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— BY —
Harry Irving Greene

Author of "Yosonde of the Wilderness"

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down town. You will remember upon that occasion I handed you your match safe after we had come down, and told you that I had picked it up at the foot of the ladder we had just left; mentioning the fact that climbing up and down under such conditions was apt to work a smooth article out of one's vest pocket. There is nothing truer than that statement, and I have no doubt but that it is exactly what happened in the original case of your lost card receipt.

Now, as a matter of fact, I extracted that match safe from your pocket in the darkness when you were occupied in pressing the putty against the window in order that I might try an interesting experiment. The experiment succeeded. My calling your attention to the likelihood of losing such articles under conditions similar to those you had just experienced, started a train of thought in your mind. I knew you were worried by the loss of your card case and were very desirous of regaining it. My stratagem of the restored match box made it occur to you that it might be that you had lost your card case in going out of the window on the night of the crime, and that there was a bare possibility that it had not been picked up and that you would find it among the rubbish back of the hotel. Having as I hoped sowed this thought in your mind, I made an excuse and left you. You will recall that the pretext I made for departing was that I wished to make another experiment alone. I immediately made it, the experiment consisting of my going rapidly to the head of the alley passing the Pacific Hotel and waiting there for you. True to my reasoning, you went straight to the place where I had found the card case, and lighting a cigar, made a brief search of the premises by the light of the match, of course unsuccessfully. Then, as you came hurrying into the street, you popped into my arms where I had stood to watch if you would fall into the trap. I remember your expression of surprise and displeasure at unexpectedly seeing me there. As an excuse I told you that the criminal was downtown then and moving around considerably himself. I imagine that remark rather got you guessing. Whether you admire my strategy or not, I think you will have to admit it was a rather clever performance on my part. I twisted in my seat.

"I have nothing further to say at present than to repeat that you will repent of your idiocy later," was my frigid comment. He laid aside the card case as having been disposed of, and began toying with the book-maker's ticket.

"Being now thoroughly convinced of your guilt, I began worrying my head for good, tangible proof of it—proof that would convince two men who would be naturally prepossessed in your favor at the beginning because of your appearance and good record. I hated to believe you capable of a thing like this, but was forced to; and, as you know, when I tackle a man in any contest, friendly or otherwise, I am going to down him if I can, leaving the matter of what I will do to him after I have done my duty. I dependent a good deal upon his own actions. If he yells quits I am always inclined to help him up, but if he wants to fight it out to the end, of course I am not going to give up. Now, your devotion to Mrs. Dace was well known about town, and when I became advised of it I began thinking hard. It went without saying that it was costing you money to court her, and I did not believe that your salary was sufficient for you to be able to keep up the pace long on that alone. Therefore I naturally wondered where you got the rest. When, in tracing you backward, I found out that you had been to the Derby, another bright thought occurred to me. You remember your horse with the forged note and get the suit of clothes you had worn on that day? Well, that was another article of mine. I wondered if there could possibly be any evidences in your pockets of a gambling transaction on that event. I know from personal experience how apt a man is to carry around expired passes and worthless truck of that kind for a considerable period before destroying them. So I sent an employe of mine to your house with an order written on one of the cards I had found calling for the Derby day suit, not knowing how else to describe it. He got it without trouble and I interpreted him on the way to the tailor and searched the pockets. In them I found your worthless ticket on Eagle Boy. You had bet \$1,000 on that race in the hope of winning ten thousand; had lost and failed to destroy your good-for-nothing ticket."

"I suppose, in your infinite wisdom, you also know that I had money left me by my father which I was at liberty to use as I saw fit," I broke in cuttingly. He acknowledged that he possessed that information; that he "Yes, I found out that you had something in reserve; but the most important fact it conveyed to me was that you had taken to secret gambling in the hope of winning enough to enable you to keep up your new life. And knowing somewhat of the nature of men, I knew it was improbable to suppose that having made a big loss you would stop without an attempt to regain it. There is no public gambling to any extent going on in town except on the board of trade and the stock exchange; so the chances were if you were doing anything along that line it would be at one of those places. By a few days' shadowing you I ascertained that you went to a certain broker's office, and having found

that out it did not take me long to learn what medium you were banking. It was the same stock that Bruce went broke on the day before the robbery, and I knew in the nature of things that you had gone broke at the same time he did. You were, therefore, as hard hit as he, but showed splendid nerve and never turned a hair or let a hint drop. I had now uncovered your sudden desperate plight at the exact time when you became possessed of the knowledge that your uncle had this large amount of money in an old, weak safe—the combination of dire extremity and sudden opportunity. It was your last hope, and you went after it as a drowning man goes after a floating log. You got it, and for a time it buoyed you."

"And you supposed I conjured burglar tools out of the air by a wave of my hand, together with the skill to use them," He smiled retrospectively.

"No; I still had that difficulty to overcome. For a little while it had me stumped, and then I chanced to recall that you went for a year or so to a technical school and learned a good deal about the use of tools. Now, I knew that many young men keep their kit after leaving such places, and I wondered if you had. I also remembered having noticed a sort of a tool chest in the basement on the day I examined the premises, and I concluded that it was time for me to know what was in it. Therefore, I burglarized your basement by forcing the back door, picked the lock of the chest, and examined its contents. Among the tools I found one of exactly the size of the one that had bored the safe, and upon closer inspection found that a bit of it had been broken off in the operation, and that bit of steel you now see on the table before you. I found it on the morning I went over the room. You will remember what a painfully minute scrutiny I made of everything, even using my magnifying glass." He gathered up the card case, the ticket and the bit of steel and placed them carefully in an envelope, which he deposited in his pocket. He then turned the piece of soiled paper and the lump of grayish matter.

"I had now the chain of proof connecting you with the crime forged with the exception of one link, which could I supply would make it practically unbreakable. The remainder of the mortgages which had been blacked by burnt powder was a fairly good imprint of a right thumb. I tore off the fragment of paper containing it, and by placing it under the microscope could distinctly trace the lines. Of course such lines are not the same on any two persons in the world; and could I get an imprint of your thumb and by comparison find that they corresponded, there could then be no further doubt as to your hand being the one that had rummaged the safe. But this was a difficult thing to do without arousing your suspicions. I finally got around it, however, by organizing our burglary for the double purpose of getting the print and calling to your attention the probability of your having lost your card case in your previous climb. I told you at the time that I expected to get the proof from one who would not suspect that he had furnished it until I denounced him, and I guess I was correct. I don't believe it entered your head that you were making the evidence as you went along by which I could send you to the penitentiary. Neither did you suspect that I meant you when I told you if I ever unraveled the knot it would be because of the assistance and clues you had given me. Incidentally I might say that the office which burglarized belonged to a friend of mine who loaned it to me for the purpose. I had you fancy your thumb against the ball of soft putty and got an excellent impression of it, which I have had experts compare with the faint lines on the blackened paper. They assure me that they were both made by the same thumb."

"It was a good thing that LeDuc had possessed the foresight to render me helpless and secure my revolver. In the frenzy of the moment I certainly would have used upon him or both of us. I turned upon him desparately. "Do you think any jury would believe such evidence as that and convict me?" I demanded huskily. He wrinkled his forehead.

"I am sure I don't know. One can never tell. Do you want to give a jury the chance?" I made no answer and we sat in silence, the coldness of death upon me, my companion unmoving, but lynx eyed. Then once more he addressed me, and through his tones ran the old familiar friendliness of days long gone by.

"I know that you are not a criminal, at heart, Tom. I am sorry, very sorry for all this, and I should regret very much to see you go to the penitentiary. But if you wish me to assist you, you must make a clean breast of the affair. Have you any of your uncle's money left?" I could only groan. Despairing and helpless I threw myself upon his mercy.

"No. I used it for further speculation after I was wiped out the first time. I was away ahead of the game until today, but now I am wiped out completely. I am penniless and in debt. I can repay absolutely nothing and have to do as you please with me," LeDuc whistled.

"I wonder if you had got bitten today for the second time when I read that Underground had blown up. So that ends my prospects of getting any fees for a lot of hard work." He looked quite downcast for a space, then brightened up and continued more cheerfully.

"But really that does not matter so

much after all, for I can worry along without it. If I could only have found that some one besides an old friend had done this thing I would not be dissatisfied with my job. But there is a thing or two which I don't understand. I don't believe you had a duplicate key, for I don't believe you ever contemplated such an act until you were driven desperate by the calamity. I have gone upon the assumption that you quarrelled with your uncle the day before the robbery on purpose that you might have an excuse for throwing down the key and absenting yourself from the house during the night. That being the case, how did you enter?"

"When I left the house after the quarrel I threw the catch which prevents the door from locking. Of course it would snap shut as usual, but could then be opened from the outside by the knob. I had no idea that anyone would think of looking to see that the door locked itself when it was shut on two which any more than any other, and of course no one did. I was therefore enabled to come in without a key, and when I went out after replacing the tools, and with the money in my pockets, I restored the door to its usual condition, leaving it locked." LeDuc looked at me with a frown.

"That was a thing I never did puzzle out to my own satisfaction; it was the simplest thing of all. When I think how rudimentary it is, it makes me disgusted with myself to think that I didn't solve it. All of which goes to show what blunderers we all are when we think we are doing something extremely clever. Another thing along that line which I should like to know is this. Did you put that half burnt cigarette where I found it in the hall?"

"I did not; I know nothing about it." The detective drew it from his pocket and looked at it reflectively.

"I showed it to you that day downtown merely to create the impression in your mind that I had Bruce under suspicion and had not thought of you in connection with the matter. He probably threw it there thoughtlessly in his trouble, and we were all there together. Now I am satisfied that you drugged the poor devil, and I know that you had the cabman send him to that resort. That was bad enough in itself, but when I remember also that you tried to fasten suspicion upon him I am inclined to lose all sympathy for you which I might otherwise have. To my mind your treachery in that respect is by far the worst element of your offense. I can understand how a man's infatuation for a woman may sometimes lead him to dishonesty or even bloodshed, and under those circumstances I am liable to have a lot of charity for him. But when he attempts to put a friend whom he knows is innocent into a felon's cell and thus destroy him and the happiness of a sweet woman, he does an act unworthy of any one who possesses the semblance of humanity or decency." His tones had grown sterner, and under his stinging accusation all that remained of manhood in me leaped to the surface.

"LeDuc, I cried brokenly, "whatever else I say you may believe or not as you see fit, but when I tell you this I want you to believe me implicitly. I had absolutely no idea of trying to fasten it on Bruce. I told you and everybody else from the beginning in the strongest language that I could command that I did not for an instant believe that he could be guilty. Neither would I have permitted him to be punished for the crime. If he had been tried and convicted should have confessed, come what might. But I knew he would not be convicted, because I was certain if he had no other alternative he would tell where he spent the night. I did not know how he came in possession of the key, and simply told you of having seen him have it, because I wished to appear as telling you all that I knew, and having no idea but that Bruce would immediately accuse me for it. I admit that I dropped a drug in his cocktail and that I was the one who told the cabman where to take him after he fell unconscious upon the seat, but that was for an entirely different purpose than to try to incriminate him. I made him unconscious merely out of fear that he would return to my uncle's house in another attempt to borrow money and possibly roll into my bed for the night, as he has sometimes done, thus interfering with my plans. And I had taken to instead of the place he was known for the reason that I did not wish his friends to see him in that condition and think he was intoxicated. I had no idea that he was suspected of this affair, for I did not know he would be so obstinate about refusing to tell where he had been, nor did I know that he would deny having had the key; while as for it. Therefore I had nothing to do with awake in the morning, come away, and that no harm would have been done. And when I feared that by reason of several accidents he was in danger of being suspected, I said everything I could to clear him except to acknowledge my own guilt. Neither did I use any more force on my uncle than was necessary. While I am a thief, I stole from a man who is never would have come to want because of the loss of a sum of money most life and death to me." LeDuc's face cleared up wonderfully.

"I am glad that you have explained that the way you have. I like you a whole lot better for it. But how about your mentioning the fact of the money to Mrs. Dace, and why did you do that? Was that an attempt to implicate Mackay?"

"You may look at it in that light if you choose. I utterly despised the man; knew that he would do me all the harm that he could by fair means or foul, and did not care what happened to him. I did it with the idea that it might possibly furnish a false clue for you to tire yourself out on. I remembered that I had left my keys in her possession for several days and that he was sometimes at her quarters. Therefore it was a possible thing that the maid might have said something in his presence about my uncle sometimes keeping money in

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The safe, and that he had either by the consent of the maid, or otherwise, secured my keys long enough to have a duplicate made for use in an emergency. I mentioned the fact of this particular amount being there in quite loud tones in Mrs. Dace's apartments the day before the robbery in order that it might possibly be thought that Janet had overheard me, and thus be able to communicate the fact to Mackay if she were in his employ secretly. Following out this idea I coughed as nearly like him as I could to further strengthen the clue. Knowledge that his reputation is thoroughly bad and that he is none too good to do such a thing, I carried the thought through as offering a possible solution of the mystery. Of course I wanted to mislead anybody who might work on the case.

"Anything more?" he urged, as I paused. Utterly within his power, I made this last appeal.

"Only this. Knowing that I am a criminal and by all law should go to prison for many years, probably to die there, I have this to say in justification of myself. Until I committed this crime I had always been an honest man with no thought of being otherwise and with no desire to harm a living thing. But because of my love for a woman for whom I would this moment gladly give my life, and because I could see no other way of gaining her except by speculation, I fell into temptation as many a better man has done. Driven onward by a love at whose command I would have faced hades itself, I used my own money first, losing \$1,000 upon the

Mr. John Anderson, Registrar of Deeds for the past forty years in the county of Wellington died recently at his home in Arthur. Mr. Anderson was a brother of Rev. James Anderson, a Methodist clergyman, well-known in different parts of this county, and at one time, we believe, stationed in this town.

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MILL AT FERGUS BURNED.
A Guelph despatch of Dec. 18th says: Bloomfield Mills at Fergus, formerly one of the mills of the Canadian Cereal Company, was gutted by fire which broke out between twelve and one o'clock in the morning and only the stone wall swere left standing. Three men constituting the night shift were having lunch at the time. The Fergus fire brigade were early on the scene, and within half an hour the Elora brigade was also on hand. All they could do was to protect the adjoining buildings. The loss will be about \$30,000, with insurance of about \$22,000 placed with United States companies. The building was one of the oldest in the Province, being erected in 1835. It was soon to have been changed into a chopping mill for the accommodation of local farmers, and carpenters were already at work making the necessary alterations.

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