

AN EYE

FOR

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Clarence Darrow

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hen Hank Clery left the switch-yards in the outskirts of Chicago he took the street car and went down town. He was going to the county jail on the north side of the river. Hank had never been inside the jail though he had been arrested a number of times and taken to the police court, escaping luckily with a small fine which his mother had contrived to pay. She was one of the best washerwomen of the whole neighbourhood, and never without work. All the officers knew that whenever Hank got into trouble his mother would pay the fine and costs. Hank had often been arrested, but he was by no means a bad fellow. He lived with his old Irish mother and was very fond of her and often brought his wages home if none of the boys happened to be near when the pay-car came around. Hank was a switchman in one of the big railroad yards in Chicago. Of course, he and his companions drank quite a little, and then their sports and pastimes were not of the gentlest sort; for that matter neither was their work - climbing up and down running cars and turning switches just ahead of a great locomotive and watching to make sure which track was safe where the moving cars and engines were all around - did not tend to a quiet life. Of course, most people think that no man will work in a switch-yard unless he drinks. Perhaps no man would drink unless he worked in a switch-yard or some such place.

Well, on this day Hank was going to the jail, not on account of any of his own misdeeds, but on an errand of mercy. The night before, the priest had come to Hank's home and told him that his old friend, Jim Jackson, had begged for him to visit the jail. Hank at first refused, but the priest told him that Jim had no friends and was anxious to have a few minutes' talk with him before he died; Jim had some message that he wanted to give Hank that he could not leave with anyone else. Hank

knew that Jim was to be hanged on Friday, and he had thought about it a good deal in the last few days and wished that it was over. He had known Jim for a long time; they had often been out together and sometimes got drunk together. Jim once worked in the yards, but one night one of the other boys was struck by the Limited as it pulled out on the main track, and Jim and Hank gathered him up when the last Pullman coach had rolled over him; and after that Jim could never go back to the yards; so he managed to get an old horse and wagon and began peddling potatoes on the street.

One evening Hank took up the paper, and there he saw a headline covering the whole page and a little fine print below telling how Jim had killed his wife with a poker. Hank did not understand how this could be true, but as the evidence seemed plain he made up his mind that Jim had really always been a demon, but that he had managed to keep it hidden from his friends. Hank really did not want to go to the jail to see Jim; somehow it seemed as if it was not the same fellow that he used to know so well, and then he was afraid and nervous about talking with a man who was going to be hanged next day. But the priest said so much that finally Hank's mother told him she thought he ought to go. So he made up his mind that he would stand it, although he was a great deal more afraid and nervous than when he was turning switches in the yard. After the priest left the house Hank went down to the alderman and got a pass to go inside the jail. He always went to the alderman for everything; all the people thought that this was what an alderman was for and they cared nothing about anything else he did.

When Hank got down town he went straight across the Dearborn Street bridge to the county jail. It was just getting dusk as he came up to the great building. The jail did not look a bit like a jail. It was a tall grand building, made of white stone, and the long rows of windows that cover the whole Dearborn Street side looked bright and cheerful with the electric lights that were turned on as Hank came up to the door. If it had not been for the iron-bars across the windows he might have thought that he was looking at a bank or a great wholesale warehouse.

Hank stepped into the large vestibule just inside the shelter of the big front door. Along each side was a row of people sitting on benches placed against the wall. He did not wait to look closely at this crowd; in fact, he could not have done so had he tried, for Hank was no artist or philosopher and was neither subtle nor deep. He saw them just as he would have seen a freight car stealing down the track to catch him unawares. He did notice that most of these watchers were women, that many of them were little children, and that all looked poor and woe-be-gone. They were the same people that Hank saw every day out by the yards, living in the rumble of the moving trains and under the black clouds of smoke and stench that floated over their mean homes from the great chimneys and vats of the packing houses. Most of the women and children had baskets or bundles in their arms, and sat meek and still waiting for the big key to turn in the great iron lock of the second door.

When Hank went up to this door someone inside pushed back a little slide, showed his face at the peep-hole, and asked him who he was and what he wanted. Hank shoved the alderman's letter through the little window and the door opened without delay. This was not the first time that the gloomy gate had turned on its hinges under the magic of that name, both for coming in and going out.

Inside the little office was the same motley, helpless crowd of people, the same sad-faced women and weary children standing dazed and dejected with their poor baskets and bundles in their arms. Some were waiting to be taken through this barred door, while others had just returned and were stopping until the turnkey should open the outside gate and let them go.

In a few minutes a guard came to Hank and asked if he was the man who brought the alderman's note. On receiving the reply, the guard told him that the alderman was all right and it was worthwhile to be his friend. That was the way he got his job and he always stuck by his friends. Then the guard unlocked another door and took Hank to the elevator where he was carried to the fourth story. Here he was let off