

THE WAY OF THE TRANSGRESSOR.

BY HOWARD FIELDING.

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SYNOPSIS.

Mr. J. Woodbury Newcomb, an elderly student of criminology, returning to New York from a visit to Sing Sing, meets on the train Frank Gleason, Bill Harris and Jack Finney, convicts, who have just completed their terms of imprisonment, and who mistake Newcomb for a fellow convict. To draw them out, he assumes the character, and proceeds to tell them the story of his first crime.

PART II.

To the imputation upon his veracity, Frank Gleason retorted that the story which he was about to tell was strictly true. He added that a man who had led such a life as his did not need to invent stories of a marvelous adventure. This proposition he proceeded to prove by sketching a strangely varied career with great clearness and exemplary brevity.

It appeared that he had worked at almost every trade by which men live. He spoke of each with a technical familiarity that compelled belief and, without meaning to do so, he proved that his nature had been always superior to occupation or environment, for he had made every path lead to crime. As a soldier, in a petty South American war, he had fought for booty; and as a diver, even at the bottom of the sea with the world so far away and God's hand so near, he had had the hardihood to wear jewels from the fingers of the dead.

"As to the little affair I'm going to tell you about," he said at last, "it was not much to boast of, and the only reason why I like to tell the story is because it marks the cross roads of life

with me. It was the first time that I ever went wrong. "It happened this way, Brother Woodbury," he continued, turning to the penologist, "I was brought up in a western town, and got a fair education at the schools and in a little academy that the folks out there were rather proud of. A few years later I drifted into New York, without any money, and chanced to run across a man whom I had known at home. He had started with a little money, and had built it up to a fortune in New York. He seemed to be glad to meet some one from the old place, and was sympathetic when he learned that I was out of work and low in pocket. If I would call on him at his office the next day he would try to find me something to do. I went there expecting to get a soft job and a little money, but he offered me the position of night watchman in his furniture factory in Long Island City.

"From that moment I hated the man, and made up my mind to get square with him. That was the only reason why I took the job. It was worth ten dollars a week. Think of that! Well, I went to work, and every week I charged him, in my mind, with the amount that he ought to have paid me over and above what I got. He was going in debt to me pretty fast, although I didn't know it. "Late one afternoon I went to the factory to begin my regular night's work. Grayling—that was his name—was in the office, talking with his partner, Bob Stetson. The office was a little one-story building connected with the factory by a covered walk. I saw the two men through a window. They were talking across a big pile of money that lay on Grayling's desk. Presently I saw Grayling put the money in the safe, and then Stetson went away. "A few minutes later I showed up in the office. Grayling told me he was going to be there till midnight, and that I needn't come over from the factory before that time. Ordinarily I was supposed to make my regular rounds hourly.

"Grayling went out for his dinner, and came back about seven o'clock. I took a look at him through the window. He was at work on the books, and the safe was open. The money was in that safe, I had been thinking about that. It seemed to me that there ought to be some way to collect what Grayling owed me, according to my figuring. Probably I could get a few dollars extra, if I worked it right. "I was new at that sort of business then, and naturally didn't know just how to go to work. Of course, I might have walked into the office, and probably I could have knocked Grayling on the head without any trouble. But I hesitated at that. Murder isn't in my line, and, besides, I didn't know how much money there was in the pile that I had seen. Moreover, Grayling kept a loaded revolver quite handy in a drawer of his desk, as I had discovered while glancing over his papers one night after everybody had gone.

"Perhaps I might have given up the job, but luck was in my favor. About nine o'clock, as I was standing by the window of the office looking in, and thinking a boy came along carrying a tin pail. He had his hand on the knob of the office door when I spoke to him. "What have you got there?" said I, and he told me it was coffee for Mr. Grayling.

"He always has it sent over when he works late," said he. "It's to keep him awake, I suppose. I bring it around from the restaurant, just before we close up, and I put it on the gas stove in the back office so that it will keep hot."

"That's a pretty good idea," said I. "Could you get another pailful for me?" "He was willing, and after he had carried in Grayling's coffee, he trotted back to the restaurant after mine. While he was gone, I ran around the corner to a drug store, where I bought some lathum—just for the toothache. Pretty soon the boy came back with my pail of coffee, and I paid him the price. When he had gone I dosed the coffee with lathum very carefully, for I didn't want any accident to happen.

That was why I got a second pailful. I was afraid that if I tried to dose Grayling's coffee while it was on the stove and he in the next room, I might get nervous and make a mistake. "Having fixed the coffee all right, I slipped into the back room through a rear door of which I had the key; and I slipped the safe open without making a sound. Then I took my pail over to the factory, and put it in a warm place in the boiler room, thinking that I might need it later, to brace my nerve. I waited half an hour by my watch—which appeared to be going a good deal slower than usual—and then I went into the passage that led to the office. I didn't dare to open the door, at first, but I could see fairly well through the keyhole. It was not so convenient as the window; but I didn't like to be seen there too often, in case anybody should be passing.

"Grayling was drinking his coffee. There were two cupsful. I was wishing that he wouldn't drink all of the last one; but he did. And while he was doing it, the passage where he stood got hotter and hotter till the sweat ran off my forehead. I thought that he would hear it dripping on the floor. "After he had drunk his coffee he sat down before his desk, and presently his head fell forward into his hands. I thought he was gone, but he roused himself; got up, and began to pace the floor. I heard him mutter about being sleepy. When he reached his chair I could see him through the keyhole, and I saw that he hesitated every time. He wanted to sit down; he wanted to throw his head upon his hands on that desk and sleep and sleep. I knew just how he felt, and I knew too, that he would never come back any longer. At last he sat down in a decisive way, shaking his head and shrugging his shoulders. He was going to do some work. No more sleepiness for him. He picked up some papers and rattled them briskly. Then he began to crumple them in his fingers. His hands dropped upon the desk, and he dropped his head lower and lower over them, and suddenly he was asleep. Or dead? I didn't dare to think of it.

"I had watched him so closely that it seemed as if the drug had worked upon both of us, steadily, evenly. My head seemed to be cool-cooler than usual. I could think of an enormous number of things in a second. Some of them were of a nature to frighten a man. But then there was the money; I never quite forgot that. "Over the desk he was nodding. I entered the office, and went to Grayling's side. He was sound asleep. I turned to the safe. The money was there in a little drawer. It was locked, but the key was in the lock. My hand was on the key when I heard a sound—a footstep. Some one was coming. I was panic-stricken. Instinctively I sprang behind one of the big doors of the safe. There I stood trembling. It seemed a long time. I knew that some one was in the room, but how he had come, or who he was, I could not guess. "It was useless to stand there. Discovery was certain. There was no hope except in a bold and sudden dash. Drawing the revolver which I carried for protection while on my watch, I sprang out into the room. In that instant I was face to face with Stetson. It was his life or mine. I leveled the revolver at him. "Hands up!" I cried. "Gleason!" he screamed, starting back. "That's me," said I, "and I mean business. "He sank upon his knees. "In the name of heaven," he cried hoarsely, "do not betray me. He drove me to it. With his infernal cunning he was dragging my share in our joint enterprise out of my hands. I had to kill him to save myself from ruin. "The back part of my mouth was so dry that it rustled when I tried to speak, and my brain was reeling, but I managed to gather sense enough to take the amazing tip that he had given me, and breath enough to say: "Sit down, Mr. Stetson, and try to be calm. I will hear your story."

"It burst out of him like a torrent of fire. He told how Grayling had cheated him, and how he had imposed upon his simplicity to make him sign documents that would beggar him. Those documents were in that safe in Grayling's private drawer. Yet to get them was not enough, for he would still be in his partner's clutches. So he had planned murder.

"Knowing Grayling's habit in the matter of the coffee, he had decided that therein lay his opportunity. So he had provided himself with poison, and had secreted himself in a closet in the back office—returning after a pretense of leaving the factory as usual. When the boy had brought in the coffee, and had gone, Stetson had crept out of the closet, and had poured his poison into the pail. Then he had returned to his concealment. "A few minutes later I had come in, a humble instrument in the hands of Providence—and had removed the pail which contained the fatal dose, substituting that which I had mildly drugged. Often have I reflected, since that night, and how mercifully my life was spared. For I had come as near as possible to drinking the coffee which I had taken from that room! I thought it would brace my nerves, and only the sickening thought of the drug that I had used prevented me from taking the fatal dose. As it chanced, I poured it out upon the ground.

"Returning now to Stetson, you will readily perceive how he came to take the course he did. Being discovered by me beside the body of his victim—as he supposed—there was no recourse for him but confession. Yes, he begged that I would have mercy and shield him. "Well, now, do you know, Mr. Woodbury, I couldn't do it. Of course, it wasn't business. I might have been blackmailing him yet. But the fact is that I had come as near as possible to drinking the coffee which I had taken from that room! I thought it would brace my nerves, and only the sickening thought of the drug that I had used prevented me from taking the fatal dose. As it chanced, I poured it out upon the ground.

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HAD NO EQUAL AS A READER OF MINDS

NO OTHER PROFESSIONAL PERFORMER FEELS LIKE IRVING BISHOP.

SOME OF HIS GREAT ACHIEVEMENTS

THE EXPERIMENT AT THE LAMB'S CLUB GAMBOLE WHICH HASTENED IF IT DID NOT CAUSE HIS DEATH—A FEAT NOT DONE BY MUSCLE READING EVEN IF NOT MIND READING.

FROM THE NEW YORK SUN.

"Various men, the best one being a Russian, have given exhibitions in New York during the last dozen years of what they alleged to be mind reading," said a physician at the Lamb's club one night last week. "Being interested in the subject I have seen them all. They were simply more or less clever exhibitions of muscle reading. There are several men in this club, and Harry Dixon is one of them, who can duplicate every act of these so-called mind readers. Not one of them, however, has ever duplicated the trick that Washington Irving Bishop performed in this club half a dozen years ago. I have seen Bishop, and I was present on that occasion. His death a few hours later in a cataleptic fit which was apparently the climax of the intense nervous excitement incident to the successful performance of the feat, was accepted by many of his friends as a proof of the fact that he did not possess a power of mind reading in a semi-hypnotic condition. I don't know enough about hypnotism to affirm or deny that assertion. "Bishop's last feat has never been explained to my satisfaction. Previous to that fatal evening I have frequently seen Bishop's exhibitions, and he always been skeptical of his claim that he possessed any other power than that of expert muscle reading. I said after his death, and I say it now, that in my opinion, the feat that Bishop did in this club on the evening before his death cannot be accounted for upon the theory of the power of mind reading. It was and is a mystery."

"Did you ever make a physical examination of Bishop?" asked one of the little group that had been discussing muscle reading. "REMARKABLE PHYSICALLY," replied the doctor. "He was a remarkable man physically. He was a man of medium size and rather slender build, but despite the fact that he took no care of his health he had a wonderful muscular development. His arms and back were strongly developed. He was of an excessively nervous temperament, and his mother said that he had been subject to cataleptic fits from the age of 6. On several occasions after these fits he had been summoned to attend him, and he said that he was dead. The fits usually followed some mental exertion. At the time when Bishop drove blindfolded through the streets from the Hoffman House to the Gramercy Park hotel and found a pin which a committee of well-known men standing in the lobby found, I found that his pulse was 152. Bishop himself told me that the highly nervous condition in which he was thrown by performances of this sort was a proof to him that there was an abnormal state of mind developed in his work. "Do I believe that? I can simply say that I don't know. I am skeptical of Bishop's claim, but I followed him closely the night before he died and he mystified me. Two or three of you were here that night, but I don't believe that you watched Bishop as I did, and I know that none of you sought an explanation of his feat as persistently as I. "Harry Dixey brought Bishop as his guest to the 'gambol,' and about midnight he went away. Bishop seemed to be in good health and spirits. I talked with him for a few minutes, and then he said: "For my arm. "It was as firm as iron and he was very proud of it. Later in the evening I asked him to give an exhibition of his powers. He was in the humor, and he began with what he called the 'detective trick.' This little Russian who has been giving exhibitions here this winter does much the same thing. It is simply muscle reading. Bishop left the room and a member of the club took a small dagger and made the motion of stabbing Louis Aldrich. The dagger was concealed. Bishop was brought in blindfolded, with the hand of the man who had concealed the dagger on his own hand. His quickness was one of the strong points of his performance. Without a moment's hesitation he walked to where the dagger was hidden, found it, and then walking to where Louis Aldrich was seated went through the motion of stabbing him. There was applause, but Bishop tore off the bandage from his eyes and said: "That's an easy one. Wait and I'll show you one that you never saw before and I'll guarantee that no one else can do it."

"HASTENED HIS DEATH." "It was this feat that undoubtedly hastened his death, if it did not really cause it. He asked Clay Green to think of some word in the club's book of accounts or records. Mr. Green and Dr. J. A. Irwin, an acquaintance of Bishop's, who had dropped in while he was performing his last trick, went down stairs where these books are kept and found in the club's minute book a name, Margaret Townes, which he thought it was. They fixed upon Townes as the name that Bishop should find. There was no question of collusion in this feat. I watched Bishop closely. He was more nervous than I had ever seen him before. Mr. Green and Dr. Irwin hid the minute book and came up stairs. Bishop was blindfolded as before, and with Mr. Green's hand resting on his head he led the party down stairs, found the minute book, and turning over the pages rapidly, came at last to the page on which this name appeared. He stopped for a moment, and then, skimming his finger over the page, settled on the word selected. "Is that it?" he asked in a nervous way. Being told that it was, he led the way back up stairs and announced that he would tell what the word was in a manner that would demonstrate absolutely that muscle reading had nothing to do with this feat. Bishop asked every one to stand back. Without touching Mr. Green, he asked him to think intently of the word that had been selected. Bishop stood apparently in a state of only half consciousness. The bandage covered his eyes and a part of his face. There was perfect silence in the room for nearly a minute, and then Bishop, speaking with difficulty, said: "I think it is a name. I think it is a man's name." In this latter statement he was wrong as it happened. "Give me something to write with," he went on. "Some one gave him a piece of paper and a pencil. Without a moment's hesi-

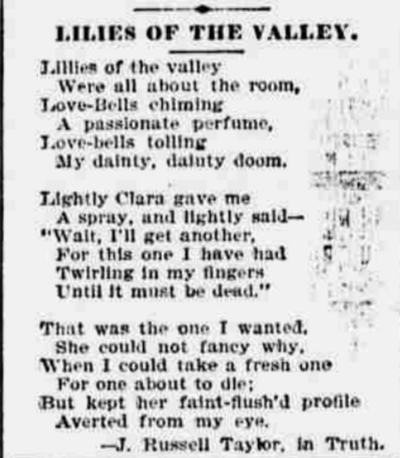
NOT MUSCLE READING.

"There was a good deal printed about Bishop's death, and many different stories were told about his feat here just before it. My statement of them is correct. Bishop's feat of writing out the name Townes that had been selected was not muscle reading, evidently. Some of the so-called mind readers who have followed him can find a certain word on a printed page by muscle reading, and then they write it out by going through the letters of the alphabet and putting them down one by one as the muscles of the guide are bound to indicate. There was no one touching Bishop. I have seen too many evidences of telepathy to doubt it, but except in this one instance I have never known a person to feel another's thoughts so clearly that they could write them down. Bishop was a mystery to me, and he always will be unless a man appears who can duplicate the feat that resulted in his death, and is able to explain how he does it. I am inclined to believe that Bishop was perfectly sincere in his belief that he accomplished his feat by hypnotic influence, but I am not ready to admit that that was the explanation of them."

"An Investigation Needed. Snodgrass—"In me, sir, there is a man of genius, unrecognized, perhaps, but still a man of undoubted genius. Skidmore—"You hold still while I turn a cathode ray on you and see whom you have swallowed."—Life.

"LILIES OF THE VALLEY. Lilies of the valley Were all about the room, Love-bells chiming, A gaspate perfume, Love-bells tolling, My dainty, dainty dove. Lightly Clara gave me A spray, and lightly said—"Wait, I'll get another. For this one I have had Twirling in my eye, Until it must be dead." That was the one I wanted. She could not fancy why. When I could take a fresh one For one about to die; But kept her faint-tush'd profile Averted from my eye. —J. Russell Taylor, in Truth.

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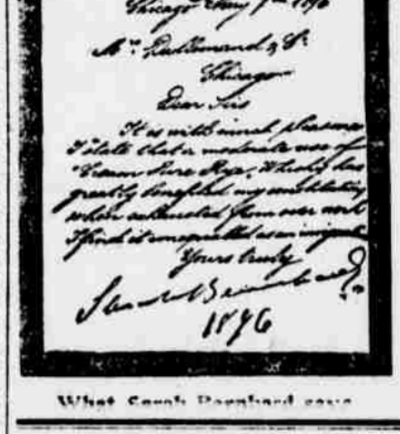
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