

## JUSTICE DELAYED

"What beastly hard luck to have one's father die so suddenly and to be left to face the world alone. Poor Bob."

Thus reflected Harry Redding, as he leaned back in the comfortable chair and thought of his old friend, Bob Harden, whose father had died a short time previously, leaving his only child without a relative. In the midst of his thoughts he was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of the butler bearing a letter for him.

"From Bob," he murmured, as he ran the letter-opener through the envelope. "I wonder what he has to say."

"Dear Harry," the letter ran, "I am awfully lonesome here alone. Can't you come up and spend a few weeks with me? I need you."

"Something's up, that's sure," mused Harry, "something important, too, if I know Bob Harden. Sure I'll go and cheer up the old boy. I'll write him now that I'm coming."

Harry Redding stepped from the train the next evening as it drew into Benton and immediately caught sight of Bob, anxiously scanning the arrivals for his pal. Bob had the car there, and soon they were speeding along the beautiful road to Birchland, Bob's magnificent home. Shortly afterwards, they drew up in front of the verandah and entered the house.

"Well, Harry, old top," exclaimed Bob, after they had eaten and were enjoying a cigar in the library, "you probably wonder why I requested you to visit me. I have much to tell you which I couldn't say in a letter, and I'm getting worried."

"Sounds interesting," thought Harry.

"Well, you know, Harry, father was somewhat of a stranger to me all through life. Somehow we never really understood each other. You remember that father died very suddenly, and that I was the first to find him dead. Well, before him on the desk was a sheet of paper on which he had scrawled a few words before he died. I saw it there and put it in my pocket, intending to clear up the thing myself. I failed and sent for you, thinking that you might be able to help me. What do you think of this?"

While speaking he drew a slip of paper from his pocket and passed it to his chum. The latter took it with much interest and some mystification. Opening it, he read the three words written there:

"Bob—the bookcase—"

That was all. The writing trailed off in a scrawl, the writer being too weak to finish it.

Slowly Harry returned the paper.

"It is, indeed, strange," he said. "What did you find in the bookcase?"

"Nothing at all. That's what the trouble is. I have carefully searched through all the drawers, but nothing is to be found."

Wonderingly, Harry arose and looked about him. Here in this library lay something of great importance. He stared around, and then moved to the bookcase which extended along one side of the great room. In it were a half-dozen drawers, and on the shelves above, some hundreds of books, mostly dealing with law, for Paul Harden had followed that profession. Then opening each drawer and carefully examining its contents, he, too, could discover nothing.

"Strange!" he muttered, "It must be here somewhere."

He turned at Bob's approach and sadly shook his head.

"It doesn't seem to be here," he said.

"I know. I have tired myself looking for it, and as a last hope I sent for you, thinking that you might help me," replied Bob, in a discouraged voice, "but something must be done."

"Cheer up, old boy, we haven't begun yet," returned Harry, as he gazed at the long rows of books. "But I wonder where it can be," he muttered.

A long, unsuccessful hour they spent together, looking through the drawers again and again, while to Harry, as he stared at the rows of books above, it seemed as if the bookcase itself were laughing at them in their fruitless search, until, the conglomeration of titles and colors becoming but a blur to their tired eyes, they gave it up for the night, as a hopeless task. Without a word they both turned and made their way back to their chairs, Bob discouraged, Harry thinking deeply, trying to find some solution for the puzzle.



Silently they sat smoking before the fire, when Harry suddenly arose.

"Well, I'm going to sleep on it. Perhaps some fairy will come with the solution tonight. We'll take another look around in the morning."

Harry lay restless on his pillow for a long time. Poor Bob. He seemed greatly discouraged, but of course, his father had evidently had some last message for him, and Bob would do his best to find out what it was. He wondered what it could be, until, utterly tired out, he finally fell asleep.

Next morning he arose early as was his custom, and descended to find Bob waiting for him.

"Still the same early riser," remarked Bob, as he accompanied Harry to the breakfast table.

After breakfast, they decided to take a walk, but, as both were impatient to discover the secret of the bookcase, whatever it might be, they returned shortly to their quest.

Harry started to the library and Bob made his way upstairs, returning some time later to meet his jubilant friend. In his hand the latter held an envelope, which he immediately presented to Bob.

"Found at last," he cried.

Bob snatched it eagerly, and with trembling fingers opened it. It contained a letter and a smaller note, a confession. Bob gasped in amazement. Slowly he turned to Harry.

"My God," he gasped, "this man must be a relative of my own. How did you come to discover it?"

"Well, the message said, or tried to say, that there was something in the bookcase, and it evidently wasn't in the drawers, so it must have been among the books. I looked between them, but it wasn't there. Then I had an idea. Perhaps I might find something in one of the books. But which one? I remembered how fond your father was of reading the records of old trials. In one of these books I found that envelope. But let's see it again."

Together they read it over. The letter bore the date of two days before, and was evidently written by the confessed criminal's wife, at his request. But the smaller was the important one, written by a dying man.

"God forgive me and grant that I am not too late. I confess to the murder of William Hill on the night of Sept. 12, 1900, and testify to the innocence of Robert Harden.

Walter Edmonds."

Harry picked up the book in which the letter had been found, and stared intently at the open page.

"Look here," he exclaimed, turning to Bob, "Read this."

Bob, taking the book, read, to his great surprise, the account of a trial fifteen years before. But the most amazing thing of all was the name of the convicted man—Robert Harden.

"He certainly *must* be a relative of mine," said Bob. "We must delay no longer, but set out on our mission at once, for that is evidently what father wished me to do."

Three days later the two lads arrived at Wayburn, far to the north. Here was a large city, well known for its penitentiary, also called Wayburn. They immediately sought out the mayor, who listened to their information with the greatest surprise, and soon they were in audience with the governor, to whom they told their story and presented their evidence. The next morning a prisoner was released from the dark walls of Wayburn Penitentiary, an innocent man, who, for fifteen years, had borne the burden and punishment of another's guilt.

In their room that evening, Harry and Bob anxiously awaited the coming of their visitor. Presently a knock was heard at the door. Harry opened it, admitting a stranger whose appearance bore the unmistakable marks of many years of suffering. Tall and slender he was, a man of refined appearance, even after his prison stay, with a kindly, once genial face, while his hair had turned quite gray, due, for the most part, to his years of misery. His voice was gentle and refined, and his words came easily.

"I believe you are the friends to whom I am indebted for my release to day. I wish to express my gratitude for the great favour you have done me."

Bob was staring into the other's countenance with much anxiety. Surely his face was familiar.

The stranger continued:



"Let me tell you my story," he requested gently, "Years ago I lived with my family in Wayburn. All through my life I had been happy and contented, and everybody seemed to like me. I married and had one child, a boy. I was in a business firm and quite successful. Then came the cruel blow. One night a dear friend of mine, William Hill, was foully murdered. A short time previously we had had a slight quarrel, and people knew about it. I went to see him, and was the last one known to have been with him on the night of his death. Evidence seemed against me. My cousin Paul, believing me guilty, turned against me in my need. I was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment. Thank God my wife was already dead."

He paused, brokenly, and continued:

"Yet I am not much better off now that I have my freedom. I know not what has become of my son, Bob, although I heard that Paul took him and left the scene of my disgrace."

Bob, now thoroughly surprised and overjoyed, almost unbelievably gasped:

"Father!"

Immediately the visitor turned and gazed in amazement.

"You, my son Bob? Thank God!" he cried, as he embraced the boy, almost overcome with joy.

"So," said Bob a few evenings later, as the three sat in the Harden home, now Bob's, "he was not my father at all. Well he certainly was good to me. It has, indeed, been an eventful week, and, thanks to you, Harry old pal, it has ended happily."

Harry sighed contentedly as he leaned back in the comfortable chair and watched the long-separated father and son chatting so happily together before him|

J.J. '27.

Fortitude is the marshal of thought, the armor of the will, and the fort of reason.—*Bacon*.

His heart was as great as the world, but there was no room in it to hold the memory of a wrong.—*Emerson*.

Grant me honest fame or grant me none.—*Pope*.