

William Hooper

*A Left-Luggage Story*

Six months ago, I was unexpectedly summoned to town by a letter from my London solicitors, Messrs. Smith and Son, on urgent business, the precise nature of which it is unnecessary to specify here. Living as I do some miles from a post-town, I do not get my letters until far into the morning, and it was only by dint of a hard gallop, that I succeeded in reaching the station at Buntford just as the mid-day up-express came steaming in. As I passed the bookstall, I called out for a copy of the day's Times, but was answered by a gaping boy that he had none—not in yet, or all out—I forget which. Being pressed for time, and moreover haunted by a vague dread of the five dreary unoccupied hours before me, I, with less than my usual discretion, flung down a shilling on the counter, and having caught up at random the first of the row of monthly magazines that came to hand, hastened to secure my seat in a first-class carriage. The compartment in which I found myself was empty, but it seemed that I was not long to have it to myself; for the opposite seat—I had taken one next to the window, with my back to the engine—was occupied by a gentleman's hat-box and railway-rug, and a portmanteau was stowed away underneath. The rug—I think I see it before my eyes now—was of a shaggy brown outside, lined with a running pattern of black and blue. The hat-box was labeled, "*Wm. Hooper, passenger to London.*"

The comfort of a journey, of a long one especially, depends in so great measure on the nature of one's fellow-travelers, that it is not to be wondered at that my eye dwelt rather long on the name, while I fell into speculations as to its possessor, and whether he would turn out a good, bad, or indifferent companion. Having scanned his luggage well, I proceeded to look out of the window for the man himself, for we were on the point of starting, and it was time he made his appearance. At this moment, there came hurrying up a tall young man with sandy moustache and blue spectacles, carrying a carpet-bag, and an old lady with a dog in her arms. Both looked in at my carriage, and both passed on, the one up, the other down the platform, entering respectively the compartments to the right and left of mine. The only persons now remaining on the platform were the station-master, who was already giving the signal for our departure, two porters, and a bearded man who paced up and down with folded arms. Him I was disposed to set down as Mr. Hooper; but if it were he, he showed a singular indifference to the fate of his property, for the whistle sounded, and we were off, and he simply stood still and stared carelessly after us.

Plainly, it was not Mr. Hooper. But where, then, was the man? It was a question more easily asked than answered. I grew weary at last of watching his luggage, and turned my attention to the magazine I had bought at the station. But I could not get on with it at all. Story after story I began, and story after story I abandoned in disgust. I use the word advisedly, for it is with no slighter feeling that common sense, perhaps common-place, men like myself can regard the tone that at present pervades this class of literature. At least, I hit upon one tale that promised to be sensible enough, setting out as it did with an account of the journey on foot of a father and son from Land's End to John o' Groat's House. But it was a mere deception after all. No further on than the third page, they lost their way in a wood, and took shelter in a small wayside inn, the Boots whereof was an individual so ominously described that it needed no large amount of discrimination to perceive that this story was going the way of all the others. Thoroughly out of

patience, and apostrophizing myself as a double ass for having thrown away a shilling on such rubbish, I tossed the offending book to the further end of the carriage. "How on earth," I said to myself, "can trash like this go down in this work-a-day world? and where do they find writers weak-minded enough to minister to so silly a taste?" Then, my eye falling on the luggage opposite, I continued, "They represent every trivial incident as tending to something of great moment. Something comes out of everything. If one of those wise-acres were here at the present time, he would make something out of that railway-rug, I don't doubt."

We had whizzed by four or five out-of-the-way stations at express-rate; now we were slackening speed considerably, and presently, bump, bump, we drew up alongside the platform at Tamwell Station.

Here we had a stoppage of ten minutes, to enable northern passengers to lunch; a tedious delay to those who like myself had no better occupation than walking up and down the platform. Among some half-dozen others employed in the same manner, one man in particular attracted my notice. He was below the middle height, broad-shouldered, thick-set, and red-haired. His eyes were small and bright; his face not a pleasant one to look at, conveying as it did a most unmistakable impression of craftiness.

"If I were a policeman," said I to myself, "I should keep a sharp look-out on that fellow."

His movements struck me as peculiar. He walked right down the platform, peering into one carriage after the other, as though undecided which to enter. Having arrived at the end of the train, he turned, and came leisurely back towards where I was standing. This time he stopped for a moment at my carriage, and an undefined instinct made me watch him yet more narrowly. He glanced back at me, and for an instant his eyes encountered mine, then he turned his head, and walked on. A sudden idea struck me: Could this by any chance be William Hooper, who, having inadvertently got into a wrong carriage at Buntford, was now come to look after his luggage? But I dismissed the notion immediately; he was so evidently not a first-class passenger. The ringing of the first bell took off my attention, and I hastened to resume my seat.

"By your leave, sir," said a voice at my elbow, and there, to my no small astonishment, was the same objectionable individual, actually preparing to enter the carriage.

"It *is* William Hooper," was my mental conclusion, but this was negative the next moment.

"I'll thank you to allow me to move your rug and hat-box to the next seat, sir; I wish to see the last of a friend."

And, suiting the action to the words, he not only displaced the articles in question, but squeezed his bulky figure out of the window in such a manner as almost to fill up the aperture. It was very annoying; but by remonstrating with a boor, I should, I knew, but expose myself to a disadvantage, so I let him take his way, hoping that when the tickets came to be inspected, he would be sent to the right-about. But I was disappointed. Not only was the ticket he produced as genuinely a first-class one as my own, but the destination thereon marked the same—Paddington.

“Odious!” I ejaculated to myself, as the carriage was locked, and the train off again. “However, if he makes himself disagreeable, I can but change carriages at the next station.”

I had procured a newspaper at Tamwell, and was busied in its perusal, when looking up suddenly, I caught my companion’s eye fixed on me with an expression absolutely startling in its keen scrutiny.

Yet more startling was the immediate and remarkable change that came over his countenance when he saw that he was observed—his eye dropped; a dull, stupid expression overspread his face, and he turned his head away. However, I had seen enough to set me on my guard. After this, I resolved to watch him steadily, though without appearing to do so.

Acting on this resolution, I soon became aware, that, for some reason or other, he took considerable interest in the luggage he believed to be mine; in reality, the property of the invisible William Hooper. At least, so I judged from the circumstance, that although, so long as I looked his way, he apparently took no notice of either hat-box or rug, no sooner did I turn my head towards the window by which we were seated, than I was conscious—I may almost say instinctively—that both were subjected to the sharpest investigation from his foxy eyes.

I had really forgotten the existence of the portmanteau, when a peculiar *thud*, repeated at intervals, roused me to the perception that my companion’s heavy heel was from time to time striking with some force against the leather casing. This might have passed for mere clumsiness, had not my suspicions already been excited. As it was, I could not divest myself of the notion, that he had some ulterior object in view, though what it could be was difficult to divine. I could scarcely believe that of sheer malice prepense he could wish to damage the portmanteau. Could he possibly be trying to get some idea of its contents; and if so, what sinister intentions did he entertain with regard to them?

Believing that danger of some description threatened William Hooper’s luggage, I resolved—since he was not here in person to protect it—to take it under my immediate surveillance; and, the more effectually to do so, not to disclaim that ownership of it, with which my companion evidently accredited me. I therefore said, as civilly as possible: “You find that portmanteau rather in your way, I am afraid; pray let me draw it out, and take it under my own seat.”

“Not at all, not at all,” returned my *vis-a-vis* eagerly. “It’s quite comfortable here, sir; don’t trouble yourself to move.”

He was evidently as loath to part with the portmanteau as I was anxious to get possession of it; but I was the more determined to carry my point, which I succeeded in doing at last.

Shortly after this, we passed through a tunnel—a long one—in the course of our transit through which, suddenly bethinking me of ascertaining the security of the hat-box, I stretched my hand across for the purpose. I had just touched the encircling strap, when my fingers encountered those of another hand; there was a mutual start, and both hands were simultaneously withdrawn. This was a disagreeable confirmation of my suspicion, and at the same time I felt considerably out of countenance myself—my object in feeling must have been so palpable, whereas, after all,

the position of his hand was not very unnatural, sitting as he was beside it, with his arm, it might be, on the cushioned partition. Neither of us said a word, and presently we emerged from the tunnel close to Whitworth Station.

Our *tete-a-tete* ended here, and though I am no coward, I must own that I was not sorry for it. The two passengers who joined our party were a white-haired lady, in Quaker costume, who took the vacant seat near me, opposite Mr. Hooper's possessions, and an elderly gentleman in an Inverness cape, and wearing a respirator, who seated himself beside them by the other window.

As he appeared to be in delicate health, I ventured to suggest that the seat opposite would be less liable to draught, but he replied that it did not suit him to sit with his back to the engine. I then proposed to move the hat-box and rug, so as to vacate a seat further from the window; but this he also declined, saying he preferred his present seat. So I left him to himself, and he presently dozed off. His sleepiness seemed to infect my opposite neighbor, who, leaning his head on his arm, closed his eyes, and soon began to snore audibly.

My lady-companion alone continued wide awake, and was very chatty and communicative. She appeared to be of a philanthropic turn of mind, and entertained me with accounts of various institutions she had lately been visiting; among others, that of the Whitworth jail. It was at this point in the conversation that a sparkle, as of a wakeful eye appearing just for an instant in the mass of red hair and beard reclining on the seat opposite, both warned me to be on my guard, and suggested the thought, "If my friend over there is not well acquainted with the inside of that jail, I am very much mistaken."

I think he must have caught my eye fixed on him, for, from that moment, the snoring gradually ceased; and by-and-by he began to wake up, in a very natural manner, I must allow. He took no interest in the conversation apparently, for he kept his face turned towards the window, and occupied himself with dotting down with a pencil, in a large pocket-book, sundry marks and lines. One would have almost thought he was sketching, or trying to do so; rather a novel experiment in a railway carriage, even in this age of utilization of time.

The Quaker lady evidently adopted this view of the case. "Thee must excuse me, friend," she said; "but the motion of the carriage is surely not favorable to drawing. If thee does not take care, thee will injure thine eyesight permanently."

"Never fear for my eyesight, ma'am," was the gruff reply; "it has held out well enough so far, and is like to do for a good time yet."

"If a lady takes the trouble to concern herself in your behalf, you might at least be at the pains to give her a civil answer," I exclaimed, indignant at his *brusquerie*.

But he gave me no answer but a grim smile, and I felt vexed that I had been betrayed into addressing him. The lady's equanimity was, however, not in the least disturbed, and she quietly resumed the conversation as though nothing had occurred; our companion, meantime—the one who was awake—continuing to divide his attention between the window and his pocket-book.

“I have a little book here concerning the Blind Asylum at Northing I was telling thee about, that it may interest thee to see,” said the Quakeress, taking a pamphlet from her bag.

I put out my hand to receive it, but at that moment my opposite neighbor, by some awkward movement in turning sharply round, jerked my elbow, and it fell to the ground. I will do him the justice to say that he had the civility to stoop down to pick it up; but he bungled stupidly about it, dropping it again two or three times, and when at last he really had it in his hand, retaining it to scan the title-page with evident curiosity, instead of at once restoring it to its owner.

I felt inclined to resent this as impertinence, but the lady took out another pamphlet, saying, good-naturedly: “If thee is interested in the subject, here is another little book for thee.”

“Thank you, ma’am,” he replied, a little more graciously than before. “Hand it over to the gentleman, if you please, and I will keep this here one.”

He *was* very much interested in the subject, if one might judge from the earnest attention with which he perused each single page; but it would seem that it was a little beyond his depth—he had not the appearance of being a well educated man—for he looked up at the end with a peculiarly baffled and puzzled expression. With an odd sort of grunt, he folded the pamphlet into his pocket-book—I thought he might at least have offered to return it—and then set to work with his pencil again.

“It is a good work they are doing there,” remarked the Quakeress; “one would be glad to forward it all one could.”

A nod was the only reply he vouchsafed.

It was a drowsy day, dull and close. After a while, we relapsed into silence. We stopped at but a few stations, and no fresh passengers came in to rouse us. Before long, my three companions all seemed to be dozing, and had it not been for a vague sense of insecurity, I should have followed their example.

Time went on. We were within half an hour of London, and nothing had occurred to ratify my suspicions. The first movement was on the part of the invalid, who, as we neared Chelston, our last stopping-place, roused himself from his slumber, and took down his umbrella from its resting-place above the seat. At the same instant, he of the red hair sat up wide awake, though but a moment before he had been, to all appearance, buried in sleep.

The tickets were always given up here, and we were called upon to have them ready. The conductor came round in a hurry, as usual, took the four tickets, saw that the door was locked, and was about to move on, when the gentlemen in the respirator placed his hand on the door, saying: “I’m for Chelston—let me out, please.”

The man glanced at the tickets in his hand, and read out: “Northsea, Buntford, and Whitworth—all for Paddington, sir.”

“I know,” said the invalid, feebly. “There was some difficulty about booking me through to Chelston, and they told me a Paddington-ticket would do. The advantage, if there is any, is on the Company’s side.”

“All right, sir;” and he unlocked the door.

At the mention of Northsea being on one of the tickets, my opposite neighbor and I exchanged a momentary glance. I made sure I had discovered one fact about him—namely, that he had been in the train longer even than I had, and had only changed carriages at Tamwell—a circumstance which, I hardly know why, confirmed my belief in his being a suspicious character. As for his face, I confess I could not make out its expression; but he must know that we were not thinking of anything particular, both began at the same time a low whistle, the effect whereof, tunes and keys being different, may be more easily imagined than described.

The elderly gentleman had, in the meantime, effected his exit, and was on the point of going off down the platform, when my *vis-a-vis* unceremoniously clutched hold of him by the cape. “I beg pardon, sir; but if you would do me a trifling favor, I should be greatly obliged.”

“If I can serve you in any way, I shall be happy to do so,” returned the other; “but there is no time to lose—you will be off in another minute.”

I judged from his tone that he was not overwell pleased with the style of address, and no wonder; but the unmannerly fellow did not seem to see it. With a careless: “That’s just why I ask you,” he scribbled a few words on the page of his pocket-book, tore it out, and twisting it up into a sort of note, handed it to the gentleman, saying: “[Will] you be so good as to take this to the telegraph office?—See, the door is over there. Thank you, sir. There’s the shilling. Ask ‘em to send it off at once, please.” Then, by way of explanation, he added: “I’m bound to let my mother know I’m coming, you see. It might make her ill if I was to look in on her all of a sudden.”

“I don’t see that a telegram will mend matters,” I muttered; but I don’t think he heard me, and I did not care that he should.

The old gentleman made his way to the door indicated. We were off before he re-appeared.

I began now seriously to consider what steps it would be well to take with regard to William Hooper’s luggage on reaching Paddington, to which we were drawing very near. If, as seemed the most natural and straightforward course, I went off to the superintendent at once to acquaint him with the circumstances, I should have, meantime, to leave it to the mercy of my red-haired friend, who had already interested himself concerning it. And yet, what course was open to me?

I was still quite at sea as to what plan to adopt, when we rushed shrieking into that Babel of sights and sounds, the Paddington Station. It was more than a year since I was there last, and it seemed to me more bustling than ever. Not that I could see much, however, for my friend opposite quite monopolized the window. I regretted it the less, that I now hastily made up my mind—no better course suggesting itself to me—to keep my seat until a favorable opportunity

offered of securing the services of a porter, to convey the luggage in my charge to safe quarters. Having watched over it so far, I was not going to abandon it now.

The object of my suspicions seemed in no hurry to go; he retained his seat, his head still out of the window, till the lady rose, saying: "We are at our journey's end, if I mistake not. May I trouble thee to let me pass out, friend?"

"Beg pardon, ma'am," he exclaimed; and opening the door, he sprang down himself first, and then, with more politeness than I should have expected of him, helped her to alight. This done, he seemed in some perplexity as to what to do next. With his hand on the door handle, he looked after her as she walked away towards the barriers raised round the luggage; then back at me; and finally, round and behind him. Suddenly, he darted off, and the next thing I saw him talking to a man in a snuff-colored coat at some distance.

I had pulled the portmanteau from under the seat, in readiness to have it taken out, but had not succeeded in getting hold of a porter, when my friend returned, alone, and offered his help, observing that the train would be shunted almost immediately to make room for another, and that I had best look sharp. There was reason in what he said; and considering that the luggage would be at least as safe on the platform as in the carriage, I thought it well to avail myself of his assistance.

The portmanteau was heavy—singularly so, for its size. We lifted it out. I placed the rug and hat-box on the top of it, and then I took up my stand by its side. My companion showed no disposition to run off with anything, but neither did he take himself off, and there was that in his manner I did not like. It was in vain that I gave him sundry hints to be gone about his business; he met them all with the most impenetrable obtuseness, real or feigned, and kept hanging about me, never going more than a dozen yards or so from the place where I was standing. I was in an awkward predicament. I did not dare to leave my charge to call a porter, and they paid no heed to my shouts and gesticulations. Other trains were coming in, moreover, and taking off their attention. At this moment I observed a man coming towards us, who, at first sight, I should have said was the very same with whom my companion had been talking but a few minutes back; I had not seen his face very well, but the hue of his coat, and a somewhat peculiar slouch in his shoulders, were identical. But when he passed close to us, going on towards the luggage-van, and there was, so far as I could see, no sign of recognition between the two, I thought I must have been mistaken.

Presently, my quondam traveling-companion, the Quaker lady, came up the platform, followed by a porter, who was wheeling her luggage in a truck; and he again was followed, rather to my surprise, by the same man who had passed us on his way down just before. This time, I particularly noticed both him and my red-haired friend. Their eyes met. Was I mistaken in fancying that they exchanged a glance of intelligence? The Quakeress nodded pleasantly; I raised my hat, and then called out to the porter to return for my luggage when he had disposed of that of the lady. The row of cabs was visible from the spot where I was standing, and I watched the Quaker lady enter one. Judge of my astonishment when at the last moment, after the luggage was adjusted, and they were on the point of starting, I saw the wearer of the snuff-colored coat, the same who had been following in her wake as she passed me, jump up, and take his seat on the

box beside the driver! The porter did not return as he had promised; I suppose someone else had snapped him up, and I was beginning to grow very weary of my position. For the last quarter of an hour, a policeman had been pacing up and down the platform where we were standing. It had struck me that he was keeping an eye on my companion—who was very possibly known to the police as a dangerous character—but it only just now occurred to me that I could not do better than make over to him the guardianship of Mr. Hooper's property. Accordingly, I beckoned him to my side. I half expected that my companion would have bolted on this, but he kept his ground.

"You wanted me, sir?" asked the policeman, looking rather odd, I fancied.

"Yes; I wish to give over this luggage into your charge. It is labelled *Wm. Hooper*, you will observe. It does not belong to me, but was in the carriage when I entered it. I cannot guess what has become of the owner; but it will no doubt be inquired after before long, so you had best give it up to the care of the Company. I recommend you not to let it out of your sight till it is safe in their keeping. I wash my hands of it."

As I said these words, I looked sternly at the man whose evil designs, whatever they may have been, I hoped thus effectually to foil. So far from looking abashed, however, he returned me a smile that was the very embodiment of impudence.

"Have you no tongue in your head?" he said rudely to the policeman. "Can't you tell the gentleman that you'll do his bidding?"

It was, to my mind, like a rat challenging a terrier; and I should have liked dearly to see him get a good set-down; but the policeman was too forbearing by far. Taking no notice of his insolence, he simply turned to me with a "Very good, sir!" and then beckoned to a porter in the distance, who obeyed *his* signal fast enough.

With a parting admonition to him to look well to his charge, I took up my bag, and walked off, very glad to be free.

I called a cab, and drove at once to my solicitor's office. I had got out, and dismissed my vehicle, when, whom should my amazed eyes light on, standing but a few paces from the door I was about to enter, but my late traveling-companion, whom I had left, twenty minutes before, by the policeman's side on the Paddington platform! There was no mistaking the man, though he affected not to see me. Beyond doubt he had either followed, or not impossibly accompanied me.

Indignant at this espionage, yet uncertain how to act, I determined to consult my legal adviser; who without more ado, sent for a policeman. To him I pointed out my obnoxious fellow-traveler, who was still lounging about the nearest lamppost, and then, leaving him to take what steps he thought proper, Mr. Smith and I proceeded to business.

Scarcely had we entered upon it, however, when the policeman returned, and with elongated face and flurried manner requested to speak to Mr. Smith alone. To me he would not vouchsafe a word of explanation, and I had to wait in a small ante-room, in no very amiable frame of mind, while the two were closeted together.



The interview did not last long. There was an explosion of laughter in the next room, and then out came Mr. Smith, looking excessively amused.

“My dear sir,” he exclaimed, “whom do you think we have been setting this good fellow to watch?”

“How should I know?” I replied, with some acrimony. “Someone who’s no better than he should be, I’m quite sure!”

“As to that,” said the lawyer, “I’ve never yet come across the man who was. But setting jesting aside—it’s too ridiculous. Why, it’s one of his own feather—a detective, with whom he has often done business; and the best of it is, he—the detective, that is—has bid him keep a sharp look-out on you, and not let you get out some back-way unobserved. He says you are a scoundrel, and a very deep one; and that the account you have been giving of yourself is all humbug.”

“Preposterous!” I cried, indignantly. “You are making game of me, Mr. Smith.”

“No such thing, my dear sir. Calm yourself, and I will explain. In the first place, I must tell you that he takes you for one William Hooper.”

“Well, and if he does? What, in the name of goodness has that got to do with it?”

“Just this: that William Hooper, or rather a fellow assuming that name, is suspected, on good grounds, of having been concerned in a robbery of jewelry at Northsea last night; and of carrying off his spoils with him today. This detective was put on the scent, and flattered himself that he had secured both his person and his illgotten goods. It is not to be wondered at, when you took such good care of his luggage, that he should take you for the man himself.”

The policeman at this moment entered the room, followed by my late traveling-companion, who now, to my enlightened eyes, looked no longer disagreeably crafty, but simply clever and shrewd. It is not necessary to recapitulate all that passed, nor how Mr. Smith at last succeeded in convincing the detective that I, his client of twenty years’ standing, was a man of the most respectable antecedents, and in no possible way connected with the so-called William Hooper. Suffice it to say that he was persuaded of the mistake in time, and that then we all had a hearty laugh over what had occurred. The detective even went so far as to read out to us the instructions received that morning, on which he had been acting. These were a few hurried lines, directing him to be on the look-out for a man traveling up to town, under the name of William Hooper; to get a seat in the same carriage, and keep a strict watch on all his movements; also particularly to notice any communication that might pass between him and any fellow-traveler, as there was reason to believe he was accompanied by an accomplice in the shape of an elderly woman. Hence the interest he had taken in my conversation with the Quaker lady, of which he had in reality been taking notes in a peculiar shorthand of his own, fancying that more was meant than appeared on the surface; and the eagerness with which he intercepted the pamphlet, which must have edified him extremely. It was left to his own discretion either to arrest the parties on reaching Paddington, or to let them go their own ways, following them up closely; by which means it was hoped he might be able to find the clue to some other robberies that had lately

taken place in the same neighborhood. This latter plan he had resolved to adopt with regard to me, and had also sent a colleague to accompany the poor Quaker lady on her route, to ascertain where she went, and whether she were truly what she gave herself out to be. The detective had been staggered for a moment by my voluntarily resigning the luggage to the charge of the policeman, but had thought it explained by the fact that I saw myself suspected, and hoped in that manner to get off myself, even at the sacrifice of the stolen goods. But if I were not William Hooper, where, then, was the real man? That was the question now uppermost in all our minds. "There was one Northsea ticket," remarked the officer. "I thought I was sure of you then."

"That was yours, surely?" I exclaimed.

"No, indeed, sir; I got in at Buntford. Was in a hurry, and had not time to look about me till we got to Tamwell. It must have been one of the two others."

"Not the lady," I said. "I happened to notice her ticket as I handed it—it was taken at Whitworth, where [she] got in."

"Then there is only that fellow in the respirator. Ha!" he exclaimed, suddenly, "if I haven't been and let the right man slip through my fingers after all! What a fool I was not to suspect it!" And he quite ground his teeth with vexation.

"It can't have been he," I said, "he took no notice of the luggage whatever; and he cannot have failed to recognise it, sitting close beside it as he did."

"No doubt he knew me better than I knew him," replied the detective, "and thought it best to keep quiet. I might have guessed it, when he was so bent on getting out at Chelston; but, then, I was so certain it was you. And then to go and give him that telegraphic message to send off! He took precious care it should not go, no doubt. No wonder they weren't quite on the look-out for me when we got to Paddington. However, I'll have him yet. Good-morning to you, gentlemen; there's no time to lose."

At the next assizes, the great jewel-robbery at Northsea came on. I do not, in general, take much interest in such matters; but hearing that my friend Smith was to be present, and feeling some curiosity as to the end of this affair, in one phase of which I had been so strangely mixed up, I made my way to the assize town.

When this particular case was called, two prisoners, a man and a woman, were led into the dock. I looked at them eagerly, fully expecting to recognise in the former the elderly gentleman who had been one of my companions in the railway carriage on that memorable journey to London. But no; he was tall, and young, and sandyhaired. Surely I had seen him somewhere before, though! And his companion? Yes, now I recollected. They were the same two, with the blue spectacles and lap-dog respectively, whom I had observed getting into the train at Buntford, just before it started.

The red-haired detective was present, and gave important evidence. The case did not last long, it was so clear against the prisoners, and both were convicted.

“You succeeded in getting hold of the right man, at last,” I remarked to the detective, when, the business of the day ended, he, Smith and I met to dine, and talk matters over together at the hotel. “But you made a mistake a second time, I see. That old man in the respirator was not the fellow Hooper, after all.”

“Don’t be too sure of that, sir,” returned the detective. And then he proceeded to tell me the whole story, so far as he had been able to make it out. How the sandy-haired young man, having got into an empty carriage at Buntford, had contrived, by means of the appliances contained in his carpet-bag, to transform himself into an old man, so effectually disguised, as to be, he thought, quite safe from detection. On returning to his own carriage at Whitworth, he had, however, recognised the detective, and seeing that I had appropriated his luggage, judged it wisest to make no fuss, but quietly decamp at Chelston.

I have not had occasion, since my adventure, to make another journey by rail. When next I do so, I shall take good care not to enter a carriage that contains hat-box, rug or portmanteau *minus* the owner.

*Flag of Our Union*, December 28, 1867

*The Odd Fellow’s Companion*, August 1868