

A \$2,000 GOLD SWINDLE.

A Mysterious Affair—An Innocent Auburnian Robbed—No Trace of the Thieves.

[Auburn Advertiser, Oct. 2.]

A mysterious affair, illustrative of the simplicity of some human beings and their greed after gain, occurred in this county yesterday, in which Anthony Shimer of this city, proprietor and owner of the "Shimer Opera House," was the victim of misplaced confidence; and a party of negroes unknown in these parts were the successful schemers.

On the evening of Oct. 1st (last night,) at about midnight, Anthony Shimer was robbed, with no great effort on the part of the thieves, of \$2,000 in greenbacks. The full particulars of the affair, as we learn from reliable sources, are as follows:—The commencement of the affair dates back a week or more, at which time Harriet Tubman, a colored woman, residing near the South street tollgate, well known in this city, and who has gained somewhat of a notoriety in other sections by reason of the statements published from time to time of the services rendered by her as a scout during the late war of the rebellion, became acquainted with two colored persons who came here (as they said) from the south, and who stopped with her at her house on South street. These men, by their plausible address and gentlemanly appearance, soon gained the entire confidence of the unsophisticated Harriet. They stated to her that while in the south they had unearthed \$3,000 in gold which had been buried by rebel soldiers, and were now trying to devise some means of disposing of it. They were afraid to come to the city to get this amount in circulation, as they would at once be suspected of having obtained it in a dishonest manner. They wished to use Harriet as an agent to get rid of this coin which they were willing to exchange for currency at par. Harriet is noted in this city for her strict integrity and straightforwardness. Knowing this her friends (?) wished to use her as a negotiator with some party to dispose of the gold on hand. Harriet made overtures to several gentlemen of Auburn in regard to the matter, but all seemed to regard the affair as a "put up job," until she came across the unlucky Shimer. On one occasion, previous to interviewing Shimer, she aroused ex-Sheriff James Mead, who resides a short distance from her abode, at midnight, and requested him to come over to her house in the morning, as her friends with the gold would be there.

In previous conversation with Harriet the ex-sheriff had learned the object of her solicitude and had made up his mind that the whole affair was a swindle. He went to her house in the morning and was introduced by her to the friends, one of whom was a sable colored son of Erebus and the other a mulatto. He shook hands with each of them, and states that the hand of the latter was as soft as a woman's, showing that he was not a laboring man. He then engaged himself in conversation with them, in which they unfolded the object of their interview, but our ex-sheriff was not to be caught with such chaff, and declined to enter into the scheme. Before leaving he called Harriet one side and told her in his emphatic way not to have anything whatever to do with her pretended friends, as they were downright swindlers, and would rob and perhaps kill her at any time. She was too firmly impressed with their genuineness, however, and told her adviser that he did them injustice and was cruel in his remarks. Her confidence in them was not to be shaken by anything but an evidence

of guilt on their part, and she so expressed herself.

Finding ex-Sheriff Mead so firmly set against the colored men, and having the most implicit confidence in their stories herself, she applied afterwards to several other parties in this city to take hold of the matter in order to help the colored men out of their embarrassment. They needed the money and she wanted them to get into a shape where they could use it. Failing in all other efforts with different parties, they all warning her against the men, (in her zeal to assist them and still having entire confidence in their statements) she at least thought of Mr. Shimer. She immediately sought an interview with him and found him, as ever, ready to engage in any laudable enterprise to turn an honest penny to his advantage. He took hold of the scheme with energy and enthusiasm, thinking that he saw in the distance the premium on \$2,000 in gold going into his pocket without much effort on his part and without the least risk—"a soft thing." It was in his estimation a speculation that promised certain results on the profit page of his ledger. So certain was he that he went to a party in Auburn and stated that he had about \$2,000 in gold and wanted to know what premium they would pay on it in currency. He was offered ten per cent, whereupon he exclaimed, "by guy, that is not enough." Determined, however, to get the gold, and in order to have it counted all right, he sought an interview yesterday with Mr. Chas. O'Brien, cashier of the Auburn City National bank, in regard to his projected "spec."

Mr. Shimer was advised strongly by Charles N. Ross, president of the bank, and Mr. O'Brien, cashier, and other bank officials, to have nothing to do with the affair, but he said "you can't tell Shimer anything," and was more determined than ever to gain possession of that "bright yellow gold." At the interview yesterday at the bank, Mr. Shimer told the story nearly as related above, viz: that Harriet Tubman and Jno. Stewart, a colored friend and neighbor, had two friends stopping with them who had come from the South with \$2,000 in gold. Not wishing to bring such an amount to the city, and being in need of funds, she applied to Mr. Shimer and asked him to get \$2,000 and go with her to purchase that amount of gold from her friend. Mr. Shimer went to the City bank yesterday and drew \$2,000 in greenbacks—a one thousand dollar bill and the remainder in bills of various denominations. Mr. O'Brien, finding himself unable to dissuade Mr. Shimer from his reckless chase after gain, advised him to take some one with him as a referee in order to see that everything was correct. Accordingly Mr. Shimer, accompanied by Mr. O'Brien, started at about 4 P. M. of yesterday for parts unknown, being guided by Harriet, her husband, and two other colored companions. Let it be remembered that Mr. Shimer, at his own request, was accompanied by Cashier O'Brien for almost the express purpose of handling the funds and coin, and counting it, which from his long experience, would be an easy task. They proceeded westward on Genesee street to South Division street near the fair grounds, where they turned to the left (south) and rode about twelve miles to the tavern at Poplar Ridge. On the way the gold purchaser stopped several times and seemingly hesitated as mile after mile was passed, but was persuaded each time by Harriet, and her entreaties having the desired effect, rein was not pulled until reaching the tavern. The whole party then entered the inn, Mr. Shimer having as much confidence in Harriet as she had in her friends. At the hotel Mr. Shimer passed \$2,000 in currency into the hands of Harriet, who, accompanied by one of her friends, left the house. Messrs. O'Brien and Shimer, with Harriet's husband and his friend remained at the hotel during this time. They supposed that Harriet was going out to meet her friends with the gold and would return with it in a short time. Mr. O'Brien did not accompany her to count the coin, and Shimer did not think that by the time Harriet returned with the precious metal the seller might be a mile away. Harriet agreed to be back in half an hour. After waiting two hours Mr. Shimer became nervously impatient, and he with Mr. O'Brien, stepped out into the road and walked in the direction they supposed Harriet had gone. After proceeding about ten rods they heard a noise resembling a groan, as if some human being was in distress. They ran towards the place from which the noises proceeded and found in the road, upon her hands and knees, securely gagged, the misguided Harriet. She was gagged by a handkerchief, which was securely bound around her head and stuffed in her mouth. She was creeping towards the hotel, being in a state of exhaustion. In all probability she had been knocked down, as she bore evidences of having been roughly handled and maltreated. Her clothing was torn in various places, and she was really in a pitiable condition. She was carried to the tavern and laid on a bed. After administering stimulants she made an effort to speak, but could not articulate coherently. She made motions with her hands indicating that she had been gagged and beaten.

After lingering at the hotel for an hour, Messrs. O'Brien and Shimer returned to this city, leaving Harriet at the hotel in charge of her husband. Mr. Shimer is slightly down-hearted, and his confidence in human nature a little shaken. Mr. O'Brien is self-possessed, inasmuch as he can say to Mr. Shimer "I told you so," and was not bothered in the least in counting the "shiners."

The names of the thieves as thieves have so far been found, and there may be some difficulty in identifying them if caught. At all events, Mr. Shimer can count himself \$2,000 behind, instead of \$200 ahead of the game, and has had the truth of the saying, "never count your chickens before they are hatched," verified to him.

P. S.—Our reporter visited Harriet Tubman's house, on South street, this afternoon, but found that she had not yet been removed from the hotel at Poplar Ridge. Her brother was just starting out—3 P. M.—after her, and will probably bring her home to-night. He is of the opinion that she is badly injured.