

The Nameless Man

Rodrigues Ottolengui

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Mr. Barnes was sitting in his private room, with nothing of special importance to occupy his thoughts, when his office boy announced a visitor.

"What name?" asked Mr. Barnes.

"None!" was the reply.

"You mean," said the detective, "that the man did not give you his name. He must have one, of course. Show him in."

A minute later the stranger entered, and, bowing courteously, began the conversation at once.

"Mr. Barnes, the famous detective, I believe?" said he.

"My name is Barnes," replied the detective. "May I have the pleasure of knowing yours?"

"I sincerely hope so," continued the stranger. "The fact is, I suppose I have forgotten it."

"Forgotten your name?" Mr. Barnes scented an interesting case, and became doubly attentive.

"Yes!" said the visitor. "That is precisely my singular predicament. I seem to have lost my identity. That is the object of my call. I wish to discover who I am. As I am evidently a full-grown man, I can certainly claim that I have a past history, but to me that past is entirely a blank. I awoke this morning in this condition, yet apparently in possession of all my faculties, so much so that I at once saw the advisability of consulting a first-class detective, and, upon inquiry, I was directed to you."

"Your case is most interesting, from my point of view, I mean. To you, of course, it must seem unfortunate. Yet it is not unparalleled. There have been many such cases recorded, and, for your temporary relief, I may say that sooner or later, complete restoration of memory usually occurs. But now, let us try to unravel your mystery as soon as possible, that you may suffer as little inconvenience as there need be. I would like to ask you a few questions."

"As many as you like, and I will do my best to answer."

"Do you think that you are a New Yorker?"

"I have not the least idea, whether I am or not."

"You say you were advised to consult me. By whom?"

"The clerk at the Waldorf Hotel, where I slept last night."

"Then, of course, he gave you my address. Did you find it necessary to ask him how to find my offices?"

"Well, no, I did not. That seems strange, does it not? I certainly had no difficulty in coming here. I suppose that must be a significant fact, Mr. Barnes?"

"It tends to show that you have been familiar with New York, but we must still find out whether you live here or not. How did you register at the hotel?"

"M.J.G. Remington, City."

"You are sure that Remington is not your name?"

"Quite sure. After breakfast this morning I was passing through the lobby when the clerk called me twice by that name. Finally, one of the hall-boys touched me on the shoulder and explained that I was wanted at the desk. I was very much confused to find myself called "Mr. Remington", a name which certainly is not my own. Before I fully realised my position, I said to the clerk, "Why do you call me Remington?" and he replied, "Because you registered under that name." I tried to pass it off, but I am sure that the clerk looks upon me as a suspicious character."

"What baggage have you with you at the hotel?"

"None. Not even a satchel."

"May there not be something in your pockets that would help us; letters, for example?"

"I am sorry to say that I have made a search in that direction but found nothing. Luckily I did have a

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pocket-book though."

"Much money in it?"

"In the neighbourhood of five hundred dollars."

Mr. Barnes turned to his table and made a few notes on a pad of paper. While he was so engaged his visitor took out a fine gold watch, and, after a glance at the face, was about to return it to his pocket when Mr. Barnes wheeled around in his chair, and said:

"That is a handsome watch you have there. Of a curious pattern too. I am rather interested in old watches."

The stranger seemed confused for an instant, and quickly put up his watch, saying:

"There is nothing remarkable about it. Merely an old family relic. I value it more for that than anything else. But about my case, Mr. Barnes, how long do you think it will take to restore my identity to me? It is rather awkward to go about under a false name."

"I should think so," said the detective. "I will do my best no clue to work upon, so that it is impossible to say what my success will be. Still I think forty-eight hours should suffice. At least in that time I ought to make some discoveries for you. Suppose you call again on the day after to-morrow at noon precisely. Will that suit you?"

"Very well, indeed. If you can tell me who I am at that time I shall be more than convinced that you are a great detective, as I have been told."

He arose and prepared to go, and upon the instant Mr. Barnes touched a button under his foot, which caused a bell to ring in a distant part of the building, no sound of which penetrated the private office. Thus anyone could visit Mr. Barnes in his den, and might leave unsuspecting of the fact that a spy would be awaiting him out in the street who would shadow him persistently day and night until recalled by his chief. After giving the signal, Mr. Barnes held his strange visitor in conversation a few moments longer to allow his spy opportunity to get to his post.

"How will you pass the time away, Mr. Remington?" said he. "We may as well call you by that name, until I find your true one."

"Yes, I suppose so. As to what I shall do during the next forty-eight hours, why, I think I may as well devote myself to seeing the sights. It is a remarkably pleasant day for a stroll, and I think I will visit your beautiful Central Park."

"A capital idea. By all means, I would advise occupation of that kind. It would be best not to do any business until your memory is restored to you."

"Business. Why, of course, I can do no business."

"No! If you were to order any goods, for example, under the name of Remington, later on when you resume your proper identity, you might be arrested as an impostor."

"By George, I had not thought of that. My position is more serious than I had realised. I thank you for the warning. Sight-seeing will assuredly be my safest plan for the next two days."

"I think so. Call at the time agreed upon, and hope for the best. If I should need you before then, I will send to your hotel."

Then, saying "Good morning", Mr. Barnes turned to his desk again, and, as the stranger looked at him before stepping out of the room, the detective seemed engrossed with some papers before him. Yet scarcely had the door closed upon the retreating form of his recent visitor, when Mr. Barnes looked up, with an air of expectancy. A moment later a very tiny bell in a drawer of his desk rang, indicating that the man had left the building, the signal having been sent to him by one of his employés, whose business it was to watch all departures, and notify his chief. A few moments later Mr. Barnes himself emerged, clad in an entirely different suit of clothing, and with such an alteration in the colour of his hair, that more than a casual glance would have been required to recognise him.

When he reached the street the stranger was nowhere in sight, but Mr. Barnes went to a doorway opposite, and there he found, written in blue pencil, the word "up", whereupon he walked rapidly up town as far as the next corner, where once more he examined a door-post, upon which he found the word "right", which indicated the way the men ahead of him had turned. Beyond this he could expect no signals, for the spy shadowing the stranger did not know positively that his chief would take part in the game. The two signals which he had written on the doors were merely a part of a routine, and intended to aid Mr. Barnes should he follow; but if he did so, he would be expected to be in sight of the spy by the time the second signal were reached. And so it proved in this instance,

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for as Mr. Barnes turned the corner to the right, he easily discerned his man about two blocks ahead, and presently was near enough to see quot;Remington" also.

The pursuit continued until Mr. Barnes was surprised to see him enter the Park, thus carrying out his intention as stated in his interview with the detective. Entering at the Fifth Avenue gate he made his way towards the menagerie, and here a curious incident occurred. The stranger had mingled with the crowd in the monkey-house, and was enjoying the antics of the mischievous little animals, when Mr. Barnes, getting close behind him, deftly removed a pocket-handkerchief from the tail of his coat and swiftly transferred it to his own.

On the day following, shortly before noon, Mr. Barnes walked quickly into the reading-room of the Fifth Avenue Hotel. In one corner there is a handsome mahogany cabinet, containing three compartments, each of which is entered through double doors, having glass panels in the upper half. About these panels are draped yellow silk curtains, and in the centre of each appears a white porcelain numeral. These compartments are used as public telephone stations, the applicant being shut in, so as to be free from the noise of the outer room.

Mr. Barnes spoke to the girl in charge, and then passed into the compartment numbered V. Less than five minutes later Mr. Leroy Mitchel came into the reading-room. His keen eyes peered about him, scanning the countenances of those busy with the papers or writing, and then he gave the telephone girl a number, and went into the compartment numbered "1". About ten minutes elapsed before Mr. Mitchel came out again, and, having paid the toll, he left the hotel. When Mr. Barnes emerged, there was an expression of extreme satisfaction upon his face. Without lingering, he also went out. But instead of following Mr. Mitchel through the main lobby to Broadway, he crossed the reading-room and reached 23rd Street through the side door. Thence he proceeded to the station of the Elevated Railroad, and went up town. Twenty minutes later he was ringing the bell of Mr. Mitchel's residence. The buttons, who answered his summons, informed him that his master was not at home.

"He usually comes in to luncheon, however, does he not?" asked the detective.

"Yes, sir," responded the boy.

"Is Mrs. Mitchel at home?"

"No, sir."

"Miss Rose?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ah! Then I'll wait. Take my card to her."

Mr. Barnes passed into the luxurious drawing-room, and was soon joined by Rose, Mr. Mitchel's adopted daughter. "I am sorry papa is not at home, Mr. Barnes," said the little lady, "but he will surely be in to luncheon, if you will wait."

"Yes, thank you, I think I will. It is quite a trip up, and, being here, I may as well stop awhile and see your father, though the matter is not of any great importance."

"Some interesting case, Mr. Barnes? If so, do tell me about it. You know I am almost as much interested in your cases as papa is."

"Yes, I know you are, and my vanity is flattered. But I am sorry to say I have nothing on hand at present worth relating. My errand is a very simple one. Your father was saying, a few days ago, that he was thinking of buying a bicycle, and yesterday, by accident, I came across a machine of an entirely new make, which seems to me superior to anything yet produced. I thought he might be interested to see it, before deciding what kind to buy."

"I am afraid you are too late, Mr. Barnes. Papa has bought a bicycle already."

"Indeed! What style did he choose?"

"I really do not know, but it is down in the lower hall, if you care to look at it."

"It is hardly worth while, Miss Rose. After all, I have no interest in the new model, and if your father has found something that he likes, I won't even mention the other to him. It might only make him regret his bargain. Still, on second thoughts, I will go down with you, if you will take me, into the dining-room and show me the head of that moose which your father had been bragging about killing. I believe it has come back from the taxidermist's?"

"Oh, yes! He is just a monster. Come on!"

They went down to the dining-room, and Mr. Barnes expressed great admiration about the moose's head, and praised Mr. Mitchel's skill as a marksman. But he had taken a moment to scrutinize the bicycle which stood in the hall-way, while Rose was opening the blinds in the dining-room. Then they returned to the drawing-room, and

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after a little more conversation Mr. Barnes departed, saying that he could not wait any longer, but he charged Rose to tell her father that he particularly desired him to call at noon on the following day.

Promptly at the time appointed, Remington walked into the office of Mr. Barnes, and was announced. The detective was in his private room. Mr. Leroy Mitchel had been admitted but a few moments before.

"Ask Mr. Remington in," said Mr. Barnes to his boy, and when that gentleman entered, before he could show surprise to find a third party present, the detective said:

"Mr. Mitchel, this is the gentleman whom I wish you to meet. Permit me to introduce to you, Mr. Mortimer J. Goldie, better known to the sporting fraternity as G.J. Mortimer, the champion short-distance bicycle rider, who recently rode a mile in the phenomenal time of 1.56, on a quarter-mile track."

As Mr. Barnes spoke, he gazed from one to the other of his companions, with a half-quizzical, and wholly pleased expression on his face. Mr. Mitchel appeared much interested, but the newcomer was evidently greatly astonished. He looked blankly at Mr. Barnes a moment, then dropped into a chair with the query:

"How in the name of conscience did you find that out?"

"That much was not very difficult," replied the detective.

"I can tell you more; indeed I can supply your whole past history, provided your memory has been sufficiently restored for you to recognise my facts as true."

Mr. Barnes looked at Mr. Mitchel and winked one eye in a most suggestive manner, at which that gentleman burst out into hearty laughter, finally saying:

"We may as well admit that we are beaten, Goldie. Mr. Barnes has been too much for us."

"But I want to know how he has done it," persisted Mr. Goldie.

"I have no doubt that Mr. Barnes will gratify you. Indeed, I am as curious as you are to know by what means he has arrived at his quick solution of the problem which we set him."

"I will enlighten you as to detective methods with pleasure," said Mr. Barnes. "Let me begin with the visit made to me by this gentleman two days ago. At the very outset his statement aroused my suspicion, though I did my best not to let him think so. He announced to me that he had lost his identity, and I promptly told him that his case was not uncommon. I said that, in order that we might feel sure that I did not doubt his tale. But truly his case, if he were telling the truth, was absolutely unique. Men have lost recollection of their past, and even have forgotten their names. But I have never before heard of a man who had forgotten his name, and at the same time knew that he had done so."

"A capital point, Mr. Barnes," said Mr. Mitchel. "You were certainly shrewd to suspect fraud so early."

"Well, I cannot say that I suspected fraud so soon, but the story was so unlikely, that I could not believe it immediately. I therefore was what I might call analytically attentive during the rest of the interview. The next point worth noting which came out was that although he had forgotten himself, he had not forgotten New York, for he admitted having come to me without special guidance."

"I remember that," interrupted Mr. Goldie, "and I think I even said to you at the time that it was significant."

"And I told you that it at least showed that you had been familiar with New York. This was better proven when you said that you would spend the day at Central Park, and when, after leaving here, you had no difficulty to find your way thither."

"Do you mean to say that you had me followed? I made sure that no one was after me."

"Well, yes, you were followed," said Mr. Barnes, with a smile. "I had a spy after you, and I followed you as far as the Park myself. But let me come to the other points in your interview and my deductions. You told me that you had registered as 'M. J.G. Remington'. This helped me considerably, as we shall see presently. A few minutes later you took out your watch, and in that little mirror over my desk, which I use occasionally when I turn my back upon a visitor, I noted that there was an inscription on the outside of the case. I turned and asked you something about the watch, when you hastily returned it to your pocket, with the remark that it was "an old family relic". Now can you explain how you could have known that, supposing that you had forgotten who you were?"

"Neatly caught, Goldie," laughed Mr. Mitchel. "You certainly made a mess of it there."

"It was an asinine slip," said Mr. Goldie, laughing also.

"Now then," continued Mr. Barnes, "you readily see that I had good reason for believing that you had not forgotten your name. On the contrary, I was positive that your name was a part of the inscription on the watch.

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What, then, could be your purpose in pretending otherwise? I did not discover that for some time. However, I decided to go ahead, and find you out if I could. Next I noted two things. Your coat opened once, so that I saw, pinned to your vest, a bicycle badge, which I recognised as the emblem of the League of American Wheelmen."

"Oh! Oh!" cried Mr. Mitchel. "Shame on you, Goldie, for a blunderer."

"I had entirely forgotten the badge," said Mr. Goldie.

"I also observed," the detective went on, "little indentations on the sole of your shoe, as you had your legs crossed, which satisfied me that you were a rider even before I observed the badge. Now, then, we come to the name, and the significance thereof. Had you really lost your memory, the choosing of a name when you registered at the hotel, would have been a haphazard matter of no importance to me. But as soon as I decided that you were imposing upon me, I knew that your choice of a name had been a deliberate act of the mind; one from which deductions could be drawn."

"Ah! Now we come to the interesting part," said Mr. Mitchel. "I love to follow a detective when he uses his brains."

"The name as registered, and I examined the registry myself to make sure, was odd. Three initials are unusual. A man without memory, and therefore not quite sound mentally, would hardly have chosen so many. Then why had it been done in this instance? What more natural than that these initials represented the true name? In assuming an alias, it is the most common method to transpose the real name in some way. At least it was a working hypothesis. Then the last name might be very significant. 'Remington'. The Remingtons make guns, sewing-machines, typewriters, and bicycles. Now, this man was a bicycle rider, I was sure. If he chose his own initials as a part of the alias, it was possible that he selected 'Remington' because it was familiar to him. I even imagined that he might be an agent for Remington bicycles, and I had arrived at that point during our interview, when I advised him not to buy anything until his identity was restored. But I was sure of my quarry, when I stole a handkerchief from him at the park, and found the initials 'M.J.G.' upon the same."

"Marked linen on your person!" exclaimed Mr. Mitchel. "Worse and worse! We'll never make a successful criminal of you, Goldie."

"Perhaps not! I shan't cry over it."

"I felt sure of my success by this time," continued Mr. Barnes, "yet at the very next step I was baulked. I looked over a list of L.A.W. members and could not find a name to fit my initials, which shows, as you will see presently, that, as I may say, 'too many clues spoil the broth.' Without the handkerchief I would have done better. Next I secured a catalogue of the Remingtons, which gave a list of their authorized agents, and again I failed. Returning to my office I received information from my spy, sent in by messenger, which promised to open a way for me. He had followed you about, Mr. Goldie, and I must say you played your part very well, so far as avoiding acquaintances is concerned. But at last you went to a public telephone, and called up someone. My man saw the importance of discovering to whom you had spoken, and bribed the telephone attendant to give him the information. All that he learned, however, was that you had spoken to the public station at the Fifth Avenue Hotel. My spy thought that this was inconsequential, but it proved to me at once that there was collusion, and that your man must have been at the other station by previous appointment. As that was at noon, a few minutes before the same hour on the following day, that is to say, yesterday, I went to the Fifth Avenue Hotel telephone and secreted myself in the middle compartment, hoping to hear what your partner might say to you. I failed in this, as the boxes are too well made to permit sound to pass from one to the other; but imagine my gratification to see Mr. Mitchel himself go into the box."

"And why?" asked Mr. Mitchel.

"Why, as soon as I saw you, I comprehended the whole scheme. It was you who had concocted the little diversion to test my ability. Thus, at last, I understood the reason for the pretended loss of identity. With the knowledge that you were in it, I was more than ever determined to get at the facts. Knowing that you were out, I hastened to your house, hoping for a chat with little Miss Rose, as the most likely member of your family to get information from."

"Oh, fie! Mr. Barnes," said Mr. Mitchel, "to play upon the innocence of childhood! I am ashamed of you!"

"All's fair, etc. Well, I succeeded. I found Mr. Goldie's bicycle in your hall-way, and, as I suspected, 'twas a Remington. I took the number and hurried down to the agency, where I readily discovered that wheel number 5,086 is ridden by ** G.J. Mortimer, one of their regular racing team. I also learned that Mortimer's private

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name is Mortimer J. Goldie. I was much pleased at this, because it showed how good my reasoning had been about the alias, for you observe that the racing name is merely a transposition of the family name. The watch, of course, is a prize, and the inscription would have proved that you were imposing upon me, Mr. Goldie, had you permitted me to see it."

"Of course. That was why I put it back in my pocket."

"I said just now," said Mr. Barnes, "that without the stolen handkerchief I would have done better. Having it, when I looked over the L.A.W. list I went through the ‘‘G’s’’ only. Without it I should have looked through the ‘‘G’s’’, ‘‘J’s’?, and ‘‘M’s’’, not knowing how the letters may have been transposed. In that case I should have found ‘‘G. J. Mortimer’’, and the initials would have proved that I was on the right track."

"You have done well, Mr. Barnes," said Mr. Mitchel. "I asked Goldie to play the part of a nameless man for a few days, to have some fun with you. But you have had fun with us, it seems. Though, I am conceited enough to say, that had it been possible for me to play the principal part, you would not have pierced my identity so soon."

"Oh! I don't know," said Mr. Barnes. "We are both of us a little egotistical, I fear."

"Undoubtedly. Still, if I ever set another trap for you, I will assign myself the chief rôle."

"Nothing would please me better," said Mr. Barnes. "But, gentlemen, as you have lost in this little game, it seems to me that some one owes me a dinner, at least!"

"I'll stand the expense with pleasure," said Mr. Mitchel.

"Not at all," interrupted Mr. Goldie. "It was through my blundering that we lost, and I'll pay the piper."

"Settle it between you," cried Mr. Barnes. "But let us walk on. I am getting hungry."

Whereupon they adjourned to Delmonico's.