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Take a Tip From Old Diogenes

By MOSS.

PLATO having a couple of thousand years ago defined man as a two legged animal without feathers, Diogenes (the chap who went around in the daytime with a lantern looking for an honest man) plucked a rooster and took it into the academy where the ancient philosophers discussed everything under the sun and said, "This is Plato's man." On which account this addition was made to the definition: "With broad, flat nails."

We all admit that old Diogenes was a pretty smart Greek, with a fine sense of humor. If he lived today he wouldn't have to use his lantern among daylight newspapers to find an honest advertiser. SUCCESSFUL ADVERTISERS MUST BE HONEST. Dishonesty doesn't pay in advertising or in anything else. No daylight paper wants to have anything to do with the space buyer who deliberately tries to fool the public.

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The Secret of Lonesome Cove

By Samuel Hopkins Adams

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CHAPTER XI.

Hedgehog House.

The elder traced the history of the Blair in an out of concentric circles of scandal—financial, political, social—and mostly untrue. Those in which the greatest portion of truth inhered dealt with the escapades of Wilfrid Blair, the only son and heir of the household, who had turned up all the paternal money he could lay hands on, writing his name in red fire across the night life of London, Paris and New York.

Tried of this, he had come home and married a girl of nineteen, beautiful and innocent, whose parents, the elder plausibly opined, had sold her to the devil per Mr. Blair's agent.

The girl whose maiden name was Marjorie Dorrance—Kent's fingers went to his ear at this—had left Blair after a year of marriage, though there was no legal process, and he had returned to his haunts of the gutter until retribution overtook him in the form of tuberculosis.

His father had brought him to their place on Sundayman's creek, and there he was kept in semi-seclusion, visited from time to time by his young wife, who helped to care for him.

"That's the story they tell," commented the elder, "but some folks has got suspicions. My own suspicions is that the young feller hasn't got no more consumption than you have, although he's got a man nurse. I think old Blair has got him here to keep him out of the papers."

"Publicity is not to Mr. Blair's taste, then?"

"I don't believe the old man would hardly stop short of murder to keep his name out of print. He's kind of loony on the subject. Safflor Mitt Smith is the feller that can tell you about the family and the place. Here, he comes up the street."

He thrust his head out of the door and called. Safflor Mitt, sturdy and white, entered and greeted Kent courteously.

"Mr. Dennett was saying," remarked Kent, "that you know something of the history of Hedgehog house, as I believe they call it."

"They call it," repeated the old sailor. "Who calls it? If you mean the Blair place, that's Hog's head, that is! You can't live in it and die in it. There's a man living as knew the place at its worst. Old Captain Hogg built it in '71. Old Hogg had a dog, the devil is tryin' bacon out of old Hogg today for the things he done in that house."

"How long since did he die?"

"Oh, twenty year back."

"And the house was sold soon after?"

"Sold vacant for ten years. Then the feller Blair bought it. He don't know him, but he bought a weebly biscuit there. A bad house, it is—rotten bad!"

"What's wrong with it?"

"Men's bones in the brick and women's blood in the mortar."

"Was the old boy a cannibal?" asked Kent, amused by the sea veteran's heresy.

"Just as bad—slave trader."

"Have you ever been in the house?"

"Many's the time when it was Hogg's house. Only once since. They do tell that the curse has come down with the house and is heavy on the new owner's son."

"So I've heard."

"The old head wagged bodingly. 'The curse of the blood,' he said. 'It's on all that race.'"

"Hogg's oldest sister was the grandmother of this young feller's mother, wasn't she?" put in Elder Dennett.

"That's right. Wilfrid Blair's great grandmother."

"And a bad 'un, too, I guess," continued the elder relishingly.

"Don't you say it!" cried the old seaman. "The curse of the blood was on her. Strange she was and beautiful, so my mother used to tell me, but not bad. She came in at Lonesome Cove too."

"Drowned at sea?" asked Kent.

"They never knew. One day she was gone. The next night her body came in. They said in the countryside that she had the gift of second sight and foretold her own death."

"Hum—m," mused Kent. "And now the Blairs have changed the name of the place. No wonder."

"There's one thing they haven't changed, the private burin' plot."

"Family?"

"Hogg's there, all right, an' never a person in the countryside dared to speak to God about his soul, when they laid him there. His nephew, too, that was as black hearted as himself. But the rest of the graves has got no headstones."

"Slaves?"

"Them as he kept for his own service an' killed in his tantrums. Nobody knows how many. You can see the bend of the creek where they lie, from the road, and the old willows that lean over 'em."

"Cheerful sort of persons the late Mr. Hogg seems to have been. Any relics of his trade in the house?"

"Relics? You may say so! His old pistols and compasses, guns, nautical instruments and the leaded whalebone whip that they used to say he slept with. They've got 'em hung on the walls now for ornaments. Ornaments! If they'd seen 'em as I've seen 'em, they'd stak the dunned things in a hundred fathom of sea."

"Safflor Smith was cabin boy on one of the old Hogg fleet one voyage," explained Elder Dennett.

"God forgive me for it!" said the old man. "There they hang, and with 'em the chains and—"

"Isn't that lamp finished yet?" demanded Kent, turning sharply upon Elder Dennett.

Having paid for it, with something extra for his curtness, he led the seaman out of the place.

"You were going to say 'and handcuffs, weren't you?' he inquired.

"Ay, yes. What of that?" asked the veteran, puzzled. Suddenly he brought his hand down with a bang on his thigh. "Where was my wife?" he cried. "Them iron on the dead woman's wrist! I knew I'd seen their like before! Slave manacles! They must 'a' come from Hogg's haven!"

"Very likely. But that suspicion had better be kept quiet at present, old man."

"Ay, ay, ay," agreed the other. "More devilment from the old haven! A bad house—a rotten bad house!"

"Yet I've a pressing desire to take a look at it," said Chester Kent musingly.

"Going back to Annalaka, Mr. Smith? I'll walk with you as far as the road to Mr. Sedgewick's."

Freed of the veteran's company at the turn of the road, Kent sat down and took his ear in hand to think.

"Miss Dorrance," he mused. "Marjorie Dorrance. What simpler twist for a name than that to transform that into Marjorie DeWoe Sedgewick?"

At the Nook he found the object of his commiseration mournfully striving to piece together, as in a mosaic, the shattered remnants of his work. Sedgewick brightened at his friend's approach.

"Heaven's sake, come in! he do me a couple of sets of tennis!" he begged. "I'm no sport for you, I jump, particularly as my nerves are jumpy, but I need the work."

"Sorry, my boy," said Kent, "but I've got to make a more or less polite call. People named Blair. Ever know 'em?"

"Used to know a Wilfrid Blair in Paris," said the artist indifferently.

"What kind of a person was he?"

"An agreeable enough little beast, but a rouser of the worst sort. Is he the man you're going to see?"

"No such luck," said Chester Kent. "I never expect to see Wilfrid Blair. Probably I ain't even be invited to his funeral."

"Oh! Is he dead?"

"His death is officially expected any day."

With which words Kent stepped out into the waiting car.

After departing from the Nook Kent's car rolled along beside Sundayman's creek sedately enough until it approached the wide bend, where it indulged in a bit of pathfinding across the country, and eventually crept into the shade of a clump of bushes and hid. Its occupant emerged and went forward afoot until he came in view of Hedgehog house. At the turn of the stream he leaped a fence and made his way to a group of willows beneath which the earth was ridged with little mounds. Professor Chester Kent was invading the territory of the dead.

From the seclusion of the graveyard amid the willows a fair view was afforded of Hedgehog house. Grim as was the repute given it, it presented to the intruder an aspect of homely hospitable sweetness and quaintness. Tall hollyhocks lifted their flowers to smile in at the old fashioned windows. Here and there on the well kept lawn peonies glowed, crimson and white. A great, clambering rose tree had thrown its arms around the square porch, softening the uncompromising angles into curves of leafage and bloom. Along the paths panicles laughed at the sun, and mimosaes scattered their ascended summons to bee and butterfly. The place was a loved place; so much Kent felt with sureness of instinct. No home blooms except by love.

But the house was dead. Its eyes were closed. Silence held it. The garden buzzed and flickered with vivid multicolored life, but there was no stir from the habitation of man. Had its occupants deserted it?

From the far side of the mansion came the sound of a door opening and closing again. Moving quickly along the sumac fringed course of the creek, Kent made a detour which gave him a side entrance and had barely time to efface himself in the shrubbery when a light wagon, with a spirited horse between the shafts, turned briskly into the road. Kent, well sheltered, caught one brief sufficient glimpse of the occupant. It was Dr. Breed. The medical officer looked, as always, nervey, but there was a greedy smile on his lips.

Kent's mouth puckered. He took a deep breath of moist inspiration and exhaled it in painful noiselessness, flattening himself amid the greenery as he saw a man emerge from the rear of Hedgehog house. The man was Gansett Jim. He carried a picnic and walked slowly. Presently he disappeared in the willow shaded place of mounds. The sound of his coat came, muffled, to the ears of the hidden man.

Cautiously Kent worked his way, now in the stream, now through the heavy growth on the banks, until he gained the roadway. Once there he went forward to the front gate of Hedgehog house. Kent paused for the merest moment. His gaze rested on the heavy black door. Heavier and blacker against the woodwork a pendant waved languidly.

To the normal human being the grisly insignificance of death over a portal is provocative of anything rather than mirth. But Chester Kent, viewing the crape on Hedgehog house, laughed as he turned to the open road.

Meditation furrowed the brow of Lawyer Adam Bain. "Nobody never Sedgewick," grumbled he. "Public opinion versus Sedgewick," he amended.

"How's a self respecting lawyer going to extricate me out of that? And Len Schlager standing over the grave of the corpse delict with a warrant against searching, so to speak, in his hand! For that matter, this Professor Kent worries me more than the sheriff."

A sharp humming rose in the air and brought the idle counselor to his window, whence he beheld the prime author of his bewilderment descending from a car. A minute later the two men were sitting with their feet on one desk, a fatiged good sign of mutual respect and confidence.

"Blair?" said Lawyer Bain. "No, I don't know him, not even to see. Took Hogg's haven, didn't he?"

"Then he doesn't use this postoffice?"

"No. Might use any one of half a dozen. See here." He drew a county map from a shelf. "Here's the place. Seven railroad stations on three different roads within ten miles of it. Annalaka would be way out of his reach."

"Yet Gansett Jim seems to be known here?"

"Oh! Is it Blair that the Indian works for? I never knew. Closer a deaf mute with lockjaw, he is. Well, I expect the reason he comes here occasionally is that it's the nearest license town."

"Lo, the poor Injun when he wants a drink will walk ten miles as easy as you'd walk."

"Do you know most of the postoffices around here?"

"There isn't but one postmaster within twenty miles that I don't call by his first name, and she's a postmistress."

"Then you could probably find out by telephone where the Blair family get their mail?"

"Easy."

"And perhaps what newspapers they take?"

"H'm! Yes, I guess so."

"Try it as soon as you get back."

"Back from where?"

"Back from the medical officer's place. I think he must have returned by this time."

"You want to see Tim Breed?"

"No! Just his records. Rural public records, I suppose, are a matter of public record."

"Yes. All you've got to do is to go and ask for 'em. You won't need me."

"Regrettable as his bad taste is," said Kent with a solemn face. "I fear that Dr. Breed doesn't regard me with that confidence and esteem which one reads of in illustrious resolutions."

"And you want me as an accelerator," smiled the lawyer. "All right. It's the Jane Doe permit you're after, I suppose."

"Which?"

"Jane Doe. They buried the corpse from Lonesome Cove under that name. Unidentified dead, you know."

CHAPTER XII.

Loose Ends.

TOGETHER they went to the medical officer's quarters. Dr. Breed had come in fifteen minutes in twenty minutes. Without preliminary Lawyer Bain said:

"I want to see that Jane Doe certificate again."

"Aren't you afraid of wearin' out the ink on it, Adam?" retorted the other, with a furtive grin.

"And I'll cheer Kent in his suavest manner," ventured to trouble you to show me the certificate in the case of Wilfrid Blair."

Something like a spasm shook the lineaments of Dr. Breed's meager face. "Blair!" he repeated. "How did you know?"

"How did I know that Wilfrid Blair is dead?" Kent finished for him. "Why there has been time enough, hasn't there?"

The physician's hands clawed nervously at his straggling hair.

"Time enough?" he murmured. "Time enough? I'm only just back from the Blair place myself."

"Ah," commented Kent negligently. "Then he died within two hours or so?"

"This morning," retorted the other. "It's all in the certificate."

"All?" inquired Kent, so significantly that Lawyer Bain gave him a quick look.

"All that your business or anybody else's," said Breed, recovering himself a bit.

"Doubtless. And I'm to be permitted to see this document?"

Breed pushed a paper across the table. "There it is. I just finished making it out."

"I see," said Kent, giving the paper a scant survey. "That the cause of death is set down as cardiac failure."

"Well, what's the matter with that?"

"Just a trifle noncommittal, but it's you, see, all die of cardiac failure."

"That record's good enough for the law," declared the medical officer doggedly.

"Who was the attending physician?"

"I was."

"Indeed! And to what undertaker was the permit issued?"

"It was issued to the family. They can turn it over to what undertaker they please."

"Where is the interment to be?"

"Say, looky here, Mr. Bain!" cried the physician, breaking into the sudden whining fury of hard pressed timidity. "Are you trying to learn me my business? You can go to the devil! That's what you can do!"

"With your signature on my certificate?" inquired the scientist, unmoved.

"I won't trouble you so far, Dr. Breed. I thank you."

Outside in the street, Lawyer Bain turned to his client. "You didn't look at the Jane Doe paper at all."

"No. I'm not so interested in that as in the other."

"Something queer about this Blair death? Not another murder?"

"I should just consider his method of burial likely to prove particularly irksome," returned Kent. "Of course I may be wrong, but I think not. The most private way to get buried is in public."

"Well, if a death was crooked I'd want no better man than Breed to help cover it. By the way, the sheriff has been away since yesterday afternoon on some business that he kept to himself."

"That also may mean something," remarked Kent thoughtfully. "Now, if you'll find out about that newspaper matter I'll go over to Sedgewick's. You can get me there by telephone."

In the studio Kent found Sedgewick walking up and down with his hands behind his back and his head forward.

"Why the enged lion effect?" inquired the scientist.

"Some one has been having a little fun with me," growled Sedgewick. "Apparently it was one sided. What's this on the easel?"

"What would you take it to be?"

"Let's have a closer look."

Walking across the room Kent planted himself in front of the drawing board, upon which had been fixed, by the artist's hand, a loosely bound edition of the Massachusetts Agricultural Reports. "The picture was stuck in between the leaves."

"No name in the book," said Kent. "The title is gone. But here's the date of publication—1830."

"That would be just about right," said Sedgewick, with lively interest.

"Right for what?" demanded Dennett.

"Before there was time for repli Kent had pressed a five dollar bill into his hand, with the words:

"You've made a trade."

"Wait," protested the elder. But the sketch was already in Sedgewick's possession.

"It's an Elliott," said that gentleman. "I'm sure of it. I've seen his sketches before, though they're very rare, and there's an unmistakable touch about his pencil work."

"In that case," said Kent suavely, "Dr. Dennett will be gratified to know that he has sold for \$5 an article worth fifty times that."

"You recognize it, though?"

"It bears a resemblance to the face of the corpse at Lonesome Cove. Where did that precious work of art come from?"

"Heaven knows! Ching Lung found the sketch lying on the doorstep with a cobblestone holding it down."

"It isn't a sketch."

"What would you call it, then?"

"A copy. If you had used your eyes on it instead of your temper, you might have seen at once that it is a tracing. Look for yourself, now."

Taking the magnifying monocle that Kent held out, the artist scrutinized the lines of the picture.

"By Jove! You're right," said he. "It's been transferred through tracing paper and touched up afterward. Right enough, too. You can see where the copyist has been—down—too—hard on the lead."

"What's your opinion of the likeness—if it is the likeness which you suppose?" inquired Kent.

"Why, as I remember the woman this picture is a good deal idealized. The hair and the eyes are much the same. But the lines of the face in the picture are finer. The chin and mouth are more delicate, and the whole effect softer and of a higher type."

"Do you see anything strange about the neck on the left side?"

"Badly drawn; that's all."

"Just below the ear there is a sort of blackish line that remains unexplained just there."

"If you were touching it up how would you correct that?"

"With a slight shading just there where the neck muscle should be thrown up a bit by the turn of the head."

"Or by introducing a large pendant earring which the copier has left out?"

"Kent, you're a wonder! That would do it exactly. But why in the name of all that marvelous should the tracer of this drawing leave out the earring?"

Obviously to keep the picture as near like as possible to the body on the bench."

"Then you don't think it is the woman of the bench?"

"No, I don't."

"Who else could it possibly be?"

"Perhaps we can best find that out by discovering who left the drawing here."

"That looks like something of a job."

"Not very formidable, I think. Suppose we run up to the village and ask the local stationer who has bought any tracing paper there within a day or two."

As the demand for tracing paper in Marlinville (center was small, the stationer upon being called on had no difficulty in recalling that Elder Dennett had been in that afternoon and made such a purchase.

"Then he must have discovered something after I left him," said Kent to Sedgewick. "By the way, could he have kept his secret for so long?"

"But what motive could he have?" cried the artist.

"Just mischief probably. That's enough motive for his sort." Turning to the storekeeper, Kent added, "Do you happen to know Mr. Dennett's early part of this afternoon?"

"I surely do. He was up to Dimmock's rummage auction, an' he got something there that tickled him like a feather. But he wouldn't let on what it was."

"The original?" said Sedgewick.

"What does Dimmock deal in?"

"All kinds of odds and ends. He carries on country store bankrupt sales an' has a big auction once a year. Everybody goes. You can find any kind of a plop handle to a second hand marriage certificate at his place."

"We now call on Elder Dennett," said Kent.

"That worthy was about closing up shop when they entered."

"Don't your lamp work right yet, Professor Kent?" he inquired.

"Perfectly," responded the scientist.

"We have come to see you on another matter, Mr. Sedgewick and I."

"First let me thank you," said Sedgewick, "for the curious work of art you left at my place."

"Hay-ee!" inquired the elder, with a rising inflection.

"Don't take the trouble to lie about it," put in Kent. "Just show us the original of the drawing which you traced so handsly."

The town gossip shifted uneasily

from foot to foot. "Now you know I got the picture?" he giggled. "