

VARIOUS

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4, 1921 / Stories of boys that make money

Dick's head, falling forward when he lost consciousness, hit the door and the sound attracted the attention of the proprietor and his two clerks. "What's that?" exclaimed Mr. Bacon. He pulled the door open and the office boy fell out

Dick Darling's Money; or, The Rise of an Office Boy

CHAPTER I. – The Office Boy's Peril

"Dick, come into my office," said Mr. Roger Bacon, a well-known wholesale dealer in watches, jewelry and silverware, on John street, New York City.

"Yes, sir," replied Dick Darling, his fifteen-year-old office boy – a bright, good-looking lad, who had not yet graduated out of knickerbockers, though most boys of his age would have dispensed with them for trousers. Somehow or another Dick looked to unusual advantage in knickerbockers, and he made a pretty figure in the store, which naturally made his employer partial to that kind of attire in him. That was one reason why he continued to wear them at his age.

Another reason was because being the youngest of a family of four, the older members being all girls, he was regarded by his mother and sisters as the baby of the family, and they wouldn't hear to his making any change in his attire. He was only a baby in name, however, for there wasn't a pluckier young chap of his years in his neighborhood, or in the city for that matter. The boys in his block, who knew him well, and those employed in the vicinity of Mr. Bacon's store, downtown, often made his knickerbockers the butt of their witticism, but Dick was a self-reliant, independent youth, and he didn't care a rap for the fun and criticism that was directed at his apparel. He surprised the downtown lads by polishing off a couple of them who got too gay on the subject, which made the rest rather shy about tackling him, since it was apparent that he knew how to use his fists if forced to call upon them. When Dick followed his employer into his private office the merchant pointed at the chair beside the desk, so the office boy sat down and awaited developments.

"Dick," said Mr. Bacon, "I'm going to send you on an unusual mission. I want you to take this package," laying his hand on a square one which stood on his desk, "to Springville, New Jersey. The village is about an hour's ride from Jersey City, on the line of the Central Railroad of New Jersey. A train that will stop there leaves Jersey City at four-thirty, and you have thirty minutes to catch it. You will deliver the package at the home of Mr. Goodrich – his name and address are written on the outside. As he is well known in the place, the station agent or anybody in the village will direct you to his house, which I believe is not over ten minutes' walk from the station. Under ordinary circumstances this package would be sent by express, but the order came only a short time ago, and the article must reach the gentleman early this evening. I may as well tell you that it is a wedding present, and is worth about \$330. You ought to be able to deliver the package and get back to the station in time to take the train for Jersey City which stops at Springville at six-fifteen. That is all. Go to the cashier and he will hand you money enough to cover all your expenses."

Dick took the package and carried it with him into the counting room, where the cashier handed him a five-dollar bill and told him to turn in the change in the morning. Then he put on his hat and started for the Cortlandt street ferry. He landed in Jersey City in ample time to catch the accommodation train which stopped at all points north of its destination. Dick enjoyed the ride to Springville, where he arrived about half-past five.

He found no trouble in reaching the Goodrich house, where he asked for Mr. Goodrich and delivered the package to him. The gentleman presented him with a dollar, treated him to some cake and lemonade, after which Dick started back for the station. He arrived there five minutes before train time and went to the window to buy a return ticket. The agent was busy at the telegraph key and Dick had to wait for him to get through.

"I want a ticket for Jersey City," said the office boy.

"Sorry, but there's just been an accident down the road. The train you expect to take, due here in five minutes, ran into a number of freight cars on a siding, owing to a switch having been imperfectly

locked, and it stuck there. It may be hours before the tangle is straightened out. You will have to wait for the nine-ten, which is the next train that stops here."

"Nine-ten!" exclaimed Dick. "That's three hours from now."

The agent nodded.

"This is only a small place, and but few of the trains stop here," he said.

"If I have to wait for that train I won't get home till after eleven o'clock, and my folks will be worried to death about me, for they don't know that I was sent down here."

The agent looked at the clock.

"Well, I'll tell you what you can do if you are a spry walker. The express which passes here at seven-thirty stops at Carlin, six miles north of this station. There's a good road running straight to that town. If you think you can cover the distance between now and seven-thirty-eight, why, you will be able to get that train, which will land you in Jersey City about eight-ten."

"I'll try it. Where's the road?"

The agent came out of his office, took Dick to the rear door of the station, and showed him the road.

"It goes right to Carlin, you say?" said Dick.

"Yes."

"Will it land me near the station?"

"Within a short distance of it. You ought to make the train, for you have an hour and twenty-five minutes to do it in. You ought to be able to walk five miles in an hour if you do your best. It's a good hard road on which a person can make good time."

Dick started at a brisk walk for Carlin. He came to a fork in the road after going about a mile. After due deliberation he took what he thought was the right road, but which turned out to be the wrong one. After he had walked what he thought at least six miles and no town in sight, he felt he had taken the wrong road. An old and apparently deserted house stood near where Dick halted and a storm coming up, he decided to seek shelter there. It was now nearly dark. Dick sought shelter in the old house. The door was nearly off its hinges. Soon the storm came on, and by a flash of lightning he saw a couple of men each with a bag over his shoulder, putting for the house. He drew back into what had apparently been a bedroom, as he did not wish to be seen by the strangers.

As soon as the two men entered, they started to talk of dividing the contents of the bags as soon as they reached the house of one of the men, who was called Parker by the other, whose name was Bulger. Dick soon learned the bag contained the contents of a burglary which the two men had committed on a large house in the vicinity, and that they had had an exciting encounter with one of the servants. Dick felt that he was in bad company. In leaning a little too heavily on one foot a board creaked, which sound the two thieves heard, and they started to investigate. Dick retreated into a corner of the room. One of the thieves heard him and made a dive for the spot. As Dick could not see the crook any better than that individual could see him, he was taken by surprise when the muscular arms of the man suddenly encountered him and he was immediately seized and dragged out of the corner. The crook saw that it was a boy he had hold of.

"Now, you young imp, I've got you!" he cried triumphantly. "What are you hidin' up in this place for?"

"What's that to you?" replied Dick pluckily.

"Sassy, are you? I reckon I'll take some of the sass out'r you before I'm through with you. Come along."

He dragged the boy into the next room.

"Open the winder and let's take a squint at this chap," said Bulger.

Parker threw up the dirty window overlooking the road, but the amount of light that came in did not greatly help matters out.

"How came you in this house?" said Bulger.

"I came here to get out of the storm," replied Dick.

"Oh, you did; then why didn't you show yourself when we came in?"

"Why should I?"

"You heard us come in, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"And you didn't let on you were here. You've been listenin' to our talk."

Dick made no reply.

"You heard all we said, didn't you?" said Bulger, giving the boy a rough shake.

"You say I did."

"I know you did."

"Then what's the use of asking me, if you know so much?"

"Because I want you to admit it."

"I'll admit nothing."

"I'll choke the life out of you if you don't!" said the crook savagely.

"I haven't done you any harm, what do you want to treat me this way for?"

"But you intend to squeal on us as soon as you get away."

"What will I squeal about?"

"About what you heard."

"I haven't said that I heard anything."

"Who are you, anyway?" said Bulger, suddenly changing his line of questioning.

"My name is Dick Darling."

"Where do you live around here?"

"I don't live around here at all."

"You don't? Know anybody named Darling about here, Parker?"

"No. He looks like a stranger to me as well as I can see him," said Parker.

"Where do you live, then?" demanded Bulger.

"In New York."

"New York!" roared the crook. "What are you givin' me?"

"That's the truth."

"What are you doin' 'way down here in Jersey, then? Who are you visitin'?"

"Nobody. I was sent to Springville on an errand by my boss."

"Where's Springville, Parker?"

"It's a village on the railroad about eight miles from here."

"If you were sent to Springville, how is it that you are over here?"

"An accident happened to the train I was going to take for Jersey City, and the agent told me that I could catch an express if I walked to Carlin. That's what brought me over here."

"Did you start to walk to Carlin from Springville?" asked Parker.

"Yes," replied Dick.

"And instead of keepin' to your left, you turned into the road to the right and came over here, eh?"

"Yes, I did that. And I walked away from the town instead of toward it?"

"That's what you've been doin'."

"That's tough. I'll have to go back to the Carlin road, then, before I'm on the right track again."

"I reckon you won't go nowheres at present," said Bulger. "You've heard too much for some people's good. We'll take him over to your place, Parker, and hold on to him till I'm ready to dig out, and then I'll take him with me."

Having decided that point, the crook took a firm hold of the boy by the arm, and led him outside, followed by his pal, who shouldered the two bags.

CHAPTER II. – Dick Escapes

Dick was marched along the road to a field, lifted over the fence, and compelled to tramp it through the sodden turf and high grass. At length they reached another fence and he was lifted over that, too. The grass wasn't so tall in this meadow, but it was high enough to keep his shoes and stockings well soaked. They passed downhill here into a wood, and through the wood to another meadow, and across the meadow to a road, a narrow branch one, and along the road to a small weather-beaten picket gate, in the center of a picket fence, which admitted them to a ruinous-looking plot of ground, in the foreground of which stood a disreputable-looking two-story house, with a light shining from one of the windows. Dick was marched around the house to a crazy barn in the rear. The door, held by a hasp and staple, was opened and he was pushed in, followed by the man, Parker dropping the bags on the floor. Parker fumbled about on a beam till he found a match, with which he lighted a lantern. Then he got a piece of rope and with it Dick was bound to a post on which some odd pieces of harness were hanging. The men then conferred in a low tone. Finally, after Bulger had examined Dick's bonds to make sure that he was well tied, the men took the bags up and left the barn, after blowing out the light, and secured the door after them.

For the next half hour Dick worked hard to get free from the post. He twisted and pulled and shoved his arms this way and that, stopping occasionally to rest himself. Perseverance, they say, will conquer in the end; at any rate, it did in Dick's case, for at the end of thirty minutes he pulled one of his hands out of the bonds. The other soon followed, but still he wasn't free, for the rope around his chest held him close to the post. Even though his hands were free, he could not reach the knot that held him a prisoner. However, that did not greatly matter, for he managed to work his right arm to the front so he could put his hand in his pocket and pull out his knife. He had to put it behind his back to open it, but once that was done all he had to do was to crook his arm and begin sawing at the rope. The blade was sharp so the strands were quickly severed, and he stepped away from the post, free at last. The next thing was to get out of the barn. He tried the door, but that was beyond him. Then he felt his way around the walls in the dark, stumbling over various obstacles in his path. He found a place at the back where the boards appeared to be loose. He struck at one with his heel and it began to give way. Encouraged by this, he kept at it and in a short time detached the end of the board. He succeeded in knocking out a second board, and ripping both off, made a hole sufficiently large for him to crawl through. He knew where the road was and he started for it, taking care to give the house a wide berth.

There was a light in the room he judged was the kitchen, and he believed the two men were there, drying their clothes. He climbed over the picket fence, and when he stood in the road the problem of where it led to struck him with some force. He would have to follow the road in one direction or the other, and he had no idea at all where he would fetch up at. The night was dark and the strangeness and uncertainty of his situation made him feel all at sea. He started down the road at random, hoping he would meet with a house where, if the inmates were up, he could get information that would enable him to reach Carlin. He saw the lighted windows of a house up the road and decided to go there and make his inquiries. As he approached the gate he saw three men standing there talking. Two of them seemed to be rural policemen. They looked at him as he came up.

"Is this the road that runs into the Carlin road?" he asked the party generally.

"Yes," replied the well-dressed third person, who was evidently connected with the house.

"Would you favor me with the time?"

"It is about ten o'clock."

"Thank you, sir; now maybe you'll tell me whether this house was robbed this evening just before the thunderstorm?"

The three looked at Dick with some surprise and curiosity.

"Yes, it was," replied the gentleman. "How did you learn about it?"

"From the two thieves themselves."

His reply created something of a sensation.

"You learned the fact from the thieves?" said the gentleman.

"Yes, sir."

"Pray, who are you, young man? You seem to be a stranger in this vicinity."

"I am a stranger. My name is Dick Darling. I live in New York, and am employed by Roger Bacon, wholesale dealer in watches, jewelry and silverware. I was sent with a package to Mr. Goodrich, of Springville, a few miles from here, this afternoon, but after delivering it I found that the accommodation train for Jersey City, which stops at Springville at six-fifteen, had met with an accident which put it out of business, and being anxious to get home, the agent told me that if I walked to Carlin, six miles north, I could catch the next express, which stopped there at seven-thirty-eight. I started to walk, and got on all right till I came to where the road joined another, this one, in fact. I took this one by mistake and it brought me out here, away from Carlin, though I did not know at the time that I was going wrong. Then the thunderstorm came on and I took refuge in the vacant house up yonder."

Dick then went on to describe the arrival of the two rough characters with a bag each, and how not liking their looks he retreated to another room, from which spot he overheard them speaking about the robbery they had committed, and what their plans were for the immediate future. Then he told how they discovered his presence in the house and made a prisoner of him, and after questioning him closely they took him over to the house where the man named Parker lived, where they locked him up in the barn, after tying him to a post to make sure he wouldn't get away; but he had made his escape in spite of their precautions, and found his way over to that road, his object being to reach Carlin and, after reporting the robbery and all the facts connected with it, take the first train he could get for home. Dick's story interested the gentleman, whose name was Mason. They said they would go and arrest the thieves, while Dick was to stay at Mason's house until they came back. This plan was carried out.

CHAPTER III. – Dick Meets the Mason Family

The gentleman took Dick into the house by a side door and up a back stairs to his own room. Here he provided the boy with a pair of long stockings and his own slippers. Then he showed him where he could wash his hands and face and brush his hair. While Dick was thus employed, his host took his shoes and stockings down to the kitchen, and instructed the cook to start up the fire and dry them as soon as possible. He returned to his room and found that Dick had made a great improvement in his personal appearance.

"Now we will go into the sitting room, and I will make you acquainted with my family," he said. "They are greatly exercised over the robbery, for the thieves made a clean sweep of this floor, and took all the jewelry and other personal belongings of value, including a much-prized set of silverware which my wife inherited from her mother. The loss of the latter has made her quite ill, but when I tell her that we are likely to recover all our property through the information furnished by you, it will make her feel much better, and you will receive her thanks."

Mrs. Mason, her unmarried sister, and Miss Madge were seated in a bunch in the sitting room, looking very much dejected.

"Let me make you acquainted with Richard Darling, of New York," said Mr. Mason.

Dick bowed and the ladies acknowledged the introduction in a solemn way, expressive of the state of their feelings.

"You will be glad to learn that this young man has brought us a clue to the rascals who robbed the house, and the constables have gone off quite confident of capturing them and recovering our property," said the gentleman.

His words produced a considerable change in the ladies.

"Do you really think, John, that they will be caught, and that we shall get our things back?" asked his wife.

"I have strong hopes for it, for this lad's story confirms William's statement that Samuel Parker is one of the men. According to his account, the two rascals went over to Parker's house, where they proposed to hide the plunder in a dry well on his grounds until it could be safely taken away and disposed of."

Mr. Mason asked Dick to tell his story to the ladies, and he did so. They expressed their astonishment that circumstances should have brought him into the business, and declared that he was a fine, plucky boy. They said they were sorry that his mother and sisters would necessarily be worried about him, but he was sure to get home early in the morning, probably about half-past two, and then their anxiety would be allayed.

"In the meanwhile we will try and make your short stay with us as pleasant as possible," said Mr. Mason, "and I assure you that you are entitled to our grateful appreciation. We won't forget what we owe you for the clue you have furnished us, even if those rascals are not caught as soon as we expect. And now as you have missed your dinner, I will see that a meal is prepared for you at once."

The gentleman left the room and the ladies continued conversing with Dick. He was such a nice, polite boy, and gentle in his ways, as lads brought up in a family of girls usually are, that they took a great fancy to him. After a while Mr. Mason returned and told him to accompany him downstairs. Dick found a nice meal waiting for him, and as he was very hungry, he did full justice to it. While he was eating, the constables returned, bringing their prisoners with them and also the stolen goods. The ladies were pleased to death to learn that their property had been recovered and, of course, gave all the credit for it to Dick. After the office boy had finished eating he was taken outside to identify the rascals, which he did. The servant William also recognized them as the thieves. Bulger favored Dick with an unpleasant look and told him he hoped to get even with him some day.

The rascals were then put in a wagon and carried to the lock-up of the near-by village to be removed next morning to Carlin. Mr. Mason had his auto brought out of the garage.

"I am ready to take you to the station at Carlin," he said.

Dick was quite ready to go with him. He bade the ladies and Miss Madge, who had taken a decided liking to him, good-night, and he and his host were presently en route for that town, which they reached in ample time for Dick to connect with the midnight express. Thirty minutes later he reached Jersey City, crossed the river and took an elevated train for Harlem. He reached the flat where the family lived a few minutes before two and found his mother and sisters all up and in a great stew about him. He explained everything to them, and then the family retired to make the most of the few hours before morning called them to arise as usual, for the girls all worked in offices downtown and had to get away about eight o'clock. Dick reached the store on time next morning, in spite of the fact that his usual hours of sleep had been curtailed, and he turned the change of the \$5 bill over to the cashier; also the receipt Mr. Goodrich had signed for the package. The office boy attended to his duties until Mr. Bacon appeared about ten o'clock, when he followed him into his office.

"You delivered the package to Mr. Goodrich all right, I suppose?" said his employer.

"Yes, sir. I handed the receipt to the cashier."

Then Dick surprised Mr. Bacon with the story of his adventures with the two thieves in New Jersey.

"You didn't have much sleep," said Mr. Bacon. "If you feel tired this afternoon you can go home at four o'clock."

"Thank you, sir, but I don't think that will be necessary. I'll have plenty of time to make up my lost rest by going to bed directly after supper. Mr. Mason told me that I will be required to appear in court at Carlin this afternoon when the men are brought up before the magistrate. He told me I should take the half-past twelve train down, and that he would meet me at the station. Can I go?"

"Certainly. I have no right to prevent you giving your testimony in court."

That ended the interview. Dick went to Carlin that afternoon, was taken to the court by Mason, and identified the men as the two thieves, telling his story in a straightforward way. The rascals were held for trial. Dick returned to New York by an express, reaching Jersey City at half-past five, and within an hour got home, just in time to sit down to supper.

CHAPTER IV. – The Missing Diamond

Although Mr. Bacon was a wholesale dealer, he also did a considerable retail trade as well. On the following morning a well-dressed man came into the store and asked to see some fine diamonds. The clerk who waited on him showed him a tray full of choice gems from two carats up to five. The customer looked them over carefully, made several selections, but the price was always too high for him to pay. He tried to get the clerk to reduce the figure, but that was out of the question, as Mr. Bacon had but one price for his goods. Finally the man said that he would have to go elsewhere. As he started to leave the sharp-eyed clerk noticed that a five-carat stone was missing from the tray.

"One minute, sir," said the clerk. "You forgot to return one of the diamonds you were looking at."

"I did? Nonsense! Do you take me for a thief? I only handled one of them at a time and after looking it over laid it down on the showcase, or on that mat."

"Nevertheless, one of the diamonds is missing," said the clerk, pushing a button under the counter which summoned the manager of the store. The customer waxed indignant and protested that he had no knowledge whatever of the diamond. The clerk insisted that he must have it.

"Well, then, you can search me, but I think it's an outrage," said the man.

The manager took him into his office and went through all his pockets, and looked him over for a secret pocket, but there was none and the diamond was not found on him.

"You see, I haven't got it," said the man. "Your clerk's eyesight is defective. I don't believe there is a diamond missing at all from the tray. He only thought there was."

Under the circumstances the customer was permitted to leave the store, though the manager was pretty well satisfied that the clerk had made no mistake. Dick had seen the man examining the diamonds, but had noticed no suspicious movement on his part to get away with a gem. In his opinion the man had been wrongfully accused. Once he had seen the man put his left hand under the outside ledge of the showcase at the bottom and hold it there for a moment, but he thought nothing of that. At any rate, he knew there was no place there where a diamond could be lodged even temporarily. The clerk looked over the floor on the outside of the counter, but without result, so he felt sure that the customer had managed to get away with it somehow. In about half an hour a lady entered the store and went to the same counter. She wanted to look at some new style rings. While the clerk was producing a couple of trays, Dick, who was close by, saw her place her hand under the bottom ledge of the showcase and run it along there about a foot, an action the office boy thought strange. When she removed her hand she fumbled for her pocket. A moment or two later she was looking at the rings the clerk placed before her. At that juncture the manager called Dick and sent him down the block with a message. As he was coming back he saw the man who had been suspected of taking the diamond standing near the curb about a hundred yards from the store. He seemed to be waiting for some one.

Down the street came the lady whom Dick had left examining the rings. She went directly up to the man and handed him something. Dick saw him hold the article up and pick at it. In another moment he tossed something away and put his finger and thumb into his vest pocket, then the couple walked away. The meeting of these two persons struck Dick as having a suspicious bearing on the missing diamond, though just what the connection was he could not say. He looked at the place where he had seen the man toss what the woman had handed him and saw a small, dark object. He went and picked it up. It proved to be a wad of chewing gum. Dick was disappointed with his discovery and was about to drop it when he noticed a deep impression in it that looked like the imprint of a diamond.

Then the truth came to his bright mind like a flash of inspiration. The missing diamond had been stuck in the gum. Still that didn't explain to his mind how the diamond had got there, or how the lady who had been in the store half an hour after the man had come in possession of the diamond. The matter puzzled him greatly, but of one thing he was confident, and that was that the missing

diamond was now in the man's pocket. Under such circumstances he believed that it was his duty to follow the pair. The couple turned into Nassau street and walked leisurely northward. Dick kept on behind them in a rather doubtful frame of mind. They kept straight on, passing the Tribune Building and the other newspaper offices of the Row, and so on under the Brooklyn Bridge entrance to the corner of North William, a narrow and short street that cuts into Park Row at that point. They crossed the head of this street and walked into a well-known pawnshop that stood there.

"I'll bet the man is going to pawn that diamond," thought Dick. "Well, I'm going to see if he is."

He immediately followed them into the public room. He found them standing before the long counter. A clerk came up to them.

"How much will you advance me for a month on that diamond?" asked the man, taking the unset stone out of his pocket and laying it down on the counter.

The size of the diamond corresponded with the missing one, and on the spur of the moment Dick glided to the counter and grabbed it before the clerk's fingers touched it.

"I don't think this shop will advance you a dollar on a stolen diamond," he said, stepping back defiantly, ready to maintain his employer's claim to the stone.

The woman gave a stifled exclamation and looked frightened.

"Give me that diamond!" cried the man.

"No, sir. Will you send for a policeman to settle this matter?" said Dick to the clerk.

"Do you want me to send for an officer?" the clerk asked the man.

"No; I can settle my own business without a cop butting into it," replied the man savagely.

"Call an officer for me, then," said Dick. "I accuse this man of stealing the diamond he asked you to fix a price on."

"How dare you call me a thief!" roared the man.

"Because that's what you are," answered Dick defiantly.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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