

My Lost Dollar - Stephen Leacock



Introduction

My Lost Dollar is a story narrated in first person by the author Stephen Leacock. The one line summary is that he tries in many ways to get back that one dollar he lent his friend Todd for paying his taxi to go to Bermuda. It is made to be funny by using comparisons on the amount one dollar and on friendship.

The Story line

The author's close friend is going on a tour to Bermuda. Just before his departure, he wants some small change to pay off the taxi. He asks the author to lend him a dollar. Leacock also gives it readily. Todd departs for Bermuda. Todd writes a letter to the author from Bermuda, but there is no dollar bill inside the envelope. Twelve months go by. Todd has returned from Bermuda, but has not bothered to return the one dollar to the author. The lender is too decent to offend his friend by demanding his dollar back. He tries many ways to remind Todd about the dollar he owed, but due to some inexplicable reasons, the memory of the unpaid dollar refuses to enter Todd's mind.

Reminding his friend

The author lists out the ways he attempted to remind his friend. First he went to the railway station to receive Todd when he returned from Bermuda. Todd was as cheerful as ever, but not the least embarrassed. The author becomes unhappy. On another occasion, during an evening chat, the author discusses the subject of the American dollar by asking if it is circulation in Bermuda too. Todd replies casually but remembering about the unpaid dollar. The author meets Todd almost every day in the Club, but Todd never mentions about his debt. Todd even says that he no longer remembers much about his Bermuda trip. The author is exasperated. He feels resigned to the loss of his dollar.

In desperation, he adds Todd's name to his list of people who have similarly not paid money back to him. The author remains as friendly with Todd as before. On another day, the author met Todd over dinner. Todd talks about the loan of Poland which is not paid. But, Todd did not appear to think of his own un-paid debt.

Sad feelings

With his wounded feelings, he feels, if forgetting loans is so human, he himself could have taken such loans and not repaid it. This realization unsettles him. Much disturbed, the

author is about to start a “Back to Honesty” campaign. He is convinced that honesty should be the backbone of the nations aspiring to greatness.

While concluding, the author wants his ‘forgetful’ friend Todd not to know of the torment the payment has caused to him. Comically, he wants the readers not to bring the copies of this story to the University Club Montreal frequented by Major Todd.

Moral: The moral of the story is that small or big, one should return the money owed to others. That amount may be important for the lender. Further, it gives a great pain to the lender, if the borrower totally forgets about money borrowed. An honest man remembers the help done by friends.

Themes : In the story, there are the theme of honesty, hypocrisy, appearance, letting go, frustration and acceptance. Narrated in the first person by an unnamed man the reader realizes after reading the story that Leacock may be exploring the theme of letting go. As to why the narrator doesn’t simply ask Todd outright for the money is also interesting. Again the narrator is looking for a standard from others that he himself cannot meet.

Summation: The story is a hilarious excerpt based upon human behavior on borrowing and lending money intervened with the natural tendency of human memory of the borrower and humorous failed attempts of its revival by the lender.