

# TWENTY-FIVE DOLLARS REWARD *By* Harriet Lummis Smith

WHEN Mr. Leonard Knight looked from his bedroom window that winter morning he uttered an ejaculation of astonishment. Then he exchanged the glasses he was wearing for another pair and looked again. The second view seemed to increase his amazement.

"Upon my word!" he said aloud. "This is extraordinary, most extraordinary!"

Mr. Knight was not exaggerating. There had been rather a heavy fall of snow the day before, and the urn underneath his window, a receptacle for flowering plants during the summer, had been so covered that when he noticed it the previous afternoon it had suggested to him a marble pedestal for a bust. And the extraordinary thing was that it had become the pedestal of a bust of himself, the appearance of which suggested marble, though as a matter of fact it was fashioned of snow.

Mr. Knight's worst enemies would hardly have pronounced the likeness a good one. His nose had been exaggerated into a sort of beak, and his chin had been sharpened to a mere point. His eyes were narrowed. Two pert icicles represented his moustache. In short the bust was a caricature, yet even the subject realized that it was astonishingly clever. Several times as he went on with his dressing he stopped to gaze at it, and each time he looked he murmured, "Extraordinary!" or "Remarkable!" He was in a thoughtful mood when he went down to the dining room.

Mr. Knight was a widower without a family, but he was fortunate in having a housekeeper and a butler who had been with him for many years, so that his household affairs moved like clockwork. Thomas was in the dining room as Mr. Knight entered it, and he wished him good morning as he pulled out his chair. Then he brought him his glass of orange juice, ice cold and fragrant.

"By the way, Thomas," said Mr. Knight as he sipped the golden liquid, "have you noticed the new decoration on the lawn?"

"I suppose you mean the snow, sir. Quite a fall, sir."

"No, not the snow. Look for yourself."

Mr. Knight motioned toward the rear window, and Thomas obeyed the gesture. Then he caught his breath. "Scandalous, Mr. Knight!" he cried when he had recovered himself. "I'll have it removed at once, sir."

"Wait, Thomas. Quite a remarkable likeness, isn't it?"

"Not at all, sir. I should never have known that it was meant for you."

"Then why do you think it was meant for me? I suppose," said Mr. Knight thoughtfully, "it is a protest against my action at the meeting of the school board the other evening."

Thomas said again that it was an outrage and went for Mr. Knight's oatmeal.

Mr. Knight sat thinking. He was a recently elected member of the school board, and at its regular meeting a few days before he had raised the question of discontinuing the art department in the high school. Mr. Knight had spoken strongly against spending the public money for what he denominated as "fads." A committee had been appointed to consider the question and to bring in a report, but as Mr. Knight was on the committee he felt sure of being able to carry his point. And the appearance on his snow-covered lawn of the uncomplimentary likeness of himself Mr. Knight attributed to some one who resented his attitude regarding the art department.

Before he left the house he gave Thomas instructions that the bust should not be

disturbed, and once outside he stopped for a nearer view. It increased his admiration rather than his resentment. If he did not enjoy the leering expression the unknown artist had imparted to his likeness, he was overcome with wonder that it was possible to produce it with snow. Then he went to his office thinking deeply.

One of the results of Mr. Knight's reflections was an advertisement that appeared in the leading evening paper of the little city. Instead of being off at one side with the other advertisements it occupied the centre of the page and was printed in large black type.

**REWARD**

*A reward of twenty-five dollars will be paid for information leading to the identification of the person who on Tuesday evening executed a bust of myself in snow on my lawn.*

**LEONARD KNIGHT.**

The day of the snowfall had been comparatively mild, but the thermometer had dropped sometime during the night, and the soft snow of which the bust was made, partly melting as it was handled, had hardened into ice. Although Wednesday was fair

"A young woman to see you, sir. She wouldn't give her name."

"Show her in," said Mr. Knight and laid down his book, prepared to give his entire attention to his caller.

The caller was a girl of perhaps eighteen years, thin and sallow and with rather small eyes. She took the chair that Thomas placed for her and waited for him to withdraw before announcing her errand. Then she said, as Mr. Knight had expected, "I came about your advertisement in the evening paper."

"Indeed. Then you think you can give me the information I wish?"

"I know I can. But I want to keep my name out of it."

"That can be arranged without any difficulty."

"A girl did it—Lettice Seymour. She is a high-school senior."

"Can you give any proof of your statement?"

"Oh, it will be easy enough to prove it. Lettice is always modeling things. Nobody else in town could have done that bust."

"You seem to know her well."

"Oh, yes; I'm in the same class."

right," she said briefly. "The reason she did it and gave it such a mean look was because she was angry at your trying to do away with the art department."

"I see. She disapproves of my stand, and the bust expressed her disapproval."

"Oh, she was furious," said Dora. "Lettice is a pretty-fair all-round scholar, but she's crazy about art. She'd rather draw or model than eat. And of course she's the star pupil of that department, so that the teachers make a great fuss over her."

"Has she never studied art except in the public schools?"

"She couldn't," Dora Hawley answered. "The Seymours are as poor as church mice."

"She moved toward the door and then stopped to say, 'I'd rather be paid in cash, if you please. You see a check—'"

"Yes," said Mr. Knight. "I see. Good evening."

The next morning at his office Mr. Knight had another girl caller. He assumed that she was another candidate for the reward, and at the sight of her he was conscious of keen regret that it was so. Although not pretty in the conventional sense, she was so glowing and vital that it gave him a pang to think of her errand.

As the girl did not seem to know just where to begin, he helped her out. "I suppose you came about the reward?"

"No, I didn't," she interrupted him. Now that she was started her momentary indecision vanished. "But I came to tell you who made the bust of you."

"Isn't it the same thing?"

"No," she looked at him with a rather queer smile. "I wouldn't take the money even if you would give it to me. You see, I made that bust myself."

"Ah!" said Mr. Knight and twisted the end of his snowy mustache.

"I didn't think about its being especially wrong," the girl continued, "till I saw your advertisement. Then I began to think. Of course I was trespassing, and I suppose my being so angry at you doesn't excuse me for insulting you. But after all you made it a great deal worse. If you'd gone out next morning and smashed it, nobody would have known."

Mr. Knight smiled.

"I was not willing to destroy it," he said. "Because, although I do not consider that as a portrait it is beyond criticism, at the same time I think it is quite remarkable. I had always supposed the ordinary snowman was all that could be expected in the artistic line with snow as a material."

"It's not ideal," the girl admitted. "But you can do a good deal with it if it's soft, the way it was Tuesday night. And as for being a likeness, it was just a hideous caricature, and I beg your pardon."

"You spoke," Mr. Knight reminded her delicately, "of being angry with me."

"Well, I was. I was furious," said the girl, using as Mr. Knight noted, Dora Hawley's word. "Of course you or anybody else can't realize what the art department in the high school has meant to me."

"Suppose you try to tell me."

"Well, you see, I always wanted to model things. I suppose if I'd been a genius I could have taught myself to do it. But as it was I went blundering along, making all sorts of ridiculous experiments. In the grades I learned something about drawing, and that helped. But when I got into the high school—well, it was like heaven!"

Mr. Knight stroked his mustache again, this time to hide a smile.

"The teachers have been just wonderful to me," the girl went on. "They've given me lots of help outside school hours, and, if I ever do anything in art, I shall owe it to them. And when I saw in the paper about



"I wouldn't take the money even if you would give it to me"

DRAWINGS BY A. O. SCOTT

it was still cold, and the bust remained unaltered. The first effect of Mr. Knight's advertisement was to lead a great many people to saunter by his house and look for the bust that he had referred to. Indeed when Mr. Knight came home so many people were passing that a stranger might have declared that the census report, which gave Lawrenceburg a population of only twenty thousand, was wrong on the face of it.

As the evening wore on, Mr. Knight began to think that the first result of his advertisement would also be the last. But at half past nine some one knocked at the side door, and a moment later Thomas appeared in the library.

"Of course you understand, Miss—" He paused, waiting for her name.

Flushing uncomfortably, the girl replied, "I'm Dora Hawley, but I wouldn't have my name get out for a good many twenty-five dollars. They'd make my life a burden to me."

"Who would?"

"Oh, all the school, teachers and everyone else."

"Why is that?"

"Well you see, Lettice is awfully popular."

"But not with you?"

Dora Hawley hesitated. "Why, I've nothing against her. She's always treated me all right."

"Then this is just business," suggested Mr. Knight with his keen gaze on her face. "You're not trying to get even?"

"No, indeed, it's just business."

"Of course I shall have to check up your story before paying you. If you will write your address on this card, I will send for you in case I find your information correct."

Dora wrote her name and address on the card that he handed her. "It's correct all

your wanting to do away with the art department I felt—like committing murder!"

"Then I suppose I should congratulate myself that you were ready to stop with making a bust of me."

The girl smiled wanly. "The worst of a quick temper," she replied, "is that you do things before you take time to think." She hesitated a moment before she asked, "Are you going to have me arrested?"

"For trespassing?" Mr. Knight seemed mildly amused.

"Well, I didn't know but that bust might be counted as libel." It was evident from her air of relief that she found his amusement reassuring. "Is that all?" she inquired.

"You haven't told me your name yet."

"Oh, excuse me; I'm Lettice Seymour."

"Are you sure, Miss Lettice, you don't want that reward? You see, if any of your acquaintances should bring the information you have given me, I should be obliged to pay for it."

Lettice smiled. "Oh, there won't be any informants."

"Are you sure? I suppose many of your schoolmates could guess the artist who visited my grounds Tuesday evening."

"Oh, they all know. Doing crazy things of this sort," explained Lettice comfortably, "is so exactly like me. But they wouldn't give me away. They are a splendid crowd of boys and girls."

A few days later Dora Hawley was summoned to Mr. Knight's office, and he counted out to her five five-dollar bills. "I've found your information quite correct," he said to her briefly.

Dora rolled up the money and put it into her purse. Then she said earnestly, "Mr. Knight—"

"Yes."

"I'm graduating from the commercial course next June. I've led my class right along. If you should need a stenographer or a bookkeeper, I wish you'd keep me in mind."

She looked up and met a peculiarly steely pair of gray eyes.

"Young woman," Mr. Knight said sharply. "I wouldn't have you in my employ if you gave me your services."

Dora only gasped.

"Several hundred young people," Mr. Knight continued, "knew what you knew, but you are the only one who has applied for that reward. The one thing every employer hopes for in those he associates with is loyalty. You are exceptionally deficient in that quality. Good afternoon."

The girl stumbled toward the door. Her hand was on the knob when Mr. Knight spoke again: "Just a moment, Miss Hawley. I don't want you to have too heavy a load on your conscience. Probably a good many people misunderstood my advertisement. I wanted to know who had made that extraordinary snow bust, not to punish the artist, but to make sure that talent like that was given a chance."

It astonished many people that the committee appointed to consider the question of discontinuing the art department in the high school brought in an unfavorable report. Mr. Leonard Knight, whose suggestion had led to the appointing of the committee, explained that when he had looked into the matter more carefully he had changed his opinion. And indeed owing to Mr. Knight's interest from that day forth the art department flourished exceedingly.

Lettice Seymour might have regretted that she graduated when she did had not Mr. Knight arranged to send her to an art school in the East—a consummation, from Lettice's standpoint, as wonderful as the ending of a fairy tale. And at the present time along with her determination to grow famous and earn a great fortune her ambition includes the making of a marble bust of Mr. Leonard Knight that will give posterity a good idea of the marked magnanimity of the distinguished philanthropist.

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