

The Stuffed Wallet.

MR. J. H. HORTON, owner and manager of the Horton Steel Works, summoned Frank — the head of the office force into his private office.

"You wish to see me, sir," inquired Frank on entering.

"Yes," replied Mr. Horton, "I have had some money paid me this morning and as I have a business appointment now, I would be much obliged to you if you would take it to the bank for me."

"Certainly, sir," replied Frank taking the wallet handed him and retiring.

On returning to his desk, he placed the wallet there, while he got his coat and hat and gave some directions to the stenographer and then proceeded immediately to the bank.

On opening the wallet, he received a shock for he saw that it did not contain money at all but was stuffed with paper. After his first shock upon discovering the money missing, Frank wondered if his employer could have made a mistake. This hardly seemed possible, for why should he have a wallet stuffed with worthless paper? The money must have been stolen during the few minutes it was lying on his desk. This would point to some one in the office. As he returned, he thought of his own position. Would his employer accuse him of theft?"

The most of the office force were at dinner when he arrived; but Mr. Horton was still in his office, and to him Frank proceeded immediately.

"Well Frank, did you deposit the money?" asked Mr. Horton as Frank entered.

"No sir"—That is, sir—there must be some mistake—there was no money in the wallet I took to the bank—it was stuffed with worthless paper.

"Nonsense, sir," replied Mr. Horton, in a different tone of voice, that of the cold, calculating business man, "the money was in the wallet when I gave it to you and if it disappeared, it was while in your possession. Did you leave it anywhere, for any length of time?"

"I left it on my desk for a few minutes, while I made ready to depart for the bank," replied Frank.

"This is a very serious matter Mr. ——— and I will have it privately investigated but under the circumstances you cannot continue longer in my employ."

"But surely you do not believe I took the money, sir?" said Frank in a h .

"That makes but little difference, sir, in a matter of this kind. This is a purely business matter and we must not let sentiment enter into it. However, personally I have always had an interest in you and deeply regret that this has happened, but from a business standpoint it would be absurd for me to retain you longer in my employ. I will not prosecute because I can easily stand the loss of a few hundred dollars, and when you can prove your innocence in this matter, come back, and there will be a position awaiting you."

Frank left the office very indignant, not so much at his discharge as at the circumstances bringing it about. Upon consideration he saw that his employer could not do otherwise. The evidence was strongly against him with nothing but his own word to the contrary and in the everyday business world this does not go very far.

He was now on his way home where he was sure there was one, who, though the world turned

against him, would believe in him—his mother. Frank's father had died some years previously and and though not by any means, a rich man, had left enough to enable Frank and his mother to live comfortably.

Upon hearing the circumstances of Frank's discharge she was very indignant.

"How dare he even suspect you of theft," she exclaimed.

"Oh, don't be too hard on Mr. Horton, mother," replied Frank, "he dealt with me very leniently in not subjecting me to the disgrace of being arrested on suspicion, and on the whole he could not do otherwise than dismiss me."

"But you have no position now, and small hopes of getting one here, for every person to whom you apply will want to know why you left Mr. Horton's," said his mother.

"Quite true mother," replied Frank. "I cannot get a position here till I am cleared of this charge. But there is no need of worry. You remember my telling you sometime ago of receiving a letter from a friend of mine offering me a position. The reason I did not accept his offer then was because I had a good position with Mr. Horton with a chance of promotion, but now I shall be only too glad to accept."

"Then you will have to leave home, Frank."

"Yes mother, that is the hardest part of it. But I may not be away long, for I intend to try and clear myself of this charge, and when I do, I shall return and vindicate my good name."

"God grant you may, my son," replied Mrs. ———, fervently.

So this being decided, Frank immediately wrote to his friend explaining to him the cause of his dis-

missal and asking him if under the circumstances he was still willing to give him a position. Upon receiving a reply in the affirmative Frank prepared to depart and a few days later left for Ashton, the city where his friend was employed.

On arriving he immediately sought for his friend and found him occupying an important position in his uncle's employ.

Frank had met him before when he was down at Mr. Horton's on business and a mutual friendship sprang up between them. He believed Frank when he told his story of his dismissal from Mr. Horton's, and gave him employment in his uncle's office where he was manager and also insisted that Frank should come and room with him, as he was unmarried and desired a friend-companion.

This comradeship between the two friends caused Frank to be invited to many social functions and it was at one of these that he met Helen Grayson, the daughter of his employer.

Frank's parents, though not rich in the sense of the word nowadays, were moderately so, and social gatherings were not entirely new to him, and being a born gentleman it was not unnatural that this casual acquaintance grew into intimacy and friendship, and, later into a love which he had every reason to believe was reciprocated.

Of course this did not all happen immediately. Frank was two years in his employment and had been promoted by his employer who was quick to note his ability.

But during those years he never forgot the suspicion hanging over him and although his letters from home told him that despite Mr. Horton's inquiry and search nothing new had developed. Still he had

hopes that he would soon be able to vindicate his good name, and the only thing that marred the pleasure of the evenings spent with Helen was the afterthought that he would have to clear himself before he could ask her to become his wife.

These thoughts caused Frank many hours of agony and suspense, for, although Mr. Grayson had shown him many favors as an employer and must have known that Frank's many visits to his house were not for business matters alone, still to ask him to accept for his son-in-law a suspected thief would be absurd. He also realized that it was neither fair to Mr. Grayson nor his daughter to let matters go on as they were resolved to tell her the story, and that night true to his resolve he did so.

"I believe you," she told him after he had finished, "and feel that before long you will be able to prove your innocence."

These words had a cheering effect upon Frank for it inspired him with new courage and he, inspired by her confidence believed that before long his innocence could be proven.

One afternoon a few days later while Helen Grayson was enjoying a spin in her car she happened upon the scene of an accident. A man under the influence of liquor had been struck by a passing car and seriously injured. Her sympathies being aroused she immediately volunteered to take him to the hospital where it was found that his chances for recovery were small.

Drawn by some unknown impulse she returned to the hospital a few hours later to visit the injured man. On her informing him who she was he exclaimed:

"Miss, I am glad you came, not only to thank you for your kindness to me but also because I want some one in whom I can confide and I feel that I can trust you. Will you listen while I tell you of a wrong I once did a fellow-man?"

"Certainly," replied Helen sympathetically.

"About three years ago," began the man, "I held the position of book-keeper in a large firm and was honored and respected. One day a temptation was thrown in my way. My employer had given a young man some money enclosed in a wallet to take to a bank. Before going he left it on his desk for a few minutes. The temptation was too great. I took the money and stuffed the wallet with paper, which he unsuspecting took to the bank. Nothing was said about it, but the young man was discharged and went away to seek another position branded as a suspected thief. Sometime later I left my employer and went away with my ill-gotten money. I soon spent it and sank lower and lower until I was run into by the car today while intoxicated."

"What was the young man's name?" inquired Helen having little doubt what the answer would be.

"Frank ——," replied the man.

"I happen to know the young man," replied Helen excitedly, "and if you wish to right the wrong done you will give me a written confession of your crime."

"That I will gladly do," said the injured man, "because as I have not much longer to live I would like to clear the young man's name from the stigma now attached to it before I die."

Helen immediately wrote the confession as dictated and the dying man signed it and a short while afterwards expired.

Helen left the hospital with a great feeling of exultation in her heart for now her lover's honesty could be proven.

Frank's feelings when he received the book-keeper's confession may well be imagined. Now nothing stood between him and his heart's desire and that evening in telling his employer the story having had Helen's consent he asked him for his daughter's hand.

Mr. Grayson was not at all taken by surprise, and in giving his consent signified his intention of taking his nephew into partnership with him and making Frank manager of the concern.

With these pieces of good news Frank prepared to return home to see his mother and former employer. Having shown Mr. Horton the proofs of his honesty he returned with his mother to Ashton where he and Helen were married shortly afterwards and moved into a fine residence purchased for them by Mr. Grayson, and among their many wedding gifts was a substantial cheque from Frank's former employer Mr. Horton.

"I hope Frank," said Helen one night as they were seated in the library of their new home, "that such a misfortune will never befall you again."

"Misfortune?" laughed Frank, "I wonder if it was. As a result of it I found that I had some real friends, and found some new ones. secured a fine position, met the first woman I ever loved, besides my mother, married her and am now living in a palatial residence with both of them to take care of me. Call it a misfortune if you will, but it was certainly my "lucky misfortune."

P. McM. '21.