robbing the man?"

"Why, really, Smith, I do not wish to be either judge or jury; but it does look somewhat singular that you should pick any man's pocket of a large sum of money, whether you happened to know him or not. You say it was done for a joke; perhaps it was though I must confess I cannot see the point."

"At all events, you'll not betray me?" I asked, in an imploring tone.

"No," he replied, "I'll not betray you." Then with a severe look, he added: "That is, not if you follow up your present intention of restoring the property." And he turned away and left the room.

"Good heavens, I am lost!" I muttered, while the perspiration poured down my face. "He believes me guilty, and to will everybody else. What can I do? I shall never be able to face those confounded policemen. Without doubt I shall pass this very night within the walls of a jail, in company with other felons. What will my friends, and, above all, what will Marion think when she learns that I am a common pick-pocket and thief?"

"Almost fainting from excess of emotion, I leaned against a pillar and gazed vacantly about me. 'Change hour was nearly over, and the crowd that had thronged the hall was rapidly thinning out. In a few minutes there would be scarcely a dozen persons present, when the officers would have no difficulty in ferreting me out. I strove to nerve myself for the event that was impending by walking rapidly back and forth across the hall. Presently some one entered the door; it was Dick Jones.

"Dick!" I almost screamed, beckoning him toward me.

"Why, Bob?" he exclaimed, as he came toward me and grasped my hand "what is the matter? You look as if you had got the yellow fever. Are you sick?"

"Yes—very sick," I replied; and with a sense of the deepest humiliation, I recounted the circumstances. Dick heard me to the end in silence, looking very grave.

"Sure you do not think I intended any evil?" I ejaculated, an agony of spirit, as he continued to gaze upon the floor, silent and thoughtful.

"No, Bob," he returned, very gravely; "knowing as I do, your unfortunate propensity, I cannot but believe your statement, though the case certainly looks bad and I fear it would be difficult to convince strangers of your innocence."

"But you will do something for me; won't you Dick?" I said.

"Why, yes; I'll do all I can," he replied. "What is the name of the gentleman you plundered? I will go to him and see what sort of an arrangement I can make; we shall have to do it quick, too, for I see the officers are watching us."

What's the name.

"I have not the slightest idea who he was. I shall have to examine the wallet to discover that. Do you suppose I can do so without being discovered?"

"Well, you will have to take that risk anyway. Go into that corner and examine. I will stand before you to prevent notice as much as possible. Be sly, now, for there's no time to lose."

With trembling fingers I drew the accursed wallet from my pocket, and read the name upon the clasp.

"It belongs to Jenkins, of South street," I whispered to Dick.

"The deuce it does!" he replied; "then I'm afraid we shall have some difficulty in arranging the business, for he has the reputation of being a stern, hard man to deal with. However, wait where you are, and I will go and see what can be done. And I say, Bob," he continued, lowering his voice, "if anything should

happen before I get back, I will come up to the Toms and see you this evening, or in the morning," and he hastened out of the hall.

"People may talk of shipwrecks and disasters at sea—the solemn hour before a battle, or the breathless interval before the word to fire is given in a duel; but I'll be hanged if I believe I should suffer the one-hundredth part so much in any one of these situations as I did for half an hour after Dick left me. Dinner hour was fast approaching, and the crowd rapidly dispersed, until there was not twenty people in the hall. That I might not render myself conspicuous by wandering about with an evident want of purpose, I bent over a desk and pretended to be reading, while I kept my eyes upon the door, watching and dreading the entrance of the formidable detectives. O, how long seemed the minutes that I stood there waiting and trembling hoping every minute to see Dick returning, and yet conscious that he had not been gone long enough to accomplish anything!

"At length, as I turned for the hundredth time before the door, I saw the officers come in and walk up the room; they passed and repassed me several times, and though I did not raise my eyes from the paper, I was conscious that they were examining me attentively. Presently one of them came, and leaning over the desk by my side, began carelessly turning the papers while his searching gaze was bent fixedly upon me. My heart was in my mouth, and my breath came and went with difficulty.

"Can you give me small bills for a twenty?" he asked abruptly laying his hand upon my arm.

"No—no, sir, I cannot; I haven't it about me," I stammered without raising my eyes from the paper.

"Haven't it about you! Why, what's that?" and he rapped his knuckles against my pocket, which the fat wallet caused to bulge as only a rich man's pocket should bulge.

"That—that is only a bundle of papers."

"Papers, eh? Well, let's have a look at them."

"What do you mean, sir!" I exclaimed, making a frantic effort to appear indignant, though not daring to raise my eyes to his face.

"You'll soon find out what I mean," he replied, seizing me firmly by the arm and beckoning to his brother officer, who appeared to be expecting the summons.

"I cast a despairing glance towards the door. Could it be that fate had at last relented? Yes—there was Dick and the gentleman I had robbed coming up the steps. They called the officers aside, and a long conversation ensued. Jenkins and Dick appearing to be urging something upon the officers, with which they seemed reluctant to comply, for they occasionally looked at me and shook their heads. But at length the arguments of my friends seemed to prevail, for the officers walked away toward the door and the former approached the spot where I was standing.

"Give the gentleman his property said Dick, very gravely.

"Sheepish and blushing, I produced the diabolical pocket-book, and returned it to its owner.

"Young man," said the gentleman, very severely, "I am doing wrong—very wrong in allowing you to go at large. It is my duty to deliver you up to justice. Your story of the mistake and intended joke is absurd, people have but one object in picking pockets. But in consideration of this being your first offense, and more in consequence of the entreaties of your friend, I have consented to allow you to depart, and I sincerely hope my mistaken kindness may not be the means of bringing you to the gallows." And with a bow to Dick, he left the place.

"There, Rob," said Dick, in a grave and serious tone, "let this be a warning to you. No one but myself knows what a narrow escape you have had, another time you may not be so fortunate." And he, too, left the place.

"With the deepest sense of humiliation, I slunk out of the room and sneaked home a much wiser man than I was in the morning."

A hog entered a grocery store in Brunswick, Missouri, recently, when a knowing dog attacked him, bit off his tail, then seized the hog by the ear and led it shrieking back to its quarters in the rear. The dog then returned to the store, picked up the tail and carried it to the pig.

A wise head hath a still tongue; there are many men who can talk a great deal, yet they may know but little.

Singular Phenomenon.

The Mobile Register of the third inst., tells the following remarkable story:

For several days past there have been mysterious and vague rumors of the most remarkable meteorological phenomenon out at the Catholic graveyard on Stone street, above the Three-mile creek. It is asserted by those who say they have seen it, that for the last five days a gentle shower has fallen continuously on the lot of the Lemoine family, in which are buried Mr. Victor Lemoine and many others of the family. With a view of getting at the facts of the most extraordinary affair, we had last night an interview with Mr. Louis B. Lemoine, employed at Asa Holt's, a son of the deceased Victor Lemoine, who died in 1851, who related the following startling particulars:

Having heard that it was reported that it had been raining for several days on the enclosed ground which forms my family burying ground in the Catholic burying ground on Stone street, above the Three-mile creek, I drove out there last evening to satisfy myself, and, to my intense astonishment, I saw that a column of rain was coming down without ceasing, which although hardly powerful enough to lay the dust was enough to wet the hands or any article, and at times rained quite hard. The volume of rain fell inside of the enclosure, and nowhere else, as the weather was and has been bright and clear all the time during the five days the rain has been falling on these graves. There are thirteen of my family buried in the lot of ground upon which it had been raining. My mother, brother and sister visited the spot yesterday and the day before to satisfy themselves about this matter, and declare that they too saw this wonderful phenomenon. It has also been seen by over two hundred persons. I took a friend with me when I visited the spot, who also saw the rain falling as described. Mr. John Rosset, the keeper of the cemetery, told me that the rain had commenced falling in heavy drops about five days ago. I am willing to take my oath as to the truth of this statement.

So incredible did this extraordinary affair seem, that those who saw it several days ago refrained from stating or asserting what they had seen, for fear that not only their veracity but their sanity would be questioned, and it was only until a number of gentlemen of the first respectability had seen and reported the result of their personal observations that credence was attached to the truth of the matter. Take it altogether, it is certainly the most astounding and miraculous atmospheric wonder that has ever been witnessed in this part of the world, and will doubtless afford abundant food for thought, research, and observation, not only among scientific men, but among all classes. There are so many who vouch for the truth of Mr. Lemoine's statement and his character for veracity is such, that there can no longer be any doubt of the fact that it has been raining for the past five days on the grave of his kindred.

The Secret of It.

An old farmer being asked why his boys stayed at home when others did not, replied it was owing to the fact that he always tried to make home pleasant to them. He furnished them with useful and attractive reading; and when night comes, and the day's labor is ended, instead of running with the other boys to the railway stations and adjoining towns, they gather around the great lamp and become absorbed in their books and papers. My boys were still at home when the eldest boy was 21, while those who were furnished with no reading at home sought city life and city dissipation as soon as they were 17 or 18. All will do well to heed this testimony of a farmer who has known how hard it is to struggle for footing on a free soil without capital, and how valuable and comparatively cheap are the aids which good reading brings to him. In this age of general intelligence, the mind must be catered to and books and papers furnished; and not only this, but in this age of cheap and artistic chromo pictures can also be bought to be used in making home attractive. The farmer's life is the most independent of any, and there is no reason why it may not be as attractively surrounded.

A terrible earthquake recently occurred in Asia, involving a region of nearly two hundred miles in extent, on the confines of Thibet, China, and Burmah. Over 3,000 human lives were lost. In one place a mountain fell, and a new one was suddenly upheaved. Many villages were destroyed.