

rode off in the direction from which we had come.

Probably, dear reader, you will say I acted the part of a scoundrel, but wait; we will see whether my actions were honorable or not, I did not intend to rob this innocent young girl out of a cent, I had with me upwards of fifty thousand dollars belonging to the United States Government and by my ruse I thought to save the money for which I was responsible. When we got to our destination, which was San Francisco, I would make good the young lady's losses, and a handsome present as well. But my plans were foiled, through circumstances over which I had no control.

Here was a young lady with whom I had no acquaintance whatever, laying sick upon a bed at a way side inn far away in the depth of the snow capped mountain, for she had fainted at the time of the robbery, and had not gained consciousness when the stage left the hotel to resume its tedious way towards the broad Pacific. Do what I might I could not forget what I had done, nor the beautiful face whose owner I had caused so much misery, and perhaps a protracted spell of sickness. My conscience reproved me severely.

I arrived safely in the golden city, made my way to army headquarters, concluded the business for which I had been sent, and was now free to assume the role of a private detective, and hunt up the family of the young lady, whom we left behind in such sore distress.

I had now been on the coast nearly three months, but had failed signally to find out anything that would give me a clue to the identity of my fair young friend.

The summer months were rapidly passing away, although in this favored land the change is scarcely perceptible; but a golden ripe September, which makes Washington life so charming, was hastening forward. This, coupled with other more important matters would soon induce me to retrace my steps in the direction of the famous political Mecca. One more duty was left for me, and when accomplished I should be off—I must see an old friend of my father's who lived on the out-skirts of the city. I accordingly took a horse car in front of the hotel where I was stopping; the car halted after going two blocks, taking on two ladies, one of whose faces was familiar to me, but where I had seen her I could not then recall. I noticed her glance at me, and when I turned to look at her, and our eyes came in contact, it produced something of a mutual recognition. Then the following conversation took place.

"Excuse me, madam, but have we not met before somewhere?"

"Yes sir," said she promptly with a smile.

"But where?"

"We had a long ride together and quite an exciting time. It was last June if I remember right."

"Oh, yes," I exclaimed, grasping her hand and eager to catch any information which I knew she must possess in regard to the young lady about whose identity I had been so extremely anxious for the last three months.

"Would you be kind enough to tell me something about the young lady whom you accompanied on the trip? I believe you got on at the same place she did."

"Yes, sir; you are right; I have been with her ever since her mother's death, which occurred at her Fannie's birth. That has been twenty years ago. Her father is Colonel Barnett, a retired army officer. When you first saw us we were returning from a visit to Fort B., and were on our way back to San Francisco, which is our home. Fannie is now in Paris with her father, where she will remain for one year—the doctor having recommended a sea voyage, after the terrible shock to her nervous system the night of the robbery."

"Do you know anything of her loss in the recent difficulty?"

"Yes, sir; three hundred dollars, and a diamond ring, which was a present from her father when she graduated from school. It has on the inside, F. B. in very small letters."

With a heart full of gratitude for my newly found friend, I returned to my hotel, and the next day set out on my return to Washington. Nothing of interest happened on my way till I reached Denver, at that time a mere struggling mining camp, not unlike a few towns whose blood curdling names could be mentioned here. As the waiter approached me to take my order for breakfast, he handed me the only paper printed in the town at that time. Scanning its local columns I read the following:

"Since the capture of the two highway-men a few days ago, it has been ascertained that they are the same who robbed the stage last June as it was crossing the divide at night. Miss Fannie Barnett, a daughter of a retired army officer, residing in San Francisco was among their victims."

Finishing my breakfast I started for the sheriff's office and found that functionary, to whom I related my story.

"Come with me to the station, perhaps you may recognize the men," said my guide.

I followed. We were soon inside of the old wooden corral which served for a bastle for outlawed humanity. The first criminal who made his appearance was not the man I was looking for. When the turnkey said to the fellow, "Tell Pete to come out," a tall dark-complexioned man appeared, who had the bearing of a gentleman, but was minus the handsome black mustache, which was either false or had been shaved off, I think the former.

"Did you ever see this gentleman before?" asked the jailor.

"No—I—never—did—that—I—remember."

This was enough. I knew he was the man I wanted, and made it known to the jailor, who kindly granted me a private interview with the prisoner.

"I know you are a detective," said the prisoner when we were alone, "I shall not criminate myself in any way by talking, so you need not propound any questions whatever," said he.

I quickly assured him that my errand was of an entirely different nature from what he supposed, and that I was no detective, but simply wished to obtain a diamond ring with the letters F. B. engraved on the inside, and which I knew he took from a young lady on the night of the robbery, and for which he was now incarcerated waiting trial.

"How do you know I was there?" he asked.

"By your peculiar voice."

"Yes," he remarked bitterly, "it has given me away more than once."

While I engaged him in conversation I reached into my pocket and drew forth fifty dollars, the sight of which made him more communicative and passive.

"Well," he said, "if you will promise me upon your honor as a gentleman, which I believe you to be, never to repeat this interview I'll give you a letter to a woman living within a hundred miles of this place, who will place the ring of which you speak in your hands. You must give me twenty-five dollars, and the woman the same amount. I will write to that effect."

I was only too glad to get the ring at any price, so I freely promised to keep his words, and have done so till now, which is twenty years after. He got the money, probably all of it, with which I afterwards heard he bribed a guard and gained his freedom.

My story does not end here dear reader. I had now to find the fair owner of this precious gem which was in my possession. I lost no time in making my way to Washington which I reached in October when the rich golden louage ripples in the soft southern breeze and dame Nature is in her changeable mood. The national capital is always beautiful at this time of the year. The second day after my arrival in the city, I made my report to the honorable secretary of war to whom I also applied for a letter to the secretary of state from whom I wished to secure an appointment as military attache to the American Legation at Paris. In this I failed, but in just thirty days after the filing of my application at the state department I received my passport and instructions to proceed at once to Paris and report to the consul general.

At the reception of these papers my joy knew no bounds. I need hardly say my real object was to find Miss Fannie with whom I was now over head and heels in love.

I was not more than three or four days getting my traps together, and on the tenth of December, I boarded the good ship Teutonic which sailed away, bound for sunny France.

After a very rough voyage I arrived safely at Havre, from which place I was not long in getting to the beautiful French capital. When I had been a few days domiciled in my new quarters, young Lieutenant D. of the naval said to me:

"Have you ever met any of the American ladies visiting Paris?"

"No," said I, "but would like to."

"A ball is to be given at the American Legation," said my friend, "and if I am so fortunate as to get an invitation I shall write at once to Miss Fannie Barnett."

"For what?" said I quickly, trying to conceal agitation.

"For her company," he answered promptly.

Was this sprout of a naval attache to become a tedious burden in my way, thought I.

"Where is Miss Barnett stopping?" I ventured.

"Oh, at the Hotel de Pleasance." Did you ever meet her? She is very pretty, her father is of the army, you know."

This was all said in one breath, by this English imitator.

And sure enough an invitation came