

(editor's note: This paper was transcribed from a handwritten cursive copy with various difficulties. For a perfect rendition, the reader might wish to consult the original, itself a copy, in the volume entitled *Literary Club Papers* 2, 1886 – 1887 June 5, '86 to May 21, '87)

A Plagiarism

Wanted – An Investigation

Being called West not long since, on business I landed in W., a western city of considerable pretensions to culture and literature. I did not suppose that I would be known by anyone in town, but the very evening of my arrival, I was called upon by a very worthy old gentleman, evidently a person of importance who asked me if I were Mr. P., the writer of the ingenious stories that had appeared from time to time in the Monthly Magazine. Upon my reluctantly acknowledging that distinction (I was annoyed at being interrupted) he declared that he was delighted to meet me, that he had been a regular reader of my stories, and that he and his wife were among my devoted admirers. He further added that he was going to have a little literary club or social, meet at his house on the next evening, and that his wife would take no refusal from me to be present. I pleaded business, illness and a dozen other excuses, but finally, to get peace, I accepted.

Promptly at the appointed time, I presented myself to the old gentleman's residence, which I found to be a very handsome one situated in the best part of the city. The old man's wife was evidently another Mrs. Leo Hunter, and it soon became apparent that I was the reigning sensation of the evening. Everyone, old and young, was presented to me, and as a very large proportion of the company was made up of those pretty western girls that are at least so frequently heard about if seldom seen, I rather enjoyed the distinction. I was called upon to make a few remarks, which I did in a foolish sort of way, which at once gave me a reputation as a great wit – and was altogether in very high feather. Take it all in, the lionizing business was not so bad after all.

Later in the evening a middle-aged gentleman who had come in late was presented to me. He seemed to look at me with a peculiarly unpleasant glance and with considerable emphasis asked if I were Mr. P., the author, to which I responded deprecatingly in the affirmative. He asked me then if I were the Mr. P. whose portrait and story appeared in the current Monthly. "Of course," said I; "although I did not know the magazine for March had appeared "I am surprised to hear you say so," said he, and with that he abruptly left me wondering at his strange manner, which was almost offensive.

The mystery deepened a few moments later. My host accompanied by the later comer came toward me with an air of indignation that I could not understand, and said in a very severe tone that he would like to speak a word apart with me. Very much surprised and full of wonder at his manner, I followed him and the latecomer to an adjoining room where I asked an explanation of his singular conduct.

"It is for you to give an explanation, sir," said he in a voice full of passion, "now sir who are you?"

"Who the deuce do you suppose?" said I, in great indignation, "I have told you my name,

which in fact you seemed to know before I ever saw you.”

“Sir, no evasions: you told me that you were P., the well-known story writer, and have palmed yourself off on all my guests as such.”

“I have already told you.”

“Yes, but my dear Sir, that won't work. P. the story writer, is a woman.”

“What?”

“That fixes you, don't it. Well, look here.” With this he held up a copy of the current Monthly Magazine with a handsomely engraved likeness of a very charming young woman, labeled below with my name, – Stuart Price.

Almost out of my wits, I turned over the leaves where I saw my latest and best story, at the end of which was a note by the editor stating that the general interest that had been aroused by the writings of the author of the foregoing story had induced the publisher to give a likeness of the gifted writer, who, as all would be surprised to see by the portrait, was a woman. The note further said that the writer had concealed her identity well, as it had never been known even by the editor that his gifted contributor was other than a man until he had received the portrait from her for publication.

What I said to that indignant old man or how I got to my hotel I do not know. Suffice it to say that I took the next train home, there to find among other mail, two letters awaiting my arrival. The first was a note from my photographer, dated on the day of my departure, a few days after I had sent my picture to the Magazine, stating that owing to some accident my photographs and the likenesses of Miss Blank had been interchanged in preparation for the mail, and asking me to return the ones I had received and accept my own in exchange therefor.

Evidently I had picked out one of the new photographs that had just arrived, and without noticing the mistake, had forwarded it to the editor, who forthwith inserted it in his magazine as my likeness.

The other letter was from the editor of the Monthly Magazine, enclosing a newspaper clipping bearing date the day following the appearance of the March Monthly, and asking an explanation. The clipping was a letter from a well-known editor of a rival magazine stating that the story in the current Monthly Magazine was a plagiarism and not written by the the young woman whose picture accompanied it, as the same article had been presented to him in person several years before by a young man, its author, named S. and who he was certain was not the young woman who wrote under the name of P. His story was true. I had presented him the story several years before, and my modesty at that time had induced me to assume the pseudonym of S. instead of following my real name, P.; He had rejected the story on the ground that it was too long and unsuited for publication in his Magazine, and for half a dozen other reasons, none of which prevented me from afterwards publishing it in his rival's magazine after my name had been established.

Well, I explained to Mr. Leo Hunter, or what ever his name is, I explained to both editors, I explained to the public and now I explain to you, but somehow or other, gentleman everybody looks upon me with suspicion, and my stories are now always “returned with thanks.” I therefore ask for an investigation.

Charles Theodore Greve

Budget
Greve Editor
March 26, 1887