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Marvelous Skill

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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK TWO WONDERFUL DETECTIVES; OR, JACK  
AND GIL'S MARVELOUS SKILL \*\*\*

**Two Wonderful Detectives;**  
**OR**  
**JACK AND GIL'S MARVELOUS SKILL.**  
**By OLD SLEUTH.**

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## **Two Wonderful Detectives;**

OR,

## **JACK AND GIL'S MARVELOUS SKILL.**

**BY OLD SLEUTH,**

*Author of All the Famous Old Sleuth Stories.*

### **CHAPTER I.**

THE DETECTIVE AND THE BANKER—A REMARKABLE  
NARRATIVE—A PECULIAR TRAIL—MILLIONS WITH NO OWNER  
—A GREAT TASK LOOMING UP FOR JACK—A MOMENT OF  
EXPECTANCY.

"Your name is John Alvarez?"

"That is my name, sir."

An elderly man was seated at a table and a young man stood opposite to him. The elderly person was a well-known banker who had retired from business, and he had sent for the detective who had just entered his presence.

"You are a detective?"

"I claim to be, sir."

The elderly man meditated a moment and then said:

"A gentleman learning that I desired the services of a detective mentioned your name to me, and gave you a character for qualities which I think are specially needed in the service I may have for you."

"I am glad, sir, that some good friend has spoken well of me."

John Alvarez was a twin brother of Gil Alvarez. They were known among their few friends as Jack and Gil. They were trained athletes; their father had been a circus performer, and under peculiar circumstances the two brothers had been trained for the profession, but owing to reasons satisfactory to themselves, and as recorded in previous records of their exploits, they had decided become detectives, and had so acted upon three occasions as recorded in Nos. 104, 106 and 108 of "OLD SLEUTH'S OWN." These brothers had a history and were two very remarkable young men, as proved in their previous exploits as recorded, and as will be proved again in the present narrative.

"The matter I have on hand is a singular one. I do not know that I can give you a single clue to work upon—indeed, it is a very strange story."

"If you have sufficient confidence in me, sir, you may tell me the story and I will be able to judge whether or not there is a clue to work upon."

"I will tell you the story and tell it in perfect confidence, trusting that in case we fail you will never mention the circumstances to a living soul; let the subject pass from your mind forever. And again, you must call in no confidential assistant in the matter. Your failure or success must remain a secret between ourselves—yes, a secret forever."

"Is there a crime involved?"

"I do not think there is unless I am the criminal."

Jack Alvarez gave a start as the old banker by implication accused himself of being a criminal.

"I cannot agree, sir, to hold as a secret a crime which in justice should be exposed."

The banker laughed, and said:

"That is a straight remark and in full accord with the character that was given you as a straightforward, honorable young man. I can say that my crime is not a punishable one, and yet I feel that I am deserving of censure. You may think so also, but I will say this much: I will pay a large sum of money to rectify. What I say as concerns myself is a case of inexcusable negligence."

"That is your only crime?"

"I feel so."

"Then, sir, you can state the case to me and rely upon my maintaining your secret."

The banker meditated a few moments and then said:

"Forty years ago I was a comparatively poor man; I had just started in the banking business and I was having a hard time to make both ends meet, as I had been a clerk and was starting out on my own hook with a very small capital. The business in which I was engaged at that time under the old emigration laws is not possible now—I mean the transactions in which I made the best profits. It was a legitimate business, and I know several bankers who from the same beginning afterward became large financial concerns. Yes, I was successful myself, but, as stated, I was doing a small business and thankful to make fifteen or twenty dollars on a deal; and one rainy day—a dark, dismal day—I was seated in my office alone, when a man entered—a singular appearing man—and demanded if my name was Richard Townsend. I replied that my name was Richard Townsend; he then asked me if I was born and raised in a certain town in Massachusetts. I told him that I had been born in Massachusetts in the town named. He asked me about my father and mother, named them by their given names, and named them correctly. I made an affirmative answer to all his questions, and then he said:

"'You are the right man, I have made no mistake,' and then added:

"'Here is a certified draft on London for sixty thousand dollars; here are securities to the amount of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars; here are other securities of a cash value of sixty-five thousand dollars; here is a draft accepted by a London firm of solicitors for fifty thousand pounds, which is to be held in trust until collected. Now, sir, my instructions are to deposit these with you. The drafts are made payable to your order; the bonds are made over to you, and of course the Bank of England notes are collectable at any time.'"

The banker rested a moment, and then resuming said:

"You may judge of my surprise and astonishment. I would have thought the man crazy, but as he named the different amounts he laid the vouchers before me, and at a glance I could see that they were all genuine. The singular statements of the man and his final proposition almost took my breath away, and it was fully a minute—and under the circumstances a minute is a long time—before I could propound the question:

"'Why is this wealth consigned to me?'

"'I will explain.'

"'Do so.'

"'I am to give you a letter. These securities and the letter you are to put away in your safe and forget that you have this trust for twenty years. At the expiration of twenty years you are to open the letter and you will receive full instructions.'

"'But in case of my death?' I said.

"'You are to leave a letter addressed to some one whom you can trust, who will open the letter and carry out the trust. Here is the letter.'

"I was thoughtful for a long time. I did not understand it all. I was appalled, for there was a convertible fortune committed to my care, and I was to be its custodian for twenty years without knowing for whom I held it in trust, and there were many contingencies that might occur. The

securities might fall in value, the institutions might go out of existence, and there were dividends to be collected or they would accumulate. I spoke of this, and the stranger said:

"The individual who consigns this wealth to you has taken all these possibilities into consideration. He desires the dividends to accumulate, and will take the chances also of the winding up of the institutions. You will accept the trust, and I am to pay you in advance ten thousand dollars for so doing. I have the money here in good current bills, and here is the letter of instructions to be opened in twenty years. Now, sir, will you accept the trust?"

"Is this honest money, and am I assured that I am not becoming the custodian of stolen funds?"

"I will swear that it is honest money, and I will also sign a letter to you that if you discover at the end of twenty years when you have opened the letter that all is not fair and square you can make such disposal of the money as you may see fit."

Again the banker meditated a few moments, and Jack sat silent, wondering what the denouement to the strange story would prove. At length Mr. Richard Townsend after an interval resumed, and said:

"I thought the matter over and concluded that stolen money would not be hidden away for twenty years, and after due reflection, having decided to have him give me the letter, I consented to accept the trust. Ten thousand dollars paid in hand was a great temptation, but not even for ten thousand dollars would I have accepted a criminal trust.

"The man gave me the letter signed by a name I had never heard before. I proposed that he make it in the form of an affidavit, but he said:

"You will have the money; it will be a matter of conscience with you anyway; in fact, I have no witnesses. You can steal the money, no one can call you to account; it is an even thing between us."

"I so concluded, and the man went away after some further talk. Now, Mr. Alvarez, that is one part of this mysterious affair."

"Did the man give you no intimation of his purpose in making such a strange contract?"

"He did not, but he did say I could change the securities and cash the draft in London and make investments in the United States, but he imposed the conditions that I should do so at once and then place the securities in some safe place and let them lay collecting interest and dividends according to my judgment; 'but the letter,' said he, 'you must not open until twenty years from to-day.'"

"The man went away and I was in possession of the securities. I let a week or two pass, thinking he might be crazy or that some development might come, but he came not nor did any development. I waited one year before I did anything with the securities, then I changed all the foreign investments into American securities. I collected the draft on the London solicitors; I decided to invest the money all in real estate. I did so in my own name, but provided for its going to the proper person at the end of the twenty years."

"Did the man never turn up?"

"He never did; and it is just forty years ago that I received the trust. My investments have increased so that at this moment the estate which I hold in trust amounts to over two and a half millions, and I know not who the real owner of this vast property is."

"Didn't you learn when you opened the letter?"

"Aha! Mr. Alvarez, here comes in my criminality."

Jack expected to hear a confession; on the contrary, the explanation was strange, weird, and extraordinary, and yet the incident could readily occur. It was, however, a remarkable incident.

## CHAPTER II.

NOT A TERRIBLE CRIME—A SERIES OF SHARP QUESTIONS—A  
DETECTIVE AT HIS BEST—STARTLING DEVELOPMENTS OF A  
LOGICAL MYSTERY SOLVER—REPRODUCING AN IMAGE AFTER  
FORTY YEARS—A GREAT DIALOGUE.

When Mr. Townsend said "Here comes in my criminality," as intimated, Jack expected a weird confession and he remained silent, determined to permit the banker to declare his crime in his own way, and after a little the latter said:

"The money and securities I held intact; the letter I put away in my safe, and as instructed I tried to forget all about it. The years passed; I became very successful in business—indeed, a rich man, and still there came no word from the party who placed the fortune in my hands under such strange conditions, and one morning, ten years later, I came down to my office and there had been a great fire. The building in which my office was located was totally destroyed, and the

letter was in a safe. I was very much disturbed; the safe was fireproof and I hoped to find the letters, but, alas! the safe and all its contents were destroyed—" The banker stopped short; he had made the last statement with startling distinctness.

"The letter was lost?" suggested Jack.

"Yes."

"But where does your criminality come in? You could not help the fire, and you had taken all due precautions."

"Yes, I had, but there I was with this vast fortune, and as it appeared, no way of finding out the owner of it. The ten years passed following the fire, completing the twenty. I never heard from the individual who had deposited the money with me, nor did any one else make a claim; and so twenty years more have passed and no claimant has appeared, and I am in possession of the fortune."

"It is certainly all very strange," said Jack, "but I cannot see where you are in any way to blame."

"I am, though."

"How?"

"I feel that I am to blame, however."

"How?"

"I knew of the possibility of fire and *I should not have left the letter in my safe down at the office.*"

"There was the same chance of fire in your residence."

"No, you see, my house is well guarded against fire. I am a bachelor, and the ordinary chances of a fire in a private residence do not equal those in a public building where there are thousands of tenants. Yes, I feel that at the end of twenty years I should have made an effort to find the real owners without the aid of a letter."

"And did you not do so?"

"No; I was engaged in large transactions, and the fact that the twenty years had expired escaped my memory, and five years or more elapsed before I recalled the fact of the letter; then I placed the matter in the hands of a detective. He advertised and made search. He questioned as concerned the appearance of the man who deposited the fortune with me, but I could give him no more information than I have given you."

"I think, sir, you have been faithful to your trust."

"It is very kind of you to say so, but I cannot agree with you. I blame myself, and if the owner of the fortune is not found, I always shall blame myself."

"What more could you have done?"

"Had I started in immediately after the expiration of the twenty years I might have been successful. The real owners of the fortune might have known something about the affair and have been on the lookout for information, but after five years they may have given up in despair."

"And you want me to find the owner of the fortune?"

"Yes."

"I certainly will perform a great detective feat if I succeed."

"Yes, you will."

"Accident may aid me; I owe a great deal to accident in my past investigations."

"I will tell you one thing: it is worth your while to succeed."

"I do not doubt that."

"You will earn more money for this one success than you could possibly earn in many years—indeed, I can promise you twenty-five thousand dollars in case you discover the real heir and furnish absolute proofs as to identity."

"But remember, I have not a single clue. Forty years have elapsed since the fortune was placed in your hands. The chances are that all the heirs are dead."

"That is true," said Mr. Townsend.

"True practically, and yet there is a possibility that an heir lives, and is ignorant of a fortune which would be his or hers in case of identification."

"Again, that is true."

"How long since any one was engaged on the case?"

"It is fourteen or fifteen years. After the failure of the detective I employed, at the end of twenty-five years I made no further efforts; that man devoted a whole year to the case."

"Where is he now? He must have secured some data."

"He is dead."

"And did he never give you any data?"

"He never did; on the contrary, he informed me that it was a hopeless case unless accident should open up the mystery."

Jack, as our readers know who have read of his previous exploits, possessed a wonderful faculty of discernment and a very clear and penetrating astuteness. He was a born detective, and this natural gift in the direction of solving mysteries had led him to become one. As stated, he became very thoughtful—indeed, he said to the banker:

"Excuse me, sir, but let me think a few moments—yes, think while the incidents of your remarkable narrative are fresh in my mind."

"Certainly," said the banker; "and let me tell you I have hopes that you will succeed."

"You have?"

"Yes."

"What leads you to hope?"

"The gentleman who referred me to you said, 'If any man on earth can solve the mystery, Jack Alvarez is the man.'"

"He was very kind to speak so highly of me."

Jack fell into silence, and his active mind was performing wonders of detective investigation, and after a season he asked:

"How long was the man in your presence who confided this fortune to you?"

"He was with me over an hour."

"Do you recall his appearance?"

"As well as though it were yesterday that he stood in my presence—yes, I possess a wonderful memory."

"How old are you, sir?"

"I am seventy."

"How old was the man who called on you?"

"He was a man between fifty and sixty, I should say."

"He had gray hair?"

"Yes, gray hair."

"The color of his eyes was black."

"No, sir."

"Oh, yes."

"No, sir, they were clear blue eyes; I remember that well. Why did you say they were black?"

Jack laughed and answered:

"I was only aiding you to remember—working on the plan of a detective I've read about, who always worked on the negative track, when trying to develop positive facts from witnesses."

"By ginger! I never should have recalled the color of his eyes if you had not positively stated that they were black."

"Then we have verified the theory?"

"Yes, indeed."

"He wore a high beaver hat, I am sure?"

"No, he did not; he wore a wide-brimmed slouch hat, what they used to call a Kossuth hat."

"Oh, I see; but he wore low shoes?"

"No, he didn't; he wore boots. I remember that; he sat opposite me and his pants were drawn up, exposing the leg of his boots."

"I see; and those boots were covered with black mud?"

"No, they were not," laughingly exclaimed Mr. Townsend. "They were covered with the *red mud*

*of New Jersey.*"

"Nonsense, sir."

"I'll swear to that," cried Mr. Townsend, and there came a look of wonderment to his face as he added:

"Young man, you'll win, you'll solve the mystery."

"I will?"

"Yes."

"Why do you say so?"

"I can see that you will."

"You can?"

"Yes."

Jack laughed and said:

"What encourages you to think so?"

"You are going to work the right way. By ginger! you already have a clue; hang me, if you are not a mind reader! You have a clue—yes, you've established the fact that the man who deposited the fortune with me *came from New Jersey.*"

"New Jersey must be red," said Jack, as a smile overspread his handsome face.

"Yes, and I'll swear that man came from Jersey."

"The man, you mean, with heavy plow boots on."

"Hang me! now I recall that is a fact."

"He wore very plain clothes?"

"Yes."

"He had a sort of twang in his pronunciation," said Jack, leaning forward in an eager manner.

"Young man," cried Mr. Townsend, "you have raised up the figure of forty years ago. You have described the man exactly—yes, I have been blind; you are inspired. Now I recall the man must have come to me off a farm."

Jack was delighted, and we will here state that subsequent incidents suggested the idea that he was almost inspired, for like lightning a theory had formed in his mind, and stranger still, his theory led him to ask a remarkable question which drew forth an answer astoundingly suggestive.

Jack had been thoughtful awhile, but at length he asked:

"Did it not enter your mind that there might be a claimant for that fortune before the expiration of the twenty years?"

"Great Scott! young man, are you a mind reader?"

"No, I am merely a logical student of possibilities. Answer my question."

"Your question has recalled a part of my conversation with that strange man which had really escaped my memory."

"Oh, yes, I may lead you to recall considerable."

"How fortunate it would have been had I met and employed you fifteen years ago."

"Yes, it might have been better for us both, but I may work up a clue yet, and as you will admit I start out on a very slight basis."

"You do; I called you into this case as a last resort without any idea even that you would attempt to solve the mystery."

"I shall attempt to solve it; but you have not answered my question."

"I did speak of a possibility of there appearing a claimant. His answer was that 'If there did arise a claimant who founded his claim on a basis that appeared reasonable to me, to *open the letter at once.*'"

"Aha! you recall that now?"

"I do."

"And you are not mistaken?"

"I am not."

"Then he did admit the possibility that there might arise a claimant ere the expiration of the twenty years?"

"He did practically, when he answered my question as I have stated."

### CHAPTER III.

AN EXTRAORDINARY CROSS-EXAMINATION—A THEORY AT  
LAST—WHITE SAND AND JERSEY MUD—WORKING ON A  
SLIGHT CLUE—AN INSPIRATION—THE MAN WITH THE DIARY  
—A PROSPECT.

Again Jack became thoughtful. He appreciated that his questions were developing strange and directing admissions. After some little time he resumed his questions. Our readers will remember that our hero had adopted a line of interrogations in line with a theory that had been suggested in his mind. He asked:

"Did you observe in the securities that they had been wet?"

"No."

"Now mark well this next question, sir: Did you notice any white soil?"

"Great Moses!" ejaculated Mr. Townsend, "young man, who are you—what are you?"

"I am a detective; you have my card; but please answer my question."

"Yes, sir, when I opened the package of securities I observed that some white sand fell on my lap. I remember brushing it off—yes, it's marvelous that you should know this. Are you the heir, or did you meet the man, or do you know him, or did some one tell you, or am I dreaming?"

"None of your propositions, sir, are correct; I am merely shadowing down to facts, going logically to work to find a clue."

"But you must have some basis for these questions?"

"Only such as come to me."

"No facts?"

"None whatever; I never heard of the affair until you related the circumstances to me within the hour, but I am reasoning on certain lines. I may project several theories and consider them all. We have made a little advance; we have learned that the strange man who deposited the fortune with you came from New Jersey; we have reason to believe that his *farm* was somewhere near the seashore."

"Yes, yes, I see, this is wonderful. Why, the detective business is easy enough if you only know how to go about it."

Jack laughed and said:

"Yes, it is easy, but there is another mystery to solve. How did you cash those drafts on the London solicitors? Did you not receive some intimation from them?"

"They were drafts drawn by themselves on bankers; in fact, they were indorsed by them to no particular individual. I sent them through the regular channel for collection; they were paid and I never received any word from them."

"Didn't your first detective mention them?"

"He did, but I could not remember the names of the drawers of the drafts. Remember, twenty-five years had elapsed."

"Did you make no record of the names?"

"If I did the record was lost."

"And there you lost a clue."

"That is true, I can see now."

"But the securities—did they not contain a name?"

"Certainly, but I have forgotten those names also. Strangely enough, they were indorsed or assigned blank by the London solicitors, and all I had to do was fill in our name and get new certificates; I did so."

"And you claim a great memory?"

"Yes."

"And you do not remember any of the names on those papers?"



"No, you see, I was excited; I may have observed the names at the time, but they passed from my memory. I disposed of them immediately and the matter rested for twenty-five years. It was evident that they had been indorsed in blank on purpose for some one to fill in the name and dispose of them at will. I admit it was a strange oversight for me not to have made a record of the names—indeed, it is possible I did, and that I filed them away with the letter, and if I did so they were destroyed with the letter."

"It does appear," said Jack, "that the fates all combined to hide the identity of the real heirs to that property."

"Yes, but now I recall through your aid that the strange man who deposited this fortune with me did several times speak of possible claimants, and I remember that in the letter he gave me he bade me use my own judgment should any such claimants present themselves."

"And that letter of instructions?"

"It was destroyed along with the other memoranda."

"Now give me a general description of the appearance of the man who deposited the fortune with you."

Mr. Townsend did so, and his description was minute, and as afterward appeared very accurate, and Jack made a mental note of the description, and after some further talk, distinguished by the same singular brightness which had enabled him to ascertain as much as he did in order to establish some slight indices whereon to base a "shadow," he bade Mr. Townsend adieu, promising to call upon him as soon as he had anything definite to report.

Once alone as he walked through the streets going to his lodgings, Jack meditated deeply over the strange narrative he had listened to, and he muttered:

"It is all straight enough save the fact that the old man who has such a good memory in one direction should forget so important a fact as those names, which it appears must have been written on the securities and the drafts; and yet," added Jack, "he appears perfectly frank and honest."

Our hero saw his brother Gil, and the two discussed for a long time the strange incidents, and Jack said:

"It is possible that Mr. Townsend is crazy. He is over seventy years of age and may be laboring under a hallucination. His story does appear incredible; there are elements of romance stranger than any I ever read about. Had the money been deposited with him for a few months, or even years, it would have been different, but a deposit to cover twenty years seems to me almost incredible; and then again, he appeared to be all right."

"You know," said Gil, "some people laboring under a hallucination will tell a straighter narrative than those who are relating facts."

"Yes, I've thought of that, but there is one thing I particularly observed: the old man answered my questions. I revived his memory, and every time he answered me clearly and naturally, and it is this fact which makes me believe that there may be some truth in his extraordinary narrative. At any rate, I shall investigate the story."

"Have you formed a plan?"

"I have."

Jack revealed his plan to his brother and laid out a course of work for the latter, for which he was particularly fitted. He said:

"I shall proceed in this matter for awhile as though I had not a single doubt as to the authenticity of the old man's tale. I have a theory, and if I am correct I believe I will be able to delve until I strike a clue, and if I do and prove the story correct and solve the mystery, we shall have performed one of the most extraordinary detective feats ever accomplished."

"I will tell you frankly, Jack, I believe you are being played by a crazy man."

"All right, we shall see."

Jack was not a man to be played very easily. He did not accept the story as a whole, nor did he absolutely reject it, as intimated. He determined to make a test, satisfied that he would be able to strike a clue, a sufficient one to at least confirm the story. And such being the case he could then go ahead and investigate further.

Our readers will remember that our hero was working for a clue on an event which had occurred forty years previously, and the difficulty is apparent. He could not trace by the memories of people who could aid him, and on the following day when he crossed to Jersey he became more and more impressed as to the difficulties of the "shadow," and he remarked:

"Accident has favored me several times, but I cannot see how accident can favor me now."

It is strange, but the very word accident suggested a most extraordinary and novel plan. He went to the railroad office, and gaining admission to the presence of the superintendent made several inquiries as to a record of accidents that had occurred on the road. At first the superintendent

showed little interest, but when Jack disclosed the fact that he was a detective, the superintendent became communicative and inquisitive, and Jack was compelled to practice great adroitness in evading questions. Finally the superintendent said:

"There is an old man employed in the freight office who has been on the road fifty years. He is a queer old fellow, and has kept a diary of every incident of importance as connected with the road for fifty years. His name is Douglas; he lives in Newark, I think. See him and you will get all the information you require."

Jack left the office and there was a smile of satisfaction on his face, as he remarked:

"By ginger! it does appear as though my thoughts were an inspiration. Why, probably I wouldn't have run across anything like this diary business anywhere else in all the world."

We ask our readers to observe the extraordinary foresight of the detective in developing his theory, in view of the extraordinary denouement that was to follow.

He made inquiries around about this man Douglas, and learned that he was a very peculiar man and possessed of a wonderful memory.

Jack lay around until he managed to see Douglas, and in his own way he made the old man's acquaintance, and finally invited the old gentleman to go to lunch with him. He encouraged Douglas to talk about the road, and as the old man was fond of talking he was pleased to have a listener, especially a man who appeared deeply interested in the history of the road, and Jack professed great interest and finally said:

"I believe I could write up a first-class article on this subject."

"Oh, I see, you are a newspaper man?"

"That is what I am."

"Well, if you will come to my house some evening I'd look over my diary, and I can furnish you some strange narratives. Why, you can make a great article out of it."

"I think I can," said Jack, "and indeed I have such an opinion of it that I am willing to pay you for your time."

"Pay me?"

"Yes."

"Well, now, I ain't looking for any pay."

"Ten dollars would come in handy all the same, I reckon."

"Well, yes; you see, although I've been on this road for fifty years I didn't save much. My daughter didn't marry well, and I've had two or three families to take care of—yes, ten dollars will go a long way with me."

"All right; I've got ten dollars' worth of information out of you already."

Jack handed the old man a ten-dollar bill.

"What!" ejaculated Douglas, his eyes dilating, "do you mean that you will pay me ten dollars for just the little I've said to you?"

"Certainly I will; our papers pay big prices for interesting stories."

"Well, I can tell you some interesting stories—yes, I can do that."

"I'd like to get the article as soon as I can, Mr. Douglas, and I'd be willing to pay you for loss of time if you can get 'laid off' for a day."

"Oh, I can do that any time—yes, I've been on the road so long they favor me."

"Well, I'll tell you, I will be at your house to-morrow morning at ten o'clock. You will have your memoranda all ready, and we will go over it. You see, I want to write about the road forty or fifty years ago."

"I see—yes, I see—and I've got the data."

Jack had perceived that the old man was quite intelligent for his station in life, and having arranged to meet him at his home in Newark, Jack bade him good-day and returned to his lodgings.

## CHAPTER IV.

A MOST WONDERFUL "SHADOW"—GOING OVER A RAILROAD  
DIARY—AN INCIDENT THAT WAS SUGGESTIVE—A MARVELOUS  
DISCOVERY—THE OLD TRUNK—ON THE TRACK OF A GENUINE

Our readers may think it strange that the detective should go out of his way to listen to an old man's tales of a railroad, but Jack had become possessed of an idea. His idea may have been "far-fetched," as they say, but he believed he was building on a good logical basis; at any rate he was sufficiently prepossessed in favor of his theory to determine to make a fair test, and little did he dream how straight to the mark he was going. He resolved, however, to go ahead without knowing.

On the day following, at the time named, Jack appeared at the old man's house, and found Mr. Douglas glad to welcome him. The ten dollars and a prospect of more money made the man with the diary quite solicitous to furnish all the information he could.

"Let me see," said Jack, "when did you start the diary?"

"The very day I was first employed on the road."

"And you have kept it faithfully?"

"Yes, I have recorded every incident of importance as it occurred, even to the names of every conductor and official of the road."

We will not relate in detail Jack's patient following up of all the incidents in the diary, but he spent three hours in studying every incident until he came to the record of an accident where a man had stepped out upon the platform, had lost his balance, and had been hurled to the ground and killed, and in this incident there appeared a note stating as follows:

"This was a very sad affair. The man lived fifteen minutes after having fallen from the train. He made an effort to say something, but could only speak the word *mon*, and he was probably a Frenchman, as he evidently desired to say in French my wife or daughter or something."

When Jack read the account of this accident there came a strange glitter in his eyes, and also a look of gratification to his face. It was but a trifling incident, and there were hundreds of accidents on record, but here was a milepost for our hero—yes, a clue, as he really believed.

"That was a strange accident," he said.

"Yes, a very sad accident. Nothing strange about it, but very sad. The old man's body was never claimed; I remember the incident well."

"But tell me, when did it happen?"

"October 19, 18—; yes, I remember well, it was early in the afternoon. The man fell from my car; I was first at his side. I heard him utter the word *mon*, and that is all he did say. He attempted to speak, and there was a wild, eager look upon his face, but he soon became unconscious and died without uttering another word except the French word *mon*."

"Possibly he meant to exclaim '*Mon Dieu*,'" suggested Jack.

"Yes, I guess that was it. Let me see, that means 'My God.' I did not think of that—yes, 'My God' is what he attempted to say in French."

"And you remember all about the incident clearly?"

"Yes, I do."

"The man probably came from New York," suggested Jack.

"Why do you ask that?"

"Because he had black mud on his boots."

"Well, he didn't; the man was a Jersey man."

"How do you know?"

"He had Jersey red mud on his shoes."

"Oh, he wore shoes?"

"No, he did not, he wore boots. Let me see, yes, he wore boots. He was probably a farm hand, a friendless fellow. That is the reason his body was never claimed."

"He wore a high beaver hat. A farm hand would not be apt to wear a high beaver hat."

"What do you know about it?" demanded Mr. Douglas.

"Nothing; I am only guessing."

"Well, you are guessing wrong. He wore a wide-brimmed slouch hat."

"He did?"

"Yes."

"You are sure?"

"I can see him as plainly as though my eyes were fixed on his dying face at this moment."

"And he had clear black eyes—regular French eyes."

"Well, it's strange how you talk, Mr. Newspaper Man; you're not good at guessing. His eyes were not black; I will never forget the color of his eyes; they were fixed on me with a look of agony while he tried to speak. They were a clear blue—yes, sir, as blue as the midday sky."

Our readers can imagine the exultation of the detective as he elicited the description we have recorded, and indeed he had reason to exult, for he had secured a clue in the most remarkable manner. His keenness had been marvelous; his success was equally wonderful; but he had after all only secured a starter. But there was a revelation to come that caused him to stop and consider whether or not any credit really was due him, and whether it was not a strange Providence which had after forty years guided him to the startling starting point for the following up of a great clue.

The old man's suspicions had at last been aroused. He glanced at the detective in a suspicious manner, and said:

"See here, young man, I am not a fool; no, sir, neither am I blind—I mean intellectually blind."

"You are a very bright and remarkable old gentleman."

"I am?"

"Yes."

"You mean it?"

"I do."

"Then please tell me what you are driving at. You appear particularly interested in the death of this old Frenchman, that occurred over forty years ago."

"What makes you think I am interested?"

"Oh, I can see; you have asked me very strange questions. You have done more; you have questioned me in such a manner as to quicken my memory—yes, you have brought vividly before my mind all that occurred on that day when that Frenchman was killed."

"Mr. Douglas, you are easily misled."

"Am I?"

"Yes."

"No, I am not."

"Oh, yes."

"You are seeking to mislead me now, but you can't. You are not a newspaper man, no, sir."

"I am not?"

"No."

"What am I?"

"Shall I tell you?"

There came an amused smile to our hero's face, and he appreciated more keenly what a bright old gentleman he was dealing with, and this fact made the man's testimony the more valuable. Our hero said in answer to Mr. Douglas' question:

"Yes."

"You are a detective; you are not interested in my diary beyond the facts connected with that poor old Frenchman, I can see."

"Possibly you only imagine it."

"No, sir; and let me tell you, if you are a detective, and if you are interested in the identity of that old Frenchman, tell me the truth, and I may give you a great surprise."

Jack meditated a moment and concluded that there really was no good reason against his letting the old man know that he was a detective, as at the same time he could ward off all inquiries as to his purpose.

"You think I am a detective?"

"Yes, I do."

Jack laughed; he did not intend to surrender his secret too fast.

"Maybe you are mistaken."

"It may be I am, but mark my words: I will withhold my surprise unless I learn the actual truth."

"Suppose I were to confess that I am a detective."

"So much the better for you."

"But you might give me away."

"Never; I am not a woman."

"You are a very shrewd old gentleman."

"I am no fool."

"I am a detective."

"So I thought, and now one word more: why are you seeking facts about a man who died forty years ago?"

"I desire to establish the fact of his death."

"Is that all?"

"Yes, at present."

"I see, it is a will case?"

"No, on my honor, no."

"There is money in it somehow."

"What makes you think so?"

"The fact that a detective is taking the matter up after the lapse of forty years."

"Suppose there is money in it?"

"That's all right; I am not seeking a money reward, but I want to know what I am about. I am a pretty old man, and sometimes there is great devilment going on in will cases. I do not want to aid the wrong side; I'll do all I can to aid the right side."

"There is no will case."

"On your honor?"

"Yes."

"Then, why do you seek to establish the facts of the accident?"

"In order to confirm certain other facts, that's all."

"Have you made up your mind that the man who was killed is the individual you seek?"

"Not positively."

"I told you I had a great surprise for you."

"Yes."

"Well, I have."

"I like to be surprised."

"No doubt, but you can't guess what I've got for you."

"Oh, yes, I can."

"You can?"

"Yes."

There had come to our hero a most strange, weird and startling suggestion.

"You can guess?"

"Yes."

"Then you must be a Yankee."

"No, I am not."

"And you can guess?"

"Yes."

"Will you bet on it?"

"Yes, and give odds."

"You will?"

"I will."

"We won't bet, but you would lose; tell me the surprise."

As stated, there had come a very startling suggestion to the detective's mind. He looked very wise, and said:

"If I were to anticipate you, then I'd spoil the surprise."

"No, you would not; but it would be me who would receive the surprise."

"Very well, I'll tell you, Mr. Douglas, you have the clothes the old man wore on the day he was killed."

"I'll swear I have not told you so."

"No, you did not tell me so, but you admit it now."

"Yes, I admit that I have the clothes; that was the surprise I intended for you, and it is wonderful that you should suspect."

"I am pretty good at suspecting."

"I see you are. But hold on; it was forty years ago. I think I have the clothes; I cannot be positive, but since you have been talking to me I remember I received the clothes from the coroner a long time after the old Frenchman's death. I secured them to hold for identification."

"And it was a very wise precaution."

"It was beyond doubt, as matters have turned out; but remember, I am not positive that I have them. I believe I have, but sometimes my good old wife has a general cleaning out and may have disposed of them; but I will find out."

"When can you ascertain?"

"Oh, in a little while; come, we will go up in the attic. I remember putting them in an old trunk, and if I have them they are in that trunk still."

"Your wife may remember."

"No, her memory is failing; she would not remember anything about it, but we can very soon learn."

The detective had made the last suggestion in his eagerness to make sure that the clothes were not lost.

The old man led the way up to his attic, and our athletic hero lifted a number of old boxes, and finally came to a trunk, old and green with mold, and the old man said:

"That's it—yes, that is the box. Haul it down and we will soon learn, but I will swear that they are there, for that box has not been disturbed, as you can see, for many years."

The detective stood a moment wiping the perspiration from his face, for it was hot up in that attic, and he was excited. After a moment, however, he hauled down the box and watched the old man as the latter proceeded to open it.

## CHAPTER V.

THE SECRET OF THE OLD BOX—A GHASTLY FIND—  
WONDERFUL CONFIRMATIONS—STILL MORE WONDERFUL  
DETECTIVE WORK—A NOVEL SURPRISE—THE DEAD ALIVE—  
AN ABSOLUTE IDENTIFICATION.

"Great Scott!" cried the old man, as the lid of the box flew off and disclosed a package of old clothes—yes, old apparel including hat and boots.

"Here they are," he said; "I don't swear, but darn it, if this isn't wonderful—yes, it's a surprise after all."

"It is the hand of fate," said the detective, in a solemn tone.

"It's fate or some other darn mysterious thing; but here are the clothes—the very clothes the old man wore the day he was killed."

The clothes were taken from the case and thoroughly examined, but the vigilant detective made a discovery which led him to say:

"They are not blood-stained."

"No."

"Is there a mistake?"

"No, sir, no mistake. See, there are the big boots, the broad-brimmed slouch hat; I'll swear to the clothes."

"But how is it they are not blood-stained?"

"Oh, that is easily explained. The old man struck on his head; it was concussion of the brain that killed him. The exterior wound was only a scalp wound. There was no blood on his clothes, as the wound was on the head only. No, sir, there is no mistake; those are the clothes the old man wore on the day he was killed, October 19, 18—."

It was a ghastly exhibition under all the circumstances, and the explanation concerning the blood-stains was very satisfactory and reasonable, and besides, the clothes answered the description of both of the old men who had seen their living owner over forty years previously on the very day he died, for our hero concluded that the man had been killed on the very day he had deposited the great fortune with the banker. It was a strange and remarkable find after so many years, and it made the detective very thoughtful.

"Can I examine the clothes?" he asked.

"Certainly; and prove that you are an honest man and you can have them to solve any mystery that you may be investigating."

"I am investigating a mystery."

"Will you tell me what it is?"

"I am seeking to solve the dead man's identity."

"You will not find anything in his clothes to aid you."

"I will not?"

"No."

"How is that?"

"Oh, a dozen men went through those clothes, and lastly I did. There was not a paper or sign of identification of any kind."

"Did he not have any money?"

"No; but let me see, there was an old pocketbook, I remember—I do not know what became of it—but nothing else. He must have paid his last dime for his car fare."

"But his railroad ticket? What became of that? Surely that would have indicated his destination?"

"That was the strange part of it; he must have been stealing a ride. No railroad ticket was found on his person. We searched for that. Possibly he was a tramp, or he might have been 'busted' and had determined to steal a ride, and was seeking to dodge the conductor when he fell off the train and was killed. At any rate no ticket was found. We searched for it, I remember."

Our hero knew that the old man must have had some money; there was a little side mystery in none being found on his person, but a clue had been obtained—a very startling one—and Jack was delighted with his success thus far, but he little dreamed of the many strange and conflicting incidents he was destined to be called upon to unravel.

Jack held a long talk with Mr. Douglas, only partially explaining his purpose, and finally succeeded in getting the old man to consent to loan him the clothes. Our hero had formed a very novel and startling plan to make his identification complete.

During the course of the day Jack had the clothes transferred to his own apartments, and there he gave them a thorough cleaning, and later held a long talk with his brother Gil. He determined to call upon the latter to perform a part in one of the most dramatic scenes that could be conceived.

During the afternoon Jack sent word to Mr. Townsend that he would call upon him that same evening at about eleven o'clock, adding that he had some very important facts to impart.

Exactly at the hour named the detective was on hand. The banker was expecting him, and greeted him with the complimentary salutation:

"Well, Mr. Wonderful, what have you discovered?"

"I have some very important questions to ask."

"Proceed; I will answer all your questions to the best of my ability."

"One word as a matter of precaution: sir, your heart is perfectly sound?"

"I believe so."

"You are a man of nerve?"

"I have always been so credited."

"You would not be overcome by a sudden surprise?"

"I think not."

"You are not superstitious?"

"I am not."

"And generally a man of courage?"

"I believe so, but I cannot discern what these singular questions mean."

"You will understand later on, for I have some startling disclosures to make."

"Then you have really made a discovery?"

"It is possible that I have, but I have not yet had a chance to fully test my discoveries in order to learn if they amount to anything. With your aid I hope to do so."

"All right; you need not fear for me. I am prepared for anything that will tend to a solution of the mystery, and which will also promise an opportunity for me to make atonement."

"That is all right, sir; but tell me, was it on the 19th day of October, 18—, that the strange man visited you and deposited the wealth with you under such remarkable circumstances?"

Mr. Townsend turned very pale, but said:

"I cannot answer you immediately."

"Is there any way that will enable you to give me a certain answer?"

"Yes, sir, I can answer the question."

"To a dead certainty?"

"Yes."

"Then, sir, let me tell you that a great deal depends upon the accuracy and coincidence of dates."

"Then you really have made a discovery?"

"That is to be learned; I will be able to tell you later on. First learn if you can concerning the date when the strange man visited you."

Mr. Townsend went to a desk, drew forth a little leather-bound book, turned over its pages, and finally, with a look expressive of wonder and surprise, said:

"Yes, the deposit was made with me on the date October 19, 18—."

"There is no mistake?"

"There certainly is no mistake; but let me see, I do not remember having mentioned that date to you."

"No, sir, you did not."

"Then how did you learn? You certainly must have discovered something?"

The detective suddenly started and bent forward in a listening attitude.

"What is the matter, sir?" demanded Mr. Townsend.

"You have not kept faith with me, I fear," said Jack, in a tone of well-assumed sternness.

"I have not?"

"So it would appear."

"What do you mean?"

"There is some one in the adjoining room."

"Not to my knowledge."

"I heard a footstep."

"You only imagine so; no one would dare enter that room without my permission."

"You are sure?"

"I am."

"Just ask anyone to step forth who may be in that room."

Mr. Townsend had become very nervous; the detective's manner was so strange and peculiar.

"What do you mean, sir? I tell you there is no one in that room."

"I tell you, sir, I heard a footstep in that room."

"You only imagine so."



"I know I did."

"Very well, we will see," and Mr. Townsend called out:

"If there is any one in the next room let him come forth."

Immediately a man stepped forth—a strange, weird-looking man—in old clothes, high boots with red Jersey mud on them, and a broad-brimmed slouch hat. As the figure stepped forth Mr. Townsend leaped from his chair with a wild cry and glared with bulging eyes—glared like one fearing a figure from the grave—and indeed, to all appearances it was veritably a figure from the grave; and during this almost tragic and really dramatic and startling scene Jack Alvarez, the detective, sat cool and unperturbed, and finally remarked:

"I knew there was some one in that room, Mr. Townsend. Who is this man?"

Mr. Townsend was indeed a strong-nerved man, and after a moment he recovered from the first shock of surprise and said:

"It is the dead come to accuse me for my negligence."

"The dead come to accuse you for negligence?"

"Yes."

"I do not understand."

"Mr. Alvarez, there stands the man who can name the owner of the fortune which I have held in trust for forty years—yes, there stands the man who confided the great fortune to my keeping."

"You recognize the man?"

"I do."

"Then question him."

Mr. Townsend, in a singularly firm voice, considering the circumstances, said:

"My good friend, you must forgive me. I lost your letter, but I have held the trust sacred, and I am prepared to surrender it to you with accumulated interest; but tell me why did you wait all these years and not come and claim the money?"

In a perfectly natural voice the strange "appearance" said:

"I left a letter with you."

"It is true; I tell you I lost the letter, but now I will gladly surrender the fortune."

"Then you recognize me?"

"I do."

"Beyond all question?"

"Yes, beyond all question."

"I will not have to prove my identity?"

"You will not."

"Remember, forty years have elapsed."

"I would recognize you if a thousand years had elapsed. You appear to me to-day just as you looked forty years ago. I was a young man then; I have grown old, but you do not appear to have aged at all."

"And you are prepared to surrender the fortune?"

"I am."

"I only have to say, sir, that I can prove how easy it is for a man to be deceived."

With the above words, Gil Alvarez cast aside his disguise and stood revealed, presenting his wonderful resemblance to his twin brother.

Mr. Townsend recoiled in greater amazement than he did while under the first belief that he had been confronted by a visitant from the grave. A few seconds he gazed and then said:

"Wait."

He stepped to a sideboard, drank a glass of brandy, and then resuming his former seat, said in a perfectly cool tone:

"This is a very remarkable piece of acting, Mr. Alvarez. Who is this person?"

"My twin brother and my aid."

"And what does this all mean?"

"It is a test of identification."

"You are a wonderful man."

"I am?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"In being able from memory and imagination to create such a wonderful resemblance. You have the clothes and appearance of the man who visited me counterfeited to perfection. How you could have had those clothes made is a mystery to me; I am dumfounded. No wonder you asked me if I was sound of heart; otherwise you would have killed me."

"And the counterfeit was perfect?"

"Yes."

"The identification would have been perfect?"

"Yes."

"Well, sir, I have a remarkable disclosure to make."

"I cannot be more surprised than I have been. I tell you your dummy is perfect."

"Then permit me to inform you that the apparition was not all acting. Those are the clothes worn by the man on the day he visited you and deposited the fortune with you—yes, sir, the very clothes the strange man wore on that occasion."

"Then, sir, I will admit that you have a wonderful disclosure to make."

"Yes, sir, I have."

## CHAPTER VI.

ON A NEW "LAY"—DOWN IN MONMOUTH COUNTY—AN  
APPARENT DEFEAT—A SINGULAR CLUE—TWO COINCIDENT  
DATES—OLD BERWICK—STRIKING SUGGESTIONS—ONCE  
AGAIN A CHANCE.

After what had occurred Mr. Townsend was prepared for anything. He had regained his self-possession. He was a brave, nery old gentleman; his bravery was like that which always attends honesty.

"Please do not keep me in suspense."

"I have said those are the clothes worn by the strange man who visited you forty years ago?"

"Yes."

"And you have not seen or heard from him since?"

"I have not."

"It is not strange."

"You can explain why?"

"I can."

"Within three hours after his visit to you he was a dead man."

"A dead man?"

"Yes."

"Did he commit suicide?"

"It is possible he did, not probable."

"Explain."

Our hero proceeded and told all the thrilling incidents of his phenomenal "shadow," and proceeding said:

"I have proved the identity of the man now beyond all question."

"You have; but what was his name?"

"That I have not learned; I will in time; but I have learned one fact: he came from Monmouth County, New Jersey. That is what he was trying to say when his heart ceased its throbbings. It is

not strange that Mr. Douglas thought he was striving to say *Mon Dieu*; I know he was striving to tell where he resided, and death stealing rapidly over him would not permit the completion of the sentence."

"I see I employed the right man."

"I trust so."

"I am confident the mystery will be solved."

"Yes, the mystery will certainly be solved. It may take a long time, but now I have something to work on."

"Yes, and you started without a single clue."

"I did."

Mr. Townsend meditated a few moments and then said:

"It is evident to me that you will succeed in solving this mystery; and now let me tell you, your reward shall be the largest a detective ever received. I will pay the reward out of my own pocket as an atonement for my negligence."

The detective held a long consultation with Mr. Townsend and then returned to his home, and there after his brother had removed the dead man's clothes Jack commenced a thorough search of the clothing, despite the fact that several people had done so before him. He went to work in a scientific manner and spent hours over the investigation, and when he had finished he said:

"I am not altogether satisfied, and yet it does appear as though the old man had nothing on his person at the time he was killed, or some one went through his clothing and secured whatever might have been in them, and if that is so those papers are in existence somewhere. The thief must have them, and some day I will find that man or his heirs. I have succeeded thus far, I will succeed to the end."

Jack had made up his mind that the old man had visited New York from Monmouth County, and he adopted a very cunningly devised scheme. On the day following the incidents we have related Jack made his brother up in the dead man's clothes and took a photograph. He constructed his dummy according to the various descriptions he had received, and having the man's clothes, and by other ingenious arrangements, he secured a very remarkable reproduction, and remarked:

"I believe if I can meet any living man who knew the depositor of the fortune, I shall gain a living clue."

Taking his photograph with him our hero went down to Monmouth County, New Jersey. Jack spent six days and made about as thorough a "shadow" as man could make, but met with no success whatever; he failed in securing the slightest clue. He showed the portrait he had to many old men, but none of them could recall ever having seen the original, and one night the detective sat in his room at a little tavern where he was lodging, and he felt quite depressed. He had made such a good start, he had calculated to go right ahead and secure all the facts, and here he had spent five days, working away into the night—indeed, he had devoted eighteen hours out of the twenty-four—and had been completely baffled. It was still comparatively early in the evening when he went down into the barroom, and he was sitting there watching a game of high, low, jack being played by some old fishermen. It was a pretty rough sort of night. The wind howled without and made the shutters and casements of the old building rattle, and finally an old man who was sitting there remarked:

"It's a pretty rough sort of night; I hope all the boys who were on the water got in safe before this southeaster came sweeping over the waters."

"Oh, yes, I reckon all the fishermen got in all right."

The place where our hero was located at the time was a little fishing village on the coast, and another man remarked:

"It ain't often the boys are caught in a gale like this; they know what's coming pretty well."

"Yes, yes, as a rule, but sometimes a mishap will overtake a man when there is neither wind nor high seas. I often cogitate over what accident must have befallen Jacob Canfield. He left the shore one morning when it was as mild and fair as the brightest June day that ever dawned, and it was pleasant and calm all day. The sun went down as serenely as it rose, and not a ripple was on the sea—yes, it was a mild, lovely October day, from sunrise to sunset. Jake was seen to go out in his boat, but neither Jake nor the boat was ever seen afterward. I tell you I've never made up my mind as to what happened him."

"I've heard about that," said one of the men; "it happened a long time ago."

"Yes, it happened forty years ago. I don't just remember the date when he disappeared, but it was somewhere in the middle of October, and as I said, as fair and mild a day as though it were the middle of June, but Jake was never seen alive afterward."

Jack was all ears and attention. Here were two suggestive incidents: a man named Jake Canfield had disappeared forty years previously on a beautiful October day and had never been seen

since, and it was in October when an unknown man from Monmouth County was killed on the railroad. Jack made no demonstration; he was perfectly cool, but when an opportunity presented he made some inquiries about the old man who had told of the mysterious disappearance of Jake Canfield. He learned that the old man's name was Berwick, that he had been born a few miles away on a farm in the interior. He had been a fisherman all his life and knew about every one that lived in the vicinity, or who had lived around there during fifty years.

Jack betrayed no outward excitement, but inwardly he was greatly excited. The incidents did not agree altogether, but the detective had only heard the outlines of the tragedy. He believed he might mold the facts down so as to fit the proofs he was seeking. He learned that old Berwick lived only a few hundred yards away from the tavern, and was a pretty smart old man, also well-to-do, and also that he spent most of his time at the tavern, being too old to perform any sort of labor.

It did appear to our hero that at last his patient and careful investigation was about to be rewarded. He did not speak to the old man that night concerning the tragedy or the mystery of Jake Canfield's disappearance, but he made the old man's acquaintance and engaged him in conversation on several subjects, treated him to several glasses of hot punch, and indeed became quite well acquainted with the old fisherman. Jack did not wish in any way to convey the idea that he had any interest in Jake Canfield, but when he returned to his little room and lay down that night he lay awake a long time, his brain busy in turning over the many possibilities. Two facts were assured, and these two facts were very suggestive. Old Canfield had disappeared forty years previously; he had gone away one bright October day; he had lived in Monmouth County, and had never been seen since the day he went away on the waters off shore—that is, so the statements of Berwick indicated.

On the following morning our hero was out bright and early. He knew the habits of country people pretty well, and in the case in point his conclusions were justified. He saw old Berwick going down toward the beach. Jack followed the old man and joined him on the great spread of sand.

"Good-morning," said Jack.

"Good-morning," came the response, and then as the old man glanced up there came a smile to his face, and he said:

"Why, let me see, ain't you the chap I met up at the tavern last night?"

"I'm the man."

"Well, you must excuse me; you see, my sight is not as good as it was forty years ago. I'm right glad to see you, but I say, you are out early. I reckon you're a city chap, and city people, as a rule, don't often see the sun rise."

"I am an early riser."

"Is that so? Well, I am out a little earlier than usual myself this morning, for I love to come down to the beach and catch the early morning breeze off the ocean; and to tell the truth, I felt a little rusty after that hot punch I drank last night. I ain't much of a drinker, but once in awhile I like a little hot stuff on a chilly night. No, I ain't much of a drinker; when I was a young man I did not touch it at all, and maybe that's how I've lived to such a great age—yes, I am eighty-two years old, and I feel pretty brisk considering that I've led a hard-working life."

"You are a wonderfully well-preserved old man. I should not have taken you to be over seventy."

"Well, I am—yes, I am eighty-two just, and I feel pretty hearty yet."

"You've lived around here all your life?"

"Yes, I have."

"You remember a great many wrecks on this coast?"

"Do I? well, sir, my memory is just stored with sad scenes that I've witnessed."

"You were speaking last night about a man named Jake Canfield."

"Yes, I was; Jake was a fine man, but he had hard luck—yes, he did."

"I was quite interested in that story you told about him."

"I didn't tell no great story; I merely told how he had gone out in his boat, and how neither he nor his boat was ever seen again."

"You said you did not believe he was dead."

"Well, I never did believe he was drowned. Of course he is dead now, for he was twenty years older than me, but he had hard luck."

"Things went against him?"

"Not in one way; Jake was a very successful man as a fisherman, and he had money in the bank when he died, but he was very unlucky for all that."

"Will you tell me how he was unlucky?"

"You appear to be interested."

"I am."

"You are?"

"Yes."

"How so?"

"Well, I've nothing else to do, and it's very monotonous down here, and I am interested in old sea stories."

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

"I could tell you hundreds of them."

"I am going to get you to do so, but first tell me all about old Jake Canfield."

## CHAPTER VII.

OLD BERWICK'S RECOLLECTIONS—A GOOD REASON FOR A  
STRANGE DEPOSIT—A GIRL IN THE CASE—EXTRAORDINARY  
DETECTIVE RESULTS—A NEW "SHADOW"—GREAT  
POSSIBILITIES—SURE TO WIN.

"Well, there ain't much to tell. Jake went off in his boat one morning before daylight; he was seen to go off, and that was the last ever seen of him around here, but I've my idea. They say he was drowned, that he was run over by a steamer and went to the bottom, boat and all, but I tell you Jake was too good a sailor to be run down by a big steamer on a clear day. No, no, I never took any stock in that theory, but I never said anything because I rather honored Jake for letting it appear that he was drowned, and thus he saved all the trouble."

"You have alluded several times to some trouble that Jake had."

"Yes, he had a heap of trouble—yes, sir, a heap of trouble."

"How?"

"Jake was a quiet, inoffensive man, neither a fool nor a coward. No, sir, he saved many a man's life in his time at the risk of his own, but he was a man who did not like strife—a very quiet, inoffensive man, but he was no fool, and he knew just what he was about all the time, and don't you forget it. No, sir, he was only averse to war."

"But you do not tell me what his troubles really were."

"Oh, lots of men have the same troubles the world over, and it serves them right—yes, it does; but Jake was no fool, he knew what he was about, and don't you forget it."

The old man managed to avoid telling exactly what old Jake's troubles really were until Jack said:

"I reckon I know now what you mean."

"About what?"

"About Jake Canfield's troubles."

"What do you mean?"

"He had trouble with his family."

"You'll have to guess again."

"I will?"

"Yes."

"Then I give it up."

"You were only part right."

"Oh, I was partly right?"

"Yes."

"Then set me fully right."

"Why should I, sir?"

"Because you have aroused my curiosity."

The old man appeared to enjoy the situation, and at length he said:

"See here, stranger, maybe you know as much about those troubles as I do."

"I don't."

"You don't?"

"I do not."

"And you are not down here *picking up facts for Jake's granddaughter?*"

Jack had hard work to keep himself from leaping backward in his excitement, for here in a most unexpected manner he had gained a link of evidence that was the most startling and suggestive of any he had yet unearthed.

"I swear I am not trying to gain information for any evil purpose; I am just gratifying my curiosity. Why, man, don't you know I could go and find out all I wanted to about Jake Canfield if I had any deep purpose?"

"That is so, but you see, I've been expecting that some day there would be inquiries down here, for no one ever found out what Jake did with his granddaughter. Her disappearance was about as mysterious as that of Jake himself, and between you and me, Jake put his granddaughter away and then joined her, that's all, and gave out that he was dead, or rather made it appear that he was drowned; but I never took any stock in the drowning story. I believe Jake lived a good many years, for he was a very strong, healthy man. He may even be alive yet—yes, I've known of people living to be a hundred, and really Jake was not as old as he looked. Trouble made him look older than he was, and he had led a hard-working life. I don't believe he was much over fifty but he looked like a man over sixty; but he wasn't drowned on that October day forty years ago, I'll swear to that."

Jack adopted new tactics. He saw that the old man Berwick was a peculiar character, and he concluded not to show any more interest in the Canfield mystery, and commenced to talk about something else; but Berwick's mind had got started on the Canfield mystery, and it was a subject he often brought up, as Jack later learned. The old man, seeing that our hero did not ask any more questions, said:

"I'll tell you about Jake's troubles."

Jack made no reply, and old Berwick continued:

"You see, Jake in early life married a very nice girl, the daughter of a clergyman. She died, leaving one child, a son, and this son lived and married and had a daughter, Jake's granddaughter, and this granddaughter was only about five years old when her father, Jake's son, was drowned. In the meantime, Jake married a woman, a widow with several children. This second Mrs. Canfield was a she-devil, one of the worst women I ever met in all my life, and her children were imps. You see, Jake had a little money, and they were down on his little granddaughter from the start, and here was where Jake's real troubles first commenced. He was true to his little granddaughter, and it was said that his will was in her favor. Well, this just made Jake's life a living misery, and one day the granddaughter disappeared. Every one knew Jake had taken her away because he feared his wife and her sons; the latter were rowdies, born criminals, that's true. Jake would never tell what he had done with his granddaughter, as I said, and the war commenced. His family just tortured him almost into his grave, and so one morning Jake went out in his boat and he, too, disappeared, and then the family set up a claim against his money and property, and as the granddaughter could not be found, by ginger! they got it—yes, they produced some sort of will—a forgery I'll swear—but according to the will Mrs. Canfield number two was to have the money, and was to take care of the granddaughter. Yes, they got the money after a few years in the courts, and they all disappeared. I always wondered Jake did not come forward and claim his money and beat them, but I reckon he was glad to get rid of them even at the sacrifice of his fortune, and between you and me, it was whispered sometimes that Jake had *money deposited in New York, that no one but himself* knew anything about. At any rate, he never showed up and his widow, so-called, got the money. She sold the house and land, got the money from the bank, and disappeared, and that was the last we ever saw or heard of them around here. Of course there were all sorts of stories."

"About what?"

"Jake."

"What was the character of the stories?"

"Well, they do say that the stepsons murdered him. Yes, one story was that Jake never went out in the boat, but a dummy went out in his clothes, one of the sons. Another story was that the son went out over night, laid for Jake on the sea, knowing his habits, and murdered him out on the water and sunk his boat and body, but I never took any stock in those wild tales. No, sir, Jake was not murdered, he just 'sloped' to get away from his devilish second-hand relatives. I never blamed him; no, sir, I never did."

Jack was the most delighted man that ever started out to "shadow" a mystery. He had indeed

started without a single clue, and he had made out a most wonderful case. He had traced and traced step by step, and was satisfied that Jake Canfield was the strange man who had deposited the money with Mr. Townsend, and what was far more important, he had established a *motive* for the singular deposit, and this, as intimated, was the most important of all his discoveries. The adventure of Mr. Townsend had been a very remarkable one; it was an incident that only the facts could explain, for no one could ever have imagined a series of incidents to account for so remarkable a proceeding. Jack felt that he could claim without dispute that his success thus far had been a remarkable detective feat—one of the most remarkable on record—but he was not through. He had several important links to supply, several incidents to explain. Of one fact our hero was assured: Jake Canfield had not been murdered, but he had indeed taken steps to guard against his second-hand family, as old Berwick called them, securing an estate which in some mysterious manner had come into Jake Canfield's possession. The detective had made great progress, but he had further to go. There was more light, however, shining on his way; he had something tangible and clear to work upon.

Jack held a prolonged talk with Berwick, drawing out many little facts and incidents which it is not material to our narrative to record, and in good time he returned to the city of New York, and one night appeared at the elegant home of Mr. Townsend. He had given the old banker warning of his visit, and Mr. Townsend was prepared to receive him, and again saluted him with the appellation:

"Well, wonderful man, what have you to record now?"

"I have an announcement to make."

"Of that I am sure."

"Yes, sir, I can safely say now the chances are that you will be compelled to surrender the fortune."

"Great Scott! young man, what is that you say?"

"You will be compelled to surrender the fortune."

"Never," came the declaration.

"Aha! then all your zeal was a 'fake?'"

"No."

"What then?"

"It will never be necessary to compel me to surrender the fortune; I will be only too glad to do so—yes, delighted to do so in case the real heir can be found; but what have you discovered?"

"I have discovered that the man who visited you was Jake Canfield."

"You have learned the name of the man?"

"I have."

"Is he living?"

"We know that he is dead, killed on the railroad, but it is believed down where he was raised that he was drowned from his boat while out fishing."

"Then that accounts for his body not being identified."

"That in one way, and in another there were interested parties who did not desire that his body should be identified."

"And you have learned all this?"

"I have."

"You are a wonder indeed."

Jack proceeded and told his remarkable story, and Mr. Townsend said:

"You have identified the man and you have located him?"

"I have, beyond all question, but it is very unfortunate that you lost the letter."

"It is, I admit."

"In that letter he has directed what should be done with the fortune. I can now plainly see why he made this deposit with you—yes, it is as plain as noonday."

"I'd like to hear your explanation."

"As old Berwick said, his second-hand family was a bad lot."

"Yes."

"He wanted to put the money away until his granddaughter came of age. If we had that letter you would learn that was the reason of his strange trust in you. He was preparing against all

contingencies. He was evidently a very shrewd man; he desired to cover all trace for twenty years."

"He succeeded, and so well that by the loss of that letter I have deprived his granddaughter of her fortune."

"It is even so—yes, this accounts for his strange deposit, and it was a cunning one. His only risk was your honesty, and it is evident from your interview with him that he knew what he was about when he made you the depository."

"He certainly had great confidence in my honor."

"And your care and prudence."

"Yes, and in the latter I have failed."

"We can yet rectify your mistake."

"Do so and you will earn a fortune for yourself."

## CHAPTER VIII.

JACK'S FORESIGHT—A SECOND VISIT TO OLD BERWICK—THE  
PORTRAIT—OTHER SIGNIFICANT DISCOVERIES—"ALAS! THE  
LETTER!"—A STREET CAR INCIDENT—"I WILL FIND THAT  
LETTER."

"I will succeed; I have not made this remarkable progress and come upon these strange discoveries all for nothing."

"Jacob Canfield is dead?"

"Yes."

"The granddaughter if living would now be forty-five years of age."

"Yes, but still a comparatively young woman."

"She may be a humble woman with a family."

"Yes, but if I had a photograph I'd soon find her if living. It is now my duty to find this granddaughter. She was once a Miss Canfield; my 'shadow' is diverted to a solution of the whereabouts of the living. The mystery of the dead is solved."

"Yes, but here again you start without a clue."

"Not exactly; I know the name of the one I seek; and now, sir, you will not see me again until late to-morrow night, and by that time I may have something to impart."

"One more question, Mr. Wonderful Man: Where did Jacob Canfield get this fortune?"

"That is a mystery; the letter no doubt would have made that plain. One fact we can assume: he came by it honestly, for his record is that of an honest man, and again, all the drafts were paid without question. He told you to sell them; he did not attempt to hide his ownership of them. Yes, the money was his honestly to bestow, or he may have held it in trust for some one else. It may be that the letter would have revealed the latter fact, and it is here we may be at fault at the last. It may not have been his granddaughter, but some other person's child for whom he held the money. There is a great deal of mystery surrounding the case yet, but I doubt not that in time we will solve it. I will have something important to relate, no doubt, when I see you to-morrow night or the night following."

"No doubt, for you have come back with marvels to relate every time."

On the morning following his interview with Mr. Townsend, the detective again appeared at the tavern where he had met old Berwick, and he again met the voluble old gentleman. Berwick recognized our hero and said:

"Hello, you here again?"

"Yes, I am here again."

"I suppose you have some more questions to ask concerning Jake Canfield."

"Mr. Berwick, can I trust you?"

"You can as sure as my name is Berwick."

"You asked me if I had any special interest in Jake Canfield."

"I did, and you tried to throw me off, but you did not. I knew all the time that you did have an interest in him."



"Well, I have, in his history and also in his granddaughter, if she is alive."

"Well, now, see here; after you went away I got to thinking. I made up my mind there was something up in this case, and I remembered that I had a photograph of the little girl—not a photo, but one of those old-fashioned pictures they used to take before photos were invented."

"And have you that picture now?"

"I have, as sure as guns."

"Where?"

"Up at my house; I was looking at it this very day."

"Can I see it?"

"Yes, come along over to my house; you shall see it, sure. But tell me, is the girl living?"

"On my honor, I do not know; I want to find out and discover her if possible."

"I see, you are a detective."

"Possibly I am, but don't mention the fact."

"You can just bet I won't; but tell me all about it."

"You said it was rumored that Jake had a deposit in New York which he concealed from his second-hand family?"

"It was so said; I don't know if it was true or not."

"It was true."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, and the granddaughter is the heiress. You see this money has been at interest and it is quite a sum now—yes, quite a good sum. We want to find her or her heirs in case she is dead."

"I'll lend a hand—yes, I will, for all I am worth."

Old Berwick led the way to his home and produced an old-fashioned daguerreotype, the picture of a little girl not over five or six years of age. The picture was well preserved, and the features were well defined.

The detective examined it closely, and finally asked:

"Is this really and beyond doubt a picture of the grandchild?"

"Yes."

"Her name would be Canfield?"

"Yes."

"She was a child of old Canfield's son?"

"So they said."

"So they said?"

"Yes."

"But wasn't she?"

"Well, I can't say she was or she was not. Old Jake always said it was his granddaughter, but he was the only one who knew anything about it. No one else knew that his son left a child; possibly they didn't inquire into it. I wouldn't have thought of it now myself only I was talking it over with my old woman, and she said that young Jake Canfield never had a child. I remembered then that the old woman had always said so."

As stated, the detective had been studying the picture, and on the case in very small letters he saw printed with a pen and in ink the name Amalie Stevens. He required his powerful magnifying glass to read it, but under the glass he made it out. He trembled at the marvelous new lights that were flashing in on the dark mystery. Here was a chance for a new theory; a door was opened to account for the possession of the great fortune in possession of a humble fisherman, and here again was a partial suggestion as to the secrecy and the twenty-year clause in the trust, and Jack muttered:

"Oh, that the banker had not lost that letter—how plain everything would be now! Still we are on the right road, and no doubt after all that has been revealed I will eventually arrive at a full solution and clearing up of the whole matter."

Jack made some very close inquiries and learned particulars that convinced him that he was on the true road, but it was a difficult path that lay before him, and only a man of his wonderful energy and hopefulness would have dared to anticipate absolute success.

The detective returned to the city, and at the hour named once again met Mr. Townsend, and as

usual the banker asked:

"Well, Mr. Wonderful, what now?"

"It is wonderful, Mr. Townsend, the strange facts I have secured; but first see here."

The detective passed the picture over to the banker.

"What is this?"

"A portrait of the heiress at the age of five or six."

"Well, well, you are closing down on facts."

"I am, but to me it is 'yet so near and still so far.' Here is the picture, but the original was but five or six when that was taken and she is now a woman of over forty. She cannot be shadowed on a resemblance."

"But you have a clue."

"Yes, I have a clue, but a very thin and unsatisfactory one."

"You are not getting discouraged?"

"I never get discouraged, but I do wish we had that letter."

"You cannot possibly wish it more than I do."

"You are absolutely certain that it is lost? You do not hold back a surprise for me?"

"I do not; I sincerely wish that I did."

"I will tell you something: that girl was not the granddaughter of the old fisherman Canfield. I do not believe she was a relative at all, and do you observe the suggestion?"

"I do not."

"It is plain."

"It is?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"If the girl was not his granddaughter Canfield only held the money in trust—yes, held it for a helpless orphan—and being a peculiar old man he was making sure that the fortune confided to him was properly invested and held until such time as the heiress was capable of taking care of it herself."

"Then this explains the mystery?"

"It does."

"And the letter would open up everything?"

"It would."

"And fire has consumed the letter; but matters are simplified."

"They are?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"All we have to do is find the reputed granddaughter of old Canfield."

"Easier said than done."

"But we have a clue now."

"We have?"

"Certainly."

"You are becoming quite a detective."

"I am."

"What is your clue?"

"The girl is probably living under the name of Canfield."

"That is possible."

"You say the name is Amalie Stevens?"

"I believe that to be the real name of the heiress to the fortune you hold."

"Then you are doubly armed."

"In that particular, yes."

"Remember what I have told you."

"Repeat, please."

"A fortune awaits you as well as the girl."

"I would solve this mystery if I could, without the prospect of receiving one cent."

"I believe that, but it is as well to know that you will be well paid."

"All right, sir, to-morrow I commence the search for the missing child, now a woman between forty and fifty."

The detective went forth, and we can here state that he with his brother spent three whole weeks searching for the missing woman, and in all that time, as Jack afterward stated, he believed he had looked on the face of almost every woman in New York, and during this strange "shadow" he encountered many very strange and remarkable experiences. He met nothing, however, that he could call a reward. He did meet many women who in a certain way possessed characteristics of feature that might have distinguished the heiress developed from a child into a woman. He visited the theaters, variety shows; he advertised for relatives of Jacob Canfield, and expected to receive answers from descendants of the old fisherman's second-hand family, if from no one else. He did receive many bogus replies, but nothing was really worth a second thought. At the end of the three weeks he did feel a little discouraged, but showed no disposition to surrender the search. He, however, became very thoughtful, and kept repeating:

"Hang it! if I only had that letter."

At last there came to him one day a singular suggestion. He was riding in a street car, and two old men met, and during the course of conversation one of them made a remark, saying:

"Well, I tell you it's sad how one will lose their memory in directions. My memory is as strong as ever it was, and then again it plays very strange pranks—yes, very strange pranks. Do you know I will do things and then forget that I did? For instance, I will deposit a letter in a U. S. box and ten minutes afterward forget all about it."

"I have the same weakness," said the other old man; "indeed, in that direction I am bothered very frequently."

These remarks started a line of thought in our hero's mind. He remembered asking Mr. Townsend if he had ever removed the letter that had been intrusted to him from his office. Mr. Townsend had replied that he was certain he never had. Our hero recalled that he had accepted the banker's word but had never tested it, and he exclaimed:

"By ginger! here is where I have been remiss."

Our hero proceeded to Mr. Townsend's home, and after a little talk said:

"You once told me you were certain you never removed that letter from your office."

"I am certain that I never did—yes, I repeat the declaration."

"You are mistaken."

The old banker started and exclaimed in a tone of surprise:

"I am mistaken?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you have found the letter?"

"No, but I will find it."

"You will?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"Here in your house."

"Never."

"You are positive?"

"I cannot think it possible that I removed the letter. I once thought it possible and made a search."

"Oh, you once thought it possible?"

"Yes."

"And made a search?"

"Yes."

"And you failed to find it?"

"I did not find it."

"Where did you look?"

"In my private safe."

"You wish to find the letter?"

"I do."

"Then you will not object to my making a search?"

"Certainly not; I will oppose no effort to find the letter."

"Then I will make the search," said our hero.

## CHAPTER IX.

A WONDERFUL SEARCH—JACK BECOMES THE SEARCHER—A  
STARTLING DISCOVERY—THE LONG-LOST LETTER FOUND AT  
LAST—A MOST REMARKABLE FEAT—THE STORY OF THE  
SEALED LETTER.

There came a perplexed look to the face of the banker, as he said:

"It cannot be possible that I removed that letter."

"It is not only possible, but it is probable."

"But I searched for it."

"No doubt; but, sir, while searching were you as *positive then* as you are now that you had not removed the letter?"

"I may have been."

"You will permit me to make the search?"

"Certainly."

"All right, sir; leave me the keys of your private safe, then leave me alone in the room where your safe is located, and we will settle the question once and forever."

"You will not find the letter."

"You think so?"

"I am sure."

"Why are you so sure?"

"If I put it anywhere I put it in my private safe, and I have looked through the safe several times."

"Looked through?" repeated the detective.

"Yes."

"But never made a search?"

"I would call it a search."

"I might not."

"Very well, sir, you shall satisfy yourself. Here are my keys, and the safe is in that room built into the wall, and guarded as no other private safe is guarded in this city."

Jack pulled out his watch and said:

"It is after eleven o'clock; I may be hours. Will you trust me alone here until morning?"

"I will."

"Then you will retire?"

"I will, but if you do find the letter arouse me. But nonsense, you will never find it."

"I will never be satisfied until I have at least made a search for it. The document is too important to be passed over as lost by one who only *looked* for it. I will make a search, and, sir, I have a strange, weird premonition that I will find it."

"Then, sir, you would only be doing your duty if you hung me by the neck until I should die."

"We will not punish you as severely as that."

The detective was left alone with the safe and the keys in his possession, and as he opened the safe a feeling came over him as though he were really opening the doors of a tomb. Jack removed every article from the safe; removed every drawer and piled them on a table which he had placed for the purpose. It was evident that indeed he intended to make a *search*.

Having taken everything from the safe he commenced to return them one at a time. First the drawers, and he closely examined and sounded them—indeed his examination was as precise as though he had an object under a magnifying glass, and so he returned article after article and had spent three full hours. All was returned to the safe but one book, a sort of ledger. The detective took it in his hands, and as he did so he muttered:

"Well, I have one satisfaction—I have at least made a *search*."

He took the ledger, sat down on a chair, and placing the book on his knees commenced turning over leaf after leaf, and his method was but an indication of the thoroughness with which he had conducted the whole examination. We will admit that he had lost all hope of finding the letter, but he was determined that he should never reproach himself for any carelessness in carrying on the investigation.

Patiently and carefully he turned leaf after leaf until he had passed through nearly three-quarters of the heavily-bound volume, and then suddenly it fell from his lap, and he sat rigid like one suddenly chilled to the heart. His eye had fallen on a letter, and on it was written:

*"To be opened after twenty years by Mr. Townsend."*

The detective had not been expecting anything of the sort. He was turning the leaves mechanically, and we can add without hope, when, as stated, his eye fell upon a letter, and at a glance he read the superscription, and it was then that his heart gave a great bound and the heavy volume slid off his knees to the floor. It had come so suddenly, so unexpectedly that literally it took his breath away, but after a moment—yes, a full minute—he was able to exclaim:

"I have found it—found the letter at last. It has indeed been a remarkable feat. I deserve to have found it."

Jack was a young man of iron nerve. Of course the discovery had caused a shock, but quickly he recovered his self-possession. He stooped down, picked up the book, and calmly returned it to the safe, and then picked up the precious letter, for in the fall it had slid from the book. It was an exciting moment. He again read the writing on the letter, and there it was plain and bold: "To be opened after twenty years." He did not open the letter, for it was written to Mr. Townsend—yes, the banker was the only man who had the right to open the letter.

As stated, the detective had regained his self-possession. He was perfectly cool; he stepped into the adjoining room and drank a glass of water from a pitcher which had been left for him. Then he lit a cigar—did this equally as coolly. He stepped from the room and started up the stairs. At the door of the rear room on the second floor stood Mr. Townsend, pale and excited.

"I heard something heavy fall," said the banker.

"Yes, I dropped one of the books."

"Have you found it?" came the question in a husky voice.

"I *have found something*."

"What is it?"

"I will not attempt to decide. You will please come downstairs and decide for me."

"I will be down in one minute."

The detective returned to the library, and after a few minutes Mr. Townsend joined him. The detective was sitting in an easy-chair drawn up to the table, smoking as coolly and calmly as though taking a last whiff just before going to bed.

"Oh, dear me!" exclaimed the banker, when he beheld the detective sitting there so cool and apparently unconcerned, "I thought you had found something."

"So I have."

"It cannot be the letter; I did have hopes."

"What has dampened your hopes?"

"You are too cool for a man who has found the letter."

"I am?"

"Yes."

There came a smile to the detective's face, a smile that was thrilling in its suggestiveness, as he laid the letter on the table and said:

"Well, I have found something; you can tell what it is; look at it. No need to search now; I think the search is over."

Mr. Townsend advanced, seized the letter, and his face was ashen as he exclaimed, while trembling like one with ague:

"That is it."

"I thought so," said the detective.

"Yes, that is the letter."

"I thought so, and did not open it because it is written on it 'To be opened by Mr. Townsend only.'"

"Where did you find it?"

"Never mind where I found it; what have I found?"

"You have found the letter which was left with me by Jacob Canfield."

"You are certain?"

"I am. No doubt as to its identity. I must have removed it from the safe in my office."

"No doubt."

"Yes, it's one of the most remarkable lapses of memory."

"It is not so remarkable."

"Where did you find it?"

Jack told where he had found the long missing letter, and then said:

"Now, sir, all you have to do is to open that letter and we will learn what you are directed to do."

"We would have been wise to have searched for the letter at first."

"Oh, no, we have prepared the way now to act on what the letter may disclose. But read it."

"I will open it; you read it. I am so overcome I have not the strength to do so."

"All right."

Mr. Townsend did open the letter. We will not attempt to produce its contents in detail, but relate the main facts wherein the strange mystery of the extraordinary deposit was fully cleared up, and also how the remarkable cleverness of Detective Jack Alvarez was fully and most amazingly verified.

Jack had traced down to the real character. Jacob Canfield was the man who had made the deposit, and as Jack had discerned he held the money in trust. One morning the fishermen along the Jersey coast discovered a bark in distress off the shore. It was in the midst of one of the fiercest northeast storms in the remembrance of any man. No boat could go to the aid of the crew, and all efforts to send a line proved futile, and through the day the vessel was seen beating and thumping, and when night fell it was decided that ere morning she would have gone to pieces. Among those who were on the beach was Jacob Canfield, and at night he walked along the beach, when from the breakers he heard a cry. Jake was a powerful swimmer, and he ran down into the water, and it did seem as though in fitness of time and place his rush was providential. He saw a figure, brought in on a wave, and he plunged forward, seized the form of a man who had lost his strength and was being carried back, never to be plunged forward again alive. Jake dragged the half-drowned man ashore and carried him to his own little home. At that time he lived alone, a widower. After hours of work he managed to restore the man to life, and at the rescued passenger's request he let no one know of the rescue. In the meantime, during the night the storm went down, and lo, the stanch bark withstood the mad assaults of the waves, and life savers in good time were able to go aboard. They did so and later saved every man of the crew. There was one passenger, however, missing, named Harold Stevens. He was the only passenger, and he was washed overboard and drowned—that is, so every one believed. Luck favored the crew, as later on the baggage of the sailors was saved, and also the baggage of the missing passenger.

Meantime, as the rescued man revealed to Jake Canfield, he was Harold Stevens, and Jake was sent to bring the captain of the bark to his cottage, and the rescued passenger and the captain of the bark had a long conference. Later Harold Stevens went to New York, and being identified his baggage was delivered to him, and no one on the beach ever knew that Jake Canfield had been the saver of the life of the passenger reported as drowned. Six months passed, and Jake married and entered into the misery of his second-hand family, and as he stated in his letter in confirmation of old Berwick, his misery began at once. He learned that he had married an evil woman with an evil lot of children. Jake, however, was not a man to complain, and one day after the expiration of two years following the loss of the bark he received a summons to New York, and there met the man whose life he had saved.

## CHAPTER X.

### CONCLUSION.

The narrative in the letter went on to recite that the man Harold Stevens had taken a cold, owing to his experience when washed overboard, and the fatal disease consumption had ensued. He sent for Jake Canfield as a man whom he believed to be honest and faithful, and to him he confided his only child, stating that the mother had died in South America and the child had been in the hands of friends whom he feared. He stated that he had secured possession of his child, and desired to consign her to Jake. He gave many directions concerning the child, but enjoined that she should not know she was an heiress until she was twenty-five years of age. The letter did not state why this determination had been reached by the father. Jack took possession of the child and the fortune, and for reasons never explained the father desired that her real name and identity and parentage should be concealed until her twenty-fifth birthday. Jake took charge of the child and the fortune, and two weeks later the father died, and strange to say, about the same time Jake's son died, and when he took the little child to his home he represented her as the daughter of his son, hoping thereby to conceal her real parentage more effectively. Then came the time when he took the child and placed her in charge of perfect strangers, giving reasons that do not concern the interests of our story, but based on the idea of his second-hand family and their evil feeling toward his supposed granddaughter. In the meantime Jake had been worried about the fortune deposited with him. He was an old man, led a perilous life going to sea, and he finally determined to deposit the money with some one whom he knew would be honest. He had gone to school with Mr. Townsend's parents, as he originally hailed from New England. He made inquiries about the young banker and concluded that he would be a safe man with whom to deposit the money as trustee for the child, and he did go out in his boat as a "blind" and sailed in her to New York, where he disposed of her, having determined to let it be thought that he was dead and thus escape his second-hand family—we use the term second-hand family. The above is the gist of the narrative. What else may concern our narrative will be recorded incidentally as Jack had developed. As our readers know, Mr. Canfield was killed on the railroad and never spoke a word, and owing to the fact that he was supposed to have been drowned no inquiry was made concerning him, and thus for forty years all memory of him had been lost until revived by our hero through the incidents as we have narrated them.

Having finished the reading of the letter, Jack said:

"Well, sir, all is clear now."

"Yes, and it is wonderful how the facts have been developed."

"I have plain sailing now," said Jack.

"You will find this girl, Amalie Stevens?"

"I will, or her heir."

"There is some satisfaction, Mr. Wonderful, in starting out with a perfect clue."

Jack laughed and said:

"My clue is not as clear as you may think, still I have something to work on. I know the woman's name."

"The girl, you mean?"

"No, the woman; you forget that forty years have passed."

"You are right, I did forget. Well, how time flies! Now that the mystery is solved, it seems to me as though the incident had occurred only a few months ago."

On the day following the incidents recorded Jack visited New Jersey, the land which had been so fruitful in furnishing him incidents tending to a solution of the mystery. While on the train he meditated over his great success and felt proud over his wonderful "shadow"—for indeed it had proved a wonderful "shadow." He appreciated, however, that almost as difficult a task lay before him. The letter had said the child had been placed with strangers, and singularly the old man had failed to state with whom or where he left the child. He had evidently intended to do so, but through some oversight had omitted giving the information. Jack did have one advantage—he knew the real name and possibly the assumed name of the woman he was searching for, but he did not know what her present name might be in case she was living. He was working entirely on conjecture. He concluded that Jake had placed the child somewhere near his home, where he might find her at any time if he desired to communicate with her.

Jack left the train on the Central Railroad of New Jersey and started out by visiting from house to house. He determined to visit every town from Jersey City to Lakewood, and he started in at one of the oldest towns and then commenced his search again. He started in by looking in the face of every woman he met, and he also went from house to house, pretending to be acting as agent for a monthly publication. He had the picture of Amalie, and believed that with his marvelous keenness he could detect a resemblance even though forty years had passed since the picture had been taken. He in this way spent one whole week, and believed he had seen the face of every woman in the town, but not one face presented any suggestion of a resemblance. With the

different women he started in with a little line of conversation; he introduced the name of Stevens and Canfield, and he would say: "Why, let me see, isn't this the town where the little girl was brought up from the beach and left with strangers to secure a fortune to her?"

The above was only one of the many ingenious questions the detective asked in order to quicken some one's memory, or start a line of thought that would recall the circumstance of a little orphan child having been left in charge of some one. He had one disadvantage to contend with—the length of time that had elapsed; but he was hopeful that he might in this way run upon Amalie Stevens in person. He recognized that the chances were the girl had continued to live in the town where Jake had placed her, and it was equally possible that she might have married some one in the town and have settled down and lived there for life. We wish space would permit the recital of the many odd and novel little inventions of the detective to gain a clue, but all his devices failed. He did not become discouraged; he kept muttering: "I'll get there in time."

There was one chance against him, and that chance he most feared. It was possible Amalie Stevens had died while a child; if so there remained little hope of his ever solving the mystery, at least little hope of ever seeing an heir to the great fortune, for failing to find Amalie there was no other heir. The great fortune under the terms of the letter would lapse to Mr. Townsend. Jake Canfield had calculated the possibilities of the child's death, and had said that the father had named no other heir, and had directed that in case of Jake's death he was to have the money—one-half for himself and one-half to be distributed in charity. Jake, calculating upon his own death, had made the same provision, and in case the child Amalie died, and Jake also, Mr. Townsend was to carry out the original terms of the trust—distribute one-half in charity and keep one-half for himself.

We here desire to call attention to the fact that at this time there were at least two honest men on earth, Mr. Townsend and Jack, and both were making every effort to find the real owner of the estate, while both would benefit in case of failure, for Mr. Townsend had told our hero that in case the heiress was not found, or any other legal claimant, he would transfer the interest in the estate to Jack, remarking: "I have enough of my own, and you deserve it in case there is no other heir discovered."

With this possibility staring him the face, Jack was bending every energy to find the original heir, and was prosecuting his search with a skill and acuteness that well warranted success, and in his investigation he ran up against a very singular experience. Several robberies had taken place in the section of the country where Jack was conducting his investigation, and when he had been about three weeks thus engaged his adventure occurred. The detective was stopping at a little country hotel, and he had worked several disguises. He was cute enough to know that his work would in time attract attention, and that he was liable to considerable annoyance, so as stated, he changed his attire, his general appearance, and his pretended business. One day he was a book agent; the next day, under a different disguise, he was a sewing machine canvasser, and so he floated from one business to another; but despite his care and shrewdness, as it appeared, he did attract attention, and one night while in his room in the hotel indicated a country-looking chap knocked at his door and was admitted. The visitor was a green-looking fellow, and upon entering said:

"Mister, you will excuse me, but I jest thought I'd call in on you because I also thought I might be of some service to you."

"Hello," thought Jack, "here I am at last; my usual luck has set in; I am going to get some information."

"I am very happy to have you call," said Jack.

As our hero spoke, however, there came a change in the tones of his voice; ere he had completed his sentence he had made a discovery. When the man had first entered the detective had not paid much attention, but while speaking in answer to the visitor's statement, our hero discovered that the supposed countryman was under a disguise, and his disguise was a good one. Only a man like our hero would have pierced the "cover." Jack did, however, hence the sudden change in the tones of his voice; but he recovered himself in an instant and prepared for the game which he concluded was on the tapis.

"You've been making some inquiries around town here to-day."

"I've been making some inquiries?"

"Yes."

"Oh, no, my friend, I've been seeking subscriptions."

"Oh, that's all?"

"Yes."

"You've only been seeking subscriptions?"

"Yes."

"Then I reckon I've made a mistake; I've been told you are making inquiries about a girl named Canfield or Stevens, or some such name."



Jack had not only pierced the man's disguise, but his purpose, and possibly his identity, and when his visitor made the statement recorded Jack laughed and asked:

"Have you come to give me the desired information, my friend?"

"Well, yes."

"I'm sorry."

"You are?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Simply because my little narrative was all a fiction. You see, I work up this story in order to catch the women's attention; I get them engaged in conversation and then start in to sell my goods, or rather get my subscriptions. I am sorry my little business trick has put you to the trouble of coming here to see me."

The disguised man looked sort of blank when he received the above explanation.

"Golly!" he exclaimed, "you're cute."

The expression of the visitor was two ended—sharp at both ends. It might mean "You are cute because you are lying," or it might mean "You are cute working that little game to gain customers." Jack was compelled to diplomize a little further in order to learn just what the man did mean.

"Yes, you are awful cute," said the man. "I learn you've been going along the road in different towns telling different tales, and telling 'em good, too."

"Yes, I've done that."

"And you've changed your business about as often as you have your stories."

Jack saw that his visitor was not as cute as he might be, even though he were a regular detective, and our hero had determined that the man was a professional.

"Who has been giving you that story?" queried Jack.

"Well, I've been told so."

"Oh, you have?"

"Yes."

"And are you going to explain all my little fictions?"

"Hardly; I thought I might solve one of your little mysteries."

"Oh, you did?"

"Yes."

"I'll be obliged."

"I have been told that you change your appearance about as often as you change your business and your stories."

"You were told all this?"

"Yes."

"You appear to have taken a deep interest in my business."

"Well, yes, I have."

"Am I obliged to you?"

"I have not decided yet."

The visitor had dropped his simple manner and was talking in a short and direct way.

"So you haven't decided whether I am under obligations to you or not?"

"No, I have not yet, but I've a question to ask you: What is your name?"

"I will direct you to the registry; look downstairs."

"I've looked at that."

"You have?"

"Yes."

"Well, you have been interested in my affairs."

"I have, yes. Is that your real name?"

"My friend, you have called on me."

"Yes, I am here."

"I did not invite you to come here, you came uninvited."

"I did."

"Who are you?"

"I may tell you or I may not."

"Are you well acquainted with Jersey law, sir?"

"Pretty well."

"That's lucky, for when I tell you that you must get out of this room you will understand that in the law I have a right to make the request."

"Yes, you have a right to make the request."

"And enforce it, my friend."

"Ah! that's different."

"Then you dare intimate that you won't leave this room?"

The pretended countryman quietly drew a pistol, cocked it with equal deliberation, and said:

"Yes, sir, I dare intimate that I won't leave this room until I get ready."

"You are an intruder."

"Am I?"

"Yes."

"What are you?"

"A gentleman."

"Oh, you are?"

"Yes, I am."

"Do you see this?"

"I do; and do you see this?"

Both men displayed pistols, and the visitor's tone fell off a little.

"My friend," said Jack, "I am not afraid of pistols, I am used to them. Why, my dear fellow, I always sleep with them under my pillow, eat with them under my napkin, hide one under my Bible when I go to church; in other words, I am never without a barker."

The visitor listened with a look of surprise on his face.

"Why do you always go thus armed?"

"So as to be ready to shoot at a moment's notice; so as to be ready when some impertinent bully draws a weapon as you have done—yes, I always go ready for impertinent fellows wherever I may meet them."

There followed a moment's silence, and then the visitor said:

"My friend, you had better not attempt to draw a weapon on me; in plain language I am an officer. I have reason to know that you are a fraud; do not attempt any 'bluff' on me, for I've been on your track for two weeks; but I'll give you a chance."

Jack, as our readers know, was perfectly cool. He enjoyed the scene—enjoyed it hugely—and he said:

"You will give me a chance?"

"I will, a good chance."

"Thank you."

"But you must earn the chance."

"Oh, I must earn it?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"'Squeak;' I am on to your whole game; you are playing the peddler and locating, and the gang, on your information, work the houses afterward."

"A nice game, ain't it?"

"Yes, a very nice game."

"Why do you wish to interfere with such a nice game?"

"It's my duty to do so."

"Oh, that's it?"

"Yes."

"You have another duty to perform."

"I am not taking instructions."

"But I am giving you instructions, all the same. Now get out of here and don't stand on the order of your going, but just 'git.' Do you understand that?"

The visitor rose, when Jack suddenly seized a pillow from his bed and dealt the man a tremendous rap over the head. The pillow burst and the bran poured down over the man's face and eyes, and in the meantime Jack seized the man's weapon, and then seizing a second pillow gave him a second succession of raps until the man was blinded, and finally ceasing the detective sat down and watched his man clean his eyes and ears, and after a little coolly said:

"Go to the wash basin there, old man, and wash out the horse feed."

The man managed to find the basin and obeyed, and when his eyes were cleaned he looked and beheld our hero sitting there with a broad smile on his face.

"Do you know what you have done?" demanded the man.

"What have I done?"

"If you have committed no other crime, you have assailed an officer of the law in the performance of his duty."

"I am not sorry I've taught an officer of the law a lesson; I suppose you claim to be a detective?"

"I do."

"You so claim?"

"Yes."

"Well, old man, I *am* a detective, and even you know how a real detective goes about it. Where are you from?"

"Newark."

"Better get back to Newark as quick as you can or I will give this whole business away."

"Who are you?"

"I've told you *I am* a detective, and I don't do my business by splurges."

"Then you were on detective work when you went around from house to house?"

"I am not giving my business away."

"What are you after? I may aid you."

The detective laughed and said:

"When I need aid I will secure a woman."

Here was as pretty a double answer as was ever uttered, but the man from Newark only got on to one end of it. After a little time Jack let down easy on the man, thinking he might be of some service some day, and later the visitor departed, carrying his mortification and defeat in his memory. But he had learned a lesson, we hope, in the difficult trade he pretended to follow.

On the day following the incidents we have recorded Jack started out to walk to the adjoining town. On the way he came to an old graveyard; he stopped a moment and then said, talking to himself:

"Great Scott! I have missed a point all along. I will just take a walk around this old burying ground. I have not been able to learn anything from the living, I may pick up a point from a tombstone."

It was a bright, clear day; the sun shone with magnificent splendor as the shrewd officer entered the burying ground. He walked around looking for little graves, and he had been fully an hour in the place when suddenly he uttered a cry. He beheld letters almost illegible which struck him as startling in view of his quest. He dropped down, brushed away the grass, and lo, his search was ended—indeed his eyes had not deceived him. There before his eyes was the humble epitaph: "Amalie Canfield, aged four years; died December 20, 18—."

The detective's search was over and he was sadly disappointed, although the disappointment

meant a large fortune to himself, under the declaration of Mr. Townsend. There was no need for the detective to search further. He had solved the mystery, he had found Amalie Stevens, and *she left no heirs*. The child had died, according to the tombstone, some two months following the death of her adopted grandfather. There was the indisputable testimony.

On the day following Jack appeared in New York and at the home of Mr. Townsend, and he said:

"Well, sir, the mystery is all solved."

"It is?"

"Yes."

"You have found Amalie Stevens?"

"I have found the grave of Amalie Canfield, aged four years."

Our hero proceeded and told all that had occurred, and Mr. Townsend remarked:

"How sad, how fatal!"

"Yes, sir, but you have a consolation. Your oversight has not cost any one any trouble. Old Mr. Canfield died the day he made the deposit with you, and the heiress died two months and one day later, so it makes no difference. No one would have gained by an earlier finding of the letter; the fortune belongs to charity and you."

"No, not to me," said Mr. Townsend, "but to you."

"To me?"

"Yes."

"You mean it?"

"I do."

"Then I accept it as a trust."

"Accept it as a trust?"

"Yes, as a trust only, and I shall leave it in your possession."

"What is your reason?"

"Harold Stevens may have had other heirs; if so I will find them. I trust my next quest will prove a more *successful shadow*."

Mr. Townsend meditated awhile and then said:

"Your conclusion does you honor, but remember, I am an old man, I have legal heirs. If this fortune were found in my possession it might lead to trouble. I will transfer it all over to you; I can trust you; I *know you are* an honest man. If you should ever find a legal heir you can bestow the fortune, if not you can carry out the bequest at your leisure. Give half to charity and keep the other half; in the meantime, from my own fortune I propose to pay you twenty-five thousand dollars which is to be yours absolutely; the money you have earned."

Jack Alvarez determined to set out and find the true heirs if any were living, and under the title of "A Successful Shadow," a story to be written by us and issued very shortly, our readers will learn the incidents attending Jack Alvarez's most wonderful quest, and we promise our readers one of the most intense narratives, and the most thrilling and startling denouement that can be conceived, despite the testimony of the little gravestone. Do not fail to read "A Successful Shadow," to be issued in this series in a few weeks.

## THE END.

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[Transcriber's Note: The original edition did not contain a Table of Contents. A Table of Contents has been prepared for this electronic edition. In addition, the following typographical errors present in the original book have been corrected.

In Chapter I, a comma has been added after "Now, Mr. Alvarez".

In Chapter II, "a hopeles case" was changed to "a hopeless case".

In Chapter V, a missing quote has been added after 'strange "appearance'.

In Chapter VII, "Benwick's mind" has been changed to "Berwick's mind", and "It it, I admit" has been changed to "It is, I admit".

In Chapter VIII, "TACK'S FORESIGHT" has been changed to "JACK'S FORESIGHT", "Old Benwick" has been changed to "Old Berwick", and a missing quotation mark has been added before "indeed, in that direction".

In Chapter X, "the original heir" has been changed to "the original heir", and "as as cute as" has been changed to "as cute as".]

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK TWO WONDERFUL DETECTIVES; OR, JACK AND GIL'S MARVELOUS SKILL \*\*\*

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