

Learning the Secret of Picking Pockets

The *Detroit Post* tells a good story as follows:

A short time since, while our reporter was visiting a town in the interior, he made the acquaintance of a well-to-do farmer, who, after making some inquiries in regard to the growth and prosperity of Detroit, inquired if there were any pickpockets in the city. The reply was of course in the affirmative. The farmer laughed quietly a moment, and then said: I don't often tell my first experience in seeing the lions of your city, but I am not as sensitive over it now as I used to be, and I'll tell you about it. Some years before my father died, he went to New York city on business, and while there he bought himself a gold watch. He wore it as long as he lived, and when he died, a few years ago, he gave it to me. Of course I was strongly attached to the watch, and not a little proud of it, especially when I put it in my pocket upon the occasion of my first visit to Detroit. I haven't any doubt that I looked at it a hundred times a day and you will not be at all surprised when I tell you that I had not been in the city two hours before it was missing, chain and all.

I informed the clerk of the hotel where I was stopping of my loss, and as I did not remember of being jostled by any one and could give no clue to the thief, he said there was no use in calling in an officer. He advised me to offer a large reward for the return of the watch and add that no questions would be asked. I put such an advertisement in the morning papers and during the afternoon received a note informing me that if I would be at the corner of B— and L— streets that evening at seven o'clock with the reward (\$100), my watch would be returned to me. The note also stated that I must come alone, and if during the day I made any attempt to inform an officer, the writer would not meet me. That I would be watched all the time and the only way that I could recover my watch was by doing precisely as I advertised.

At seven o'clock I was at the spot indicated, and after waiting a few moments a well-dressed man in passing me asked me the time of day. I replied that it was seven o'clock. At that he asked me to walk along with him a short distance, and as we walked he inquired if I had brought the \$100. I replied in the affirmative, when he handed me my watch, received the money, and was about to leave me, when I stopped him, and told him I would give him \$10 more to tell me how he managed to pick my pocket.

“Oh!” said he, placing his finger on his lip, “you promised to ask no questions, but I would show you if it wasn't for that man standing over there on the corner. He is a detective officer and knows me,” and the man pointed across the street.

I looked in the direction he had indicated, but could see no one that looked like an officer, though there were plenty of people standing in that locality. “That tall fellow with the stove-pipe hat is the one I mean; but I must be off. Good bye.”

The man hurried off and I saw him disappear round a corner; then I again tried to see the tall fellow with the stove-pipe hat, but if he had been there he had disappeared, and I started for the hotel, happy in again possessing my father's last present to me. At this thought I put my hand upon my vest pocket, where I had placed the watch a moment before, and the next instant you

could have knocked me down with a straw, for the pocket was empty. The thief had indeed complied with my request, and shown me “how it was done.” I didn’t advertise for it again, and I came home without telling the hotel clerk about that evening’s experience.

South Side Signal [NY], September 10, 1870