

The Mystery At No. 89 — Street, New York

“Kleptomania”— The Tendency To Superstition—An Old Knickerbocker Family—A Very “Proper” Old Gentleman, A Mr. Garretson— He Calls On Me At My Office, And Finds A Curious-Looking Room— His Story Of Wonders—“Everything” Stolen—Talk About Disembodied Spirits—The Mystery Deepens—Probable Conjecture Baffled— Visit To Mr. Garretson’s House— Mrs. Garretson, A Beautiful And Cultivated Old Lady—We Search The House—An Attic Full Of Old Souvenirs—We Linger Among Them—Mr. Garretson’s Daughter Is Convinced That Disembodied Spirits Are Their Tormentors— She Puts An Unanswerable Question—A Dangerous Dog And The Spirits—Tedious And Unavailing Watching For Several Days And Nights—The “Spirits” Again At Work—Re-Called—The Mystery Grows More Wonderful— The “Spirit” Discovered And The Mystery Unravelled—The Family Sent Away— The Attic Re-Visited With Mr. G. And Its Treasures Revealed—A Re-Discovery Of The “Spirit”—The Family Review Their Long-Lost Treasures Found —Reflections On The Causes Of The Mystery—A Problem For The Doctors.

by George McWatters

“KLEPTOMANIA,” the delicate term of modern coinage from the old Greek, which is used to signify a passion for thieving under peculiar circumstances, and is mostly used when the thief is a person of some importance and of moneyed means, so that the lust for gain is not supposed to be his prompter to the “offence against the statute in such cases made and provided,” indicates a moral “dereliction” which not only attacks the wakeful subject, but sometimes infuses itself into the dreams of sleepers. Many women in a state of pregnancy are said to be liable to this disease, so to term it, who, in any other state, would be horrified at the bare mention of the crime of theft. They exhibit great adroitness in their maneuvers when under the influence of the disease, and possess a boldness, too, of which, in their strictly “right minds,” they would be utterly incapable. Such establishments as Stewart’s great retail dry goods store expend large sums of money yearly in the employment of detectives to watch the customers, to see that they do not slyly purloin such goods as they may easily secrete in carpet-bags, in their pockets, under shawls, or under their dresses, and so on. Not a small number of these would-be thieves are kleptomaniacs, and mostly women suffering under diseases peculiar to the sex, or women in a state of pregnancy, whose blood is more or less driven in unusual quantities into the head, and stirs [their] passions and desires which they never so feel at other times. The philosophy of this thing would be a pleasant matter of study, and falls legitimately enough into the line of a detective’s life to investigate; but here is not the place for its discussion at any great length.

I may run some risk in the narration of this tale, of trespassing upon the feelings of some persons who might prefer that I say nothing about it; for the facts were known to a large circle of highly-respectable people, mostly, relatives of the “chief person of the drama,” who would, perhaps, prefer that the matter should rest in peace, and go out in oblivion by and by. But I will endeavor to be delicate and courteous enough, in the avoidance of names, and in my general descriptions, to offend no one of those relatives who may read this.

There are a great many people who have a natural tendency to superstitions of all kinds. They have excellent common sense, for example, in everything except in matters of a religious nature. A family of such people may be divided into religious partisans of the bitterest stamp; the one may be a Baptist, for instance, and believe that all the rest, who disagree with him, must be lost. Another member may be a modern "Adventist," deny the doctrine of the essential immortality of the soul, and think his brother, who does believe in it, guilty of a proud and sinful assumption and godless vanity in so doing. Another may become an English churchman, and gravitate from that character into the Roman Catholic church, and feel that all the rest, —the Baptist, the Adventist, etc., —must "perish eternally," unless they come into the fold of the Roman see. And still another may be a modern Spiritualist, and believe in the return of "departed souls" to earth, to commune directly, or through "mediums," with poor mortals here, etc. It seems to depend very much upon how the superstitious element in each member of such families is first or finally addressed, as to what each may become.

The reader will please conceive of an old, respectable family of Knickerbockers, into whose veins was infused a little Yankee blood, imported from near Boston, Mass., a family whose sires held in the past high rank and official position in the state and nation—a family not a little proud of its far-off Dutch and English stock—reared in wealth and luxury, well bred, of course, at home, and well educated, both the males and the females; with a large amount of landed estate in various parts of the country, and blessed with a plenty of houses and building lots in the cities of New York and Brooklyn; and, in fact, I have been told that their property could be pointed out all along the road, from Jersey City to Morristown, New Jersey. In fact it was by the possession of city lots, and the constant increase of value thereof, that the family acquired the larger portion of their estate. Add to this that the relatives of the family are mostly rich, and that such of them as are not rich, belong to that highly respectable, humdrum sort of people, who are here and there found in the midst of the stir and bustle of New York, who persist in representing old notions, old modes of doing business, and whose chief pride exercises and delights itself in talking over what their fathers did, who their grandfathers were, etc., or in preserving, perhaps, some legend, that when Washington had his residence near Bowling Green, their grand-uncle, or some other relative, was a welcome visitor there. It is necessary to bring to the mind's eye this class of people in order to comprehend the commotion which bestirred them at the time when I was called to "work up a case" in their midst.

One day, in the last "decade," I was waited on by a very proper old gentleman, neatly dressed, with long white locks smoothly combed, hanging over his shoulders. The old gentleman possessed one of those passionless faces, so difficult to read, unless you can get a chance to peer down the eyes. He wore his gloves just one size too large; a little too independent to conform to the fashion of tight gloves, and a little too aristocratic to go without any—(although I think a poor-fitting glove no ornament, to say the least), —and walked with the short, dainty, quick step of the men of note of the last century; he was tall, that is, about five feet and ten inches in height, rather slim, though he evidently had been a man of quite robust form.

But some name I must have—and what better can I substitute for the real one than Garretson? I might have chosen Paulding, or Van Wyck; but I may wish to use them yet in this. Well, such a looking man was Mr. Garretson, as he came one day into my office, bearing me a note of introduction from an old skipper who had his office in Pearl Street then, near Wall Street. The

note, it appeared, was written at Mr. Garretson's, on peculiar family note paper, and bore the Garretson coat of arms, and would, I presume, have been sealed with the Garretson "stamp," and a pile of sealing-wax as large as one of the lead drops on "bulls," which the Pope attaches to deeds of excommunication, or of convocation of councils, if it had not been a note of introduction, and therefore not proper to be sealed; for the Garretsons were never known to do anything which was not proper, not suitable to their rank, and so forth, to do. The old gentleman stared a little as he entered my office, evidently expecting to find its appointments a little more to his taste, instead of finding "everything" in the office, and nothing in order; and asking if such were my name, and being answered in the affirmative, he daintily handed me the note.

"Be seated, sir," said I, as I took it; and pointed him to a seat near the window, which looked out on the public street, and the only empty seat in my office save mine, the rest being filled with books, papers, coats, hats, shackling irons, some old disguises, masks, etc., which I had that day pulled out of a trunk to give them an airing, and had scattered about. As I read the note, I looked at the old gentleman, and found him looking out of the window, as if he were uneasy, and was questioning in his mind what manner of man was he whom he had come to visit and consult, — for so intimated the letter of my old friend, the skipper.

I finished the perusal of the note in a minute or so, and stopping up to the old man, offered him my hand, with the usual salutations, and drawing my chair near him, sat down.

"Well, Mr. Garretson, our friend has intimated your business with me. I am at your service."

There was quite a long pause, when the old man brought his cane down on the floor between his legs, rested his hands upon the head of it, bent over it a little, and began:—

"Really, Mr.— I was thinking why, on the whole, I had come here; for the more I think, the less do I believe that you can give us any assistance. We've tried everything ourselves."

"Yes, sir, perhaps I cannot assist you; but if you will tell me your story, I shall probably be able to tell you whether I can or not immediately."

"That's the trouble, sir; the question of probabilities in the matter," said he; "for my story is a peculiar one, and involves the disclosure of matters which I should not like to tell you, unless you can conscientiously say that you think you can solve one of the greatest mysteries in the world,"—and here he paused.

"Why, sir," said I, "everything is a mystery to those who do not understand it. I cannot assure you that I can be of any service to you; but it is my business to unravel these matters which are mysteries to most people, and however complicated your case may be, I dare say I can cite many instances of as difficult ones, which have been worked out."

"I presume so," said he. "You are right. 'What man has done man may do,' you know; but we've tried everything which seems possible to be done, to solve the trouble."

“Doubtless all you have thought of as being practicable has been tried, sir; but there is some solution of your trouble possible, sir, of course.”

“Yes, yes; that’s true—unless there is some superior power at work in the matter. Some of my family and friends think there is.”

“O, ho! Then to find out *that* for a certainty would be a solution worth having; but you can only discover that by first proving that your affair is not operated by any ordinary power. Do you mean that it’s thought to be the work of disembodied spirits?”

“Yes, and I confess I am half-inclined to think so myself; and I almost feel sorry that I have come to you so soon,” said he, in a voice and manner which revealed to me his superstitious proclivities quite pointedly.

“O, well, sir,” I replied, “it is not proper for me to press you to tell your story now. You must be your own judge of the propriety of doing so; but if you wish to, you can recite your case to me confidentially, and I will give you whatever construction of it may occur to me.”

“Well, if the matter can remain a secret with you, if you do not see a way to solve it, I will tell you, and I do presume that you may be able to cast some light upon it. The case is this. I live at No.— 89 Street, as you already know from Mr.—’s note.”

“Yes, sir; I call the house to mind; have often noticed it as I have passed along that street.”

“Well, sir, now for some eight months I’ve been able to keep nothing in our house of a small kind, and valuable nature, such as spoons, napkin rings, all sorts of silver ware, jewelry, watches, ladies’ dresses, and my own clothing, etc., in fact, anything; it is all mysteriously carried off. I say mysteriously, for we have kept watch, night after night, and things would disappear right before our eyes, as it were.”

“Well,” said I, after a pause of some length, in which the old man seemed to be pondering whether he would go on with his story or not, looking bewildered, as if there was something he wished to tell me about, but did not quite dare to, or was ashamed to tell. “Well, tell me the whole story. How many persons are there in your family?”

“My wife and myself, three unmarried daughters; two married ones spend much time there too; and two of my sons, unmarried. They are in business; but I like to have my family about me—“

“Are these all?”

“Yes, except the servants. I have four maid-servants in the house, besides my coachman and butler.”

“Do you suspect none of these servants?”

“No; I’ve tested them in every way. They have all, with the exception of one girl, been with me for from ten to twenty-five years. I called the women maid-servants; two of them are widows, one has been a widow for twenty years, and has lived with us for all that time, and the butler has been with us longer. I would trust any of them as soon as I would my own children.”

“Of course, then, you suspect no one in your house?”

“No, no; there’s nobody there to do these things. We’ve all watched and watched, I tell you, and the servants are as much interested as we to know who is the guilty actor, for they have lost many things as well as the rest of us.”

“You speak of one girl who has not been there so long as the rest. How long has she been with you?”

“About three years.”

“Has she a lover who visits the house?”

“O, yes; and he’s been coming there for two years.”

“Why don’t he marry her and take her away?”

“My wife wouldn’t part with her—will keep her as long as she lives, if she can. She thinks she’s the best servant she ever saw. We should suspect her least of all. She has lost nearly every keepsake her lover has given her, and some very valuable things which her mother gave her on leaving Ireland, and the poor girl has nearly cried her eyes out over her loss.”

“Well, her lover, what sort of a man is he?”

“A hard working mechanic; works at the Novelty Works, and bears an excellent name.”

“Is he Irish, too? I suppose he is.”

“No; he is an Englishman—a Yorkshire man, I think.”

“Is he Protestant or Catholic?”

“Protestant to be sure. She’s Catholic, though.”

“Have you ever talked with him about your losses?”

“Yes; and he and Mary, the girl, have watched several times, sitting up to keep my wife company, who was watching too; sitting up half the night, and things would disappear then.”

“So you have no reason for suspecting him. Well, the case *does* look a little strange, I confess,” said I; “but I would like to have you go into detail all about your promises; where the things

taken were, who were in your house at the time, the kind of locks you have on your doors; what searches you have made, at what hours, or between what hours, the things have been taken; for how long, in consecutive days or weeks, things have been stolen; if there's been any cessation of these pilferings for any length of time since they began; if you have ever discovered any traces of anybody's having gotten into the house at this or that window; what part of the house has been rifled the most,"—and every other query I could then think of, I added.

This drew from the old gentleman a minute story of the whole affair. I found the locks were the best; that he had a ferocious watch-dog loose every night in the lower and middle part of the house, but excluded from the chambers, on the servants' account, who were afraid of him; that all parts of the house were rifled alike, and it seemed from what he said that the thefts were accomplished from about the time of the family's retiring until morning, for they had watched sometimes till near morning, and then on rising would find something gone, mostly things of value, too; but sometimes trivial things, such as the grand-children's tops, etc., when they happened to be visiting there. The relatives of the family had been called in to watch too; but things went when they were there the same, and when the watch was most complete as to the number of watchers, then it was that the most valuable things were missed, and injury (evidently out of pure malevolence) done to valuable furniture; and finally Mr. Garretson told me that there had been two obvious attempts to fire the house, —and this he uttered with tremulous emotions.

From all I could gather from him I could not make up my mind to any conclusions upon which it could rest, and I told him I must visit the premises, and make examinations for myself. But I could not go till the next day or night, for that night I had engaged to meet some parties in counsel upon an important matter; "but which," said I, to him, "was more mysterious, a week ago, than anything you have told me, and which has been worked out. Now we are to consult as to how best to get the guilty parties into our hands, for we know who they are." This seemed to encourage Mr. Garretson for a little, and we parted, I to call at his house some time next day, at my convenience.

I went as appointed, and was presented by Mr. Garretson to his wife, a fair-looking old lady, of the blonde school. Indeed, she was a motherly, sweet woman to look upon, and had evidently drunken at the "fountain of youth" somewhere; for although she was only five years younger than Mr. Garretson, as I learned, she looked thirty years his junior. Her face was a blending of the Greek and modern German in style, nose aquiline, and head broad, and not lacking in height; a pleasingly-shaped head to look upon; and there was all the mercy, tenderness, and kindness in her eye and voice which one could desire to find in a woman.

There was a sweet, unostentatious dignity, too, about her which compelled respect. She gave me a long account of the household's troubles, of her own watchings night after night, of the hypotheses she had had about the matter, and how one by one they had been exploded; and she and Mr. Garretson took me all over the house, even up into the attic, among piles of old "lumber," such as boxes, old trunks, old furniture, that had been set aside to make room for new, piled up with hosts of things which almost any other family would have sent off to the auction shops, or sold to second-hand furniture men. But she explained that some of these things had belonged to her grandfather, and other deceased relatives, and that a large old Dutch wooden chest, with great iron clasps all over it, was brought over by Mr. Garretson's ancestors from

Europe. These she couldn't bear to sell, she said; "and often" said she, "they afford me great pleasure, for when Mr. Garretson and the girls are gone from home, I sit up here in this old chair" (and she pointed to a large chair, the posts of which were large enough each to make a modern chair out of), "and muse, read, and think over the past, and dwell upon heavenly things to come."

In her talk, Mrs. Garretson became quite animated, and we waited up there, listening to her stories about the old furniture and her ancestors, quite a long while. I noticed that with the excitement of the hour her face had become quite rosy, and that there was a peculiar spot on each cheek, not unlike the hectic flush upon the cheeks of the consumptive. But she was, apparently, in the full vigor of health; a tall, but solidly-made woman, and evidently had no trouble in her lungs. But the spots gave her face a peculiar expression, and withal seemed, somehow, to give her eyes the look of subtle intelligence, which I had not observed before. I found that although Mr. Garretson was a sensible old man, well educated, and, withal, courtly, yet Mrs. G. was the chief spirit of the house, and so I consulted her further when we came from the attic. We visited each chamber, and looked into each closet, of course; and the windows of the house in front and rear were all examined, and I satisfied myself too that there was no easy approach, and no way of getting in without great risk to life or limb from the other adjoining houses; and I examined the basement as thoroughly, talked with the servants, and finally with the daughters, two of whom were then at home, and who came in from making morning calls. One of these daughters had settled down upon the conviction that the thefts were the work of disembodied spirits; but to my query if she meant by these words "departed *friends*" she smiled, and said, "Not exactly;" and went on to tell me her religious notions about "evil spirits," as well as good ones, etc. The father fell in with her views considerably; but the clear-headed old lady, the mother, in a kind way, combated them with great force. But there was no answering the daughter when she retorted, —

"Well, perhaps it is not the work of spirits; but will you tell me whose work it is—who does it?"

Of course the family could have nothing to reply. They had exhausted their powers to solve the mystery, and I confess I began to think a particle less lightly of ghosts, hobgoblins, and "spirits of departed men," than ever before. That dog, too, which was chained up below, and was let loose of nights, was a savage-looking fellow, and it seemed to me that he would catch and tear to pieces anything but a spirit that might be prowling about the house.

I was at my wits' ends to conceive a theory which should throw light upon the subject, or even to make anything at all like a reasonable conjecture. But I could not help feeling that perhaps out of the daughter's suggestion of "spiritual" interference might be wrought something in the way of a solution of the vexatious mystery; and so I brought up the topic in that phase again, and we all entered into a general discussion.

It appeared that things had more frequently been missed when all the outer doors and all the windows of the house had been closed and locked, than at other times, when some of the upper windows especially had been opened; more in the winter than in the summer time. The articles taken, then, could hardly have been borne by "spirits" even, through the solid doors, or the glass of the windows; and so I inquired if it was sure that every trunk and every hiding-place in the house had been searched, and was assured by all, father, mother, and daughters that such search

had been frequently made by them; and they explained how they had gone to the bottom of trunks and boxes, and had “shaken out sheets,” etc., for in the early period of these thefts, it had been conjectured that the things missed had simply been mislaid. The daughter gave me her reasons extendedly for supposing the thefts the work of spirits, and I had to confess that some of her reasoning seemed good, “provided always,” as a lawyer would say, that there are any such existences as “spirits” at all. But the family believed in “spirits;” whether they could or did communicate with “things on earth,” or not, was the whole question with them; but the mother’s judgment seemed to settle the question for the father and the other daughter, which was, that these thefts were not committed by spirits; and to this point we got during my tarry there that day, and it was agreed that I should return in the evening and pass the night in the house.

I left Mr. Garretson’s, and being a little weary, when I returned home threw myself on my bed, and managed to secure about four hours’ sleep, which I needed in view of my prospective watching that night, and I arrived at Mr. G.’s about half past ten o’clock. A room had been prepared for me on the first flight, above the parlor, its door opening into the broad hall, which room I took after a half hour’s conversation with the family. It appeared that things were missed equally on nights when the gas was burning dimly about the house, as when it was shut off; and I deemed it best to have a slight light burning in the halls, parlors, and so forth, which was permitted. Bidding the family good night (having concluded to not let the dog loose for fear, in my secret mind, that he might attack me if loose, and I should be about the house ; but which thought I did not then reveal, saying only that he might make a noise, and I could perhaps listen better if I heard steps). I betook myself to my room, and drawing a lounge near to the door, which was open a few inches, I stretched myself upon it, and began to muse upon the probabilities in the case. There I lay. The clock struck twelve—again it struck one—and I had no occasion to move from my position, and began to conceive that possibly the “spirits” wouldn’t work with me in the house. A half hour more went on, when suddenly I discovered the light in the hall go out. Quickly leaving the lounge, I rushed into the hall, only to discover that it was total darkness all over the house, save in my room. When Mrs. Garretson, hearing me, stepped to her door, and said, —

“Is that you, Mr.—?”

“Yes, madam. I saw the light go out, and I came to see what it means.”

“O,” said she, “I put out the light, for somehow, I found it oppressive—the sense of it—and could not sleep, and I guess we shall not be disturbed to-night.”

A few more words were exchanged between us, when I retired to my room, and there watched the whole night out, waiting for some sign of noise in the house. But I reflected that Mrs. G. had been in different parts of the house to put out the lights, and I had not heard her move. Had she not put out the lights I should not have known that she had stirred. How, then, could I hear spirits, or even mortals, so far as their footfalls were concerned? Mr. G. got up early that morning, came to my room, and begged me to go to bed and sleep, as he should be up and about the rest of the morning, as well as the servants, who would soon be up. They would have a late breakfast, or I could lie till dinner time, if I liked, and get a good rest. He closed the door as he

went out, and I lay till called for dinner. At breakfast time Mr. G. had made his way to my room, and finding me “snoring soundly,” as he said, let me sleep on.

At dinner, it was disclosed that some three or four things had been missed that night; among them a very valuable gold thimble, which the daughters knew was left in a given place, and they were the last who retired; and a peculiar, elegant, silver-mounted sea-shell, which had been brought from the Mediterranean, and on which had been cut some sea-songs in the modern Greek language. I had noticed this beautiful shell myself. Where were these gone, and who had taken them? Mrs. Garretson was sure that she was awake a good part of the night, and could have heard anybody moving about the house, for with a screen at their door, her husband and herself usually left their bedroom door open. We canvassed the matter over and over, and arrived at no conclusion. Finally, it was determined that I should stay the coming night. And I left, and returned in due time. This night was one of severe watching, to no purpose. Nothing was found to be gone, and I watched still the third night, to no purpose. No noise was there, and nothing taken; and I gave up the matter for a while, subject to be called in again if Mr. Garretson thought best.

Several days, and finally three weeks passed, before I was again called. Meanwhile this case was constantly on my mind, no matter how busily I was employed with other matters, some of which were almost as difficult of solution as this. I could not yet come to any conclusion; but I had resolved, that if I should be called in again, what course to pursue. At the end of three weeks Mr. G. called on me, and said that the “spirits” were again at work; had visited the house the night before, and carried off several things, this time having evidently tried to carry away some chairs, for they found two of the parlor chairs in the basement hall, standing against the door. This was rather too much for my credulity, that “spirits” should do these things, and I went that night to Mr. G.’s with the determined purpose of meeting the “spirits” in the operation of carrying off chairs, etc., for I concluded I could see the furniture if the spirits were indeed invisible. The room I had before was given me, and the household retired, —I giving them no clew to the course I intended to pursue. The dog was chained as before, and I had taken quiet notice of the location of everything in the parlors, and had visited the kitchen (from which things were frequently taken, even loaves of bread, for which I suspected the “spirits” had no use), and taken notes there. I had visited the dog in company with Mrs. G., and gotten into his good graces as well as I could, and made him familiar with my voice.

The family retired, and so did I, but not to sleep. In a half hour after going to my room, there being no light in the house this night, I took a dark lantern I had secretly brought with me, and taking off my boots, tripped down into the parlors, out of one of which, in the somewhat old-fashioned house, opened a closet with shelves in it, at the top, but with room enough for me to sit comfortably in it upon an ottoman, which I placed there, and with the door slightly ajar, there I sat. Of course I was well armed for any emergency, and my purpose was to shoot anything like a “spirit” I might find prowling about, provided I could get “sight” of the wretch. There I remained for two hours and over, when, about half after one o’clock in the morning I heard something like a person’s stumbling against a chair. I listened intently, and heard something moving very stealthily. There was no light in the room, and so cocking my trusty pistol, and holding it in my right hand, I with the other brought out from its concealment my dark lantern, and threw its full blaze into the room, and there, to my astonishment, I found a person in a night-gown, with a sort

of tunic over it. The size indicated Mrs. G., and I was just about to apologize to her, when she turned about, and I saw that her eyes were closed. There was a very peculiar and cunning look in her face, and she concealed in her tunic a pair of opera glasses, and other small things, which she took from the *étagères* in the corner of the room. It flashed upon my mind at once, of course, that Mrs. G. was the troublesome “spirit” I was seeking, and I immediately turned the veil upon my lamp, fearing that the light might disturb her operations, and awaken her; for I suspected at once that she was in a state of partial sleep, and was, in short, a somnambulist; and when in the condition of one, affected with the desire to conceal things; romancing, in short, in her dreams. I resolved to follow her, to see what disposition she would make of her prizes; and so, when I concluded she had gotten to the other side of the room, I brought out my lantern again, and discovered her tripping lightly to the hall stairs, and I slowly and softly followed. Up stairs she went, and up another flight, and finally ascended the attic stairs. I followed, as near as I could, without disturbing her, and with my light got the opportunity of seeing her open the big Dutch chest, of which I have spoken before. She unlocked it, and I waited no longer, but went down to my room, and stood within the door of it waiting for her to return. She came down after some ten minutes had passed, as stealthily and softly as she had gone up, and there was playing upon her face, which my light partly turned on revealed, that same covert smile. She passed on to her bedroom door which was open, and must have glided around the screen, which stood within the doorway, and lay down.

I withdrew to my room, locked the door, and went to bed, and slept more soundly than I had done for three nights before, —the solace which comes to mental anxiety is so much more soothing than the balm which heals only physical pains. Breakfast was called at a late hour next morning, and I felt perfectly refreshed from my sleep, and was in one of my jolliest moods; and when I announced at table that I had, I thought (as I cautiously said), fully solved the mystery, —had seen the “spirits,” and knew all about the matter, —there was no little astonishment expressed all around the board. But I got the family in a joking mood, and held them in suspense—in half doubts. Mrs. G. was the liveliest of all, and said they could never be grateful enough to me, never could pay me enough for what I had done, if I had really scented out the culprits. They asked me all sorts of questions; but I was not ready to explain, for I was in doubt what was the best course, —whether I should tell the mother alone, or the father, or both, or all.

At last I decided upon a course, which was, to get the daughters and mother away from the house on some errand; to tell the father, and with him make search of the chest, and every other conceivable hiding-place in the house, which thing, —the sending off of the mother and daughters, —was readily accomplished after I had slyly taken the father to my room, when the ladies were occupied with their cares and pleasures, and told him that I wished he would ask no questions why, but that I desired he would send out his family.

Fortunately they were projecting a visit that day to some friends in a distant part of the city, and the old gentleman encouraged it; and finally ordered out his carriage, and sent them off with the driver, in great glee, in their expectancy of “the great revelation when we get home,” as the spiritualistic daughter expressed it.

They had not gotten well away before I asked the father to hunt up whatever keys he could find in the house; and he was not long in finding two or three bunches, and several other single ones

besides, and, without explaining anything, I told him to follow me, and proceeded at once to the attic. A half dozen trials of the keys resulted in the chest's yielding up its deposits. There we found all sorts of things secreted away in old boxes placed within the chest, and all covered with a blanket, and over all this small piles of time-old newspapers, brown and faded. The chest was very capacious, and contained a great deal of the silver ware that had been taken, valuable little articles of *virtu*; a large quantity of jewelry, and all sorts of small things which are ordinarily to be found in the houses of wealthy people. These were all nicely laid away. Considerable order was observed in their arrangement, which accounted for the hours of solitary comfort which Mrs. G. told me, on the first visit to the attic, that she spent there among the old mementos of the past. But when we had gotten everything out of the chest, Mr. G. called to mind many things which had been missed, which were not found there; so we made the most scrupulous search into old trunks, and other things in the attic, without much avail, finding a few things, however. At last, in removing some old boxes which stood atop of each other, and against the chief chimney running through the attic, we came across a fireplace, which Mr. G. said he had forgotten all about. Long years before the house had been extended into the rear yard (for it was a corner house), by a small "L," in which the servants were provided with rooms. Prior to that some of them had occupied a room done off in the attic, the board partitions of which had been removed. It was then this fireplace was in use. A sheet-iron "fire-board" closed it up, and was held in place by a button. As I took hold of the button, and found it moved easily, I said to Mr. G., "We shall find treasures here;" and we did. It was quite full of household things; and here we found some of the largest pieces of silver ware that had been lost. A full tea-service, etc., together with a large roll of bank bills, and five bills of old "Continental scrip," the loss of which Mr. G. had mourned as much as that of almost all the rest, for they were pieces which Alexander Hamilton had given to Mr. G.'s father, upon a certain occasion notable in the history of the latter, and bore General Hamilton's initials in his own hand.

We continued our search, and found other things, which it is needless to specify. Then Mr. G. and I held a "council of war" as to what was to be next done. We concluded that the servants must not be allowed to know anything about the matter, and we had not concluded whether the daughters were to be let into the secret or not. This was after I had told Mr. G. of my solution of the matter, which I had kept secret from him until we came to consider what was to be done with the things. At first we thought we would at once carry them all to his bedroom, and place them in a large closet there. But finally Mr. G. thought it would be more satisfying to see his wife operate, himself; and we put back the things as well as we could, and went down. It was arranged that I should come back that night to watch further, and that Mr. G. should tell the family that I wished to make more investigations, and that I was not quite satisfied after all; which he did. That night I returned, kept excellent watch, and Mrs. G., as fate would have it, left her room, and went prowling about as before. At the proper time I entered Mr. G.'s room, and awakened him and, drawing on his pantaloons, and wrapping himself in a cloak, he followed me, and watched his wife's maneuvers to his satisfaction, and retired, before she had concluded her work.

The next day, at breakfast, the family rallied me about the things missed the night before, Mr. G. joining in the badgering, jokingly. I played the part of a defeated man, half covered with shame; and before noon Mr. G. had the family out to ride again. We hastily gathered up all the lost and found treasures, and placed them in a large closet in Mr. G.'s bedroom; he having made up his mind to give his wife, by herself, a great surprise, and then tell her what he had seen, and consult

her feelings as to whether the children were to ever know how the things were gotten back, or not.

He was anxious to have me wait till she came; and we managed, without exciting the suspicion of the girls, to get together in the bedroom, where Mr. G. opened the door of the closet, first cautioning Mrs. G. to make no loud exclamation, and there revealed the lost treasures.

“See what the ‘spirits’ have brought back to us?” said he. “Mr.— is the best ‘medium for business’ in the city. We must give him a certificate;” and the old man “rattled away” with his jokes, while Mrs. G. looked on with astonishment and delight.

“You must tell me all about it,” said she. “How *did* you find these things? Who brought them? Who is the thief? How did he get in the house? Does he come down chimney?” and a host of other questions.

“I’ll tell you all about it to-night,” said Mr. G. “It is a long story; but first the girls must be called to see the lost treasures now restored.” And the daughters were called up. To their queries, uttered amidst the profoundest astonishment, as to how, and when, etc., the treasures were brought back, and who was the thief, and if it was some Catholic, who had disgorged the stolen goods through the confessional, Mr. G. only answered, slyly winking at the spiritualistic daughter, “It was through the means of a first-rate ‘medium’ that the things were restored.”

“There, there,” said the daughter, too serious to stand her father’s irony, “I could have told you so. What do you think now of spiritualism, father?”

“O, I don’t know,” said he in reply. “There *are* a great many strange things in the world, that’s a fact.” But he would not promise to ever tell them how the things got back, and the ladies went to assorting them, and commenting on each article. It was a novel sight to see the eagerness with which they grasped at this or that article as it turned up, —the long-lost treasures found.

I left the house duty that day, and I understood from Mr. G., who called on me three or four days after, that when he told his wife that night what he had seen, and how she looked, and so forth, when moving about so slyly, that she had a “great crying spell “ over it, and did not wish the daughters to be informed of the secret state of things; and that for fear the somnambulistic state should come upon her again, she tied her arm or foot to the bedstead, in order to be awakened if she should attempt to get out of bed. But she had had no more attacks of the disease.

“Perhaps her severe crying broke it,” said he.

I made many inquiries of Mr. G. about his wife’s habits in life, her general health, her peculiar troubles, if she had any, by way of resolving this mystery of the kleptomania connected with the somnambulism; and from all I could learn, I believe that she was one of the most conscientious and best of mortals in her normal state, and I was led to believe that the kleptomania, if not the somnambulism, was caused by diseases, though slight ones, peculiar to the female sex; but why these came on so late in life, (for Mrs. Garretson was sixty-three years old,) I cannot conceive, but leave that for the doctors to decide.

McWatters, George. *Knots Untied: Or, Ways and By-Ways in the Hidden Life of American Detectives*. Hartford: Burr, 1871. (848 pages)