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CHAPTER III.

A SCOTCH VERDICT.

Arrived at a police station the party marched in and halted in front of a big counter behind which sat a benignant-looking man reading a book. Drane saw that it was a volume of Shakespeare, and he felt a dim hope that this man at least would prove to be kind and trusting. He did not know the New York policemen, though he was scraping acquaintance with the species faster than he really cared to. The man at the desk continued to read until he had come to a convenient stopping place when he took up a pen, looked at Drane and asked:

"What's your name?"

It flashed over poor Lawrence that all the reporters in town would write up his adventures, that the accounts would be telegraphed to Western newspapers, and that a full measure of disgraceful notoriety would be heaped upon him. So, "Tom Jones," he replied at hazard. The benignant man's face wrinkled into an incredulous sneer, but he put the name down without a word. Then, "Where do you live?" he demanded.

"Kansas City," faltered Lawrence, utterly at a loss to carry on his fiction, and when he was questioned as to his business he hung his head in despair. His garments would belie his claim to be a gentleman; for the same reason he could not explain that he was charged with enlisting Boston capital in the interest of a new railroad, a commission that he had undertaken more for the sake of diversion than for any need of money-making, and in a fair frenzy of misery he blurted out:

"I haven't any business!"

"Umph! walking-gent, I suppose," said the man at the big desk. "What were you doing with this man and woman?"

The young lady at once began a protest and explanation which was checked by the officer in charge of her, who growled:

"Say, youse will you keep quiet until you're asked to say something?"

The accuser declared that Drane had assaulted him and tried to rob him.

"Look him up," said the benignant man, drily, and the obedient policeman conducted Lawrence to a cell. As he passed through the doorway he heard the young lady sobbing bitterly. Walking down the corridor he repressed the tremendous resentment that raged within him. But as soon as the key was turned he addressed his conductor:

"I wish you'd let me have a word with you."

The officer passed. Drane had intended to tell his story, hoping to convince his jailor, if not of his innocence, that at least there was a grave error in the proceedings somewhere. But his feelings overpowered him.

"I'd have you understand," he exclaimed, "that you don't know whom you are dealing with. I could buy this house fifty times over and not feel it! My reputation never has been questioned, and somebody will suffer for this. Why—"

"Oh, rats," interrupted the jailor, and he walked away. There is no phrase in polite or vulgar literature that compresses so much contempt into so small a space as that one word "Rats!" It is unanswerable, complete, depressing. As Lawrence listened to his jailor's retreating footsteps his resentment turned to despair.

"That just bows," he thought, "how ill-fitted I am for those clothes. If I had been brought up to wear them I should have known how to express myself adequately. Some really shocking language might have had an effect on that fellow."

Then for four mortal hours Lawrence ruminated on visions of penal servitude, balls and chains, breaking rocks, stories of galley slaves; and he wondered whether much famed Sing Sing would be better ventilated than his present quarters. He took one little comfort in his gruesome reflections—he could at least depend on something to eat as long as the Government should be his host. There was no breakfast for him, however, and when at last he was marched to Jefferson Market court he was in that state of faintness that he would have walked willingly many miles had the officers required it. Without realizing how time had passed or what had happened he found himself one of a nondescript company shut in by an iron railing. The audience room was crowded with spectators and in the enclosure where he stood were policemen, lawyers and reporters. Lawrence shrunk as close as he could against the wall and gave way to profound discouragement.

"Well, pard," said a low voice at his side, "you seem to have struck it rough this time."

Drane saw a man in rags—more loathsome than his own, with rum-bloated features—leering at him sympathetically.

"You have the advantage of me, sir," he responded, haughtily.

"I guess not," said the other, with a dreadful smile. "That ain't to say that I knows ye, that I ever had the honor of 'sociatin' with ye, but I recognize the fraternity wherever I comes across 'em, see?"

Drane shuddered.

"I'm goin' to take a vacation at the Island," continued the other, cheerfully. "Got kind o' tired walkin', an' need to rest up. Spect to go up for long?"

"I don't know what they will do with me," replied Drane, "and I don't want to talk to you."

"All right, all right," said the ragamuffin, "only if you ain't used to this business you'll find 'fore long that it's useful to make friends wherever you can pick 'em up. No tellin' what a man might do for you, see?"

Lawrence turned away, feeling in his disgust a forlorn conviction that the fellow was probably right. At the other side of the court where several women prisoners were grouped he saw the young lady whose misfortune had had so much to do with bringing him there. He started at once to go over and speak to her, and of course a policeman prevented him. He saw that she was speaking eagerly with an elderly lady who stood on the other side of the rail.

"She at least has found a friend," thought Drane, and so it proved, for in a few minutes she was called before the judge, and the elderly lady stood up with her at the bar. There was a brief conversation which Lawrence could not hear, and then both women stepped down and passed through the gate into the audience room. They were on the way out of the court, but the young lady paused a moment and looked inquiringly back. Lawrence caught her eye and bowed. She returned his salutation and hurriedly whispered to her companion. The latter raised a pair of glasses, beautifully framed and handled in ebony, to her eyes and scrutinized Drane keenly. Then she shook her head decidedly and passed out.

"Oh, yes, go on," thought Lawrence, "he's a bad case, of course. Look at his clothes and his villainous face!"

The young lady's face was grave with disappointment, but just as the door was closing on her she threw back at him a smile which made the unhappy prisoner's heart bound.

"She's trying to tell me to be hopeful," he thought, "and so I will, by Jove!"

For a full minute after that he felt convinced that somehow all would go well with him; but this uplifting of his soul was transient. He soon relapsed into a dull, faint indifference, paying no attention whatever to the trial of cases constantly going on before him. He did not hear the crier call out twice "Thomas Jones," and he did not half comprehend what was up when an officer seized him by the shoulder roughly, saying:

"Here, come along! why don't you stand up when you're called?"

In the little delay that thus ensued another case was crowded before the judge. Lawrence, standing at the bar, tried to listen. He caught some words about "common vagabond," and "stale beer gang," but he could not understand it all. Presently, however, the prisoner on trial turned to him and Lawrence recognized his recent acquaintance, the ragamuffin.

"I've got ten days," he said, smiling complacently. The fellow shuffled off, and Lawrence looked up just in time to catch the judge's eye as the formal question was put:

"What is your name?"

"Lawrence Drane," he responded quickly, and then he thought—too late. The judge scowled at a document before him and glanced inquiringly at the policeman.

"That's my prisoner," said the latter; "he gave a different name at the station house."

"What do you mean," demanded the judge, "by giving one name at the station and another one here?"

"I—I didn't want to be known, your honor," stammered Lawrence.

"No, I suppose not," snapped the judge; "well, what is it, Jones, or the other name?"

"Jones is right," replied Lawrence, realizing gloomily that another hope that he had cherished slightly, that of convincing a judge, had been shattered by his blunders.

"You are charged," continued the judge, "with assault and attempt to rob. What do you say to it?"

Of course Lawrence responded "not guilty," and then the judge called for the complainant. The well-dressed young man was not present. Thereupon his honor reprimanded the policeman for bringing up a case without a witness and added:

"In the absence of a complainant, I should discharge this man at once if he had not tried to assume a false name. That attempt makes him a suspicious character. Hold him until three o'clock and see that your witness is here at that hour."

The hours dragged along, the judge went to lunch, another session was begun, and at last "Thomas Jones" was again called to the bar. The complainant had not turned up, and the judge said, irritably:

"You are discharged, Jones, but I warn you not to do any thing of this kind again."

"But I haven't done any thing wrong, your honor," protested Lawrence.

"You'll get into serious trouble right here if you're not careful," cried the judge.

"Here, you, get out! I understand," said a court officer, pushing Lawrence toward the gate. Lawrence did understand, and with a feeling somewhat

DISCHARGED FROM COURT.

akin to relief, he passed through the audience room a free man.

"When once I get well out of all this," he thought, "I'll get the Legislature to provide a fund for supplying discharged prisoners with a square meal. I'd almost give my liberty for a sirloin steak with hyennaise potatoes."

What to do to get this desirable refreshment was a problem. He looked up and down the avenue a moment and then returned to the court room. He inquired of an officer near the door about the elderly lady who had carried off his park acquaintance.

"I will at least let the young widow know that I am no convict," he thought, and he did not disguise from himself a hope that she would help him somehow in his straits.

The officer told him that the lady came to court every day exercising her charitable disposition in assisting innocent prisoners who were unable to secure legal advice.

"But she won't do any thing for you," added the officer, "she draws the line at men."

Nevertheless Lawrence obtained her name and address, and set off to call upon Mrs. Bowers far up on Madison avenue. He amused himself on the way by trying to estimate how long his vital forces would endure miles of walking every day without any renewal of the tissues, and by speculating as to what stage of starvation would be the most painful. Now and again he became dizzy, and almost lost consciousness, and led him to think that perhaps he had come passed the worst part of starvation already.

Mrs. Bowers was at home and she received Drane in a tiny room which she evidently used as an office for her charitable work.

"Madame," began Drane, "I am in circumstances so unusual for me, I am suffering so much for lack of food, that I find it difficult to say what I wish to. I was in court this morning when you secured the release of a young lady—"

"Oh, yes," interrupted Mrs. Bowers. "You are the man who went to her aid in the park. H'm. That was a very worthy thing to do," and she eyed him critically through her glasses. Lawrence felt so oppressed by this fresh humiliation that he hung his head. Mrs. Bowers continued: "I should not have expected it of you. I have made a long study of human nature, my man, and I warn you that you can not impose on me. So they discharged you. H'm. If you're willing to work I will send you a card to a wood yard."

"Madam," cried Lawrence, "I never have had to work in my life! I don't ask for work; I did not come here to ask any assistance of you. I want to see the young lady and tell her my story."

"Quite impossible," interrupted Mrs. Bowers, placidly. "She is young and inexperienced, and I certainly shall guard her against any vulgar imposition. You make a mistake in refusing work. I can read you closely enough to see that you will recognize your error as soon as you are convinced that I am not to be imposed on. Therefore I shall give you this ticket. It will secure you lodging and breakfast if you will saw wood. And in consideration for your defense of the young lady you refer to, I will pay your car fare to the wood yard. I seldom do this, never when I am convinced of a man's character as I am of yours, but you are doubtless faint and weary. Therefore, here is the card, and here is a dime to pay your way on the horse-cars."

"Madame," said Drane, huskily, "you have done me injustice and given me pain that is worse than all the ills that have come on me since I arrived in New York. I decline your charity, and you may rest assured that no extremity of misery will ever make me regret my course."

With that he bowed haughtily and walked from the house, while Mrs. Bowers looked shocked and made an entry in her book of charitable work as to the evil pride that keeps some men from acknowledging the superiority and goodness of others.

CHAPTER IV.

A FOOL AND HIS MONEY.

Drane had occasionally reflected upon the possibility of such a misfortune as had overtaken him, though he had never carried his imaginings to the point which the actualities of the case had reached. He had supposed in a general way that there were plenty of things to be done by a man in such a position; but when he ran over the list in his mind he realized that every course of action involved painful humiliation. He knew that there were many charitable organizations which sometimes assisted the distressed, and at other times distressed the assisted; but he could not remember the names or addresses of any of them, with the single exception of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. It hadn't come to that yet, he thought, but there was no telling when it would. He had gone as sheep a gentleman and had waked up a strange, an equal drop in the next twenty four hours might make him a champagne or a cow.

The thought was not pleasant, and it caused him to desperation. Either that or his hunger stimulated his memory, for he suddenly recalled the fact that a gentleman with whom he had had some dealings by letter was in business on Murray street. He asked a policeman where that was, and the reply fairly staggered him. It was miles away. He felt that he should fall dead of hunger before he covered half the distance.

He leaned against a lamp-post in utter weariness, and closed his eyes. Then he heard a woman's voice behind him saying: "I hoped that you would come to see Mrs. Bowers, and I have waited to thank you again for what you did to help me."

"When I heard your voice," said Drane, turning to greet his acquaintance of the morning, "I thought I must have died of starvation and been admitted to paradise through a mistake in the records. You can not imagine what friendly words are to a man in my position."

"And have you really suffered from hunger?" she exclaimed, while the tears came to her eyes. "Oh, that is horrible! Take this," and she put a silver dollar into his hand; "it should be multiplied a thousand-fold if I could but prove my liberality, and then I should feel that I had done but little for you. There, do not say a word now. I know that you will repay me. Oh, dear me! there is Mrs. Bowers; she is coming down the steps; she will be here in a moment. Hurry away, but write to let me know that you have come out of all your difficulties."

"Where shall I address you?"

"Oh, dear! I don't know. I can't think of any place at all except that park where we met."

"That's hardly an address, you know," said Drane, trying to be facetious though Mrs. Bowers was bearing down upon them very fast. "I might try the general post-office, but I don't know your name and—"

"And it isn't necessary that you should," put in Mrs. Bowers. "Come along, my good girl. He is not a bit acquaintance for you."

She dragged the younger woman away, and gave her no chance to reply. Lawrence, half crazed at being thus interrupted, was following them, when a hand was laid upon his shoulder, and as he turned about, the policeman who had directed him to Murray street stood before him.

"Look here, young feller," said he, "I saw de young woman give you somethin', an' that's enough for you, see? Don't you follow her no more!"

Drane couldn't abide the idea of another interpretation, and he obeyed the officer's instructions with wrath in his soul. And yet, when he cooled down a bit, he perceived that his coin, now had been sanctified to the extent of one silver dollar, a consideration by no means to be overlooked. He had never till that moment realized the value of money. In the liberal thought that he could at last buy something like

WELCOME RELIEF.

a square meal he forgot even the means by which the money had been obtained. Food was his one great need. He looked about him for a restaurant. There was none in sight. Away to the left was the elevated railroad. He knew that it would take him down town where eating houses would be plenty, and he hurried to a station.

An L train at ten miles an hour is not rapid transit to a man who has not dined for two days. Before he reached the City Hall station Drane fully realized how badly New York needed another and a quicker system. Electricity in a moment of excitement would have been the proper thing to keep pace with his impatience. However, the journey acted before the tissues of his body had wholly wasted away, and two minutes after he was seated at a restaurant table and had ordered just seventy cents' worth of food. Nothing, from fish-balls to terrapin, had ever tasted so good to him as that soup.

"If I ever meet a hungry beggar again," thought he, when the food had begun to take effect, "I'll treat him to a ten-course dinner."

The world took on a different aspect to him now. He felt sure that every thing would come out right. His acquaintance at Murray street would gladly help him out of his predicament, and he could laugh at his strange experience. With a light step and hopeful heart he turned into the office, but when he ran over the contents of his pocket, he was a little sober again as he strolled up to the clerk to pay for his check. Just then a suspicion which had upon him. He wanted to compare it in mind to his hunging for food had left him liable to his present craving for that rare fragrant whiff of tobacco.

"How much are those cigars?" he asked, indicating some which the man at the desk had just spread before a customer.

"Fifteen cents, two for a quarter," was the reply.

Drane remembered that a man so poor as he must not afford to pay fifteen cents for a cigar when he could get 11 for twenty and a half by simply persuading one. Overcome by this unavailable sacrifice, he laid down his last quarter, and in another moment he was enjoying one of the weeds for which New York is justly infamous to such a degree as he had never enjoyed a good one in his life. But he was penniless again.

He crossed City Hall Park with a firm step, and his head in the air. His woes were floating away in smoke; his hopes were high. He walked down Murray street and quickly found the number he sought. The name Richard H. Billings, in white letters on a window of the lower story, set all doubts at rest, and, indeed, the man himself sat at a desk in plain view from the sidewalk. Lawrence identified him at once from description, and he felt that he was saved.

Mr. Billings, however, was engaged in earnest conversation, and Lawrence, after staring at him a minute through the window, decided to walk around the block and give him a chance to finish his business. When he had completed the circuit Mr. Billings was no longer in sight. The rolling top of the desk was closed, and when Drane noticed that fact his heart stood still. He hurried into the office.

"Mr. Billings has just left for the Grand Central depot," said an office boy. "He is going on to Boston to-night. If you hurry up there you can catch him. Have you got a message for him?"

"Yes; I wish to see him personally."

"Go on," said the boy, "you want to strike him for the price of a beer."

Drane could not wait to reprove the youth for his impudence. He was in too much of a hurry to get to the depot. He learned that the train which Mr. Billings was to take left at six o'clock. It was then half past five.

When he had reached the street he reflected that it would be necessary to know where the Grand Central depot was, before going there. He had supposed that it or was "central" it must be near at hand, and he learned with horror that it was more than three miles away. To reach it on foot in time was out of the question, and he had not a cent.

He cursed his folly in leaving Billings' door unguarded, and was inclined to be offended with Billings for going to Boston. The world had turned blue again. He could see nothing ahead of him but another night in the street.

For the next three hours he wandered about the lower part of the town, and at nine o'clock he found himself in front of the Pennsylvania railroad ferry house at the foot of Cortlandt street. Then the thought came over him like a flash:

"This road goes to Trenton. Bob Tyler, my old friend Bob, lives there, and he'll let me have a thousand quicker than a wink if I can only reach him."

But how to do it? Supported by a good dinner he would have started along the line cheerfully, but a ferry was a different matter. How he regretted the extravagance that had left him penniless!

Across the street from the ferry was a little "high stoop" house used as an hotel. Lawrence had come to the conclusion that he must look up some charitable institution and ask for a night's lodging, and with this purpose in mind he entered the hotel office and asked to see the directory. While he was consulting it a man with a concertina in his hand dropped into a chair near him.

"Hello, Billy," said the clerk to the new arrival, "where's your side partner?"

"I dunno," replied Billy. "Guess he's in the jug. I haven't seen him since the three o'clock boat this morning."

"Going to play a lone hand to-night?"

"Guess I'll have to. I can do the dancing all right, but I can't sing. You'd better come along, Jimmy, and try your little song on the public."

Jimmy laughed, and it was evident that the offer was intended as a joke, but it set Lawrence thinking. The man with the concertina took a seat in a remote corner and appeared to be somewhat downcast. Lawrence approached him.

"Did I understand you to say that you were going to give an entertainment somewhere and desired a singer?" he asked.

Billy looked up with an amused stare.

"Can you sing?" he inquired. "No foolin', now. I took a feller on his word some years ago, and when he opened his mouth aboard the ferry-boat the passengers came pretty near throwin' us both overboard."

"I didn't know that entertainments were allowed on the ferry boats," said Lawrence. "There was a sign prohibiting such things on the boat I came over on."

"Don't worry about the sign," said Billy. "I stand in with all the night crews. Now can you sing, honest? What do you know? All the old concert-nuts, I suppose. Give us a sample. If it's very bad I'll beg the clerk's pardon, and you won't get shot."

Drane was crowed. He had a tenor voice of good power and compass, and excellently cultivated. He looked Billy squarely and steadily in the eye for a moment, and then gave him a short, vivid, exercise somewhat proportionate in its character, and something with a smooth, mellow howl in the neighborhood of Eight C. Billy and every body else in the place jumped to their feet, but they did not run away, as Drane had feared they might.

"Say," said Billy, slowly, putting his forefinger on the breast of Drane's coat, "that's great stuff. Just do that a couple of times on board the boat while I knock out a little accompaniment on the old concertina, and we'll pick up big money."

Drane was elated. Here was his chance to escape from all his difficulties. He wondered that he had not thought earlier of using his voice to make his living.

He had often been affected by just such entertainments as he now proposed to take part in, and he had wondered what would be the success of a really competent performer. He had no end of faith in good music, and he resolved to give the ferry-boat's passengers something worth hearing. The time dragged heavily till twelve o'clock, when Billy said the curtain could rise. Billy was a queer specimen, and Drane would have felt very much ashamed of his society under ordinary circumstances, but now he only thanked his stars that the future was for worse. He was a great deal more ashamed of the concertina, and wished it too.

They left the hotel and boarded the twelve o'clock boat. Drane was nervous. He hadn't decided what to sing, and he feared the miscellaneous audience to the last degree. He had often sung in public, and occasionally in costumed light opera parts but he had never been so thoroughly and outrageously "made up" before.

They took their positions in the aft cabin, directly at the passage between the forward and after cabins on the ladies' side.

"We'll have to wait till she starts," said Billy. "That's the rule, and perhaps we'll get waked up. None of 'em can escape after you begin to sing."

Drane shivered. "Great Heaven!" he thought, "what am I about? Perhaps some of these people are educated. Do you think I'd better go to ladies along or single ones, and air my Italian and take my chances?"

"Billy," replied Drane, pointing to the concertina, "have the cold properties gathered on that horse, or will you let that thing break loose with the singing? Fire in public, you know."

"Oh, I'll handle her careful," said Billy. "Don't you worry about that. Are you about now? She's started."

Billy pushed Drane out into the cabin and then crossed in a few words from the concertina by way of prelude. When he had finished Drane began the well-known air, "Sweet is death," which is written to a bass prima voice, but not to an audience of New Jersey people returning to their homes in the dead of night. After the first few melodious notes had escaped the air, an intoxicated citizen waked up with a start and shouted:

"Say, boss, quit that and sing some thing we all know. Sing 'Annie Laurie.'"

The inebriate started his favorite song in a voice much the worse for liquor, and both he and Drane were having a very bad time of it, when Billy, thinking to liberate a poor unfortunate partner in distress, sounded the opening with a concertina accompaniment, which passed from one key to another like a musician struggling with a series of epileptic fits. Several men near the door escaped, and others were on the point of following their example. Drane kept his time and voice up for about a minute, and then, turning suddenly, he kicked Billy's concertina clear to the roof of his cabin and fled in disgust before it came down.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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KISSES.

(A la Romeo and Juliet.)

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