

HEARTS AND HANDS

"Hearts and Hands" by O. Henry is a story about two acquaintances who meet on a train. When Mr. Easton encounters Miss Fairchild, he is handcuffed to another man. One passenger on the train, however, realizes that things are not as they seem.

Like many of O. Henry's short stories, a surprise ending awaits readers of 'Hearts and Hands.' The story is set on a train to Denver. An elegantly attired woman named Miss Fairchild is seated on the train when two men arrive and take the seat facing her. It quickly becomes apparent that the woman knows one of the men.

She speaks to this man, Mr. Easton, and then she is rather surprised to discover that he is handcuffed to the man seated beside him. As Easton greets the young woman, 'He slightly raised his right hand, bound at the wrist by the shining 'bracelet' to the left one of his companion.'

Evidently, the man with Easton senses Easton's embarrassment and volunteers an explanation: Easton is the marshal, and the two are headed for

Leavenworth prison. 'It's seven years for counterfeiting' Easton says. As the conversation continues, the woman is surprised to learn that Easton has discarded his life in Washington to become a marshal out West, but she finds the West agreeable as well.

The young woman continues to chat with her acquaintance, but she continues to stare at the handcuffs. To ease her concerns, the scruffy looking older man tells her, "Don't you worry about them, miss," said the other man. 'All marshals handcuff themselves to their prisoners to keep them from getting away. Mr. Easton knows his business.'" As the two men stand to go to the smoker car, the young woman bids Mr. Easton goodbye.

All the while, two passengers seated nearby have listened to the conversation. One remarks on Mr. Easton's appearance, saying that he seems too young to be a marshal. The other eavesdropping passenger corrects the mistake, one that the young woman and readers have likely made as well. Mr. Easton is not the marshal; he is the counterfeiter. "Oh! didn't you catch on?" the passenger says. 'Say--did you ever know an officer to handcuff a prisoner to his right hand?"

