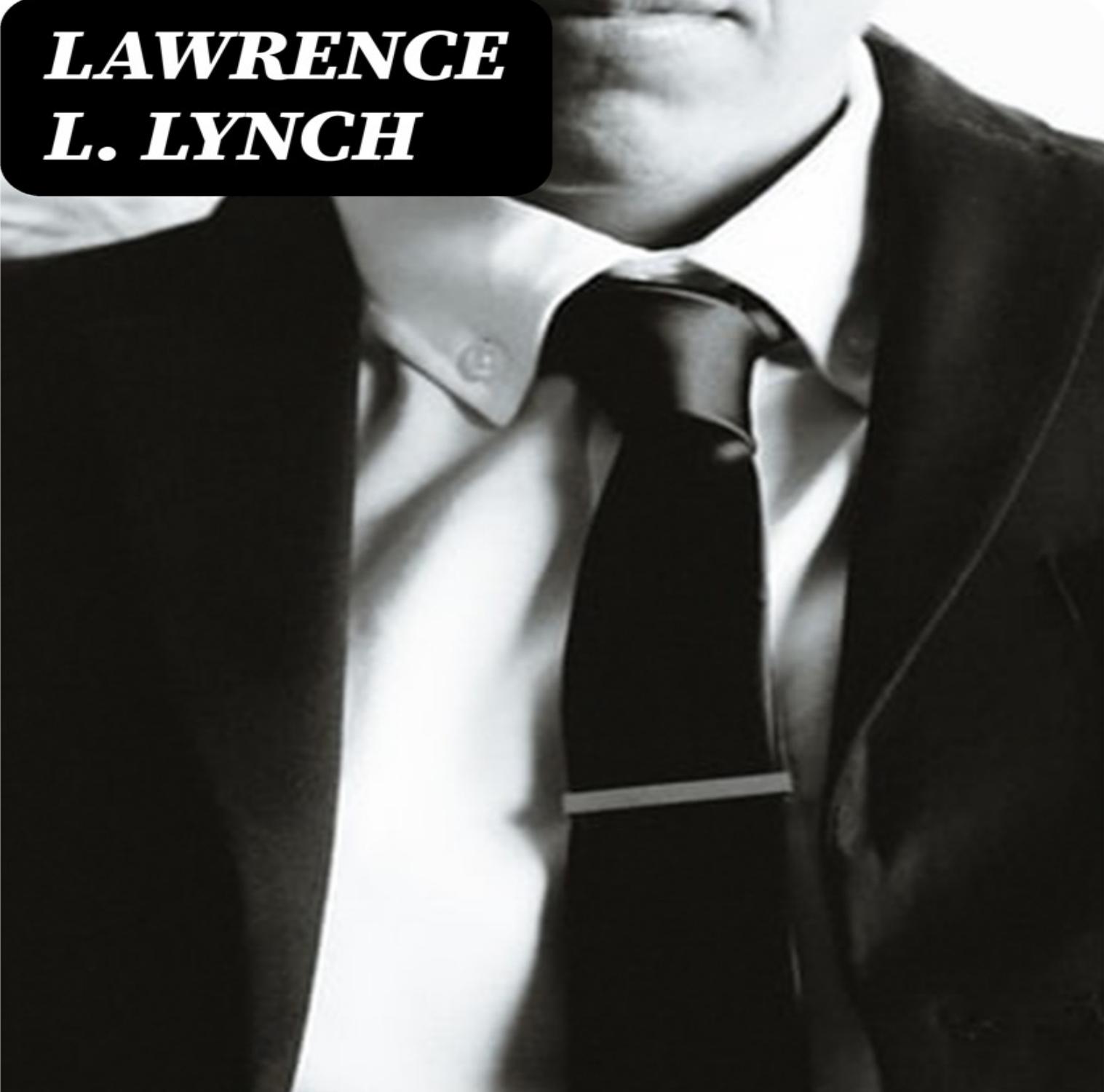


**LAWRENCE  
L. LYNCH**



**AGAINST  
ODDS**

**Lawrence L. Lynch**

# **Against Odds**

**A Detective Story**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

A DETECTIVE STORY OF THE WORLD'S FAIR

CHAPTER I.

'CHICARGO GITS MY MONEY.'

CHAPTER II.

'I TOLD MY TALE OF WOE.'

CHAPTER III.

A CONUNDRUM.

CHAPTER IV.

'I CAN'T MAKE MYSELF LIKE HIM.'

CHAPTER V.

'IT'S ALL A MIRACLE.'

CHAPTER VI.

A CRIMINAL HUNT.

CHAPTER VII.

'IT WAS GREENBACK BOB.'

CHAPTER VIII.

'STRAIGHT FROM THE SHOULDER.'

CHAPTER IX.

IN DISGUISE.

CHAPTER X.

CARL MASTERS.

CHAPTER XI.

'I DISLIKE A MYSTERY.'

CHAPTER XII.

'MORE DANGEROUS THAN HATE.'

CHAPTER XIII.

FACE TO FACE WITH DELBRAS.

CHAPTER XIV.

MISSING—CARTE BLANCHE.

CHAPTER XV.

THE KING OF CONFIDENCE MEN.

CHAPTER XVI.

THAT LITTLE DECOY.

CHAPTER XVII.

'THOSE TWO WOMEN.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

'IF YOU'LL FIND ONE, I'LL FIND THE OTHER.'

CHAPTER XIX.

'STRANGE! MISTAKEN! HEARTLESS!'

CHAPTER XX.

'WE MUST UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER.'

CHAPTER XXI.

'LET ME LAUGH!'

CHAPTER XXII.

'THERE IS DANGER—NEAR!'

CHAPTER XXIII.

'YOU ARE SUFFERING IN MY STEAD.'

CHAPTER XXIV.

'IT IS OUR FIRST CLUE.'

CHAPTER XXV.

'IT'S A SNARE.'

CHAPTER XXVI.

A COLUMBIAN GUARD.

CHAPTER XXVII.

'I'D SWEAR TO THEM HANDS ANYWHERE.'

CHAPTER XXVIII.

'NOW DOWN!'

CHAPTER XXIX.

'FIRE! FIRE! FIRE!'

CHAPTER XXX.

'IT SHALL NOT BE ALL SUSPENSE.'

CHAPTER XXXI.

SIR CARROLL RAE.

CHAPTER XXXII.

FOUND DEAD.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

'A MERCYFUL DISPENSAYSHUN.'

CHAPTER XXXIV.

'EUREKA!'

CHAPTER XXXV.

AFTER ALL.

THE END.

# **A DETECTIVE STORY OF THE WORLD'S FAIR**

[Table of Contents](#)

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# CHAPTER I.

## 'CHICARGO GITS MY MONEY.'

[Table of Contents](#)

'Eureka!'

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

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

I had come hither straight from the Terminal Station, seeking this stately keystone to the great Fair, not to steep my senses and fill my eyes with beauty in myriad forms, but to seek out the great man whose masterful hand was to create for me the passport which was to be my 'open sesame' to all within this fair White City's walls; but when I stood beneath that lofty double dome and looked about me, I forgot all but the beauty all around, and gazed upon the noble rotunda through the western entrance, where 'Earth,' majestic but untamed, a masterpiece of giant statuary, guards one massive pillar; and the same 'Earth,' yet not the same, conquered yet conquering, adds her beauty to the strength of the column opposite—to the east, where Neptune sports, classic as of old, around about the octagonal interior with its splendid arches, its frescoes and gilding, its medallions and plates of bronze, wherein

gleamed, golden and fair, the names of the world's greatest countries at its gilded panels, supported by winged figures, and bearing engraven upon each shining surface the record of some great event. Its medallions and graceful groups, allegorical or symbolic, all mounting high, and higher, until illuminated by the opal-like circle of light at the summit, Dodge's great picture crowns the whole, with its circling procession of arts and sciences, gods and muses, nymphs and graces, and Apollos radiant in the midst.

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

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

'Big thing, ain't it?'

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

told but too plainly of the luncheon under the pictorial newspaper tied down with abundant lashings of blue 'Shaker' yarn.

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

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

'About half an hour.'

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

I was not there to impart information, and I let the honest soul babble on. He had brawny shoulders and an ingenuous face, but I felt sure he had brought with him more money than was wise or needful, and that he would come to grief if

he continued to deny the possession of money, with his tell-tale face flatly contradicting his words.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Greenback Bob was a counterfeiter, or so it was believed, for he was so bold, so shrewd, and so generally successful, that no one as yet had been able to entangle him in the meshes of the law; though samples of what was believed to be his handiwork had been passed from hand to hand, and travelled far before they had been challenged, and their journeys summarily ended in the cabinet of our chief. Bob was known as a gambler, too, and more than once had he been watched and shadowed because of some ill deed

connected with his name; we had seen his face, and his picture adorned the rogues' gallery. Delbras, however, was likely to give us some trouble; we had seen him, it is true, but it was only a fleeting glimpse, with the possibility that he was at the moment cleverly disguised.

Of Delbras we knew, first, that he was and had been for years the occasional partner or confederate of the counterfeiter, and presumably a counterfeiter also; next, that he was set down in the records of the London police as 'dangerous'; and last, that he had crossed the ocean, leaving Paris, which had grown 'too hot to hold him,' and was avowedly *en route* for the World's Fair, it was thought upon mischief intent.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Orphans?'

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

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

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

'Don't say! Why, I——'

'But they did not arrive; their train had been delayed. But, as I was about to tell you, if I had not chanced to have

in my possession a roll of bills, put in my care by the father of one of the younger lads, I might have been kept outside for some time longer.'

'How's that?'

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

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

'In course! but—you was a-saying—'

'I began to tell you how I learned where to go to get money changed. I had entered, you must know, at the Cottage Grove gate opening upon Midway, and walking toward the east I soon met a guard.' He had drawn a cigar from his pocket while speaking, and he now turned toward me. I had lighted a weed upon seating myself near them, and as he uttered a polite 'Pardon me, sir,' I smoked calmly on, while I copied upon a fresh page of my notebook the legend, 'Jenner discovered the principle of vaccination in 1796,' putting an elaborate final flourish after the date.

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

pocket a little ear-tube, and, adjusting it to my right ear, said, 'Hey?'

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

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

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

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

'Oh!'

'He proved very affable—the guard assured me I would find him so; and as the other agencies were so far away, I took advantage of his good nature, and instead of exchanging ten dollars, I got him to put a hundred-dollar bill into fifty crisp new two-dollar bills, fresh, like all this

exchange money from the Government treasury—a part, in fact, of that great output of two-dollar greenbacks issued by the Government at the same time as the souvenir coins, as you no doubt remember.'

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

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

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

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

As the countryman turned toward his guide, the small sharp-faced woman, who had eyed us so long and often from her bench almost opposite, arose with a movement suggestive of steel springs, and made her way toward us, waving her umbrella to attract attention. I moved rapidly aside, in anticipation of the sweeping gesture of arm and umbrella, which dislodged a tall man's hat and sent it rolling to the feet of a frisky maiden, from whence it was rescued

by Smug, who restored it, with a placating word, and so averted an unpleasantness. Meanwhile the woman had reached her husband's side, and a few quick words had passed between the two. Then a gesture, and another word or two, evidently meant for an introduction, brought the smug stranger to her notice, and the three turned their faces toward the Plaisance; but not until I had heard her say to her better-half as she clung to his arm, while Smug opened a way ahead, 'I tell you he's a confidence man, and I know it. I've been a-watchin' him!'

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

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## CHAPTER II.

### 'I TOLD MY TALE OF WOE.'

[Table of Contents](#)

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

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

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

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

"Tain't no kind of use, pa!" she declared loudly. 'I'm goin' to set down by the lake for a minit; I guess there'll be some two-dollar bills left in Midway yet when we get there. I've heard tell of them lovely laggoonses till I'm achin' to see one; and I'm jest goin' to set right here till one goes by.

Land! just see them stone anymals, and all them old-fashioned stone figgers of folks! 'Pears to me they's people enough alive and frisky, 'thout stickin' all them stone men around so dretful lib'ral; though they look well 'nough, fur's I know.' She cast her eyes all about her, and then beckoned to Smug, standing uneasily in the rear: 'Say, can't you show me one single laggoon?'

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

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

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

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

As the bearers gently lowered the chair, and stood beside it at ease, she snatched her hand from her husband's arm,

and hurrying towards the front, peered within the curtained box.

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

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

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

The shrill long-drawn-out cry caused him to turn suddenly, and to elbow his way, with his prey at his heels, toward a small railed-in space, wherein, seated on a Turkish ottoman, a little higher than the genuine, was a swarthy man with beetling brows, big rolling black eyes, and a fierce moustache bristling underneath a hooked nose. He wore a red fez, much askew, and his American trousers and waistcoat were enlivened by a tennis-sash of orange and red and a smoking-coat faced with vivid green. He was smoking a decorated Turkish pipe—'Toor-kaish,' he called it—and a low table and sundry decorated boxes and packages were his sole stock-in-trade.

'Kum-all-ong! he reiterated. 'Kum-e see-e me-e-e smoke! Easy—so—no noise; so! Soo-vy-nee-yra; Toor-kaish soo-vy-nee-yr matches!' At every pause a 'soo-vy-nee-yr match'

was struck, deftly and without noise, and a big puff of smoke was sent circling above his head.

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

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

I had followed them, trusting to the crowd and my skill as an 'artful dodger,' up to this moment quite closely; but I now fell back, and withdrew myself a little distance from the aisle where all three were now loitering, the woman examining with wondering eyes marvellous Turkish slippers with turned-up toes, and olive-wood beads and bracelets, proffered by fierce Mohammedans in baggy trousers and tasselled fez, or by swarthy, oily-skinned girls with bushy hair and garments of Oriental colouring, or in tailor-made gowns, and with the ubiquitous fez as a badge of their office—or servitude; rugs and draperies, attar of roses in gilded vials, souvenir spoons, filigree in gilt and silver, toys of unknown form and name, cloying Turkish sweets, foreign stamps, coins, reliques, all came under her unsophisticated

eyes, while her spouse gazed upon Moorish daggers, swords of strange workmanship, saddles and stirrups of singular form, and much strange gear and gay trappings, the use of which he could never have guessed but for the learned explanations of his now carelessly amiable guide.

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

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

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

The youth chose between the two canes, and handed up in payment a worn five-dollar bill, and after a feint at searching for the correct amount the man of the fez bent down and placed in his hand a crisp new two-dollar

banknote; at the same moment, almost, friend Smug touched the arm of Farmer Camp, and I saw the two turn their heads toward the southern wing. I had made my way so near them that I could hear the words of the farmer, who evidently had no subdued tones, and after a long look toward the south entrance I heard him say:

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

And then I saw his guide's lips moving, and caught the final words, 'an educated Oriental.' In another moment he had moved hurriedly forward and put out his hand to stop the man who, with head very erect, and crowned with a black and gold embroidered fez, was coming toward him, but with eyes levelled upon the active young man upon the lofty stool. He wore a severe suit of black, relieved upon the breast of the close-buttoned Prince Albert coat by a blue satin badge, bearing upon its upper half a silver-gilt souvenir half-dollar, and upon the lower portion a tiny facsimile of a Government banknote.

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

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

dollar notes to the unwitting foreigner or native; and Adam Camp was about to be mulcted.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I was playing a bluff game, and I knew it, for as yet I had not secured my credentials; but when I saw the swart face

of the sham agent change to a sickly yellow, and Smug begin to draw back and look anxiously from left to right, I was inwardly triumphant; but, alack! it is only in fiction that the clever detective always has the best of it, and at this moment there came an unexpected diversion.

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

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

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

'What is it?'

'Anyone been robbed?'

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

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

'My wallet!'

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

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

'Here it is!' cried one.

'Lord-a-massy!'

'I told you so!'

'Run him in!'

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

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

Then I spoke to my captors:

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

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

At the entrance to the great animal show there was a dense crowd, and for a moment we were brought to a halt.

Standing upon the edge of the mass of bobbing bonnets and heaving shoulders, I could see in the midst of the throng two Turkish-fezzed heads wildly dodging and struggling toward us, and a moment later a full bass voice called impatiently:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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