

The Bloomfield Times.

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Editor and Proprietor.

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BY

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THE MISSING WATCH.

ON a cold, wet evening in the month of December, not many years ago, the streets of London were still thronged with passers by, hurrying to and fro through the pouring rain. The gaslights in shop windows and street lamps shone brightly on the flooded pavement, giving a brilliancy to the crowded thoroughfares in spite of the dreary weather.

At the corner of Charring-cross, near the post office, stood one of the more respectable looking omnibuses that ply between London and the distant suburbs.

The driver and conductor were encased in oil-skin wrappers—the horses as sleek as satin with the rain running off them—the vehicle and its attendants were made up for the journey, which promised to be unusually uncomfortable. "Time up?" asked the driver gruffly of a man standing beneath the portico of the post office. "Another two minutes" replied the time-keeper looking at his watch.

During the short colloquy two passengers took their places in the omnibus—one a well-dressed man, who growled audibly to himself about the weather; the other a widow in deep mourning. As the latter raised a thick crape veil she displayed a set of features that attracted the attention of her fellow-traveller. He stopped his growling and endeavored to make room for her on the opposite side, away from the open window.

At the foot of Westminster Bridge two shabbily attired women hailed the conductor, and the omnibus was drawn up to the pavement to receive them. They made much confusion in getting in, and complained of there being no lamp inside, talking loudly. The journey continued, and then talking gradually ceased.

"The rain must surely inconvenience you," said the first passenger, resuming his attack upon the widow? He leaned forward and endeavored to persuade her to do as he suggested. The offer was politely declined. "I prefer this position, thank you," replied the little black figure. Some ten minutes passed wearily away, when one of the two last comers showed signs of uneasiness. She rose, and sought something on the floor and upon the seat. She touched the black figure roughly.

"You are annoying that lady," said the man. "What have you lost?"

The woman continued her search. She emptied her pockets, bringing forth a miscellaneous collection of coppers, keys, old gloves, and other things; her anxiety increased every moment.

"I have been robbed," she at last exclaimed. Her friend tried to pacify her in vain.

"Conductor," she cried in an excited tone, "Conductor, my watch has been stolen, and these people have got it."

The conductor descended from his foot-board, and stood at the door of the omnibus.

"My watch has been stolen, and this woman has taken it."

"I know this lady well," said the man. "She is one of my regular customers; you must be mistaken."

"I am not mistaken," replied the female.

"She took it, and passed it to her friend here. I know their tricks."

"You dare accuse me, madam?" replied the latter furiously.

"Yes, you and your accomplice here who looks so innocent."

A violent altercation took place. The woman declared she had her watch in her possession a few minutes since, and could not now find it.

The widow was greatly agitated.

"You are very wrong," she said meekly speaking through her veil.

"No, I am not," replied the accuser fiercely, "and you know well enough I'm not."

"Maybe you dropped it while getting in," suggested the conductor.

"No such thing, it was too well fastened

I felt her touch me as I passed her. I'm positive about it, and quite as positive she or her companion shall give it up."

The widow uncovered her face, now paler than ever, and hardly able to speak, declared her innocence of such a charge.

"Look for it again, ma'am," said the conductor persuasively, "maybe you left it at home."

Again the woman looked all over the omnibus and through her pockets—the watch was not forthcoming.

"Give it up," she exclaimed, almost breathless with rage, "give it up, and I'll let you off." No one replied.

"Call a policeman," she then cried. "Stop the bus and call a policeman. We'll see who is to rob me, indeed."

The first passenger expostulated with the infuriated woman; offered his card and address, and to be responsible for the loss.

"Your card and address, of course they're false. Call a policeman, conductor."

Resistance was useless. The omnibus was stopped, and a policeman came up.

"I give this person into custody for stealing my watch."

The constable asked a few questions, and then said it would be necessary for all present to go with him to the police-station.

"Will you have a cab and go quietly?" he said, turning his lantern on the widow, who was paralyzed with fright.

"We pass your quarters," said the conductor. "I know this lady, and am sure it's a mistake."

The policeman looked incredulous, and uttered something about suspicious characters.

"Do your duty, sir, and make no remarks," exclaimed the passenger who had been accused as an accomplice in the robbery. The policeman entered the omnibus, seating himself next the widow, who became hysterical and speechless.

Fortunately no other passengers were met with on the road. In due time the police station was reached, when all alighted, the constable leading the way to the room where the officer who received the night charges was on duty.

The circumstances of her loss were related with much volubility by the shabbily attired woman, to whom the officer listened with attention, taking notes of what was said.

"You must be searched," he said to the widow, and directed her to be taken up stairs for that purpose.

The passenger protested loudly against this indignity.

"My name is Williamson. I am staying at Morley's Hotel, and will give you any reference you please. Let me be responsible for this lady, or let me pay you the value of the watch," he said earnestly, addressing the last request to the woman, who made no reply.

"The matter is now in our hands," said the officer, "and must be proceeded with in the regular way." He then repeated his orders for the search to be made.

The widow was led, or rather carried, into a room on the first floor, and there submitted to the tender mercies of two of the female police.

Her bonnet and veil were torn rudely from her head, the long brown hair ruthlessly disheveled, and her dress was taken off. As the black gown fell upon the ground something in the pocket struck heavily against the floor.

"Ah! there it is," exclaimed one of the searchers with a malicious grin, "I thought we shouldn't have far to go."

The pocket was opened, and to the disappointment of the female police a large door-key, but no watch was found therein.

"You can dress yourself," said the women one of whom more charitable than the other, assisted the widow who, in a sad condition, and still speechless, presently descended the staircase and reappeared in the police station.

"Nothing found on her?" inquired the officer. "Nothing," was the answer.

The officer proceeded to enter the details of the case upon the police sheet.

"What name does the prisoner give?"

No reply.

"She has some cards with her," said one of the searchers.

"Hand them here." The name on the cards was taken. Mr. Williamson again repeated his request to be accepted as bail for the accused.

"You're not a householder, and it's too late now," replied the officer, who then ordered the widow to be removed to the prisoner's cell, a dimly lighted room, furnished only with a few benches against the walls, and containing some twenty occupants of both sexes, and all classes. She

was thrust in among the wretched group, and the door locked upon her.

"Sorry to see you here, my dear," said a gaily dressed woman coming up to her, as she stood bewildered in the middle of the cell.

"Egad though, I'm not," continued a drunken fellow, attempting to embrace her.

"Leave her alone," exclaimed the woman thrusting the man away, and knocking him down without much effort.

The rest now gathered around the widow and her newly-found defender; they offered no interference, but gazed with sheepish wonderment at what was going on.

"You're a nice one to protect the innocent, Poll, you are," said one of the prisoners, jeeringly, to the woman who held the widow in her arms.

"I shall protect who I please," was the reply, accompanied with an oath, "she's out of place among us and will soon be released."

"No, no, let her stop here," stammered the drunkard, lying where he had fallen, "let us all stop here, it's very comfortable, I'm sure."

The woman tried to soothe the widow, and succeeded in preventing the others from molesting her. It would indeed have been useless for any of them to dispute the authority of such a protector, whose powerful arm kept them all at bay.

An hour—two hours elapsed in this terrible position—the prisoners, those to whom the locality and circumstances were familiar, had settled themselves for the night; some stretching upon the floor, others upon the benches. One or two novices continued to pace the cell, occasionally disturbing the sleepers, who protested loudly and coarsely against the intrusion.

The widow regained her speech and consciousness, and was still clinging to her protector, when the door opened, and her name was called.

Being led out, she was received at the entrance by an old friend who had been desired to come to her assistance by an unknown visitor.

Without waiting to inquire into what had happened, he offered to become security for her.

"You are a householder?" said the constable, interrogatively.

"I am not, but I live in a house belonging to my family, and am a medical man well-known in this neighborhood."

"Useless, sir, quite useless. If you are a professional man, you, perhaps, know our regulations in these cases, and how strict they are."

The doctor endeavored to overrule the objections, but unsuccessfully—the police insisted upon the accused returning to the cell, and were about removing her, when Mr. Williamson arrived, accompanied by several other friends, to find whom, he had been driving about town? Two responsible householders satisfied the requirements of the police, bail was accepted, and the widow taken to her home, overcome with excitement and distress of mind.

"I told them it was a mistake," said the conductor, as he opened the door of the omnibus, but that old wizen wouldn't have it."

Having escorted the widow to her home, Mr. Williamson and those with him left her to the care of the doctor and a servant.

It was five o'clock in the morning before the omnibus was dismissed, having been employed all night by Mr. Williamson in his endeavor to gather the widow's friends together.

According to the directions given by the police, all concerned in the strange occurrence assembled at the police court, at eleven o'clock the following day.

The night charges being disposed of, a short delay occurred before the more important cases were called on. The buzz of conversation in the crowded court was suddenly interrupted by a constable making his way towards the widow and her friends; and conducting them with much ceremony to the magistrate's room.

What could have happened? Was the densely packed audience to be disappointed by the case being heard in private? Curiosity was still more cruelly excited when the magistrate, returning to his seat on the bench, desired the clerk to proceed with case number two on the list, and passed over that of the widow and the watch without a remark.

In the meantime, a strange scene had been going on behind the legal curtains.

Upon entering the room, the widow was met by her accuser who, in the most abject manner, implored forgiveness for what had happened—she had come to confess her error—the watch had been found.

"And where was it found?" asked Mr.

Williamson of the woman who was on her knees.

"Not half an hour ago, in my table drawer," gasped the virago, who was now as humble as she had been violent.

"And you had not the prudence to look there for it last night?" said the rector.

"I was so sure she had it."

"You still persist in taking this lady for a thief!" exclaimed Mr. Williamson indignantly.

The widow requested the penitent to rise, and declared she readily forgave her.

"But the matter cannot be allowed to rest thus," said Mr. Williamson; "a public apology is necessary, and some atonement must be made for all the misery that has been caused."

Hereupon the magistrate, who had been a silent spectator of what had passed, suggested that legal advice should be taken on the subject, and an apology drawn up in due form; he then left the room to resume his official duties in the crowded court house.

Mr. Williamson obtained permission to continue an acquaintance so strangely commenced. He was a man of prepossessing manners and appearance, fond of children, and delighting especially in those belonging to the widow.

Some months after the omnibus incident—he had in the meantime availed himself of the permission, and had made himself a great favorite with the children—his visits to the house became more frequent.

"Do you remember, he said on one of these occasions, to the widow, "how perseveringly I tried to make you talk when we first met?"

The widow blushed, and declared she had forgotten the circumstances.

"You may forget it, but I never can; the impression you made upon me nothing will ever efface!"—and Mr. Williamson continued a most eloquent speech, one which probably he had studied and often waited for an opportunity to deliver. The opportunity presented itself, and not long afterwards the widow was his wife.

TAMING A ROWDY.

IT IS about a dozen years since business—not pleasure, took me to New Jericho the terminus of civilization and the Wham-melover Railroad. And "a hard road to travel" that was. It had steeper grades, sharper curves, and more of them than it is to be hoped, ever periled the public life and limb before or since.

It was Saturday afternoon, and we were to reach Jericho at some indefinite hour that evening, "time not being of the essence of the contract."

At a place called Blueruin we stopped fifteen minutes to "liquor." There had been a cock-fight, and several other fights and a big crowd there that day, and everybody was in high glee.

The New Jericho delegation returned by our train, and rougher looking samples of rustic rowdiness it would have been difficult to find, even in that favored region. Among them was a strapping six-footer, a very Hercules in proportions, with a cock-o'-the-walk sort of swagger about him, who took possession of two seats, depositing his body on one and deadheading his legs on the other. One cheek was puffed out by an underlying quid, while ever and anon, with a back-action jerk, he would send near a gill of tobacco juice over his shoulder, which those within range had the privilege of dodging or taking the consequences of as they liked. As for his conversation, the curse of Emulphus, or the table-talk of a Flanders mess-room in Uncle Toby's time, in point of maledictory power, was weak in comparison. At the next station a young lady came on board, beautiful as Venus and modest as Diana. How so rare a flower came to bloom in such a wild, was a question to puzzle over. But there was no time to settle it. The lady was standing and all the seats were occupied. I was on the point of offering mine, when a youthful looking gentleman, of prepossessing manners and appearance, stepped forward and addressed the couchant Hercules:

"Allow me," he said, politely, "to turn over the back of this seat."

"Hey?" the other grunted.

The request was repeated.

"See you dod darned first!" was the gruff response.

"But, sir—" the gentleman began to expostulate.

"Look here you!" blustered the bully, "don't you offer to go for to rile me—that's my advice, an' I gives it free gratis," cause I feel a trust in you."

"But this lady is entitled to a seat," the stranger persisted.

"Give her your own then, dod drot you! an' stop your chin-music, or by Hoky, you will rile me!"

As a last resort, the gentleman appealed to the conductor, who happened to be passing. But the latter declined to interfere. Such things must be left to courtesy. Besides it wasn't his place to take part in the disputes of passengers. So saying, he went his way, punching tickets, and taking no further heed.

"Dod blast you, you hee riled me!" shouted the bully, springing to his feet and striding up to the young man, who didn't seem quite sensible of his danger; "you've gone an' stuck your nose into other people's business, an' I'm goin' to pull it!"

An attempt was made to suit the action to the word; but before the metaphorically offending member had been so much as touched, something—it moved so swiftly I couldn't be positive it was the gentleman's fist—took Hercules directly between the eyes, and sent him sprawling to the other end of the car. He didn't get up immediately, and when he did, he seemed a little bewildered as to whether he had been knocked down, or the train had run off the track. He had had enough, at all events, wherever it came from, as was manifest from the subdued air with which he took his departure for the smoking car, whither his companions soon followed, no doubt secretly chuckling at the result, as usually do the chums of a whipped bully.

Pap Kilderkin, the proprietor of the New Jericho Rest, was the most communicative of hosts. Before bedtime that night, I was thoroughly and accurately "up" in all the gossip of the place, and had its scandalous statistics at my fingers' ends.

Among other things, I learned that "stated preaching" had hitherto been among the wants of the community, but that a "supply" had been at length obtained, and the new minister was expected to enter on his duties on the morrow.

"And a refreshin' season he'll hev of it," said Pap.

"Why so?" I asked.

"Oh! Bill Grinky an' t'other chaps go in, to break him in termorrer; an' ef you want to see fun, I'd edwise you to go thar."

And I did go—not "to see fun," as Pap Kilderkin suggested, but, I trust, from better motives. Pap went too—by what prompted, I prefer not judging.

When we reached the church, the minister had not yet made his appearance, though a goodly number of hearers had already assembled. A few minutes later, yesterday's delegation to the Blueruin cock-fight, headed by the vanquished bully with both his eyes in full mourning, sauntered in and walked noisily down the aisle.

"That's Bill Grinke," whispered Pap, "an them's t'other chaps."

"Make way for the mourners!" sang out Bill, crowding, with his companions, into a front seat, where a boisterous conversation was struck up, mingled with an incessant cracking of peanuts.

"I kin tell you thar progranny," Pap continued; "a pack of shootin'-crackers 'll be tetcht off doorn' the fust hymn, an' a pair o' game chickens as a couple o' them chaps got in their pockets, 'll be sot fightin' as soon as the tex's gin out, arter which gen'ral Ned 'll be in order."

A sudden silence fell upon the congregation. Not a murmur was heard, and the peanuts ceased to crack. Looking up, I saw the minister in the pulpit; and guess my surprise at recognizing him as the young man that had struck out so deftly from his shoulder the day before.

With a clear, manly voice, he gave out a hymn, which was sung through without interruption. A prayer was offered up amid profound and decorous silence. Another hymn followed, and then a sermon, earnest, plain practical, without a word of cant in it. From the beginning to the end of the exercises, not an unseemly sound was heard save a single incipient crow, promptly choked off, from one of the invisible chickens.

"I say, Bill, I overheard said from one o' t'other chaps," as they made their way out "that parson's a trump; he preaches a downright good lick, an' fights fair, without bitin' or goughin'."

It was easy to see the new minister's status was settled. I have since heard that Bill Grinke has become an exemplary member of the church, and the parson the happy husband of the young lady, as whose champion he first achieved popularity.

"What time is it, Tom?" "Just time to pay that little account you owe me." "Oh, indeed! well, I didn't think it was half so late."