*The Detective*

About two years ago Mr. Azariah Boody of Newark, N.J., an enormously rich retired plumber, on returning from Rome where he had been to select a really good cash article of title for himself, was astonished to find the front door of his splendid residence standing open, although he had closed it securely upon his departure. Proceeding further, he at once perceived by the empty wine bottles and costly viands scattered over the magnificent satin furniture, that the house had been burglarized in his absence. (It seems strange that burglars should always scatter costly viands about when they rob a place, but according to the papers, they will do it.) A ponderous hair trunk, in which he kept his valuables, had been opened, and a set of shirt studs and a million dollar package of four percents removed. It was impossible to tell when the robbery had occurred, but the excited millionaire at once started for the office of the “Prefect of Police,” as they say in all the French plays.

On the steps of the office he encountered a keen-looking man, with the eagle nose and hawk eye peculiar to detectives, who inquired if he wished to see the chief.

“Immediately!” said the millionaire.

“He is in New York,” replied the man on the steps; “but if it is anything of importance I will attend to it in his place.”

“I have been robbed,” said the victim.

“I knew it,” replied the police *attaché*, with the true promptness of the profession. “Let us at once to the spot.”

The plumber led the way to the house.

“I trust nothing has been moved since the crime was discovered,” said the detective, as they entered the house.

“Absolutely nothing,” said the old gentleman, who had read Gaboriau’s “M. Lecocq” four times.

“Because,” said the detective, “much depends upon careful study of the surroundings,” and he again began his investigations by measuring a square inch of the dust-covered lid of the trunk.

He then produced a small pair of scales, and scraping off the inch of dust referred to, carefully weighed the same.

“Let me see,” he muttered, making a calculation; “dust settles at the rate of 948-1000ths of an inch per hour. It is therefore certain that the burglary was committed last Thursday, at quarter past 1 a.m.”

“Dear me,” said the old gentleman; “how wonderful.”

The detective now approached the remains of the robbers’ repast. “There were three robbers,” he said.

“Yes; but here are four glasses used,” exclaimed the old gentleman.

“The fourth was merely used to pour the corky top from the bottles,” explained the detective, who gave his name as Kickshaw. “One of them was a powerful man of advanced age. See, this bitter cracker wears the marks of six decayed teeth. The second one was a dandy with a long moustache, for you can perceive here he has repeatedly wiped it on this napkin. The third burglar was unmistakably a woman.”

“A woman?” gasped the houseowner.

“Precisely. You see she has eaten noting save pickles, and the icing from this cake. In her nervousness she has upset the salt and spilled her wine on the cloth. It was her first affair of the kind.”

“Yes, I see,” said old Boody, much interested.

“And a pretty woman as well,” went on the detective. “You noticed she has brushed the dust from every mirror in the room to look at herself. Next we find that they divided the plunder on the spot. Look! Were not these broken tapes the ones with which your bond-package was tied?”

“They are.”

“During the division they quarreled.”

“But how do you know that?” said Boody.

“By the overturned chair. Besides, the piano is open and marks of fingers are on the bass keys. Women always sit down and thump on that end of the piano when angry.”

“Even when burgling?” said the old party.

“At all times,” replied Kickshaw. “It makes no difference whatever. The woman has red hair.”

“Had. Eh?”

“Yes — she threw that book in the corner at the old man and made his nose bleed. See this towel stained with blood? No one but a red-haired woman would have done that.”

“How do you know it was the old man’s nose?”

“Because,” replied the detective, using a microscope, “the blood globules are those of an elderly person.”

“I suppose they did not remain hereabouts long?” queried the plumber.

“No; they left the next morning for Chicago.”

“Great Heavens, what do you mean?” said the old party. “Are you a magician?”

“It is very simple,” replied the human “sleuthhound.” “On this crumpled scrap of paper you will see some figures. Of course the thieves could not realize on the bonds at once. They, therefore, made a computation to discover how far their immediate cash would take them. Chicago was the result, as the total arrived at is the fare to that city multiplied by three.”

“I see — I see,” said the plumber.

“I start for Chicago on the next train,” continued the thief taker. “Let me see — perhaps you had better let me have five hundred dollars for expenses.”

The other instantly passed over the amount.

“Remember,” said the detective as he departed, “not a word of what we have discovered. Keep perfectly quiet until you hear from me.”

And to this day the defrauded plumber is sitting on his front steps waiting for news from the detective, who, as the high foreheaded reader has already guessed, was the robber himself.

This beautiful and touching episode is to be dramatized for the Adelphi this evening, after office hours.

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