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THE BOWERTON MYSTERY.

IT was a quiet place with few strangers arriving within its borders.

When, therefore, the mail-coach one day brought to Bowerton, an old lady and a young one, who appeared to be mother and daughter, excitement ran high.

The proprietor of the Bowerton House, who was his clerk, hostler, and table-waiter, was for a day or two the most popular man in town.

The old lady was quite feeble, he said, and the daughter was very affectionate and very handsome. He didn't know where they were going, but they registered themselves from Boston. Name was Wyettyoung lady's name was Helen. He hoped they wouldn't leave for a long time-travelers were not any too plenty at Bowerton, and landlords found it hard work to scratch along. Talked about locating at Bowerton if they could find a suitable cottage.

The Wyetts finally found a suitable cottage, and soon afterward they began to receive heavy packages and boxes from the nearest railway station.

Then it was that the responsible gossips of Bowerton were worked nearly to death, but each one was sustained by a fine professional pride which enabled them to pass creditably through that most exciting

For years they had skilfully pried into each other's private affairs, but then they had some starting-place, some clue; now, alas! there was not in all Bowerton a single person who had emigrated from Boston where the Wyetts had lived. Worse still, there was not a single Bowertonian who

had a Boston correspondent.

But Bowerton was not to be baulked in its strivings after accurate intelligence. From Squire Brown, who leased Mrs. Wyett had made payment by check on an excellent Boston bank. The poor but respectable female who washed the floors of the cottage informed the public that the whole first floor was to be carpeted with Brussels. The postmaster's clerk ascertained and stated that Mrs. Wyett received two religious papers per week, whereas no one else in Bowerton took more than one. The grocer said that Mrs. Wyett was, by jingo, the sort of person he liked to trade with-wouldn't have anything that wasn't the very best. The man who helped to do the unpacking was willing to take oath that among the books were a full set of Barnes' Notes, and two sets of commentaries, while Mrs. Battle, who lived in the house next to the cottage and who was suddenly, on hearing the clashing of crockery next door, moved to neighborly kindness to the extent of carrying in a nice hot pie to the newcomers, declared that as she hoped to be saved there wasn't a bit of crockery in that house which wasn't pure china.

Bowerton asked no more. Brussels carpets, religious tendencies, a bank account, the ability to live on the best that the market afforded, and to eat it from china, and china only-why, either one of these qualifications was a voucher of respectability, and any two of them constituted a patent aristocracy of the Bowerton standard.

Bowerton opened its doors and heartily welcomed Mrs. and Miss Wyett.

It is grievous to relate, but the coming of these estimable people was the cause of considerable trouble in Bowerton.

Bowerton, like all other places, contained lovers, and some of the young men were not so blinded by the charms of their own particular lady friends as to be oblivious to the beauty of Miss Wyett.

Finally Jack Whiffer, who was of a first family, and was a store-clerk besides, proposed to Miss Wyett and was declined; then the young ladies of Bowerton thought | agreed to leave the matter to you. When that perhaps Helen Wyett had some sense I reached the house, these gentlemen al-

Congressman, wished to make Miss Wyett mistress of the Baggs mansion and sharer of the Baggs money, but his offer was re-

jected.
When at last the one unmarried minister of Bowerton, who had been the desire of many hearts, manfully admitted that he had proposed and been rejected, and that Miss Wyett had informed him that she was already engaged, all the Bowerton girls declared that Helen Wyett was a darling old thing, and that it was perfectly shameful that she couldn't be let alone.

After thus proving that their own hearts were in the right place, all the Bowerton girls asked each other who the lucky man

Of course he couldn't be a Bowerton man, for Miss Wyett was seldom seen in company with any gentleman. He must be a Boston man-he was probably very literary-Boston men always were.

Besides, if he was at all fit for her, he must certainly be very handsome.

Suddenly Miss Wyett became the rage among the Bowerton girls. Blushingly and gushingly they told her of their own loves, and they showed her their lovers, or pictures of those gentlemen.

Miss Wyett listened, smiled and sympathized, and when they sat silent expectant of similar confidences, they were disappointed, and when they endeavored to learn even the slightest particular of Helen Wyett's love, she changed the subject of conversation so quickly and decidedly that they had not the courage to renew the attempt.

But while most Bowertonians despaired of learning much more about the Wyetts, and especially about Helen's lover, there was one who had resolved not to know the favored man, but to do him some frightful injury, and that was little Guzzy.

Though Guzzy's frame was small, his soul was immense, and Helen's failure to comprehend Guzzy's greatness when he laid it all at her feet had made Guzzy extremely bilious and gloomy.

Many a night, when Guzzy's soul and body should have been taking their rest, they roamed in company up and down the quiet street on which the Wyett's cottage was located, and Guzzy's eyes, instead of being fixed on the sweet pictures in dreamland, gazed vigilantly in the direction of Mrs. Wyett's gate.
At length there came a time when most

men would have despaired.

Love is warm, but what warmth is proof against the chilling blasts and pelting rains of the equinoctial storm?

But then it was that the fervor of little Guzzy's soul showed itself; for, wrapped Wyett a cottage, it was learned that Mrs. in the folds of a waterproof overcoat, he paced his accustomed beat with the calmness of a faithful policeman.

And he had his reward. As one night he stood unseen against the back-ground of a high wall, opposite the residence of Mrs. Wyett he heard the gate -her gate--creak on its hinges.

It could be no ordinary visitor, for it was after nine o'clock-it must be he.

Hah! the lights were out! He would be disappointed, the villain! Now was the time, while his heart would be bleeding with sorrow, to wither him with reproachcs. To be sure he seemed a large man, while Guzzy was very small, but Guzzy believed his own thin legs to be faithful in an emer-

The unknown man knocked softly at the front door, then he seemed to tap at sever-

al of the windows. Suddenly he raised one of the windows, and Guzzy, who had not until then suspected that he had been watching a housebreaker, sped away like the wind and alarmed the solitary constable of Bower-

That functionary requested Guzzy to notify Squire Jones, justice of the peace, that there was business ahead, and then hastened away himself.

Guzzy labored industriously for some moments, for Squire Jones was very old, and very cautious, and very stupid; but he was at last fully aroused, and then Guzzy had an opportunity to reflect on the greatness which would be his when Bowerton knew of his meritorious action.

An instant later the constable entered, followed by two smart-looking men, who had between them a third man, securely

The prisoner was a very handsome, intelligent-looking young man, except for a pair of restless, over-bright eyes.

"There's a difference of opinion bout who the prisoner belongs to," said the constable, addressing the squire; "and we ready had him in hand, and they claim he's one little, high, grated window of the jail. Then young Baggs, son of a deceased an escaped convict, and that they've track-

ed him from the prison right straight to the shadow of a man's head outside the for my credit as a faithful officer. Now, Bowerton."

The prisoner gave the officer a very wicked look, while those officials produced their warrants, and handed them to the justice for inspection.

Guzzy seemed to himself to grow big with accumulating importance.

"The officers seemed to be duly authorized," said the squire, after a long and minute examination of their papers; "but they should identify the prisoner as the escaped convict for whom they are searching,"

"Here's his description," said one of the officers, "in an advertisement: 'Escaped from the Penitentiary, on the -th instant, William Beigh, alias Bay Billy, alias Handsome ; age, twenty-eight ; height, five feet ten inches ; complexion dark, hair black, eyes dark brown, mole on left cheek ; general appearance handsome, manly and intelligent. A skilful and dangerous burglar. Sentenced in 1866 to five years' imprisonment-two years yet to serve." "That," continued the officer, "describes him to a dot; and, if there's any further doubt, look here !"

As he spoke, he unclasped a cloak which the prisoner wore, and disclosed the striped uniform of the prisoner.

"There seems no reasonable doubt in this case and the prisoner will have to go back to prison," said the justice. "But I must detain him until I ascertain whether he has stolen anything from Mrs. Wyett's residence. In case he has done so, we can prosecute at the expiration of his term."

The prisoner seemed almost convulsed with rage, though of a sort which one of the officers whispered to the other he did not exactly understand.

Guzzy eyed him resentfully, and glared at the officers with considerable disfavor.

Guzzy was a law-abiding man, but to have an expected triumph belittled and postponed because of foreign interference was enough to blind almost any man's judicial eyesight.

"Well," said one of the officers, put him in the lock-up, and investigate in the morning. Why, would you believe it, judge? they say Billy has one of the finest wives in the Commonwealth-handsome, welleducated, religious, rich, and of good family. Of course she did not know what his profession was when she married him."

Again the prisoner seemed convulsed with that strange rage which the officer did not understand. But the officers were tired, and they were too familiar with the disapprobation of prisoners to be seriously affected by it; so, after an appointment by the squire, and a final glare of indignation from little Guzzy, they started, under the constable's guidance, to the lock-up.

Suddenly the door was thrown open, and there appeared, with uncovered head, streaming hair, weeping, yet eager eyes, and mud-splashed garments, Helen Wyett.

Every one started, the officers stared, the squire looked a degree or two less stupid, and hastened to button his dressinggown ; the restless eyes of the convict fell on Helen's beautiful face, and were restless no longer; while little Guzzy assumed a dignified pose which did not seem at all consistent with his confused and shamefaced countenance.

"We may as well finish this case tonight, if Miss Wyett is prepared to testify," said the squire, at length. "Have you lost anything, Miss Wyett?"

"No," said Helen; "but I have found my dearest treasure—my own husband."

And putting her arms around the convict's neck, she kissed him, and then, dropping her head on his shoulder, she sobbed violently.

The squire was startled into complete wakefulness, and as the moral aspect of the scene presented itself to him, he groan-

"Onequally yoked with an onbeliever !" The officers looked if they were depraved yet remorseful convicts themselves, while little Guzzy's diminutive dimensions seemed to contract perceptibly.

At length the convict quieted his wife, and persuaded her to return to her home, with a promise from the officers that she should see him in the morning.

Now, the jail at Bowerton, like everything else in the town, was decidedly antiquated, and consisted simply of a thickly walled room in a building which contained several officers and living apartments.

A couple of hours rolled away, and left Beigh still sitting moody and silent on the single bedstead in the Bowerton jail.

Suddenly the train of his thought was

interrupted by a low "stt-stt" from the The prisoner looked up quickly, and saw

"Hellow!" whispered Beigh, hurrying

"Are you alone?" inquired the shadow. "Yes," replied the prisoner.

under the window.

"All right, then," whispered the voice. There are secrets which no vulgar ear should hear. My name is Guzzy. I have been in love with your wife. I hadn't any idea she was married; but I've brought you my apology."

"I'll forgive you," whispered the criminal : but-

"'Tain't that kind of an apology," whispered Guzzy. "It's a steel one-a toolone of those things that gunsmiths shorten gun-barrels with. If they can saw a riflebarrel in two in five minutes, you ought to get out of here inside of an hour."

"Not quite," whispered Beigh. "My hands and feet are ironed."

"Then I'll do the job myself," whispered Guzzy, as he applied the tool to one of the bars; "for it will be daylight within two hours."

The unaccustomed labor-for Guzzy was a bookkeeper-made his arms ache severely, but still he sawed away.

He wondered what his employer would say should he be found out, but still he

Visions of the uplifted hands and horrorstricken countenances of his brother church members came before his eyes, and the effect of his example upon his Sunday school class, should he be discovered, tormented his soul; but neither of these influences affected his saw.

"Bar after bar disappeared, and when Guzzy finally stopped to rest, Beigh saw a small square of black sky, unobstructed by any bars whatever.

"Now," whispered Guzzy, "I'll drop in a small box you can stand on, so you can put your hands out and let me file off your irons. I brought a file or two, thinking they might come handy."

Five minutes later the convict, his hands unbound, crawled through the window, and was helped to the ground by Guzzy .-Seizing the file from the little bookkeeper, Beigh commenced freeing his feet. Suddenly he stopped, and whispered:

"You'd better go now. I can take care of myself, but if those cursed officers should take a notion to look around, it would go hard with you. Run, God bless

But little Guzzy straightened himself, and folded his arms.

The convict rasped away rapidly, and finally dropped the file and the fragments of the last fetter. Then he seized little Guzzy's hand.

"My friend," said he, "criminal though I am, I am man enough to appreciate your manliness and honor. I think I am smart enough to keep myself free, now I am out of jail. But, if ever you want a friend, tell Helen, she will know where I am, and I will serve you, no matter what the pain and risk."

"Thank you," said Guzzy; but the only favor I'll ask of you might as well be named now, and you ought to be able to do it without pain or risk either. It's only this : be an honest man, for Helen's

Beigh dropped his head.

"There are men who would die daily for the sake of making her happy, but you've put it out of their power, seeing you've married her," continued Guzzy. "I'm nothing to her, and can't be, but for her sake to-night I've broken open the gunsmith's shop, broken a jail, and"-here he stopped and picked up a bundle-"robbed my own employer's store of a suit of clothes for you, so you mayn't be caught again in those prison stripes. If I've made myself a criminal for her sake, can't her husband be an honest man for the same

The convict wrung the hand of his preserver. He seemed to be trying to speak, but to have some great obstruction in his

Suddenly a bright light shone on the two men, and a voice was heard exclaiming in low but very ferocious tones: "Do it, you scoundrel, or I'll put a bul-

let through your head !" Both men looked up to the window of the cell, and saw a bulls-eye lantern, the muz-

zle of a pistol, and the Bowerton consta-The constable's right eye, the sights of

what are you going to do?"

"Turn over a new leaf," said the convict, bursting into tears.

"Then, get out," whispered the officer, "and be lively, too-its almost daybreak." "I'll tell you what to do," said little

Guzzy, when the constable whispered : "Wait until I get out of hearing."

The excitement which possessed Bowerton the next morning, when the events of the previous night were made public, was beyond the descriptive powers of the best linguists in the village. Helen Wyett a burglar's wife! At first the Bowertonians scarcely knew whether to recognize her at all, and before they were able to arrive at a conclusion the intelligence of the convict's escape, the breaking open of the gunsmith's shop, the finding of the front door of Cashing's store ajar, and the discovery by Cashing that at least one suit of valuable clothing had been taken, came upon the astonished villagers and rendered them incapable of reason, and of every other

mental attribute except wonder. That the prisoner had an accomplice seemed certain, and some suspicious souls suggested that the prisoner's wife might have been the person; but as one of the officers declared be had watched her house all night for fear of some such an attempt, that theory was abandoned.

For some days Helen Wyett gave the Bowertonians no occasion to modify their conduct toward her, for she kept herself constantly out of sight.

When, however, she did appear in the street again, she met only the kindest looks and salutations, for the venerable Squire Jones had talked incessantly in praise of her courage and affection, and the squire's fellow-townsmen knew that when their principal magistrate was affected to tenderness and mercy, it was from causes which would have simply overwhelmed any ordinary mortal.

It was months before Bowerton gossip descended again to its normal level; for a few weeks after the escape of Beigh, little Guzzy, who had never been supposed to have unusual credit, and whose family certainly hadn't any money, left his employer and started an opposition store.

Next to small scandal, finance was the favorite burden of conversation at Bowerton, so the source of Guzzy's sudden prosperity was so industriously sought and surmised that the gossips were soon at needles' points about it.

Then it was suddenly noised abroad that Mrs. Baggs, Sr., who knew everybody, had given Guzzy a letter of introduction to the Governor of the State.

Bowerton was simply confounded. What could be want? The Governor had very few appointments at his disposal, and none of them were fit for Guzzy, except those for which Guzzy was not fit. Even the local politicians became excited, and both sides consulted Guzzy.

Finally, when Guzzy started for the State capitol, and Helen Wyett, as people still called her, accompanied him, the people of Bowerton put on countenances of hopeless resignation, and of a mute expectation which nothing could astonish.

It might be an elopement-it might be that they were going as missionaries; but no one expressed a positive opinion, and every one expressed a perfect willingness to believe anything that was supported by even a shadow of proof.

Their mute agony was suddenly ended, for within forty-eight hours Guzzy and his

traveling companion returned.

The latter seemed unusually happy for the wife of a convict, while the former went straight to Squire Jones and the con-stables. Half an bour later all Bowerton knew that William Beigh, alias Bay Billy, alias Handsome, had received a full and free pardon from the Governor.

The next day Bowerton saw a tall, handsome stranger, with downcast eyes, walk rapidly through the principal street and disappear behind Mrs. Wyett's gate. A day later, and Bowerton was electrified by the intelligence that the ex-burglar had been installed as clerk in Guzzy's store.

People said it was a shame—that nobody knew how soon Beigh might take to his old tricks again. Nevertheless, they crowded to Guzzy's store to look at him, until shrewd people began to wonder whether Guzzy hadn't really taken Beigh as a sort

of advertisement to draw trade A few months later, however, they changed their opinion, for the constable, after the expiration of his term of office, and while under the influence of a glass too much, related the whole history of the night of Beigh's first arrival at Bowerton. The Bowertonians were law abiding peo-

his pistol, and the breast of the convict were on the same visual line.

"I've had you covered for the last ten minutes. I only held in to find out who was helping you; but I heard too much had been built and stocked with Mrs. Wyett's money.