

A Pawned Watch

It Was at the Bottom of a Plot

By ESTHER VANDEVEER
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"Goodby, Harold."
"Goodby, Alice."

These, and these alone, were the parting words between Harold Rothwell and Alice Swain, for their hearts were too full to say more. They were to have been married within a few months, but Rothwell had developed pulmonary trouble, and it was decided that he should go west and live an outdoor life. The prospect before them was gloomy. Even if Harold recovered his health the giving up of prospects he was leaving might keep him in poverty and necessitate their continued separation. He turned away and set out for the railway station. Alice watched him till he reached a head in the road, when he turned and threw her a kiss. She returned it and he passed out of sight. And as they were, they would have been far more so had they known what would happen before they should meet again.

That same day two years hence found Rothwell financial manager for Henry Palmer, a rancher, though not just appointed to the position. Rothwell had long been a sheep herder for Palmer, and the out of door life had completely cured him of his illness. As soon as it was considered safe for him to lead a more confined life Palmer, who had taken a great fancy to him and who needed a clerk, put him in charge of the financial part of his ranching. Then Rothwell wrote to Alice Swain that within another year he hoped to return for her and bring her back with him.

The ranch was not a large one, and the owner and his clerk were the only two persons engaged upon it except a few herders, who were always away in charge of the flocks. The men became very warm friends and were almost constantly together. One day Palmer said to his clerk:

"You know, Harold, that I am a bachelor and have no one in the world to have what belongs to me. I'm going to make a will bequeathing this ranch and the stock on it to you."

"That's well," said Rothwell, "but you are ten years older than I and the messenger I think I would better have my possessions, if I had any, to you."

"Furthermore," Palmer continued without soliciting the comment, "there are five \$1,000 bonds, which will also be yours. These bonds, together with some old family trinkets, I have placed in a box, and I am going to show you where they are hidden. They will go with you to your death."

He led the way to the attic and from a recess formed by a corner in the roof between two joists took a tin box, opened it and showed Rothwell the bonds and the trinkets referred to. The latter consisted of a gold watch bearing the initials H. P. and some articles of jewelry.

"You are very kind," said Rothwell, "to make me your heir, but as I have said, I don't think there is the slightest chance of my ever receiving my inheritance."

"There is a better chance than you think," said the other. Rothwell looked at him inquiringly but received no further confidence. Palmer replaced the box, and the two men returned to the lower story. Then Palmer opened a safe kept on the premises, took out a will, showed Rothwell that it was in his favor, put it back and closed the safe door.

"Why," asked Rothwell, "don't you keep the bonds and the other things in the safe?"

"I have a special reason for not keeping the bonds there. As to the watch and jewelry, it doesn't matter where they are kept. Some day you may learn the reason. So long as I live I can trust you not to show the box in the street, and after my death what it contains may be of some benefit other than for their intrinsic value."

"To whom?"

"That will appear at the time."

This was not very satisfactory, but Rothwell was obliged to be satisfied with it. It was but a few weeks after this that Rothwell, having got in some funds for the sale of sheep, rode to the town, some dozen miles away, to deposit the money in bank. The day proved an eventful one. On the way two masked men sprang upon him from a wood beside the road and robbed him. Returning to the ranch, he found Palmer lying in the living room of the house with a bullet hole in his brain.

It hit him curiously. Then he called a messenger and sent him off posthaste. When the messenger returned he brought the sheriff with him, who without a word of explanation, clapped a pair of handcuffs on Rothwell's wrists. The prisoner was taken to town and lodged in jail, charged with the murder of Henry Palmer and the embezzlement of the funds he claimed he had intended to put in the bank. The case was one of circumstantial evidence—or, rather, of motive—alone. It was assumed that Rothwell had got behind in his accounts, had embezzled the amount of which he claimed he had been robbed and, fearing that it would be found out, he had murdered Palmer.

This made a strong case against him, and there was very little to be said in his favor. No trace of any one having attacked Palmer and no evidence of Rothwell's story that he had been robbed appeared. The court retained charge of Palmer's property but allowed the legatees sufficient funds to pay a lawyer to defend him. His attorney did the best in his power for him, but was unable to establish his innocence. The jury, after some time between murder in the first and second degree, but finally brought in a verdict of guilty of the former. He was sentenced to suffer the death penalty.

And so it was that Rothwell, having escaped death from tuberculosis, had now reached a condition where he might bring his sweetheart to him as his wife, was doomed to suffer on the gallows for a crime he had not committed. There are not the dozens in punishment for crime in new countries where the safeguards against infringing on the rights of accused persons are more strictly enforced. Rothwell was sentenced to be hanged a few weeks after his conviction. A new trial was granted, on days of proceedings, and the day of doom was near when something happened.

A young woman stood looking in through the window of a pawnshop in the town where Rothwell was confined. At the time an officer of the law dressed in plain clothes was in the shop interviewing the pawnbroker about some stolen goods that he had loaned money on. The woman entered the shop and produced a watch on which she asked for a loan. The broker inspected the watch and at once caught sight of two letters, "H. P." on the case.

"Whose initials are those?" asked the broker. The woman said she did not know. The detective took a hand in questioning her and, her replies being contradictory, took her to police headquarters. There, after many surmises, some one noticed that "H. P." were the initials of Henry Palmer, for whose murder Rothwell was to be hanged in a few days. The chief of police put the woman through the "third degree" process, with the result of a confession that she had murdered Palmer.

Many were inclined to doubt that the confession was genuine. Had it not been for the fact that the woman had attempted to borrow money on a watch with Palmer's initials on it, little attention would have been paid to her statement. She claimed to have been a discarded wife of Palmer's, and it was for this casting off that she had killed him. The watch was shown to Rothwell, and he told the police where he had seen it. This identified the woman with Palmer she was charged with his murder, and Rothwell was released. He asked to see the person who stood in his place and was taken to her cell.

What was his amazement to recognize Alice Swain. Before he had time to betray their relationship she gave him a look that put him on his guard. She then spoke to him as a stranger, telling him that if he could get permission to see her alone she would throw additional light on the murder. Permission was granted, and the two were left alone. Not daring to embrace each other, they refrained. Alice talked about the murder, but, fearful of being overheard, said nothing to reveal the true situation. Meanwhile she scratched all a bit of paper.

"This is a plan to save you. Luckily you wrote me of the tin box. I came, took the watch and pawned it to get arrested, so away and I will convince them of my innocence."

It was agreed between them through the same medium that Harold should have a week before Alice revealed the trick. When the period had expired and he was safe in hiding she called for the lawyer who had defended him and told him how Rothwell had written her of the interview he had had with Palmer and of the tin box, showing him the letter—how she had gone to the hiding place, taken the watch and pawned it, knowing the man who was at the time with the pawnbroker was a detective. The attorney soon obtained a dismissal of the charge against her, and later she was set at liberty.

She at once went to the ranch house and in her future husband's name claimed for him his inheritance. Making a more thorough examination of the contents of the tin box, she found a bit of paper on which were written the following words:

If I am murdered it will be by my old partner, Jacob Wilcox. When we separated I took some bonds that he claimed belonged to him. He told me then that he would have the bonds if he had to kill me to get them.

In time Rothwell came into his inheritance and married the girl who had saved him. He spent considerable money trying to find Wilcox and bring him to justice, but never succeeding. The Rothwell ranch is now one of the largest in that section of country.

How to Open a Can of Corn.

One of the smallest of the little girls in a West Philadelphia family had of late assisted her mother in preparing the meals. She observed that her mother, who was rather busy, always talked to herself when she had any difficulty in opening cans of vegetables. The little girl thought that the handiness was a part of the operation.

"One day she was visiting a neighbor and went into the kitchen to help prepare a meal. She watched the neighbor take a can of corn, apply the opener and remove the top.

"That's not the way to open a can of corn," said the little girl. "Why, what other way is there?" asked the neighbor. "Well, you take the can of corn and start to open it, and then you bear down and the opener slips. Then you say 'Darn this can!' and instead of that's the way my mother opens a can of corn."—Philadelphia Times.

Diamonds to Lampblack.

You may purchase equal quantities of carbon for 5 cents or a million dollars. A bargain hunter might have a nickel and get a package of pure lampblack. The million would secure a blazing diamond, easily turned into lampblack, but so easily turned into lampblack would be required. However, coal and wood are really more valuable than diamonds. They surround us, giving heat while the only one so far discovered for diamonds is a few inches across, and for this carbonaceous material, every one of which can be opened and closed at will by means of powerful muscles. When a camel drinks it drinks a very great deal. Indeed, it goes drinking on for such a very long time that really you would think that it never wanted to leave off. But the fact is that it is not only satisfying its thirst but is filling up its cistern as well. One after another the cells in its stomach are filled with the water and as soon as each is quite full it is lightly closed. Then when the animal becomes thirsty a few hours later all that it has to do is to open one of the cells and allow the water to flow out. Next day it opens one or two more cells, and so it goes on day after day until the whole supply is exhausted. In this curious way a camel can live five or even six days without drinking at all and so is able to travel quite easily through the desert, where the wells are often hundreds of miles apart.

A Bit Too Clever.

Florence Hunt used to tell how a carpenter saved one of his best known pictures from a serious error. The man was doing some odd jobs about the house and was found frowning at "The Shadow of the Cross" in the studio—the picture in which Christ, who has been saving a plank in the workshop, rises to his full height and stretches, his shadow forming a crucifix.

"Well," asked the artist interrogatively. "Don't think much of it, master," was the blunt comment. "Why?" demanded Hunt, aroused. "Any one that can saw wood with out making any sawdust is a slight cleverer than I ever seed," was the answer. It was true—the floor was clean beneath the bench.

Some Nautical Facts.

A knot is 2,000 feet long. The distance from New York to Liverpool is 3,004 nautical miles by the northern track and 3,150 by the southern track. The former course is taken by vessels bound for New York, the latter by vessels bound for Liverpool. From Liverpool to New York the distances are respectively 3,050 and 3,100 miles. In estimating records the points taken on either side are Sandy Hook and Dana's rock, Quonset harbor, the first light sighted on the British coast is the Bull, Cow and Calé, Ireland, and on the American coast at Nantuxet or Fire Island.

He Was Cautious.

Fredrick the Great was always fond of disputations, but, as he generally terminated the discussion by collaring his antagonist and kicking his shins, few of his guests were disposed for an argument. He asked one of his suit why he did not venture to give his opinion on some particular question. "It is impossible, your majesty," was the reply, "to express an opinion before a sovereign who has such convictions and wears such very thick boots."

Live Table Talk.

"I hope you will be interested in 'under gentleman,'" said the hostess. "I have assigned him to take you out to dinner." "I shall be," responded the lady ad dressed. "That gentleman was formerly my husband, and he's behind with his alimony."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

It Often Is.

"I was in hopes when I married that I could give my wife everything she wanted." "Well?" "I didn't think her yearning capacity would be so much greater than my earning capacity."—Washington Herald.

Gives Him No Chance.

"Were you quarrelling with your wife when I came in? I heard you talking loud." "No. When we're quarrelling she's the one that talks."—Cleveland Leader.

Chief is crowned with consolation—Shakespeare.

Mistaken Significance.

The lesson and significance of an experience incorporated by Mr. Maximo Barling in his book, "Russian Esays and Stories," are undoubtedly the mistake of underrating one's wares. One is likely to be taken at one's word. Once when Mr. Barling was competing in a civil service examination and appeared as a candidate in the German viva voce the German examiner asked him if he could speak German.

"Yes, a little," he answered modestly. "Oh," said the examiner, "I will then wish you good morning. I will no doubt have the pleasure of seeing you again the next time there is an examination."

The next time there was an examination Mr. Barling presented himself again. The German examiner, who happened to be a different man, asked Mr. Barling if he could speak German. He replied:

Yes, I speak it as well as Bismarck spoke it, and my written style combines the solidity of Lessing's, the limpidity of Goethe's and the lightness of touch of Heine's, as you have no doubt observed from my written papers."

"Then I need not trouble you any further," said the examiner. "That time Mr. Barling got full marks."

A Camel's Stomach.

The stomach of a camel is divided into four compartments, and the walls of one of these are lined with large cells, every one of which can be opened and closed at will by means of powerful muscles. When a camel drinks it drinks a very great deal. Indeed, it goes drinking on for such a very long time that really you would think that it never wanted to leave off. But the fact is that it is not only satisfying its thirst but is filling up its cistern as well. One after another the cells in its stomach are filled with the water and as soon as each is quite full it is lightly closed. Then when the animal becomes thirsty a few hours later all that it has to do is to open one of the cells and allow the water to flow out. Next day it opens one or two more cells, and so it goes on day after day until the whole supply is exhausted. In this curious way a camel can live five or even six days without drinking at all and so is able to travel quite easily through the desert, where the wells are often hundreds of miles apart.

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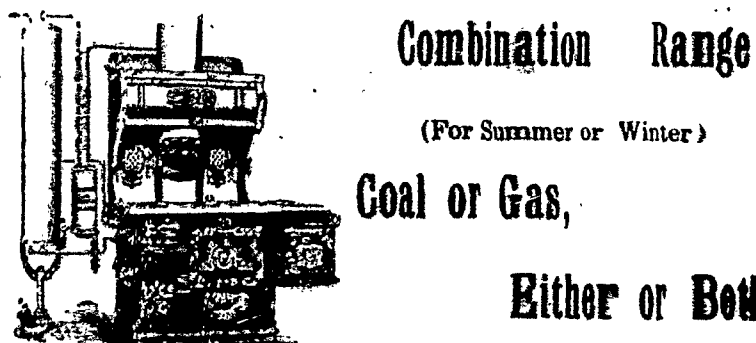
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