

Lynch Lawrence L.

Against Odds: A Detective Story



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CHAPTER I.

'CHICARGO GITS MY MONEY.'

'Eureka!'

It was I, Carl Masters, of the secret service, so called, who uttered this exclamation, although not a person of the exclamatory school; and small wonder, for I was standing beneath the dome of the Administration Building, and I had but that hour arrived at the World's Fair.

I was not there as a sight-seer, not on pleasure bent, and even those first moments of arrival, I knew well, were not to be wasted.

I had come hither straight from the Terminal Station, seeking this stately keystone to the great Fair, not to steep my senses and fill my eyes with beauty in myriad forms, but to seek out the great man whose masterful hand was to create for me the passport which was to be my 'open sesame' to all within this fair White City's walls; but when I stood beneath that lofty double dome and looked about me, I forgot all but the beauty all around, and gazed upon the noble rotunda through the western entrance, where 'Earth,' majestic but untamed, a masterpiece of giant statuary, guards one massive pillar; and the same 'Earth,' yet not the same, conquered yet conquering, adds her beauty to the strength of the column opposite – to the east, where Neptune sports, classic as of old, around about the octagonal interior with its splendid arches, its frescoes and gilding, its medallions and plates of bronze, wherein gleamed, golden and fair, the names of the world's greatest countries at its gilded panels, supported by winged figures, and bearing engraven upon each shining surface the record of some great event. Its medallions and graceful groups, allegorical or symbolic, all mounting high, and higher, until illuminated by the opal-like circle of light at the summit, Dodge's great picture crowns the whole, with its circling procession of arts and sciences, gods and muses, nymphs and graces, and Apollos radiant in the midst.

Small wonder that, forgetting all but the scene before me, my lips shot out the single word 'Eureka!' and smaller wonder that, having vented my admiration in sound, I became aware of the fact at once, and remembered not only who I was, but what I was, and why I was there.

It was scarcely ten a.m., but there were people all about me, and my exclamation caused more than one eye, inquiring, amused, cynical, or simply stupid, to turn toward me where I stood, near the centre of the great rotunda.

'Big thing, ain't it?'

I turned my head, a little rattled at the notice I had thus brought upon myself, and saw standing close beside me a man whose garb, no less than his nasal utterance, proclaimed him a Yankee, and a son of the soil. I had seen him upon my entrance, standing beneath the dome, with his head thrown back at a painful angle in an effort to read one of the brazen plates above him, one hand tightly grasping a half-inflated umbrella – long past its palmy days – and the other fiercely gripped about the handle of a shawl-strap drawn tight around a handleless basket, by no means small, and bristling at the top with knobby protuberances which told but too plainly of the luncheon under the pictorial newspaper tied down with abundant lashings of blue 'Shaker' yarn.

'Big thing, indeed!' Evidently my burst of enthusiasm had brought upon me this overture, no doubt meant to pave the way to further conversation; and I answered, after a single quick glance at my neighbour, as blandly as Ah Sin himself.

'Yes, sir,' resumed the man, with a brisk nod, 'it's a big thing! When 'twas first talked up I was a good deal sot on havin' it in Noo York State. I'd been there, ye see, twenty years ago on my weddin' trip; I was livin' in Pennsylvania then. But, Lor! Noo York couldn't 'a' done this here! No, sir, she couldn't. Chicargo gits my money – not that I've got much on it,' with a nervous start and a shrugging movement as if he were trying to draw in his pockets and obliterate all traces of them. 'I don't never believe in carryin' money to sech places.' Then, as if anxious to get away from a dangerous subject, he asked, 'Been here long, stranger?'

'About half an hour.'

'M – um! I've done better than that; been here two hull hours. Come in on one of them Village Grove cable cars, and come plum through Middleway Pleasants. M – um! but they're some, them furren fellers; only it seems to me they ain't no need of so many of them niggers of all shades, dressed up like Callathumpians on Fourth of July, and standin' round in everybody's way.'

I was not there to impart information, and I let the honest soul babble on. He had brawny shoulders and an ingenuous face, but I felt sure he had brought with him more money than was wise or needful, and that he would come to grief if he continued to deny the possession of money, with his tell-tale face flatly contradicting his words.

But I was now recalled to myself and my own affairs; and dropping a few politely meaningless words, I left my first acquaintance and made my way toward the pavilion at the corner, where I had been told I should find the 'man in authority' whom I sought.

Putting my question to a guard in the ante-room, I was told that the man in authority was absent – would be absent two hours, perhaps; and, not much loth to pass a little time in that splendid rotunda, stood gazing about the beautiful Court of Honour, with its fountains, statues, glittering and fair façades, rippling lagoons, and snowy and superb peristyle, statue-crowned and gleaming, with blue Lake Michigan, sun-kissed and breeze-tossed, stretching away to the horizon in pulsating perspective.

Fairer than any dream it looked that fair May day, with Justice, golden and glorious, rising from out the waves, splendid as a sun goddess, and dominating all the rest.

As I turned away, having looked and looked again, I saw my first White City acquaintance seated upon a settle in the shadow of one of the mammoth arches, his basket between his knees and his umbrella between his two clasped hands. He was talking just as amiably and frankly as before, and this time he had for audience a dapper man with a thin face that might have been old or young, and which I disliked at sight. He was exceedingly well dressed; he looked very respectable, but he also looked smug and sophisticated – too sophisticated, I thought, to be really so well entertained as he seemed to be with my rustic friend's confidences.

For a few moments I watched the two, to the exclusion of the golden Justice, the peristyle, everything; and then, the settle being long, and the two being its sole occupants, I moved around, going in and out unobserved among the crowd, and seated myself upon the end of the bench, unseen by my friend, who sat with his broad shoulders and back squarely toward me, and affording an ample screen between myself and his companion.

I have wondered since just what actuated me to do what I did; but I only recall now a vague remembrance of a small black book, seen in memory as in a vision, and a fluttering page which seemed to blazon forth the question, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' The book? – it was buried in dead hands long ago; and the words? – they had not been printed in the book more indelibly than upon my memory.

Why should the sight of this homely, honest rustic bring back these things? I did not know; but I seated myself in the shelter of his broad back, and affected to be absorbed in a notebook and the bronzed plates upon the walls about me, keeping meanwhile, with one ear, sufficiently close note upon their conversation, and letting my mind wander.

What a strange scene! Out upon the lagoon swift electric launches swept by, and gondolas, slower, but graceful and picturesque, glided to and fro, their lithe boatmen swaying to the sweep of the single oar.

Why did the sharp-eyed little woman opposite, on the bench in the shadow of the goddess of Air, eye me so keenly and so long, dividing her attention, in fact, between myself and a young mother with two tired children, scarce more than infants both?

Yonder went two Turks, bearing between them, swaying betwixt two long poles, a genuine Turkish palanquin, and crying, 'Hi! hi!' to those who obstructed their direct line of march.

Where was the man of authority? I looked at my watch, and my thoughts came back to myself and my own affairs.

'An hour and a half to wait! I wonder if Brainerd is on the ground, and what he will say of our joint undertaking when we meet; for you can by no means establish a precedent by which to judge of Brainerd's thoughts and deeds to come. How will our work prosper? Shall we find it easy? and shall we succeed?'

For Dave Brainerd and I, both professional detectives, 'man-hunters,' if you will, were sent to this White City on a twofold mission.

It was not our first work together, and at first we did not enter into it with enthusiasm.

'Masters, Brainerd,' our chief said to us one morning, 'they are going to want a lot of good men at that World's Fair; I think I'd better put you both on the list.' And this was all that was said then, but when we were out of his presence Dave exploded.

'Wants to send us to watch little boys, look after ladies' kerchiefs, and hunt up lost babies, does he?' he began, in a fume. 'It's not meself that'll do it; d'ye hear, Masters? I'll go like the biggest gentleman of all, or like the sleuth I am, but no child-rescuing and kid-copping for me! Let his honour give us,' with a theatrical gesture, 'a foeman worthy of our steel.'

Nothing came of this whimsical tirade, and a week had passed before the chief spoke again upon the subject. Then we were both called into his private office, and he said:

'Boys, we have just found out to a certainty that Greenback Bob and his pals are going to operate at the World's Fair. I've already promised them more good men than I like to spare, but we can't let Bob and his crowd slip. I did not really mean to send you, either of you, with the others; but this is something worth while.'

'I should say!' broke in Dave, who was no respecter of persons, unless perhaps it might have been of Dave Brainerd. 'Do you mean to tell us, Cap, that the dandy Frenchman is in it?'

'He is very much in it. He crossed from Calais on the last boat in hot haste, and I'm much mistaken if the whole gang is not already on its way to the White City, though he only reached this side the night before last; and there's another party who may give us some trouble. We don't know him, but he is said to be an all-round bad one, just come over from Calais with this Delbras. I wish I could give you even a description of him.'

Greenback Bob was a counterfeiter, or so it was believed, for he was so bold, so shrewd, and so generally successful, that no one as yet had been able to entangle him in the meshes of the law; though samples of what was believed to be his handiwork had been passed from hand to hand, and travelled far before they had been challenged, and their journeys summarily ended in the cabinet of our chief. Bob was known as a gambler, too, and more than once had he been watched and shadowed because of some ill deed connected with his name; we had seen his face, and his picture adorned the rogues' gallery. Delbras, however, was likely to give us some trouble; we had seen him, it is true, but it was only a fleeting glimpse, with the possibility that he was at the moment cleverly disguised.

Of Delbras we knew, first, that he was and had been for years the occasional partner or confederate of the counterfeiter, and presumably a counterfeiter also; next, that he was set down in the records of the London police as 'dangerous'; and last, that he had crossed the ocean, leaving Paris,

which had grown 'too hot to hold him,' and was avowedly *en route* for the World's Fair, it was thought upon mischief intent.

This last item came to our chief direct from the French police, together with the information that two or three diamond robberies which had occurred in the French capital during the previous winter were laid at his door, although it had been thus far impossible to bring the thefts home to him.

Concerning Greenback Bob – the fellow was known to us by no other name – we felt quite sanguine; we had seen him, we had his photograph and his full description according to the Bertillon system, and, once seen, he would hardly be lost to sight again, or so we flattered ourselves. Delbras we must identify through Bob, or as we best could; and the third member of the 'gang' – well, a great deal must be left to chance, as usual.

This much we knew of Delbras: he was 'handsome, educated, familiar with the ways of good society, and not an easy bird to catch.' This from the French police *commissaire*.

'A pinchbeck gentleman, eh!' had been Dave Brainerd's scornful comment upon hearing this. 'The worst set to deal with; I'd rather tackle a straight out-and-outer any day.'

Recalling this speech of Dave's brought my thoughts back to the old question, 'Where was he?' And then the dialogue at my elbow aroused my flagging attention, and brought it back to my rustic acquaintance and the smug personage at his side.

'Wal, now, I hadn't thought of that, but now't you mention it, 'twas a good idee; and they wouldn't change it to the eatin'-house?'

'Not there.' The smug man's tones were low and cautious. 'Pardon me, but – don't speak too loud, my friend – the mere mention of money is likely to attract some sharper to you. No, they refused me there. You see, I anticipated some difficulty inside the gates, so I had tried just before entering; but the man at the desk refused, and very curtly, too. I wanted to enter at once in order to meet half a dozen young men from my town who are sort of under my care.'

'Orphans?'

'Not quite. They belong to my Bible class, you see,' Mr. Smug explained modestly; 'and I had promised to be at the Terminal Station in case they arrived by the early train.'

'Whar from, d'ye say?' with awakening interest. 'I'm a Sunday-school teacher myself, when I'm to hum.'

'Indeed! It's a very interesting and useful work – labouring for souls. Ah, they come from Marshall, in Iowa.'

'Don't say! Why, I –'

'But they did not arrive; their train had been delayed. But, as I was about to tell you, if I had not chanced to have in my possession a roll of bills, put in my care by the father of one of the younger lads, I might have been kept outside for some time longer.'

'How's that?'

I had been a little puzzled at this dialogue, and was losing my interest somewhat when it reached this point, and I pricked up my ears anew, while I continued to copy inscriptions and jot down memoranda.

'It seems almost like confessing to a breach of trust; but there seemed no other way, and so, stepping to one side, I took out the package of money belonging to my young friend. I had counted it in his father's presence, and knew that it contained on the very outside of the roll a two dollar bill. I took this and procured my ticket. Of course I shall explain to him and replace it at once.'

'In course! but – you was a-saying –'

'I began to tell you how I learned where to go to get money changed. I had entered, you must know, at the Cottage Grove gate opening upon Midway, and walking toward the east I soon met a guard.' He had drawn a cigar from his pocket while speaking, and he now turned toward me. I had lighted a weed upon seating myself near them, and as he uttered a polite 'Pardon me, sir,' I

smoked calmly on, while I copied upon a fresh page of my notebook the legend, 'Jenner discovered the principle of vaccination in 1796,' putting an elaborate final flourish after the date.

'Sir! Your pardon; may I trouble you for a light?' A light touch of his hand accompanied the words, and I turned slowly, favoured him with a look of as well-managed stupidity and inquiry as I could muster, drew from my pocket a little ear-tube, and, adjusting it to my right ear, said, 'Hey?'

Again the fellow made known his want, and then, apparently convinced that I had not been a listener, he resumed, somewhat hurriedly, I thought:

'As I was saying, I met a guard and asked him where to go to get a bill exchanged; he mentioned one or two places a long way off, and then, happening to think of the arrangement made for the accommodation of foreigners, he courteously directed me to one of the agents quite near at hand.' He allowed a big puff of smoke to escape his lips very slowly, and added, as if it were the final word, 'Those agencies for home and foreign exchange are a great convenience to travellers.'

'What air they?' demanded my rustic. 'Never heerd on 'em.'

'Really! Why, the administration has arranged a system of agencies which are supplied with a certain sum in small bank-notes, greenbacks, which they are authorized to exchange for foreign currency; and, for the convenience of Midway Plaisance, one of these agents is established in Midway, near the Turkish Village. One may know him by a small blue badge with a silver stamp in the form of a half-dollar souvenir upon his coat.'

'Oh!'

'He proved very affable – the guard assured me I would find him so; and as the other agencies were so far away, I took advantage of his good nature, and instead of exchanging ten dollars, I got him to put a hundred-dollar bill into fifty crisp new two-dollar bills, fresh, like all this exchange money from the Government treasury – a part, in fact, of that great output of two-dollar greenbacks issued by the Government at the same time as the souvenir coins, as you no doubt remember.'

No, the rustic did not remember, but neither did he doubt. He was full of exclamations of wonder and admiration at the workings of so wonderful and generous a Government; and then came the climax. Would Mr. Smug direct him to this affable agent upon Midway? etc.

'As I was saying at first, I don't lug much money around with me to sech places as this here, but what little I've got ain't quite divided up enough to be handy; I don't mind gettin' a fifty into new Gover'nment greenbacks myself. My wife 'n' me are countin' on stayin' on here a consid'able of a spell, maybe, an' small change is handiest.'

'It's positively necessary,' declared Smug, getting up quickly. 'I'll show you the place, and the man; and then I must be looking for my young men again.'

I had not looked for this conclusion, but as the rustic arose I closed my notebook and made ready to follow them. I was all agog to see this amiable dealer in brand-new Government notes.

As the countryman turned toward his guide, the small sharp-faced woman, who had eyed us so long and often from her bench almost opposite, arose with a movement suggestive of steel springs, and made her way toward us, waving her umbrella to attract attention. I moved rapidly aside, in anticipation of the sweeping gesture of arm and umbrella, which dislodged a tall man's hat and sent it rolling to the feet of a frisky maiden, from whence it was rescued by Smug, who restored it, with a placating word, and so averted an unpleasantness. Meanwhile the woman had reached her husband's side, and a few quick words had passed between the two. Then a gesture, and another word or two, evidently meant for an introduction, brought the smug stranger to her notice, and the three turned their faces toward the Plaisance; but not until I had heard her say to her better-half as she clung to his arm, while Smug opened a way ahead, 'I tell you he's a confidence man, and I know it. I've been a-watchin' him!'

Following the three at a little distance, and discreetly, I smiled at the woman's rustic cleverness; and never did man smile more mistakenly.

CHAPTER II.

'I TOLD MY TALE OF WOE.'

I followed the trio as they went rapidly past the Terminal Station, and halted, laughing inwardly, while Mr. Smug, as I had mentally named the man whose game I was watching so intently, stood fidgeting before the great golden door of the Transportation Building waiting for the sharp-eyed woman to exhaust her ecstasies, and for her more stolid husband to close his wide-opened mouth and remember his errand to Midway Plaisance.

As for myself, I could have gazed at this marvel of doorways and have forgotten all else; and I was not sorry that the small farmeress had a will of her own, and that this will elected to stay.

Oh, that superb eastern façade! Never before has its like been seen. Never in such a setting and in such gigantic proportions will we see it again.

But we left it at last and made a slow and halting progress past Horticultural Hall on one side and the sunlit lagoon on the other; and here, overcome by the grandeur of it all, the woman of the party sat down, with her face toward the water.

"Tain't no kind of use, pa!" she declared loudly. 'I'm goin' to set down by the lake for a minit; I guess there'll be some two-dollar bills left in Midway yet when we get there. I've heard tell of them lovely lagoonsees till I'm achin' to see one; and I'm jest goin' to set right here till one goes by. Land! just see them stone anymals, and all them old-fashioned stone figgers of folks! 'Pears to me they's people enough alive and frisky, 'thout stickin' all them stone men around so dretful lib'ral; though they look well 'nough, fur's I know.' She cast her eyes all about her, and then beckoned to Smug, standing uneasily in the rear: 'Say, can't you show me one single lagoon?'

Smug came nearer, and waved his hand comprehensively toward the shining waters below them, and southward where a red-sailed Chinese junk lay at anchor opposite the Transportation Building.

'That is a lagoon, madam,' he said, affably but low.

'Umph! It's no better-lookin' than our old mud scow! Come on, father.' And they resumed their line of march, but not until in turning to take a last look at the belittled 'lagoon' her snapping small eyes encountered mine frowningly, and I said to myself, 'She saw me in the rotunda; can she suspect that I am following them?'

Contrary to my expectation, she did not call a halt upon entering Midway, but went straight on, still clutching her spouse by the arm, while the smug one walked sedately at her farther side; she passed the divers' exhibit, the beauty congress, the glass displays, and paced steadily on, her eyes riveted upon a palanquin borne by two waddling Turks; and when this ancient conveyance had paused before the Turkish Bazaar, then, and only then, did she pause or take further heed.

As the bearers gently lowered the chair, and stood beside it at ease, she snatched her hand from her husband's arm, and hurrying towards the front, peered within the curtained box.

'Land of gracious!' she ejaculated, 'and I s'posed they was carrying one of them harums, no less, in the outlandish thing!' Then, stooping to read with near-sighted eyes the legend, 'One hour 75 cents, one-half hour 50 cents, ten minutes 15 cents,' she turned again to her better-half: 'Come, pa, let's get that change right quick; I'm goin' to ride in that thing if I drop out through the bottom.'

There was a crowd in the Turkish Bazaar, but our smug friend led the way to an angle of the building where the hawkers were unusually busy, and I drew near enough to see that he was now looking covertly all about him, and for a little seemed at a loss.

'Kum-all-ong! Kume-mol-o-ng! Ku-m-m-m!'

The shrill long-drawn-out cry caused him to turn suddenly, and to elbow his way, with his prey at his heels, toward a small railed-in space, wherein, seated on a Turkish ottoman, a little higher than the genuine, was a swarthy man with beetling brows, big rolling black eyes, and a fierce moustache

bristling underneath a hooked nose. He wore a red fez, much askew, and his American trousers and waistcoat were enlivened by a tennis-sash of orange and red and a smoking-coat faced with vivid green. He was smoking a decorated Turkish pipe – 'Toor-kaish,' he called it – and a low table and sundry decorated boxes and packages were his sole stock-in-trade.

'Kum-all-ong! he reiterated. 'Kum-e see-e me-e-e smoke! Easy – so – no noise; so! Soo-vy-nee-yr; Toor-kaish soo-vy-nee-yr matches!' At every pause a 'soo-vy-nee-yr match' was struck, deftly and without noise, and a big puff of smoke was sent circling above his head.

'Bah!' exclaimed Mrs. Rustic, turning away, 'if you've brought me here just to see a Turkey man smoke a big pipe, Adam Camp, you may jest take me home ag'in.'

A shout of laughter followed this sally, and as she turned away I fancied that I saw a quick look exchanged between the man of the pipe and our smug guide. Whether this were true or not, I observed that Smug no longer seemed eager to hasten them onward, and I saw another thing – the woman, in turning from the man of the souvenir matches, had once more fixed her eye, through a sudden opening in the crowd, upon myself; and immediately after she had whispered something in the ear of her spouse, which something he soon after repeated, or so I fancied, to his kind friend Smug.

I had followed them, trusting to the crowd and my skill as an 'artful dodger,' up to this moment quite closely; but I now fell back, and withdrew myself a little distance from the aisle where all three were now loitering, the woman examining with wondering eyes marvellous Turkish slippers with turned-up toes, and olive-wood beads and bracelets, proffered by fierce Mohammedans in baggy trousers and tasselled fez, or by swarthy, oily-skinned girls with bushy hair and garments of Oriental colouring, or in tailor-made gowns, and with the ubiquitous fez as a badge of their office – or servitude; rugs and draperies, attar of roses in gilded vials, souvenir spoons, filigree in gilt and silver, toys of unknown form and name, cloying Turkish sweets, foreign stamps, coins, relics, all came under her unsophisticated eyes, while her spouse gazed upon Moorish daggers, swords of strange workmanship, saddles and stirrups of singular form, and much strange gear and gay trappings, the use of which he could never have guessed but for the learned explanations of his now carelessly amiable guide.

They had gazed so long that I had begun to grow impatient and to wonder how this tame chase would end, when the trio drew up at a point where the long arcade turns sharply to right and left, and where at one of the intersections a vendor of singularly-carved canes and sticks was mounted upon a stool draped with Oriental rugs, and so high and slender that one looked to see the occupant topple and fall from moment to moment. He was a brown-faced fellow of small stature and as lithe as an Indian, and he was juggling recklessly with a pair of grotesque carven sticks, crying the while:

'He-ur you-ur ur! He-ur you-ur-ur! Soo-vy-neer! Soo-vy-neer! Gen-oo-ine Teer-keesh – gen-oo-ine! Come-mon! come-mon! Teerkeesh – gen-oo-ine; only tree doll-yeer!'

A smart young man, breathing of opulence in air and attire, came briskly forward and held up his hand to receive both sticks, with a harlequin bow from the dark-eyed Oriental, who wore a spruce black broadcloth suit, in honour of America, and a red fez, in loyalty, doubtless, to the land of the Sultan; and then my interest became suddenly and widely awake.

The youth chose between the two canes, and handed up in payment a worn five-dollar bill, and after a feint at searching for the correct amount the man of the fez bent down and placed in his hand a crisp new two-dollar banknote; at the same moment, almost, friend Smug touched the arm of Farmer Camp, and I saw the two turn their heads toward the southern wing. I had made my way so near them that I could hear the words of the farmer, who evidently had no subdued tones, and after a long look toward the south entrance I heard him say:

'That him? Why, he looks like one of these fellers!'

And then I saw his guide's lips moving, and caught the final words, 'an educated Oriental.' In another moment he had moved hurriedly forward and put out his hand to stop the man who, with head very erect, and crowned with a black and gold embroidered fez, was coming toward him, but with

eyes levelled upon the active young man upon the lofty stool. He wore a severe suit of black, relieved upon the breast of the close-buttoned Prince Albert coat by a blue satin badge, bearing upon its upper half a silver-gilt souvenir half-dollar, and upon the lower portion a tiny fac-simile of a Government banknote.

He paused as the smug young man addressed him, and looked into his face, at first with indifference, almost amounting to annoyance, then with growing recognition, and finally with a bland and condescending smile. He wore a long and flowing beard, and the black cloth fez, unlike the red one, was not rakishly set on; but I recognised him at once.

It was the man with the 'soo-vy-neer matches,' quickly and deftly metamorphosed to escape the unobservant or untrained eye, but the same, notwithstanding. And now my interest grew apace. I knew that at last we were in the presence of that powerful official who dispensed virgin two-dollar notes to the unwitting foreigner or native; and Adam Camp was about to be mulcted.

I had formed no plan of action. I had been interested, first, in the welfare of Adam Camp, and then the mention of these new Government two-dollar bills had aroused in me the desire, stronger for the moment than any other, to see this 'agent' whose duty it was to make easy the path of the stranger and alien in our midst.

And now our smug friend demonstrated his ability to do quick work when occasion required.

Throwing caution to the winds, I drew close behind the woman, and heard the introduction of Camp and the case stated briefly.

Smug had ventured to bring this chance acquaintance, etc., who desired a like favour to that conferred upon himself not long since. Mr. Camp desired to exchange a banknote, say ten or twenty dollars, perhaps, for smaller bills, for convenience at the Fair, etc.

The man of the badge looked closely at Farmer Camp, who was bowing like a mandarin, and then back at his spouse.

'You can vouch for this person?' he asked with a touch of severity, and in excellent English.

'Pardon me; we are mere passing acquaintances, but I should think –'

He of the badge drew himself up with a stately gesture.

'We are not permitted to judge for ourselves,' he said; 'our Government require some sort of voucher, as, for instance, a bank certificate, cheque-book, even a receipt or letter.'

Before Farmer Camp could pull himself together and reply, his wife interfered, taking a swift step forward.

'If you want dockyments, mister,' she said tartly, 'I guess I kin supply 'em. I've brought our weddin' stiffykit, and our letters from the church to Neeponsit, and our fire insurance papers.' She laid a suggestive satin-gloved hand upon her bosom and tossed her head. 'I didn't count on nobody's takin' us to be anybody else when I brung 'em, but I didn't want 'em lost, case of fire or anything.'

The 'agent' put up a remonstrant hand, and Camp hastened to produce a letter from his brother in Nebraska, which was gracefully accepted; and so overpowered was Camp at so much condescension that he opened a plump wallet – carried in a breast pocket high up, and evidently of home manufacture – and drew from it, after some deliberation and a whispered word with his wife, a one hundred dollar bill.

'I guess we might jest as well break that.' He was extending the bill, and the hand of the now eager agent was outstretched to grasp it, when I stepped quickly to his side.

'Pardon me, sir,' I said, with my best air. 'Could you tell me where the bank is located? I am told that there is one on the grounds.' The four pairs of eyes were full upon me, and I knew that by three of them I was recognised. 'I am anxious to get some money changed,' I went on glibly, but with a meaning glance at the 'agent,' 'to buy some souvenir matches down here, and I'm told there's counterfeit money circulating here.'

I was playing a bluff game, and I knew it, for as yet I had not secured my credentials; but when I saw the swart face of the sham agent change to a sickly yellow, and Smug begin to draw back and

look anxiously from left to right, I was inwardly triumphant; but, alack! it is only in fiction that the clever detective always has the best of it, and at this moment there came an unexpected diversion.

Camp still stood with the bill in his hand, open-mouthed and evidently puzzled; and now his wife, who had drawn closer and was peering into my face, turned upon him quickly.

'Adam Camp, put up that money!' she cried. 'I know this feller; I seen him talkin' to you back there by the Administration Buildin'; and he's been watchin' and follerin' us ever sence. I know him! In another minute he would 'a' grabbed your money and run for it.'

There was a sudden movement, a shifting of positions, a mingling of exclamations and accusations, with the woman's tongue still wagging shrilly, and heard through all. People crowded about us and a brace of Columbian guards came hurrying up.

'What is it?'

'Anyone been robbed?'

Instantly the hands of Smug and his confederate began to slap and dig into their pockets, while the woman answered eagerly:

'All on us, like enough! He's a pickpocket or a confidence man. I seen him follerin' us. I've kep' an eye on him.' And then came a cry from Smug.

'My wallet!'

He turned upon me, calling wildly to the guards, 'Search him!'

Into my nearest pocket went a gloved hand, and when it came out, there, sure enough, was a brown leather wallet.

'Here it is!' cried one.

'Lord-a-massy!'

'I told you so!'

'Run him in!'

I was the centre of a small bedlam, and I shut my lips tightly and inwardly cursed my interest in all rustics, and particularly the Camps. I was fairly trapped. I saw my position, and held my peace, while the two rascals told their tale, making sure by their volubility that the Camps did not tell theirs. Only as the two guards, one on either side, turned to lead me away, I said to Smug, 'We shall meet again, my fine decoy;' and to the sham agent as I passed him, 'Better stick to your matches, my friend.'

Inwardly chafing, I marched through the crowd between my two captors, bringing them to a momentary halt as we came abreast of the place where the souvenir matches were hawked, and seeing there, as I had anticipated, a new face beneath the red fez.

Then I spoke to my captors:

'Men, you have made a mistake for which I can't blame you. Take me before your chief at once, and I will not only prove this, but make it worth your while to be civil.'

For answer the two merely exchanged glances, and hurried me on, and, convinced of the uselessness of further remonstrance until I had reached someone in authority, I strode on silently.

At the entrance to the great animal show there was a dense crowd, and for a moment we were brought to a halt. Standing upon the edge of the mass of bobbing bonnets and heaving shoulders, I could see in the midst of the throng two Turkish-fezzed heads wildly dodging and struggling toward us, and a moment later a full bass voice called impatiently:

'Go ahead! Get out of this, can't you?'

I started at the sound of the big, impatient voice, and stood with my eyes riveted upon the spot from whence it seemed to come. A moment later the two red heads had emerged from the crowd, and with them a sedan-chair, which, evidently, they found no easy load. As they shuffled past me I started again, so violently that my two captors caught at me with restraining hands.

At the same instant there was a quick exclamation from the swinging chair and a peremptory order to halt.

'Masters, I say! Stop, you infernal heathens! Stop, I say! Open this old chicken-coop and let me out!'

As the astonished Turks slowly and with seeming reluctance set down their chair and liberated their prisoner, my guards made a forward movement.

'Stop, you fellows!' called the newcomer, in the same peremptory tone. 'Where are you going with that man?'

As he flung himself from the chair he tossed a coin to the bearers, and promptly placed himself squarely in the way of my two guards.

'Masters,' he began, 'what in the name of wonder –'

'He's our prisoner,' broke in one of my captors; and at the word Dave Brainerd threw back his head and laughed as only Dave could, seeing which my indignant escort made another forward movement.

'Stop, you young – donkeys!' Dave threw back his coat, and at sight of the symbol upon his inner lapel the two young men became suddenly and respectfully stationary. 'Now,' panted Dave, still shaken with merriment, 'w-what has he done?'

I stood silent, enjoying somewhat my guards' evident doubt, and willing to let Dave enjoy to the full this joke at my expense, and after a moment's hesitation one of the guards replied:

'He picked a pocket, they say.'

'Oh, they do? Well, my young friends, I can't blame you much; he is a suspicious-looking chap, but really he's quite harmless. You can turn him over to me with a clear conscience. I'll run him in.' And he laughed again, and tapped his coat-lapel. 'Really, boys, you've made a regular blunder. This pal of mine is entitled to wear this same badge of *aristocracy*, only he seems to have wandered out for once without his credentials. How did it happen, Carl?'

But now my impatience broke out afresh, and I turned to the guards.

'Look here,' I said hurriedly, 'those two fellows who called you up and pretended to be robbed are fine workers, and I believe counterfeiterers. I was watching them while they were roping that old countryman. If you want to repair a blunder, go back, see if you can trace the men, or the old man and his wife, and report to your chief.'

They were very willing to go; and when we were free from them my friend indulged in another long and hearty laugh at my expense.

'Jove! Carl, but it's the richest thing out – that you, a crack detective, coming here with extraordinary rights and privileges, should be nabbed by a couple of these young college lads at the very beginning; it's too funny. How did it happen? Who caused your arrest?'

'An old woman,' said I shortly, feeling that the fun was quite too one-sided. But seeing the absurdity of it all, and knowing that Dave would have it all out of me sooner or later, I drew him out of the crowd, and under the shadow of the viaduct just behind us, and standing as much as possible aloof from the throng, I told my 'tale of woe.'

Before I had reached the end Dave was his serious self once more – a detective alert and keen.

'You are sure,' he began eagerly, 'that the old farmer was not one of them?'

I smiled, thinking of Mrs. Camp and the 'laggoons.'

'Perfectly sure. It was the old woman's quick eyes that did for me,' I replied; 'she had seen me once too often, and her suspicions were on the alert. I dare say she saw a "confidence man" in every person who came suspiciously near them, but a woman pal could not have played one whit better into their hands.'

Dave made a sudden start. 'Look here,' he said, 'I'm going to try for a look at those fellows! I've got a sort of feeling that they may belong to our gang, some of them – that match-vender now; the other, your smug friend, is too short, as you describe him, to be either of our men; but the agent, and that fellow with the canes – describe them a little more in detail, but be quick, too; and the old

folks – of course they're taken in and done for before now; but I'd like to meet that old woman, just on your account. I'm going straight to that Turkish village; and you?' He began to laugh again.

'Oh, I'm going back to the Administration Building,' I said with a grimace, 'as soon as I've described your men for you. I don't feel inclined to wander about this mysterious and dangerous White City any more until I am fitted out with a trade-mark. It is not safe – for me.'

Five minutes later Dave was on his way to the scene of my absurd escapade, and I was hastening back to the place which I never should have left until I had made my bow before the 'man in authority,' and had been duly provided with the voucher which would open for me all doors and command the aid or obedience of guards, guides, etc.; until, in fact, I had been duly enrolled, and had taken rank as one of the 'specials,' who went and came at will and reported at pleasure or at need.

On my way I soundly berated myself for my folly in venturing so recklessly and without authority to interfere in behalf of a sheep, when besieged by wolves, and in danger of losing no more than his fleece.

I had lost all interest in Farmer Camp, and felt not a spark of philanthropy in my whole being.

But the White City was a place of surprises, and Farmer Camp and I were destined to meet again.

As I approached the viaduct which separated the Midway Plaisance from the World's Fair proper, with my mind thus out of tune, and was about to pass under, a sharp guttural cry close beside me caused me to turn quickly about.

'Ta-ka ca-ar-h! La-dee, la-dee!'

'Ah – h – h!'

The first cry, or warning, came from the throat of a grinning Turk, one of a number of palanquin-bearers, and the last from the lips of a tall golden-haired girl who had been walking somewhat slowly, and quite alone, just before them, in the path she had chosen to take and to keep without swerving. There were half a dozen of them pattering along in line between their vacant swinging palanquins, and they had evidently learned that, being a 'part of the show,' they might claim and keep the right of way.

The rascally Turk had uttered his cry of warning without in the least slackening his shuffling trot, and as the lady uttered the single frightened syllable, I saw that one of the poles in the bearer's hands had struck her with such force as to send her reeling toward me.

Throwing out one hand for her support, I thrust back the now surly bearer with the other with such force as to throw him back upon his poles and bring the whole cavalcade to a momentary halt. At the same time a guard came up and ordered a turn to the right.

'You fellows are not running in a tramway, Mr. Morocco, and you'll find yourselves switched on to a side-track if you try the monopoly business on free American citizens – see!' The last word, emphasized with a sharp shove to the right, was easily comprehended by the glowering sons of Allah, and they moved on, silent, but darting black glances from under their heavy brows.

Meanwhile the fair one had recovered her poise and dignity, and thanked me, in the sweetest of voices, for my slight assistance, and I had found time to note that she was more than a merely pretty blonde.

At that moment I was sure that I had never seen a more charming face, though she gave me only a glimpse of it; and when she turned away, and the crowd about us, attracted for the moment, separated again into its various elements, I stood gazing after her for a moment as stupidly as the veriest schoolboy smitten at sight of his first love, and then, turning to go my way, and letting my eyes fall to the ground, I saw just at my feet a small leather bag, or what is called by the ladies a 'reticule.' It lay upon the very spot where the young lady had been so rudely jostled, and I picked it up and turned to look after her. She had disappeared in the crowd, and after following the way she had taken for two or three blocks, and finding the crowd more dense and the trail hopelessly lost, I

turned at last and went back, bestowing the little reticule in my largest pocket, and gradually bringing my thoughts back to my own affairs, and those of Greenback Bob and the rascal Delbras.

CHAPTER III. A CONUNDRUM

I had not gone far on my way after deciding that the lovely blonde had quite escaped me – in fact, I was once more about to pass under the viaduct opposite the Woman's Building and which separated Midway from the grounds proper – when a tall figure in blue appeared at my elbow, and fell easily into my somewhat hasty stride while saying:

'You will pardon me, I hope, for intruding, and let me say how much I appreciated and enjoyed the sudden way in which you halted that Turk just now. It was scientifically done.'

I turned to look at the speaker. His words were courteously uttered, and I knew him at once by his blue uniform for one of those college-bred guards who have helped so much to make the great Fair a success to question-asking visitors. He was a tall, handsome fellow, with an eye as brown as his hair, and as honest and direct as the sun's rays at that very moment, and I recognised him almost at once as the guard who had hastened to lend his aid, and had sent the Turks to the right-about, there being nothing else to do. A churl could not have resisted that pleasant half-smile.

'It was nothing,' I said carelessly; 'the fellow was wantonly heedless.'

'It was a very pretty and scientific turn of the wrist,' he insisted, 'and – yes, those fellows at first were obsequious enough; now, some of them, having found out how ill-mannered the Americans dare be without being beaten, are aping our manners. I – I trust the young lady was not hurt?'

The big brown eyes turned from me as he put the question, for that it was, and I saw a dull-red flush rise from his throat and dye his face to the very tip of his jaunty visor. I detected, too, a note of anxiety in the mellow voice that he could not quite suppress.

'I don't know, but fancy not – not much, at any rate.' We had come out from the shadow of the viaduct, and he halted as I spoke. I checked my steps also, and I checked my speech too. The anxiety in the voice was reflected now in the face. I was smiling slightly, and through my mind flitted a fragment of doggerel:

'Oh, there's nothing so flirtatious
As the bowld soldier boy!'

Suddenly the brown eyes came back to my face, open and clear as day.

'I owe it to myself,' he said, with sudden dignity, 'to explain. At the moment when she turned away, I recognised the young lady as an acquaintance, and was naturally interested to know if she had received any hurt – the blow seemed a severe one. I saw you pick up her bag and start in pursuit, and when you came back I ventured to address you. I could not follow far; this is my beat.'

'I see!' I was quite won by the young fellow's frank and manly air and his handsome face; 'and I'm sorry I can't enlighten you. I did not find the lady.'

'Oh!' There was a world of disappointment in this one syllable, and before he could utter another a new voice broke into the dialogue.

'Pardon me, please! But' – a little pant – 'but I saw you pick up my friend's bag, and – and she was so fatigued after the shock that I ran back.'

The speaker stopped here, and for several seconds seemed occupied in recovering her breath. She was a small and plump brunette, well dressed, and wearing a dashing sailor-hat of black, wide-brimmed and adorned with two aggressive-looking scarlet wings; this and the red veil dotted with black which partially concealed the face was all that I had time to note before she spoke again, coming closer to me and altogether ignoring the good-looking guard.

'She was so startled and nervous after the shock that she sat down near the Java Village, and I came back the moment I could leave her.' She shot a glance over her shoulder, and turned her look squarely upon the guard, who had drawn back a pace. 'A chair-boy,' she hurried on, 'waiting near the Libbey Glass Works saw you pick up the bag, and told us the way you had gone. Will you please give me the bag?'

I had been studying the little brunette while she talked, and I now said:

'I am very sorry your friend did not come in person. She did not seem much hurt.'

'She was not, and she would have come with me, only – ' Again she cast her eyes in the direction of the guard, who still stood looking both anxious and ill at ease, and for a moment she seemed to hesitate. In that moment the guard's fine face flushed again, and then set itself in cold, resolute lines. He lifted his hand in salute to me, and, without a second glance at the little brunette, strode back toward the viaduct.

The face of the girl showed instant relief, and she put out her hand.

'The bag, please!'

'Excuse me,' I answered, 'but really I can't let the lady's property out of my hands without something to prove your right to it. Since the lady is so near, if you will permit, I will go back with you.'

'How dare' – she threw back her head, and her black eyes darted annihilation – 'how dare you, sir! Because I condescend to address you, to oblige an acquaintance, do you fancy I will accept your escort and pocket your insult? Not for ten thousand leather bags!' She turned upon her heel and went swiftly back towards Midway, and after watching her for a moment I resumed my often-interrupted march, smiling as I went to think how the clever little brunette had been thwarted. That she was an adventuress I did not for a moment doubt. She had seen the dropped bag, of course, and had noted my pursuit of its owner, and its failure, and she had counted upon making me an easy dupe with that assured little demand of hers. But I was not quite a stranger to her kind. Perhaps if the good-looking guard had not been so suddenly put to rout I might have turned the young lady over to him; such offenders were his legitimate care. But as I thought of her easy, self-possessed, good society air, and the black eyes so keen and sophisticated, and then of his frank, ingenuous face, I almost laughed aloud. She would have laughed at his authority, and slipped through his fingers easily.

How quickly he had turned away at the first hint that she found his presence at our brief interview undesirable, flushing like a boy, too!

Of course I readily saw why she should prefer to make her little attempt without witnesses, especially those clothed with a measure of authority; and yet he had seemed to go away reluctantly.

And then I remembered his explanation or excuse in having followed and addressed me. He had known the young lady – owner of the bag. Why, of course – he wanted to hear of her further, from the lips of this supposed girl friend.

'Poor fellow!' I thought, beginning to imagine a little romance there in the White City; and then I turned myself about with a sudden jerk.

Truly, my wits were wool-gathering. Confound that little adventuress! He had turned away so suddenly, and he knew the owner of the bag. I would find him at once – he was not far away – and I would wash my hands of that little black bag.

But it was not to be. I had expected to find my handsome guard easily, and I did not find him at all. After a half-hour spent in prowling up and down, I encountered a file of guards marching briskly. I caught at my watch, and then scoffed at myself. Of course my guard had gone to dinner; I would do likewise, and then, when my other and more personal duties had been discharged, I would look up the guard. It would be quite easy.

The arrangements for our comfort during our stay in the White City had been completed in advance of our coming, and Dave and I had been quartered together in a cosy little apartment, which we could reach easily and as quietly as if it were an isolated dwelling, instead of being in the very centre of all the beauty and bustle of the Fair.

Having paid my respects to the 'man in authority,' and after he had made me familiar with the inner workings of the splendid system by which the White City was to be watched over and protected, and acquainted with some of my co-workers, I was ready for a hearty luncheon, and then I found myself my own master for the remainder of the day, or until four o'clock, when Dave and I were to meet by appointment at the Ferris Wheel and tempt its dangers together.

Of course my first attempt, after luncheon, was to find my handsome guard; but while good-looking young fellows and polite young fellows in blue uniforms were to be seen on every hand, the one face for which I looked was nowhere visible. I still had the lost bag in my outer pocket, which I watched jealously, for its bulk could be but too plainly seen; and when Dave and I found ourselves moving slowly upward at the tip of one of those giant spokes of the big wheel, he fixed his eye upon this pocket, and asked with a grin:

'Got an extra luncheon in case we are stranded in mid-air until past the Christian dinner-hour?'

Of course I told him the story of the find – but briefly, for my eyes were busy watching the people in the grounds below grow less and less in size, until they seemed like flies moving about eccentrically, the legs of the men seeming to jerk about convulsively, and looking automatic from that height.

There was much to amuse us in Midway, or on it; for at first the street, with its strange population, was spectacle enough, and we did not think of the black bag again until we found ourselves occupying isolated places upon the lofty seats in Hagenbeck's great animal show, and being serenaded by an excellent band, while we watched the entry of the happy family.

We had entered at a time midway between the closing of one performance and the beginning of another, and we found it a comfortable place in which to exchange experiences and compare notes.

My first question had been of the Camps and their swindling friends, but Dave's report was scant. He had seen the man of the canes, but the seller of 'soo-vy-neer' matches was no longer he of the big moustache and goodly height, but a small elderly Turk, who piped weakly and plied his calling listlessly. The Camps, Smug, the gentlemanly agent, all had disappeared from off Midway. I was not surprised at this, neither was I disappointed; and having said as much, I took up the parable of my latest adventure upon Midway, telling of my encounter with the guard and the little brunette, and letting my fun-loving friend enjoy another good laugh at my expense.

'I must say, Carl, old fellow, that so far as I have traced your career this first day at the Fair, you have not shone out brilliantly. But never mind, partner: "a bad beginning" – you know the rest. Oh, are we to have a look at the bag?'

I had drawn it forth and placed it upon my knee. It was a small receptacle of finest alligator-skin, with an outside pocket, and having attached to it the tiny chain and hook by which it had been secured to the young lady's girdle. It closed with a silver clasp, and in the open outside pocket was a fine white handkerchief with some initials embroidered in one corner.

'J. J.,' read Dave slowly. 'That don't tell us much, does it, old man?'

I looked about me. There was no one near us, and on the opposite side of the big pavilion the band was playing 'After the Ball.' I pressed the silver clasp, and the bag lay open in my hand.

'Gad!' exclaimed Dave. 'The woman who owns that is as dainty as a princess.'

He was quite right. The little bag contained only a small silver-handled penknife, a dainty tablet and pencil, a glove-buttoner, a second little handkerchief, fine and smoothly folded, and two letters.

When I had taken out these articles one by one and laid them on my knee, Dave took the bag from my hand and turned it upside down.

'Nothing more,' he said, shaking his head sagely. 'Not a bit of candy; not a powder-puff or perfume sachet. Well, well! Carl, the owner of this little article, whoever she is, besides being dainty and without vanity, is a very clever little woman, and I'll wager she's pretty, too.'

This outbreak was so like Dave that I only smiled, while I unfolded the handkerchief and shook it out over my unoccupied knee. In one corner, in exquisitely dainty embroidery, were the two initials

'J. J.,' and when Dave had shut the bag and looked again at the closed clasp, he discovered, finely cut on the metal, the same initials.

'J. J.,' mused Dave; 'that suggests any number of charming personalities – Juliet, Juno, Jessica.' 'Jane, or Jemima,' I supplemented, taking up one of the letters.

It was post-marked Boston, and bore date three days before, but it gave us no further information.

Through the name, across the middle of the square envelope, half a dozen heavy lines had been pencilled, and these in turn checked through with little vertical dashes; below were the sketchily-drawn supports, which indicated a bridge, and upon this bridge a procession of people vaguely outlined as to body, but elaborated as to face to such a degree of artistic cleverness that Dave uttered an exclamation of delight.

'An artist, upon my soul! Look at those faces! Gad! but that is well done! There are types for you, and hardly more than thumb-nail portraits at that. But it's spoiled the address; we can't get J. J.'s name out of that.'

It was quite true; under the crossed lines forming the platform of a bridge, evidently a sketch of one of the structures spanning the lagoons, the name was quite concealed, but below, through the waving water-lines and the curves of the arch, we could read and guess the remainder of the address, thus:

' –,
'Chicago,
'Illinois.
'Massachusetts Building, World's Fair.'

I put this letter down and took up the other envelope. Upon this was written a woman's name, nothing more, neither town, county, nor state.

'Conundrum?' commented Dave over my shoulder. Just then there was a sudden blare from the band, and a roar that almost startled my sophisticated nerves.

I turned my eyes toward the arena, where a splendid white horse now stood, caparisoned in a sort of armour upon back and neck, and pawing impatiently, while he waited opposite a sort of portable platform higher than the horse's back, and gaily cushioned and decorated. A great tawny male lion was in the act of leaping from the ground to this high perch. I had seen many exhibitions of animal intelligence and training, but when this king of lions, uttering a second mighty roar, leaped to the back of the waiting horse and rode about the ring like a trained rider, leaped through a hoop held in the mouth of a big spotted boarhound, and otherwise acquitted himself like an accomplished rider, I forgot the conundrum of the little black bag, and my mission at the World's Fair, and looked and applauded, and was simply one of five hundred sight-seers.

It was useless to contend; the charm was upon us; the first day at the Fair had us at last in thrall, and we watched the trained lions, tigers, bears, and pumas, admired the ponies, applauded the dogs, and wondered at the plucky woman trainer, without a thought beyond the passing moment.

The fever lasted until night had fallen, until we had trundled from end to end of Midway in a pair of wheeled chairs, visited the Dahomey Village, the Ostrich Farm, the Chinese Theatre, and the little community of quaint, shy, industrious Javanese, leaving it still in the spirit of adventure, and sauntering, after a dinner in Old Vienna, here and there through a veritable fairyland, glittering, glistening, shining, radiant from the splendid dome of the Administration Building, with its girdles of fire, its great statues shining under the golden glow, and the lagoons with their lights and shadows, their gondolas gliding to and fro between flowering banks or illuminated façades, with fountains playing, music filling the air, and everywhere laughter, merry voices, and gay throngs of enchanted pleasure seekers. What wonder that we lingered long, and that it was only when we were shut between four walls, the lights out, the White City asleep, that I thought again of J. J. and her lost letters; and

now, as I thought, the fair blond face seemed to rise before me, and I saw again the slim figure flit past me on Midway.

Brainerd lay sleeping near me, and I thought of his comment, 'A conundrum?' Why not search for the answer in these white billets, and, finding it, take the little black bag to the bureau of the 'lost or found'?

I took up the bag, opened it, hesitated, and put it down. Why should I read those letters from a stranger, and to a stranger? I leaned out of the window and drank in the loveliness all about me, illuminated by a faint young moon.

'A conundrum?' I took up the letter post-marked Boston, and slowly drew out – ah, it was more than a mere letter that my hand touched that night. I had put my finger upon a thread in the web of fate!

CHAPTER IV. 'I CAN'T MAKE MYSELF LIKE HIM.'

I am not superstitious, and I certainly had no intimation then of the part these letters would soon play in my World's Fair adventures, nor of the use I should make of them; but I opened that letter with an uncomfortable feeling of curiosity and interest, and without even pausing to look again at the tiny grotesque faces of that little bridge procession so artistically sketched upon the envelope.

The letter, like its cover, was dated from Boston, and was just four days old.

'Just received,' I said to myself, as I took up the wrapper to look at the Chicago postmark. 'Yes, came last night. She must have read it this very morning, sitting upon some one of those shaded seats on Wooded Island, and after reading it she must have amused herself by copying the people passing over the nearest bridge. Ergo, she must have been alone.' My detective instincts were rousing themselves; already I was half unconsciously handling that unread letter as if it were a 'feature' in a 'case.'

She was alone, too, when we met on Midway; that is, I saw no companion. Could it be possible that the young lady was really alone in this densely populated place? How absurd! I looked at the letter again.

It was written in a beautiful flowing hand, and I said, after a moment's scrutiny, 'Written in haste and under excitement.' There were eight closely written pages, and having begun their perusal, I read to the end without a pause. The letter was signed 'Hilda O'Neil,' and there was no street number nor post-office box, only the name of the city from whence it came, Boston.

Hilda O'Neil was the name written on the second letter, this and nothing more; but this no longer surprised me. Miss O'Neil was a New York girl, and a guest, at the time of writing, of the sister of her affianced, in Boston. This young man was already in Chicago, making arrangements for his family, who were to come as soon as informed by him that apartments in the already crowded city were in waiting. They were 'all ready for the flitting,' and were now wondering why 'Gerry' did not wire them. He had written that his plans 'were near completion,' and that he should telegraph them in two or three days at the latest, at the time of writing. The three days were just about to expire, hence the excitement visible in the penmanship of Miss O'Neil. Betwixt impatience and anxiety she confessed herself 'growing really fidgety,' especially as 'Gerry' was always so prompt, 'and then – don't think me silly, dear – but, really, Chicago is such a wicked, dangerous place, especially now.'

I smiled as I read this paragraph, and thought of Master 'Gerry' doubtless giving himself a last day or two of freedom from escort duty, and of fun, perhaps, on Midway. Decidedly, detectives are not seers.

And the second letter. Since the first did not tell me how or where to find the owner of the little bag, this letter must. And her name – would that be revealed? I opened the missive and read it through, with some surprise and a great deal of admiration.

I had been right in my conjectures of the writer. I found her name signed in full at the bottom of her last thick sheet of creamy note-paper; she had penned the letter in her own room that very morning, and had held it unsealed and only half addressed until she had applied at her State post-office for the expected letter from her friend, and this having been received, she had thrust the newly-written missive into the little bag, hoping, doubtless, soon to meet her correspondent, who might now be on the way, and to tell her story – for the letter contained a story – which, doubtless, she would much prefer to do.

And now, so much can a few written pages do, I almost felt that I knew June Jenrys, for that was her name, and her friend Hilda O'Neil.

Miss O'Neil's letter had told me first something about herself: that she was a petted and somewhat spoiled only daughter; something of an heiress, too, if one might judge from her prattle about charming and costly costumes and a rather reckless expenditure of pin-money; and that she was betrothed to Gerald Trent, of the great Boston firm of Trent and Sons, with the full consent and approval of all concerned. What life could be more serene? Young, fair, rich; a lover and many friends; and now *en route* for the World's Fair, to enjoy it in her lover's society. Happy girl! the only little speck upon her fair horizon when she penned that letter was the fact that her dearest friend and schoolmate was not quite so happy.

And June Jenrys? The two letters taken together had told me this: She was an orphan, and wealthy, left in her teens to the guardianship of an aunt, her father's widowed sister, a woman of fashion *par excellence*. During her niece's minority this lady had tyrannized all she would, and now, Miss Jenrys having recently come of age, she yet tyrannized all she could. The aunt was eager to mate her niece to a man of her own selection and a heavy purse. The niece until recently had looked with some favour upon a young man, handsome enough – even Miss O'Neil admitted that – and a gentleman beyond question, but with no visible fortune. A short time before – but I will let Miss Jenrys tell this much of her own story, quoting from the fourth page of her letter:

'I did not mean it so, really, Hilda dear, although it has seemed so to you. You see, I expected to meet you in Boston ere this, and that is so much better than writing; and now I must write after all, and instead of its being from me in Boston to you in New York, it is from me here in the "White City" – such a city, Hilda! – to you in Boston, and at Nellie Trent's.

'Well, you must know this, that it was just after Aunt Charl had "washed her hands of me," matrimonially speaking, for the – well, for the last time; and I was feeling very high and mighty, and Aunt Charl quite subdued, for her, that we gave a reception, the last before Lent. Of course he was there, and I had made up my mind that day that I would be honest with my own heart in spite of Aunt Charl. "I'm sure he cares for me," I said to myself, and – well, I knew I liked him a little. I knew he only waited for the opportunity to speak, and while I would have died rather than help him make it, I said, "If he does find the chance – if he does speak, or when he does – well!"

'I shall never forget that night! Aunt was good enough to say that I was looking my very best. I am sure I felt so. But of course aunt spoiled it all – her pretty speech, I mean.

'June," she wheedled, "that handsome Maurice Voisin will be here, and I happen to know that he admires you very much. Charlie Wiltby says he is no end of a swell in Paris, and that he is really a rich man, who prefers to be modest, and avoids fortune-hunting girls. You are old enough to settle down, and with your fortune and his you might be a leader in Parisian society. There's no place in the world where money and good looks together will do so much for one as they will in Paris." Think of it, Hilda! If I had not felt so at peace with all the world just then, there would have been an – occurrence then and there. But I held my tongue, and was even inclined to be a little sorry that aunt's silly talk was making me feel a genuine antipathy for M. Maurice Voisin of Paris renown; and really at that time I hardly knew the man. He is certainly rather good-looking, in a dark, Spanish fashion, and he is taller and somehow more muscular-looking than the typical Frenchman. He is certainly polished, shines almost too much for my liking; but that may be, really, Aunt Charl's fault rather than Mr. V.'s. That night, at least before supper, I had no word or thought against him.

'But I must get on about him, and I'll make it very short. You know how our conservatory is arranged, and that little nook just at the entrance to the library, where the palms are grouped? Well, I had danced with them both, and he had just asked me to go with him into the conservatory, "to sit out a waltz," when M. Voisin came to claim it. I had for the moment forgotten it, and he had only time to say just one word – "after."

'Well, I'll be candid, if it does humiliate me; after that waltz I eluded M. Voisin, leaving him with Aunt Charl, and went into the conservatory.

'It was so early, and the dancers still so fresh, that no one was there as yet. I had been stopped once or twice on my way, and when I entered the conservatory by way of the drawing-room, I fancied for a moment that someone was standing in the shadow of the palms, just inside the library door; but I went on, and reached the nook without being observed. I sat down, quite out of sight, thinking that if he entered from the ball-room the most direct way I should see him first. Imagine my surprise, then, when almost instantly I heard a movement on the other side of the mound of fairy palms, and then at the very first word came my own name. There! I will not repeat the shameful words, but it was his voice that owned to an intention to "honour" me with a proposal, because his finances were getting low, and he must choose matrimony as the least of two evils, etc. While I sat there, unable to move, and half stunned by this awful insult, suddenly there was a quick rustling, a half-stifled laugh, some whispered words, and then another voice which I did not at first recognise, said, very near me, "Ah, good-evening, Mr. – a – Lossing! Charming spot, really." Then there was another movement, some low muttered words, and the sound of footsteps going across the marble toward the library. Then suddenly, right before me, appeared M. Voisin. I could not conceal my agitation, and gave the same old hackneyed reason – heat, fatigue, sudden faintness. M. Voisin hastened in search of water, and I dropped my face upon my hands, to be aroused the next moment by *his* voice, agitated, hurried, making me a proposal. Then something seemed to nerve me to fury. I sprang up, and, standing erect before him, said:

"Mr. Lossing, as I am unfortunately not in the matrimonial market, I fear I cannot be of assistance to you, much as I regret that the low state of your finances is driving you to so painful a step. Allow me to pass!" Before he could reply I had swept past him, and meeting M. Voisin just beyond the palms, I took his arm and went back to the ball-room. Hilda, pride and anger held me up then, for I fully believed him the most perfidious of men. But since, much as I hate myself for it, there are times when I doubt the evidence of my own senses, and cannot believe that he ever said those words. The next morning, while my anger still blazed, he sent me a letter, which I returned unopened. That is all, Hilda. He left town the same day, I have been told.

'And now you understand, doubtless, why I am here. M. Voisin, of course, was not to blame, but I could not disconnect him from the rest of the hateful experience; and so at the beginning of Lent I packed my trunks and set out for the country and Aunt Ann's at Greenwood. Dear Aunt Ann, who is so unlike Aunt Charl!'

Then followed some details of their arrival at the World's Fair and an amusing account of the good lady's first impressions, which were so large and so astounding that she was obliged to "remain at home and take the entire day to think things over in." Think of it, Hilda, shut up like a hermit just two blocks from the gate! Is not that like nobody on earth but sweet, slow, obstinate, countrified Aunt Ann? – of whom, thank heaven, I am not one bit ashamed, in spite of her Shaker bonnet. But I can't lose a day of this wonder, and fortunately dear Aunt Ann never dreams of tabooing my sight-seeing. When I proposed to come alone this morning, the dear soul said:

"Well, I should hope thee could. Only two straight blocks between here and the gate at Fifty-seventh Street, and if thee can manage to get lost with all those guards and guides, to say nothing of the maps and pictures, thee is a stupid niece, and thee may just go back to thy Aunt Charlotte Havermeyer." If Aunt Charl could only hear that! Well, dear, I have promised myself a happy time here with Aunt Ann when she is not occupied with her meditations, and yourself soon, and without Aunt C.; but, alas! everybody will visit the Fair; and yesterday, upon Midway, whom should I see but M. Voisin! He was attired as I have never seen him before, quite *négligée*, you know, and wearing a Turkish fez. It was very becoming. He did not see me, and for this I was thankful. I did not come to the World's Fair to see M. Voisin, and even to please Aunt Charl I can't make myself like him.'

I put down this letter and smiled over its sweet ingenuousness, and singularly enough I joined the fair writer in heartily disliking M. Voisin.

'He was altogether too conveniently near at the scene of that unlucky proposal,' I muttered to myself, and then I turned to the other letter. I wanted to see what I could make, between the two, out of young Lossing.

'I have asked you twice,' Miss O'Neil wrote, 'about your affair with young Mr. Lossing. Your aunt is entirely at a loss, only she declares she is sure that you have refused him, and that in some way he has offended you; and I thought him almost perfect, a knight *sans reproche*, etc.; and he is so handsome, and frank, and manly. What happened, dear? It is so strange that he should vanish so utterly from society where he was made so much of; and no one seems to know where he went, or when, or why, or how. Gerry says he was a perfect companion, "and as honourable as the sun." There, I'll say no more.'

My reading was broken in upon at this point by a prolonged chuckle, and I looked up to see Brainerd wideawake and staring at me.

'Well,' he queried promptly, 'have you found out her name?'

'Yes; it is June Jenrys.' As I spoke I returned Miss O'Neil's letter to its decorated envelope, and replaced the two in the bag. 'I'll tell you about them,' I said, as I put it aside. Somehow I felt a sudden reluctance at the thought of seeing those two letters in the hands and under the eyes of an inveterate joker like Dave. 'I'm no wiser in the matter of address, however.' And then I told him the purport of the letters in the fewest words possible.

'Do you know,' said Dave, when I had finished my recital, 'I don't like that Voisin, not even a little bit. I think he's a bad lot.'

I smiled at this. There was not a jot of romance in Dave Brainerd's make-up, and not a great depth of imagination; but he was the keenest man on a trail, and the clearest reasoner among a large number of picked and tried detectives. It amused me to think that both had been similarly impressed by this man as he had been set before us; but I made no comment, and to draw away from a subject which I felt it beyond our province to discuss I asked:

'Dave, what did you mean this afternoon, when we opened that bag, by saying that the owner was a clever woman? Upon what did you found that remark?'

'Why, upon the fact that she did not put her purse in that convenient, but conspicuous, little bag; in consequence of which she is, or was, only slightly annoyed, instead of being seriously troubled at its loss. By the way, or rather to go out of the way, do you know that they have in the French Government Building a very fine and complete exhibition of the Bertillon identification system? I want to get to it bright and early in the morning.'

I moved to his side and sat down upon the bed. We were both admirers of this fine system, and for some moments we discussed it eagerly, as we had done more than once before; and when I put my head upon my pillow at last, it was with J. J. and her interests consigned to a secondary place in my mind, the first being given over to this wonderful French system, the pride of the Paris police and terror of the French criminal.

But we little know what a day, or a night, may bring forth.

Someone rapped at our door at an unpleasantly early hour, and the summons brought Dave out of bed with a bound, and in another moment had put all thought of the previous night out of our heads.

'Will you come to the captain's office at once, gentlemen?' said a voice outside, and I caught a glimpse of a guard's blue uniform through the half opened door. 'There's been a big diamond robbery right under our noses, and they're calling out the whole force.'

CHAPTER V. 'IT'S ALL A MIRACLE.'

It was even as the summoning guard had said, and the Secret Service Bureau was in a very active condition when Brainerd and myself arrived.

Already telephone messages were flying, or had flown, to the various districts, and at every gate, thanks to the almost perfect system instituted by Superintendent Bonfield, shrewd and keen-eyed men were on the alert for any and all suspicious personages, and woe to those whose descriptions were written down in the books of the secret service men. They must be able to give good account of themselves, or their liberty would be brief.

It was not difficult to guess why my friend and myself had been so promptly summoned, in spite of the fact that already more than three hundred men, trained detectives, from our own large cities and from abroad, were upon duty here.

It was because they were on duty, every man at his post, whatever that might be, and because Brainerd and myself – having newly arrived and being for the moment unoccupied – were both near and available. Because, too, we were specials, that is, not subject to routine orders.

The robbery had really been a large one, and a bold one.

A collection of gems, cut and uncut, belonging to a foreign exhibit, and placed almost in the centre of one of those great well-guarded buildings, must be, one would think, proof against attack. Carefully secured in their trays and boxes, shut and locked behind heavy plates of glass in bronzed iron frames, guarded by day by trusted employés always under the eye of manager or exhibitor, and by night by a guard of drilled watchmen, what collection could be safer?

Nevertheless, at night there sparkled in those crystal prisms a little silver leaf with slightly curved edges, holding what looked like a tiny heap of water-drops, congealed and sparkling, shot through by a winter sunbeam; several larger diamonds, uncut, but brilliant and of great value; some exquisite specimens of pink topaz, and one great limpid, gleaming emerald, the pride of the fine collection. This at night. In the morning – they were not.

We sat down, a small group, for we did not hold council in the outer office, nor with one superfluous member, and began to find or make for ourselves a starting-point.

The work had been done very deftly. One of the glass plates had been cut out close to the bronze frame, and the gems removed; but that was not the strange part of the affair. In their places counterfeit gems had been put, careful imitations of the originals, and the glass plate had been deftly put in its place again.

'Ah!' said the fussy and half-distracted little man who represented the great foreign house so neatly defrauded, 'Ah! if I had not come down this morning, not one othair would haf know. I am the one only expairt. See! I am praisant wen the plaice is un-cloase. I stant near, wen soomsing make a beeg chock' – he meant shock or jar – 'ant richt town falls out the klass. Wen I haf zeen it, I go queek ant look at doze shems. Ach! I know it awal – 'tis fawlze awal – effery stonzes!'

That was the story. They had found the glass cut, and false gems in place of the true.

When we had stemmed the tide of this foreign eloquence, which was not for some time, I asked:

'How many know of this?'

'Nopotty at all onlee – '

'Not more than half a dozen,' broke in the chief of the bureau. 'Of course it wouldn't do! These are not the things that we like to let the public into. It wouldn't harmonize.'

'Ah-h-h!' aspirated the little man. 'It would trive away awal the tiamont marshants together! U-u-og!'

'Right you are,' murmured Dave; and then in a louder tone, 'Can you trust your people to keep silent?'

'Ah! neffear fe-ur; tay know it is for tare goo-et.'

'Where are they?'

'The attendants?' queried the captain. 'Two are in charge of the pavilion, which remains closed. Lausch here was very clever; he sent for me at once, meantime keeping everything under cover; and when I saw how the land lay, I ordered close mouths all around, and put up a card "Closed for repairs." Then I sent for you, and we came back here. Of course you will want to see the place.'

'The place and the people,' I said, somewhat impatiently; 'and we can't get it over too quick.'

We spent three of the long morning hours in viewing, first the case where the real gems had been, and next the shams that had taken their place; then the surroundings, and last, and one by one, the people engaged about the Lausch pavilion. They were all Viennese, speaking the English language fairly well, far better than Mr. Lausch himself; and after we had questioned them closely and carefully, we closeted ourselves together and discussed the few 'points' so far gathered, if points, upon investigation, they proved to be.

'Carl,' chuckled my friend when we were at last alone, 'one of our missions here at the great Columbian Exposition was to hunt diamond thieves – eh!'

Of course his meaning was plain to me, but I chose to differ with him; there was no better way of rousing his wits.

'Of all the expert thieves on the two continents, the only ones who will not come here will be those whose faces are in every rogues' gallery in the land,' I replied. 'It would be too much good luck to find Bob and Delbras mixed up in this deal.'

'And yet,' declared he, 'I am willing to wager that it's the work of Delbras *et al.* Who but he would have prepared himself with a full assortment of paste jewels. Honestly, old man, don't you agree with me?'

'Yesterday,' I replied, 'I was ready to swear that Greenback Bob and his friend Delbras were circulating, perhaps issuing, those two-dollar Government notes.'

'And what's to hinder you thinking so still, eh?'

'Only that it would be too much of a fairy story to find our work cut out for us in such a way.'

Dave threw one sturdy leg across the chair nearest him, and settled himself in his favourite attitude for an argumentative discourse.

'Young man,' he began, 'if you can find anything connected with this White City that has sprung out of the lake and the prairie that has not a touch of the Arabian Nights about it, I want to know where it is. Can you show me anything more fairylike than this fairy city, built, as it has been, in the teeth of time?'

'Oh –'

'I tell you it's all a miracle, a nineteenth-century miracle! To come down to facts, now, you and I came here expecting to find Greenback Bob, didn't we?'

'Yes, of course.'

'And we have good reason to believe that Delbras is also here. Not much miracle about that, you'll admit.'

'No,' I assented, knowing that he must reach his climax in his own way.

'No; I should say so! But here is a miracle, a regular White City miracle. I wonder if Delbras and company know that – leaving a couple of thousand of blue-coated Columbian guards out of the question, and they're bright fellows, let me tell you – there are here three hundred and odd picked detectives, a squad at every gate, and every gate and every district connected by telephone with the main office here. Let a suspicious character appear, click goes the nearest telephone, sending the man's description to headquarters, and then, click, click, click, to every district, every gate, every man, goes this same description. Oh, the crooks whose faces are known will find a warm welcome

here! It's only the fine workers, who have been so successful that they are not well known, who can make hay in this place.'

'All the same,' I here submitted, 'for such fellows as Delbras and his ilk, who know the world on both continents, this is a promising field, in spite of the telephone system and the detectives in plain clothes at every gate.'

'As how?'

'To the man who can speak several tongues, and is an adept at disguise, this Fair, with its citizens from every clime, will be a better place for concealment than London, Paris, and New York rolled into one.'

Dave gave utterance to a long, low whistle, and jerked himself to an upright position.

'You're right again!' he cried. 'Come, let's get down to business. What's your idea about this robbery?'

'About the same as yours, I fancy.'

'And what's that?'

I took out my notebook, wherein I had jotted down the most important items of testimony elicited from the Lausch attendants, saying:

'Get out your notes, Dave; let's see how they agree.' Dave produced his own briefer notes, and I began running my finger slowly down the pages.

'It was done during the day.'

'Of course!' impatiently.

'And slowly – that is, a little at a time.'

'How slowly?'

'Well, for instance, Lausch himself told of a young woman who was much taken with the pink topaz display – you remember?'

'Yes;' beginning to smile behind his book.

'He said that she wore a coat with a deep cape, and that she rested one arm upon the case.'

'Well, I did wonder what the woman's dress had to do with it. 'Gad, but you questioned those people until I began to feel sorry for them. What figure, now, is the dress likely to cut?'

I laughed.

'In this case let us suppose that the young woman is one of the gang.'

'Oh!'

'And let us fancy that while she peered at the pink topaz – you remember Lausch told us that she excused her nearness by saying that she was very near-sighted?'

'That's so.'

'Well, while looking at the gems, with her face bent over the case, one arm upon the edge, and with the voluminous cape outspread, what is to prevent her using the other hand and arm to draw a diamond point slowly and heavily along the glass, close to the metal?'

'By Jove! what indeed?'

'And why may not this act be repeated, three or four times, say, by the same woman, slightly changed as to dress, as she could have been? Lausch, you recall, accosted her.'

'Yes.'

When Dave grew laconic I knew him to be almost convinced.

'You will recall how each of the attendants remembered one or more instances of persons lingering long near the gems, or crowding so close as to attract the attention of some of them.'

'Umph!'

'And Lausch distinctly remembered how a good-natured guard came to his aid just as he was about to close his exhibits, and stood with his back to the case, and his arms carelessly outspread upon the edge chaffing with a group of late sight-seers, and keeping them from annoying him (Lausch) while he made things secure. Now I don't say that it was done, but I can see how that guard might

have played into the hands of the gang, who might have been at hand three or four strong. Observe, the cases were high at the inner sides and shallow at the front, and while the top sheet of glass, for purposes of display, was a large one, those forming the outer side were small and set into stout bronzed squares not to exceed seven inches in depth and ten in length. Now, we will note that the back of the case, besides being higher than the front, is not of glass, but of wood, to admit of the use of a mirror for lining, and to double the show and glitter of the gems.'

'Upon – my – word!'

'Now let us suppose our guard as standing before the case and directly in front of the diamonds. He is facing outward, and before him, hovering close, are some others, two or three, or more. On the other sides of the octagonal pavilion the other assistants are busy "closing up." Lausch in person presides at the small safe in the centre of the place. Now, while he is busy, with his eyes averted for a moment, a hand thrust under the outstretched arm of the guard may gently press something adhesive against the already cut glass and pull it out, and soon, when Lausch bends down to open the safe, or to place some article therein, the hand draws out the little tray of gems; it was small, and could have been concealed under one of those wraps thrown conveniently across the arm. Now, a little ruse to substitute the false gems and replace the glass under the guard's concealing arm, and the thing is done. If it all happened at the closing hour, when the big building was shadowy and one could see clearly only a short distance, when every exhibitor was occupied with his own, and visitors, for the most part, were intent upon reaching the nearest exit – it was bound to succeed. Of course this is all theory, but –'

'It's the explanation of that theft, or I'm a sinner!' cried Dave, jumping up and beginning to pace the floor nervously. 'Carl, old man, I'll never chaff your "bump of imagination," after to-day. I'm ready to begin work on just that theory.'

'Steady, steady, Dave.'

'All right, sir; at least we can make a beginning – we can find that guard.'

'How?'

'Take his description from Lausch – find out who was detailed here –'

I put up my hand, and he stopped – staring.

'Dave, there is not a Columbian guard on the force who would, or could, have played that part – if it was played. It was simply one of the band wearing a guard's uniform.'

My friend sat down opposite me, and for some time not a word passed between us. Then he took up his notebook, and, drawing a small table toward us, said:

'Let's go over the ground slowly, and see if there is anything here to corroborate your theory, or to point to any other conclusion.'

And now I knew that Dave was fixed, so far as his opinions were concerned, and that while he might declare himself convinced by my wisdom, he had been all the time simply establishing his own convictions, and that he was now ready for earnest work.

It was some time before we came out from the superintendent's little inner sanctum, but we were now quite ready to begin our campaign; and when we were given *carte blanche* as to methods, and were promised as many men as we might need for the work, we could ask for nothing more, or better.

Our first demand was peremptory. There must be no publicity; no word of the robbery must reach the vigilant reporters who were everywhere in search of news.

Next, we caused an accurate description of Greenback Bob to be sent to all the gates and different districts, with orders for an instant report of the fact should he be seen, and that once seen he must be constantly shadowed.

Before we left the place we had arranged with Lausch to put a man of our own choosing into the pavilion, whose business it would be to keep constant watch over his people. For while he was ready to vouch for their honesty, we were not; rather, we were not willing to let any possibility of a clue escape us. A second man was placed where he could cultivate these people, and as much as

possible outside of business hours. Not that we expected much from this, for we had seen no slightest sign of dishonesty among these people, who seemed to shun all society and to have no acquaintances outside their own pavilion.

After considering long, we decided not to bring the name of Delbras into the case, or to attempt to set any watch upon him in the regular way. To 'locate' Delbras should be our own especial work, and to freshen our memories we reviewed the information furnished our chief by the French commissaire.

So far as was known there was no picture of him extant, and the French report described him about as follows:

'Nationality, French; age, probably about thirty to thirty-three years; height, six feet, or nearly; weight, one hundred and seventy-five pounds, approximate; figure good; square shoulders, military air; features, regular; thin lipped; chin sharply pointed; wears at times heavy beard, at others moustache and goatee; eyes dark, called black; hair same, heavy, and sometimes worn quite long; hands well kept, with long slender fingers; speaks English perfectly, accomplished, etc.; a small triangular scar upon temple close to roots of hair. Known to have been in Paris and London in early winter, and to have crossed to New York about January 1st. Returned to Paris some time in March, and crossed last to New York in early May by steamer *Normandie*.'

'Well,' had been Dave's comment as we reperused this summary of M. Delbras, 'he may disguise himself in many ways, but he can't change his height very much, nor the colour of his eyes, nor his "regular features"' – Dave's features were not strictly regular, and it was a weakness of his always to resent this descriptive phrase – 'nor his slim fingers, nor the scar on his temple close to the roots of the hair.'

We had spent a long morning in the rooms of the Secret Service Bureau, and as we were about to take leave, with but a step between us and the outer door, it was hastily opened and a guard entered, followed by two people whom I recognised as Farmer and Mrs. Camp. With a backward step and a quick glance at Dave, I turned and deliberately seated myself.

The only occupants of the outer office at the moment of their entry were the officer in command, who had just accompanied us from the inner office, and the subordinate who was in charge of this outer office, where complaints were received and first hearings granted.

I had drawn back quickly, but the eye of Mrs. Camp was still keen, though she looked a trifle subdued.

'The good land!' she ejaculated, catching at her husband's arm. 'Here's one of 'em now, Camp! They've caught him, anyhow!'

The words furnished Dave with a clue to the situation, and he dropped into a chair beside me, and, after one droll look in my direction, gave himself up to a fit of silent mirth.

Meantime the guard had advanced with dignity and announced to the officer at the desk:

'This man has a complaint to bring, sir.'

'Wait!' It was Mrs. Camp, standing determinedly near the door of entrance, who spoke. 'Afore you make a complaint, Adam Camp, about a raskil that ain't here, s'pose you jest make sure that this here one that is here in our midst don't git away.'

CHAPTER VI. A CRIMINAL HUNT

Now, I had told the officer in command my belief and suspicions concerning the counterfeit business which I believed was going on about us, and had been told that two of the counterfeit bills had already been brought to his notice and captured within the week; and Dave had insisted upon his hearing the story of my absurd arrest by the guards, and now it only needed a look from me, and the sight of Dave's convulsed face, to make the situation plain to him. He stepped forward, but before he could speak a new thought had darted into Dame Camp's active mind.

'La!' she finished, 'I s'pose, come to think, he's been brought here now to be tried, ain't he?'

With the shadow of a smile upon his face, the officer turned toward the farmer.

'What is your complaint?' he asked courteously; and he shot me a glance which I knew meant, 'Let him tell his own story.' And now, being authorized to speak, Farmer Camp began to tell, in his own homely way, the story of the 'greenback swindle,' as he termed it. When he had reached the point in the narrative where I made my unlucky attempt to rout the swindlers, he turned toward me.

'I've had an idee sence, though my wife didn't agree with me much' – here came an audible sniff from Mrs. Camp – 'that this here young man might 'a' meant well, after all, and we wus a little mite hasty; but, ye see, he'd been a-lookin' at us so long, an' my wife'd been a-noticin' it, havin' her mind kind o' sot like on confidence people and sech, that she felt kind o' oneasy at his sharp looks – they wus so keen, she said, an' so quick to look away, she got nervous, and said she felt as if he wus a-lookin' right inter my pockets.'

'There now, Camp, you needn't be a-excusin' me! I stick ter my idee. Anyone can see that the young feller ain't innocent, else somebody'd 'a' spoke fur him, fust off –'

Here Dave exploded audibly, and the officer checked her with a motion of his hand.

'Let me settle this point at once by telling you, madam, that the gentleman you have accused is an officer high in his profession, and sent here to protect the public and look after criminals. He had but just arrived, and it was because of this that he was without his officer's badge, which would at once have put those men to rout had it been worn and displayed to them. Let me tell you now, to prevent further mistakes, that the detectives upon whom we rely in greatest emergencies are always to be found in citizen's clothes, and they are not likely to display a badge, except when necessary.'

Long before the end of this speech consternation was written all over the face of Adam Camp, but his wife was made of sterner stuff, and when her better half had stuttered and floundered half through a sufficiently humble apology, directed, of course, toward myself, she broke in upon his effort, no whit abashed:

'There, Camp, it's easy enough ter see how we came ter make sech a mistake, and I'm sure the young man will bear no malice to 'ard a couple of folks old enough ter be his parients. 'Twas them sharp-lookin' eyes that set me ter noticin' ye, when you was lookin' over Camp fust off, down to the Administration Building, and when you went an' sot down on the settee by him, an' then got up an' followed us so fur, what was I to think? You was a-watchin' us sure enough, only you meant well by it. But, land sakes! in sech a place, where everybody is tryin' to look out fur number one, I did what looked my dooty. I'm willin' to ask yer pardon, though, and I ain't goin' ter bear no malice.'

Overwhelmed by this magnanimity, I murmured my thanks and complete satisfaction with her *amende honorable*, and tried to turn the occasion to such profit as might be by questioning the man a little.

'You were saying that you changed a bill, or were about to do so. Did the man make any difficulty after I left you?'

'No, sir. He seemed in a kind of a hurry, and made out to be on sartin whether he could spare so much small money, as he called it. But finally he counted out a roll of bills, and had me count them after him.'

'There – in the crowd where you stood?'

'Wal, no. He took us to one side a little – right in behind the place where the little man was a-sellin' canes – sort of up ag'inst a partition, and there we made the dicker.'

'And he left you right away?' queried the officer in charge.

'Yes – jest about as quick as he could.'

'And the other,' I asked, 'the man who took you to this agent – the man with the large Sabbath-school class?'

'Oh! he asked us to go to the terminus station with him and see his young men; but my wife wanted to see things, and we jest went as fur as the door, out of perlitiness.'

'And when did you discover that you had been swindled?'

'Wal, M'riar wanted to ride in one of them coopy things with a man-hoss behind and before; and when she got ready to get out, which was purty soon, I give one of them fellers a two-dollar soovyneer bill, but they made a great jabbering about it, and M'riar says, says she, "I guess they ain't got the change;" so I fished out some pennies, and a dime and two postage stamps, and after a bit they tuk 'em and waddled off. Then we got to lookin' up and down, and we didn't have no more 'casion to use money – M'riar was so busy seein' the folks and their clo's – till we got hungry, and then come the rumpus. When I come to pay the bill, they was a reg'lar howl, an' we come mighty near bein' marched off to the calaboose, same's you was. They said the bill I offered 'em first off, an' all the rest, was counterfeit.'

Until now Brainerd had taken no part in the dialogue; but now, with a quick glance in my direction, he asked;

'Will you describe the man who gave you the money – the supposed agent?'

Camp pondered. 'Wal,' he began, 'he was tall, 's much as six foot, I should say, an' his eyes were black an' big. His hair was consid'able long, and he had a good deal of it on his face in a big bushy moustache. He had a slim nose – and he wore a big di'mond on his little finger.'

'Did you notice his hands?'

'M – no.'

'Wal, I did!' interposed his wife. 'I seen the di'mond, ef 'twas a di'mond. His hands was white – real white, 'long side of his face, and they looked like reg'lar claws; sech long fingers and pointed nails.'

'Ah!' Dave shot me a glance full of meaning. 'Now, Mrs. Camp, you seem a very observing woman. Will you describe the other man – the gentleman with the Sabbath-school class?'

The woman's head became even more erect, and her look more firm and confident than before. 'Yes,' she said at once; 'I can.' She cast her eyes about her, and, seeing a vacant chair near her interlocutor – the one lately vacated by myself – she seated herself deliberately, and began:

'He wasn't much to look at; about as big as you, mebbe, and about the same complected as that gentleman,' pointing to the sergeant at the desk, 'only his nose was longer, and sort of big and nobby at the end, an' a leetle red. I remember he had bigger ears than common, too; they sort of set straight out. His eyes were little, and a sort of watery gray, and his hair was kind of thin and sandy-like. He had some little mutton-chop whiskers, and a little hair, a'most tan-colour, on his upper lip. His mouth was quite big, and I noticed he had two front teeth with gold fillin' into 'em. He had gloves on his hands when we see him first, but when we met him afterward they was off.'

'Afterward, you say – did you meet him after you had discovered that you had been swindled?'

I broke in.

'Yes – we –'

'You see,' broke in Adam Camp, 'it was this way: we was comin' out of Midway, for we'd been out a'most to the end a-seein' the sights, an' when we got hungry we went into a place a blue-coat said was good, the Vienny Caffy, he called it. Well, it was there we had the fuss about the money, and they told us to come here right away and make a complaint. We started, and was jest comin' past that menagerie place, when M'riar wanted to stop jest afore the place and look at the big lion over the door.'

'A live one,' interpolated M'riar.

'Yes, a live one. Well, standin' there, all to once I see that Sunday-school feller come out o' the door a pickin' his teeth. He was right in front of me, and at first he seemed not to see me, and was hurryin' off dretful fast, but I caught on to his arm and says, quick-like: "Look here; I want to tell you somethin' fer your own good and to swap favers." Then he sort of slowed up, and axed me to pardin him – he was in haste, an' gettin' orful anxious about them boys. Then I says right out, "My friend, I'm anxious too, and you've got cause to be: you an' me's been swindled;" and then he most jumped, and asked, "How swindled?" "Hev you broke one of them two-dollar bills yit?" says I. "No," says he; an' then I up an' told him the hull story.'

'Did you tell him you were coming here?' I asked, as he paused a moment.

'No, because he got so excited and talked so fast; I declare, he put it all out of my head.'

Again he stopped, as if loth to continue, but again Mrs. Camp took up the parable.

'Now, father, yer may jest as well out with it! Ye see, this chap flew all to pieces, so to speak, an' he was goin' to have a officer right away. He had a letter of interducshun from his minister to home to the capt'in of the Columbine perleece – they was related somehow – and he would jest have them men arrested; an' then he happened ter think that 'twas gittin' late and time a'most for that train with them Sunday-school children to come, and it put him out awfully; but he said that he'd make it his bizness to see to that, and then he made a 'p'intment with Camp to meet him at half-past ten ter-day, an' they'd go tergether ter see the Columbine perleeceman.' She paused, and uttered a cackling laugh. 'Wal,' she concluded, 'Camp see that 'twas gittin' purty late, so he 'greed to it; an' I didn't say nothin', but arter he'd gone ter meet them boys ag'in I put my foot down ter come here fust, an' not to wait till mebbe the feller'd git away, and finally Camp reckoned 'twould be best, and so we came. Someway that feller sort o' went ag'in' me, to'rds the last. I don't want to be hasty ag'in, but I sort o' feel as if he might be kind o' tricky, 's well's the rest.'

It did not take us long to convince the Camps that they had been duped all round, and while we had little faith in their ever seeing the 'Sunday-school feller' again, we obtained their promise to keep their appointment with him; and here Dave Brainerd suddenly muttered an excuse to the two officers, and said in my ear, 'If I am not back in fifteen minutes meet me at the Administration at four sharp.' And with a nod to the Camps he went hastily out. I felt very sure of his errand. He had fancied, like myself, that 'Smug,' fearing lest the Camps might prove too clever for his wiles – perhaps suspecting the keen-eyed old woman – had followed them in order to assure himself whether it would be safe to keep his latest appointment with them, and this indeed proved to be the case.

Before the Camps left the place we had easily convinced them that their 'Sunday-school friend' and not I, had been the 'confidence man,' and that if he kept this last appointment with them it would only be to lure them into another trap, and a worse one, for it would have for its aim the suppression of any and all evidence they might have been inclined to give to the 'perleece.'

In convincing the gentle old man, and shattering his faith in my friend Smug, I could see that we had dealt his simple, kindly nature a real blow, but Mother Camp was of sterner stuff.

'You needn't worrit about me, not now,' she assured me, with a vigorous nod. 'After gitten' into one trap I ain't a-goin' to tumble into any more, an' I ain't goin' ter let him, neither, not when I'm on hand. I've told that man, more times 'n I've got fingers an' toes, that he was too soft-hearted; allus feedin' tramps 'n' stray dawgs, an' swallerin' all the beggars' yarns.'

'I guess ye needn't worrit, M'riar,' the old man said, with a faint show of spirit. 'Things might 'a' been worst. I didn't aim ter squander a hundred dollars to one lick, but I've got'n nuff left yit ter see the Fair an' git home on, so I guess we may as well be a-seein' it; a body hes to live, live an' larn.'

And with this sentiment the pair took their departure, a little the wiser, and more wary, perhaps, for the words of warning and advice given them by the officer in charge, who had taken their names and address, and made a memorandum of their 'complaint.'

He had smiled slightly when told their street and number, and had remarked that at least Stony Island Avenue had the merit of nearness, adding the friendly caution, 'Don't make boarding-house acquaintances, good people, and keep on the bright side of the way in going home late.' Whereupon I made a mental note to investigate this same hardly-named avenue.

Long before the end of the Fair I had cause to thank myself for this mental note, and that it was held in remembrance.

Brainerd did not appear at the stipulated time, and I was too eager to be out in full sight of that wonder city to remain at the bureau; so taking the Intramural Railway at the nearest station I began to circle in and out among those marvels of genius, skill, and nineteenth century enterprise which, combined, had placed, in a time so short as to seem a miracle, this city of beauty beside the blue Lake Michigan.

And now I began to ask myself why the visitor who had nothing to do but to see this wonder of wonders, and had no need to keep one eye upon the passing faces, did not see it, at least until it grew familiar from that point of view, from a seat in an Intramural.

What a kaleidoscopic panorama! In taking my place I had not even noticed the direction in which I was moving. I had been seeing such a marvel of glimpses, domes, roofs, the lagoon in the distance, a flashing glimpse of the lake through glittering, airy turrets, trees, statues, flags – beauty and charm everywhere. I had taken a round-trip ticket, and I whirled on and on, until somehow I saw the great glass dome of the Horticultural Building, and a moment later a fleeting view of Midway recalled to my mind my own personality and interests. As I gazed at it, stretching away westward, a veritable Joseph's coat of a street, it was gone, and I saw the tall dome of Illinois, the Art Gallery in the distance, with the lagoon again gleaming through trees, to be lost again, while roofs, windows, vistas of streets surrounded me, and I could peep in at the windows we were passing; and then I heard the cry of the guard, and noted the name as we slackened speed at Mount Vernon Station, almost upon the roof of the Old Virginia Building. I peered out as we drew up to this station in the air, and drew back a little as a second train, moving in the opposite direction, dashed by. I am in the rear car, and as we move away from Mount Vernon, suddenly I have a vision of someone who must have flung himself from the forward car at the last moment, and who is running along the platform, and in the direction of the passing train, in breathless haste, his head bare, his hat clutched in his swinging hand.

It is Dave Brainerd, and as we tear around a curve and he is lost to my sight, I am brought back to thoughts of business. Dave has evidently 'struck a trail.' Wondering much, I stop at the north loop, and standing with the Government Building to my right and the Fisheries with its curving colonnades on my left, I gaze off upon the blue and shining waters of the lake, and realize fully for the first time the awful incongruity between all this stateliness and beauty and our mission in its midst – a criminal hunt!

CHAPTER VII.

'IT WAS GREENBACK BOB.'

Our chief had arranged for us, and in advance of our arrival, that our letters should be received at the bureau, where a desk was always at our disposal; and a little before four o'clock I dropped in once more to look for letters and ask if Dave had made a second appearance. The letters were in waiting for both of us, but there was no news of Dave, and, stowing the letters in my pocket, I sought once more the Court of Honour; seating myself near the great MacMonnies Fountain, in the shade of the Administration Building, where Dave could not fail to find me, to read my letters and wait for him.

I was in no haste, with that magnificent court spread out before me, and the blue dancing waves of Lake Michigan in the distance, Nature's background for the great Peristyle, surmounted by that novel and beautiful Columbus quadriga, in itself a work of art such as is seldom seen, and with golden Justice, dominant and serene, commanding and overlooking all.

Forgetting my letters, I let my eyes wander slowly from point to point of beauty, letting the moments pass unheeded.

'Fine figure of a woman, eh?'

I started, and came suddenly down to earth, at the sound of one of my friend's characteristic speeches. He was standing beside me, as imperturbable of countenance as usual, but looking somewhat blown; and he dropped upon the bench, and stretched his legs, and pulled off his hat, like a weary man who means to enjoy a little well-earned rest.

I knew him too well to display any curiosity, and I merely sorted out from the bundle of letters still unopened in my hand those bearing his name, and laid them upon his knee, and with merely a nod and smile, by way of greeting, addressed myself to my own.

The first was a brief business document; the next a schoolboy's letter, short, of course, from a young brother, my sole living tie and charge. The third was from our chief, and I saw, upon opening it, that it was addressed, within, to both of us.

'Dave,' I ventured, 'may I interrupt?'

'You can't,' he replied. 'I've done. They're of no consequence,' and he thrust the two missives I had given him into his loose side-pocket. 'Blaze away, boy.'

The letter was not long, and, after some minor instructions and some suggestions, came this passage:

""I wonder if either of you remembers the case of the Englishman who wrote us at much length some six months ago concerning his son, 'lost or missing' – we did not succeed in finding him in New York – ""

'And small wonder,' chuckled Dave, whose memory was a storehouse. 'We hadn't even the skeleton of a description.'

""In New York, you remember,"" I read on, ""and it has seemed to me that you may as well look out for him in your intervals of leisure, if there are such.""

'Old man's growing sarcastic,' grumbled my friend.

""It's a good thing, if successful,"" I continued; ""and the Fair is the best place in the world for a 'hide out.' If the young fellow's above-ground I'll wager something he's in Chicago now; that is, if he really did come to America a year ago, as his fond father (?) writes. I enclose for your further information his letter; and I would be proud of the fact if you two fellows could unearth him at the Columbian City. I give you *carte blanche* for the case.""

'Umph! That means roll up your sleeves and go in.'

I took up the copy of the Englishman's letter. 'Shall I read it?' I asked, 'or is it – '

'Don't say "engraven on your memory,"' implored Dave. 'Yes – go ahead.'

*"Dundalk House,
"January 3, 1893.*

"Messrs. – .

"Gentlemen, – On November 6th, in the year 1892, Carroll L. Rae, Esq., of Dundalk House, left his home, ostensibly for a few days in London. He was never seen again at Dundalk, and we have been accurately informed that he sailed for America in that same month. Being of age, he drew from his bankers while in London one thousand pounds, the full amount deposited to his credit; since that time no trace of him has been found.

"Carroll L. Rae is twenty-six years of age, and tall, lacking one-half inch of being six feet in height. He is slender, broad-shouldered, upright; fair skin, blue eyes, brown hair; features regular and refined; hair worn very short, but inclined to curl close to skull; strong in athletic sports; a graduate of Queen's College; has small, aristocratic feet and hands; a skilled horseman; sings a fine and unusually high tenor; has a singularly strong control over all animals. We have no portrait of him since childhood. Has strong leaning toward military life and somewhat literary tendencies. Am prepared to send blank cheque for the payment of expenses of thorough search, and add as reward when found two thousand pounds. Address all correspondence to

*"Sir Hugo Rae,
"Dundalk House, Egham,
"Surrey."*

'Umph!' broke out Brainerd, when I had read the last word. 'Typical old English paterfamilias! Tyrannical, I'll be bound. I'll bet something the young fellow ran away from parental tyranny. How did the thing come out at the first attempt? I don't seem to recall it.'

'And for a good reason. You were in Canada, and I was occupied with that Rockville murder. I think they put Sturgis on the case. English himself, you know.'

'Yes – well?'

'Well, as nearly as I remember, Sturgis advertised, to begin, "something to his advantage," etc.'

'Of course!' contemptuously.

'This failed, and he made the tour of the hotels, swell places first, then going down in the scale, hunted the registers; haunted the places most affected by the English tourist; halted good-looking, or English-looking, blond young men until they turned on him. In fact, tried all the dodges – and failed.'

'Of course! It's one thing to find a person who has been hidden, and quite another to search for one who hides himself. What do you think has set the chief to looking this lost son up here, and through us?'

'Why, you know his ways – he seldom stops to explain; but I fancy he may have heard again from Sir Hugo Rae.'

I took up the two sheets, and was about to thrust them into their envelope, when Brainerd suddenly said:

'Hold on, boy! there's something written across the back of that copied letter.'

I turned it over and read the half-dozen lines written thereon:

"Carroll Rae, if found, is to be told at once that his brother, Sir Hugo, is dead."

'Oh!' ejaculated Brainerd; 'so it's not his father. Well, that alters things. We may be able to find a Sir Carroll Rae, especially as he must have about exhausted that thousand pounds if he has been doing the States in true English style.'

'At any rate,' I added, 'it's on our books. I suppose one may keep an eye out for a swell young Englishman here as well as elsewhere. It's only one more face in the crowd.'

'And that reminds me,' said my friend. 'This business almost put it out of my head. I took a turn on that Intramural road this afternoon.'

'Yes?' I knew better than to interrupt at this point.

'And I saw, I am sure I saw – whom do you think?'

'Dave, that's like a woman! I'm surprised at you. You saw Delbras.'

'Wrong! I saw, I'm certain of it, Greenback Bob.'

'Good!'

'He was dressed very swell – you might have mistaken him for one of the board of directors; but it was Bob.'

'And you piped him home, of course?' I queried.

'Of course I didn't. He was going one way, and I the other, each on an Intramural car.'

'Oh! and you were running to stop the car, and Bob, when I saw you at Mount Vernon Station,' I said wickedly; 'did you overtake it?'

'I did – just.'

'And Bob?' eagerly.

'Well,' with a grin, 'I'm sorry to disappoint you, but when I jumped on board, at the last moment, I found that Bob had got off while I got on. In fact, I saw him going downstairs as I was borne away to Fifty-seventh Street. There, boy, don't look so mournful; it's all in the game. I couldn't find a trace of him; but we know he's here.'

I had decided on the night of my arrival, after pondering late the adventure of the black bag, or, as I now described it to myself, Miss Jenrys' bag, upon my course of action concerning it.

In her letter to her friend she had mentioned the entrance at Fifty-seventh Street as being near their place of abode, and I had promised myself that I would be early at that gate to watch for the coming of Miss Jenrys, and to restore her property – what else?

But I had not counted upon a diamond robbery at the very beginning of my World's Fair adventures, and as I wished to go unaccompanied, I did not attempt to stand guard at evening.

But the second morning saw me at an early hour alone, and so near the gate at Fifty-seventh Street that I could in no possible way miss the lady should she appear.

I had not needed to avoid Dave. He had been prompt to tell me that he meant to put in the day looking for Greenback Bob, and that he should 'do his looking' upon Midway.

'And why Midway?' I had asked him.

'Because, if there's a place that is better than all other places in which to hide one's self, that place is the Midway.'

It was quite true; and as I made my way toward the northern entrance, I turned over in my mind an idea suggested, or revived, by Dave's last words.

As I passed toward the entrance between the unique little house of South Dakota on one side and hospitable and home-like Nebraska State Building on the other, my gaze was caught by the restfulness and charm of the western façade of the latter, with its broad portico and the little lawn lying between the broad steps facing the western boundary of the grounds, the little stream flowing under overhanging trees of nature's own planting, and past the little natural arbour of climbing vines draping themselves among the branches, making shade and coolness for the groups loitering underneath upon the rustic seats scattered freely and inviting all.

While I gazed, a voice close behind me said, in a wheedling drawl:

'Dew come in! You never saw sech a place! Why, upstairs beats this all out of sight. Sech parlours, with velvet chairs, and sofys, and a pianer; I tell ye Nebrasky beats some o' them stuck-up Eastern States!'

I turned, to see a fat, rosy-faced and eager woman, in the defiant bonnet I have learned to know as from 'out west,' piloting a lean and reluctant woman, quite as typical as a rural New Englander, through the gate of the inclosure; and, prompted doubtless by the words I had just heard, I took

another and more extended survey of the building so justly extolled, this time lifting my eyes to the upper window and the balcony overhanging the stream.

Was it a mere passing resemblance, or a fancied one, or was the face I saw for just an instant at one of those upper windows the face of the little brunette adventuress who had laid claim to Miss Jenrys' bag? If so, she had been scanning the increasing crowd through an opera-glass, and had dropped this in seeming haste, and vanished, before I could prolong my glance.

'It's hardly likely,' I said to myself, and turned toward the bridge spanning the little stream, and lying between me and the entrance I sought.

As I stepped upon the bridge I saw, on the other side, just coming out from the shadow of the elevated tracks above the entrance, the lithe form and rare blond face, not to be mistaken anywhere, with its fine clear contour, its dark eyes, and fine healthful pallor.

She came forward leisurely, and stopped by the railing at the edge of the platform to look down at the white-hooded Laplander who constantly paddled up and down in the little stream, between the bridge and the Lapland Village behind the inclosure, a few rods to the north.

Just then there was a cry from beyond the gates, followed by the rat-tat-tat of a drum, and one of those perpetually arriving 'processions' came filing down the platform and across the bridge. I was in no haste to accost Miss Jenrys at the very entrance, and possibly in the face of one or more of my ever-present brethren of the watchful eye, and so, while she waited unhurried upon one side of the bridge, I stopped also, looking down upon the little stream and feigning interest in the white-robed canoeist paddling, and doubtless perspiring, in the mild June air. The procession was not a long one, and was formed of boys, half-grown, and wholly effervescent, wearing what was evidently an extemporized uniform, and carrying a banner which informed me that it was a boys' school, sent from an outlying town through the liberality of an 'Honorable' somebody whose name I did not hear; for the fact of the sending was not emblazoned upon the red-silk banner they carried, but was announced, often and willingly, in reply to numerous queries all along the line.

They were a healthy and wholesome lot of fellows, and while I gazed at them, not without a feeling of interest in and sympathy with their day's pleasure, a little figure flitted past me, through the tiniest of spaces between the marching lads and myself, pressed close against the rail, and I saw again the little brunette hastening toward the platform at the gate. Wondering a little, I kept my post.

There was the usual rabble of all sorts and conditions swelling the ranks in the rear, and when these had crowded across the bridge, there was another throng of more leisurely moving visitors. But Miss Jenrys was not in this throng; and when they had passed and the stream of travel had somewhat thinned I moved forward, only a few steps, however, for just beyond me, advancing slowly, with a smile upon her lips, and her eyes turned toward a companion, came Miss Jenrys.

She had entered the grounds alone – of that I had been ocularly convinced; and that she should find a companion so soon had never entered my thoughts.

But she had a companion, and I almost gnashed my teeth as I saw tripping along at her side the little brunette.

She was talking volubly, in the low, quiet manner that I knew, and if she saw me in passing she disguised the fact skilfully.

I waited until they were a few paces ahead, and then followed them slowly, chewing the cud of bitter reflection.

Could it be that I was losing my skill in reading and judging faces – I, upon whom the men of our force relied for a rapid, and usually correct, guess at a strange face? Was I mistaken in this little brunette, then? Or had I been mistaken in my judgment of Miss Jenrys?

No, never! I had set her down at once for a lady, in the sweet old-fashioned meaning of the word – womanly, refined, good and true; and had not her letters confirmed this? But this dark-haired, quick-speaking little person by her side – was she, after all, a friend? And had I committed a *faux pas* in refusing to deliver up the little bag? And if so, had I the courage to approach these two and commit

myself? Could I tell Miss Jenrys how, failing to think of a better way of finding her, I had read her letters? I had meant, of course, to do this; but could I, with those pert, mocking eyes upon me? No; in my heart I knew that it was not that which vexed me. Could I bear the scrutiny of those clear, straightforward brown eyes in that other presence, which would put me at so sore a disadvantage?

Then I shook myself and my senses together. After all she came alone. Might they not separate soon? How could I tell that there was not a friend, several friends perhaps, waiting for that troublesome brunette back in the Nebraska Building?

They were walking straight down the street toward the lake, with a row of State buildings upon one side and the great spreading Art Gallery on the other. It was a perfect June morning, and the sight of the blue lake at the end of that splendid promenade, and the fresh breeze blowing off it, were inspiring. There was to be some State function that day, and the crowd was thickening. Made bold by numbers, I came close behind them. Miss Jenrys had unfurled a big blue umbrella, and the two walked in the shade of it; and in order to screen myself, in part at least, should the brunette, whom I was beginning to detest heartily, turn and look suddenly back, I shook out the closely-rolled folds of my own umbrella and poised it carefully between my face and the sun.

And now, made bold by my canopy, and frankly bent upon hearing what I could, I drew daringly near, and when they stopped and stood to gaze at the ornate New York State Building, I halted also.

'By no means,' I heard the soft voice of the lovely blonde say, as she moved back a pace to look up at the façade. 'That would be quite too enterprising. I am chaperoned by my aunt, who is not so good a sight-seer as myself, and for two days I have ventured – ' Here the sharp call of some hurrying chair-boys drowned her words, and I next heard the brunette's voice.

'Things do happen so strangely' – it was impossible to catch all of her words – 'mamma is sick so often – and papa – I do dislike being alone, though – in the Art Gallery – acquaintances. That is all – I do wish – '

They moved on, Miss Jenrys increasing her speed perceptibly, and seeking, it seemed to me, to walk a little aloof from her companion, which caused me to wonder if she could be expecting or hoping to meet anyone. I was no longer able to hear their conversation, but they again paused and gazed long at the fine colonial building of the State of Massachusetts.

I had hardly looked to see Miss Jenrys enter the placid New York halls, but when she turned away from Massachusetts without entering or so much as climbing the terrace steps, I wondered; and then, as the pair turned away, and after a moment of seeming hesitation moved on toward the lake, a man, tall and well dressed, passed me so closely and at such a rapid pace as to attract my attention to himself. He walked well, with a quick, swinging stride, and I think I never saw a man's clothes fit better. His hands were gloved, and in one of them he carried a natty umbrella, using it as a cane. I had not seen his face, for he turned it neither to right nor left; and his splendid disregard for the beauties all about him was explained when I saw him halt beside Miss Jenrys and hold out a hand with the assured air of an old friend. I was near enough to see the smile on her face when she turned to greet him, but the few quick words they exchanged were of course unheard. Then I saw her turn toward the brunette on the other side; but that brisk little person had already drawn back, and now she said a word or two, nodded airily, and, turning, went quickly away.

A moment later Miss Jenrys and her companion turned about and went toward the Massachusetts Building, and I saw his face. It was dark and handsome; and as they mounted the terrace side by side I pressed boldly forward, under the shadow of my umbrella, and thanking my lucky stars that I had it with me, and that – because it was on the cards that at ten o'clock I was to go to the rendezvous where Farmer Camp was to meet, or await, Mr. Smug, for he knew him by no other name – I was lightly but sufficiently disguised in a wig slightly sprinkled with gray, and long about my neck and ears, and a very respectable looking short and light set of moustaches and whiskers, the whole finished with a pair of gold-rimmed glasses.

Wearing these, I ventured so close that I heard, while toiling behind them up the broad old-fashioned stairway, a few fragmentary words from the lips of Miss Jenrys, who seemed replying to some question.

'I cannot, indeed – the best of reasons. My aunt is not here, Mr. Voisin.'

'Mr. Voisin!' I fell back and meditated. So this was the handsome Frenchman, the rival of 'him'! I did not again attempt to overhear their conversation, but I followed them about the building as they moved slowly from room to room, and now I did not follow with my eyes upon the graceful and stately movements, the lovely profiles and turns of the head, of the fair woman moving on before me, but I noted carefully every gesture, every pose and turn, the gait, carriage, and as correctly as possible the height, weight, and length of limb of Mr. Maurice Voisin of France, and I felt that I was doing well.

When at last they turned from the building, which neither had seemed in haste to leave, I looked at my watch, and knew that I had barely time to reach the southern end of the grounds even aided by the Intramural. As I came out upon the street once more, and was passing hurriedly by the eastern portico of the New York Building, I chanced to lift my eyes toward it. The great curtains between the fluted columns were swaying in the breeze, and from between two, which she seemed to be trying to hold together with unsteady hands, the face of the little brunette, dark and frowning, looked cautiously out.

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