

CASES OF GOOD DETECTIVE WORK

Guarding Unsuspecting Lodgers at the Very Well Summer Hotels.

INGENUITY OF CUNNING THIEVES

An Occupation That Requires Coolness and Judgment—Use of Wigs, Spectacles and Skeleton Keys. Good Luck of a Diamond Drummer. A Well Laid Trap, and Other Readable Incidents of a Side of Life That Seldom is Made Public.

For the Saturday Tribune.

Just now the detectives in the summer hotels are decidedly busy. They must not only guard the guests from outsiders, but from wolves who have stealthily strayed into the fold. And they must make no mistake, for that would be awkward.

"My first case this summer," said a detective at one of the large Atlantic City hotels the other day, "was a queer one. Mr. S. and his wife have been coming here now for five years. This year they came up on the 4 o'clock train and were assigned to room No. 26, the first quarters. At 6 o'clock they came down stairs, left the room key in the office and went into the dining room.

"At 6 o'clock we change desk clerks, and this year we have a man on duty from 6 o'clock to 12. He had never seen Mr. and Mrs. S. About 10 minutes after they came on duty a man stepped up to the desk and said, 'Give me No. 26,' adding pleasantly, 'You see, we have the same old key.'

"The clerk handed out the key and went back to his books.

"Ten minutes later the man returned, threw the key on the desk, gave the clerk a cigar and walked out.

"Now, Mr. and Mrs. S., after dinner, sat on the piazza awhile, listening to the music, and it was fully 10 o'clock when Mrs. S. went to the desk, asked for her key and went with her husband to their room. A minute after we were started by the news of a burglary, and Mr. S., frantically with excitement, rushed down to tell us that all Mrs. S.'s jewels, her lace and valuable keepsakes of all kinds were gone, while trunks, gowns and satchels were torn in the hasty ransacking.

"I went to their room and found it all true, but who and where was the thief? I have not spoken to anybody in the place," said Mr. S., "except a man I met on the train, to whom I gave my card. I asked him to call and told him I should be in the room 10 o'clock for five years."

"This was a good clue, and with the description given by the clerk of the man who had asked for the key, I telegraphed all over the country. I was answered by other hotel detectives looking for the same man, and in a week we had our sneak bird lured in town, where he will remain for a year at least.

"You know that hotel rooms mostly all lead into one another. When only one room is wanted, the door is locked between a and a bureau placed against it. This was the case with Miss Varick's room. The dresser almost hid the door.

"One afternoon Miss Varick locked her door, took off her jewels, which were very handsome, and laying them upon the dresser with some other pieces which she intended to wear that night sat down in an easy chair by the window to read. The day was hot, and Miss Varick thought after that she might have dozed off. Any way she awoke with a start, looked around the room, saw everything was all right, and was about to settle herself for another nap when she happened to glance at the dresser, only to find it empty of all her jewels. Not a ring even was left. She got up and stared at its marble top. It was as blank as a sheet.

"In the next room were two gentlemen, old men and very dignified. They left the afternoon of the robbery. As I afterward found, they left within five minutes after she was committed. I went to their room and searched the door, but there was nothing to show it had been unlocked. The big hook that held it was on Miss Varick's side of the door. Yet through that door seemed to me the only reasonable way of accounting for the robbery. The man had left very stealthily.

"As I searched the door for the hundredth time I noticed that the paint around the edge of the panels was scratched. Picking at the fresh work around the panel, I lifted it out easily, and the panel I pulled toward me by inserting a nail in an old nail-hole.

"Now," said I to Miss Varick, "seat yourself where you were on that afternoon and keep your eyes upon the dresser."

"Very quietly I slipped into the next room, took out the panel, pushed the mirror of the dresser forward and removed a pinushon from the top. Miss Varick sat watching me, with eyes wide open. 'The very sound that woke me that afternoon,' she exclaimed, 'it was the swinging of the mirror!'

"After that things were easy. We caught the thieves in Boston, but not until we learned to know them without the wigs and spectacles which changed them from well known crooks to respectable middle aged citizens.

A Diamond Drummer's Luck. A diamond drummer came up from the city to sell diamonds to the local

stores. At dinner he got acquainted with one of our guests, an old patron, who has been coming here for years, and who is also very rich.

"After dinner they went to drive to the roadhouse, where they met two more round faced and all had dinner together. At dinner the drummer drank too much. He became very communicative and imparted the fact to all that he had \$50,000 worth of diamonds in his inside pocket. 'I ought to have left them at the hotel,' said he, adding, 'I have never carried a pistol in my life.'

"Well, the drummer got so much under the influence of the champagne that he would not go home, declaring that he would stay at the roadhouse with more congenial company. In vain our old patron, Mr. Lambert, urged him. Return home he would not. And after an argument that rose almost to blows the drummer sank back in a drunken stupor, from which he could not be roused.

"Mr. Lambert, after many efforts, all unsuccessful, started home, but not until he had reached into the drummer's vest pocket and got the packet of diamonds, which were in a long, slim chamois case. Next morning early Mr. Lambert read his mail, scanned a telegram and announced that he must go home, saying, 'I may not return this season, as I am going north and maybe to Europe upon an unexpected journey. I will pay my bill now. Call the stage.'

"Within two hours after his departure the drummer came back to the hotel white with fright and now thoroughly sober. 'Where is that man?' he cried. 'Where is my diamond case?' He has robbed me of my package of diamonds!

"Although the drummer had been a short one, the search for him over the Canada border or have redoubled his steps south. An outgoing Atlantic steamer could have been taken by him before noon, or he might be in disguise almost watching our operations.

"One day, after a month's search, I met the drummer, who had never left the house. 'I believe,' said I, 'that Lambert is right in this very town, and we shall see.'

"'Right you are!' exclaimed a hearty voice, and with a slap on the shoulder I turned and wheeled me about and clasped my hand. In a second the warrant was upon him.

"'What's this for?' he exclaimed, laughing. 'This is a good joke! What! Accused of robbing—diamonds? What? What?'

"Then as light came upon him he said: 'Why, then, drummer, the ones I took from the drunken drummer, are in your safe. I put them there that night. Next morning came word of my mother's illness. I started north to see her, got a telegram that she was better, flew off to New York to attend to some business, got my mistake shaved off on account of the heavy north wind, and now am here. What? Have you counted them? Be sure you're right. They wouldn't have been if I hadn't taken them away from him that night.'

A Cool Thief. 'This was one of the most serious hotel cases I have ever had, because a woman's fair name and fame were in question.

"I had noticed for some weeks that Mr. Blank was paying devoted attention to Mrs. Beech, although that lady's husband came up to the hotel every week and she was surrounded by five little children. She was evidently flirting with Mr. Blank, and that it was not quite open I believed from the reputation which I knew Mr. Blank to bear in the southern city from which he hailed.

"One day there came a letter from a fellow detective, telling me of a jewel robbery, took off her jewels, which were very handsome, and laying them upon the dresser with some other pieces which she intended to wear that night sat down in an easy chair by the window to read. The day was hot, and Miss Varick thought after that she might have dozed off. Any way she awoke with a start, looked around the room, saw everything was all right, and was about to settle herself for another nap when she happened to glance at the dresser, only to find it empty of all her jewels. Not a ring even was left. She got up and stared at its marble top. It was as blank as a sheet.

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QUEER LESSON OF A DOWNFALL

One Man Who is Happier in Prison Than He Was Out of It.

THE STORY OF A BANK DEFAULTER

Thirteen Years of Torture for Fear of Detection—William R. Melville, of a California Bank, Tells a Tale with a Moral—Danger of Good Credit—Crime and Sin Provide Their Own Punishment to Men of Fine Sensibility.

For the Saturday Tribune.

William R. Melville, the defaulting bank clerk of San Francisco, says he feels more free in jail than when he used to dine sumptuously at the club. Thirteen years of misery, fear and peril are succeeded by years of disgrace and imprisonment, but he says he is not equal to the torture that came from his evil deeds and from the fear of their detection.

"When I began to take money from the bank," said he to a San Francisco Chronicle reporter, "I was hot in love, I was not gambling, I was not drinking. I was quite a youngster then, as you can understand, for that was 13 years ago, and I am only 33 now. I was attending to the clearing house business of the Bank of California at the time. If you know anything about the management of banks, you will know what that means. If you don't, it is hard to explain, but the man in charge of the clearing house business takes the checks upon other banks to the clearing house to make the settlement.

"My credit was very good, even at that time. That was a peril. Good credit is an awful danger for any man who depends on a salary for a living. A bill came into the bank for something. I don't remember what it was now. When this bill was presented, I did not have the money with which to pay it. I held over a check from one day to the next in order to pay that bill, expecting, of course, to replace the money from my salary. I was surprised when I found how easy it was to take money by this way of holding over checks.

"I tried it again. I suppose in all I took about \$200, perhaps a little more, of the money of the bank. I did it back in due time. Nobody knew anything about it. I was perfectly satisfied that, though I had been unwise, I certainly was not dishonest. I had paid the bills as they were presented and then had paid back the bank the money that I had taken. You see, it was just a transfer of creditors. I thought it was better to owe the bank than to owe tradespeople.

"Well, when I wanted money again, I took it from the bank. That went along for years. I suppose I was clear with the bank two or three times after the first time that I took money from it. Then the amount gradually got bigger and bigger, and bigger, and of course it was plain to me that I never would be able to pay it back, so I just kept on taking more and more as I needed it, or wanted it, rather, for certainly I didn't need it, to pay my current expenses and live in the style that I liked.

"All the money that I took from the bank has gone for my ordinary expenses. The exact course that it took I can't tell. I never kept any personal expense account, and I really do not know in detail how I spent so much money as I did spend. My salary, of course, was not \$175 during all this time. Take my salary and add to it the amount that I took, but did not earn, and it makes an average of about \$4,400 a month. That means nearly \$400 a month. For my life I could not tell you how I spent so much. I have figured in my mind as well as I could what my expenses were, and I can't account for anywhere near that.

"Figure up my average expenses for the past few years. My room rent was \$10 a month. I boarded at the Cosmos club. My cashmere from the club amounted to about \$90 a month. I belong to the Olympic club. That cost \$8 a month. I was a member of two yachting clubs, the Pacific and the Corinthian, and they are expensive. My club dues altogether did not amount to \$15 a month. Now, all that figures up \$140 a month. I suppose my cigar bill was about \$40 a month. That makes \$180. You see, that is \$5 more than my salary allowed. For many years I have been accustomed to contribute to the

support of my mother. I gave her sometimes \$50, sometimes \$80, sometimes even as much as \$100 a month. I suppose the average would be about \$80 a month. You add that to the other \$180, and that makes \$260. Where the rest went I cannot tell. It just drifted away.

"I was never extravagant in my clothing, though I wanted to dress well, of course, as any young man would. Sometimes after hard exercises at the Olympic club I wanted good, hearty dinner, and I would get it. The cost might be—well, \$4, and that would not happen more than once a week. There is nothing very extravagant in that. A man on my salary might reasonably have afforded one \$4 dinner a week. But all these things counted up to make the total of nearly three times my salary.

"I never gambled. I don't mean by that that I never touched cards for money, but I am sure that \$200 would cover the entire amount of my losses. I lost a few dollars, perhaps \$5 or \$10, not more than that at a time. I never lost any money speculating in stocks.

"I never took from the bank any large sum at a time except just before I ran away. I should say \$500 was perhaps the largest amount, and whenever I took any it was merely for current expenses or to pay some bill that was presented.

"No one can understand the torture that I have endured during these last few years. I could not stay away from the bank for one day, because detection would have been certain. I never took the vacation that is always given to the clerk, vacating some excuse for not going.

"Every morning when I went to that old bank I did not know what I might expect when I entered. Morning after morning I had to grit my teeth as I took out my key to open the door and force myself to turn the lock and enter the bank. Every day at noon when I was returning from lunch I had the same awful feeling, but I had been discovered during the time that I was away from the bank. This fear of discovery grew worse and worse. In the afternoon after the bank closed I used to wait until cash was balanced, and

then even until I had seen my box go into the vault, and the vault locked. Then I felt reasonably sure that I was safe for one more day.

"I suppose the officers of the bank might have discovered what I was about if they had made a careful examination, but a mere casual inspection would not have proved anything to them. You see, the accounts were apparently all straight, the money that was missing being accounted for day by day by holdover checks, as has been explained. Unless the assistant cashier or whose name was on the examinations had gone over the examinations as well as the books he would not have noticed that any money was missing. My fear constantly was that while I was out some telegraphic communication might come from some eastern bank asking the fate of some check. Any one looking at my book might find that the draft had been cashed. Then he might want to know if the money had been remitted and find that the remittance had been made. This never occurred, however, though I expected it day by day.

"There ought to be a lesson in me to the young men of San Francisco. I am not exactly in the position to preach a sermon, but I feel that my distress is the gain of some one else if from me any young man should learn to live ostentatiously within his income, to avoid a debt as though it were poison. The credit system, or of whose name was on the examinations had gone over the examinations as well as the books he would not have noticed that any money was missing. My fear constantly was that while I was out some telegraphic communication might come from some eastern bank asking the fate of some check. Any one looking at my book might find that the draft had been cashed. Then he might want to know if the money had been remitted and find that the remittance had been made. This never occurred, however, though I expected it day by day.

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HIS MAJESTY IS ASTOUNDED

King Umberto of Italy Shocked at the Audacity of Princess Laetitia.

ROYALTY RACES ON A BICYCLE

The Beautiful Sister-in-Law of Italy's Sovereign and Daughter of Plon Plon Surprises the Gossips by Displaying Her Charms Astride a Cycle That Was Built for One—Kingly Anger Increased at This Breach of Etiquette.

For the Saturday Tribune.

Princess Laetitia, duchess of Aosta, sister-in-law of the King of Italy, daughter of Plon Plon, or Prince Napoleon, created a sensation the other day by riding to the race track, near Turin, on a bicycle.

Princess Laetitia is a widow. She is handsome, tall, athletic, and her 175 pounds avoirdupois is judiciously distributed over her fine figure. She does not mind exhibiting her beautiful neck and arms.

It was the day of the Grand Prix, and all Turin, with its wealth, beauty and royalty, found its way to the race track. The Duchess of Genoa made her appearance in a gala coat and six, driven from the saddle. There were the Princess Isabella's outsiders in scarlet livery. But the popular Princess Laetitia, which is the Latin for settlement, was not to be seen. It was almost time for the start. The stands were crowded, and the mob outside the railings was impatient. Fearful of a riot, the syndico of Turin sent a mounted messenger to the palace to inquire when her royal highness might be expected. Like other spectators after about five minutes, galloping wildly and motioning the guards at the royal entrance to open the gates.

Everybody stood, everybody stood on tiptoe, hats and handkerchiefs in the air, national anthem by the band, soldiers and army officers preparing for salute. But what was it that they saw? No royal highness in gay dress, no plumed horse's head, no carriage decorated with flowers. Instead the syndico's man was leading a small bicycle brigade into the grounds and at the head of it Princess Laetitia Bonaparte, duchess of Aosta, followed by the Marquis di Castellone, grand master of ceremony; Countess Colla di Polignone, first lady in waiting; Count Avogadro de Colobiano et Carriso of the late duke's military household; Princessa Morozzo della Rocca, another lady of honor, and several chamberlains, all mounted on bicycles.

The princess wore black silk tights, patent leather boots with leggings, a divided skirt of heavy black silk ornamented with silver thread and a close fitting waist of the same material. She wore a white silk yachting cap and around her waist a silver girdle with numerous attachments on small silver chains. Among them were a penknife, a pair of scissors in a leather case, a writing pad and pencil and several other things.

The faces of the Duchess of Genoa and the Princess Isabella were a study. To say they looked daggers at their relative is putting it very mildly indeed, but the manner in which Laetitia received their greetings was delicious. They were icy. She was effusive. They tried to frown her down, and Laetitia by simply appearing at the balustrade of the box evoked tremendous applause, such as in Italy is only accorded to Queen Marguerite.

During the races the princess occupied herself with betting, wildly and receiving the gentlemen who called to pay their respects. She also availed a lot of money, but kept a tally sheet of her bets on her writing pad.

She likewise drank champagne freely and otherwise conducted herself with so much democratic abandon that the Duchess of Genoa drove rapidly away in disgust, taking the Princess Isabella with her.

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