A Bit of Detective Business

IT was at a time when I was engaged as a local reporter upon a daily newspaper in a Western city that an event occurred which was destined to have a remarkable influence upon my future welfare.

In as few words as possible, I will endeavor to give the reader an account of this event, and of the consequences which grew out of it, premising that, although I flatter myself that I can do up a horrible murder, or terrible conflagration, or rightful accident, in a tolerably artistic manner, story writing is entirely out of my line. As, however, in this narrative there is no occasion for flights of fancy, it being my intention simply to tell a plain, unvarnished tale, I am encouraged to believe that my lack of imaginative power will not interfere with the interest of my sketch. It is an old saying that truth is stranger than fiction, and the circumstances which I am about to relate will prove a practical exemplification of the fact.

Among the most exclusive families in the city to which I have referred was that of Mrs. Fromby, the widow of an individual who had commenced life as the proprietor of a low grog-shop, but who, by operations in real estate and other fortunate speculations, had succeeded in becoming very wealthy. He was accused of being engaged in numerous transactions of a very doubtful character during his lifetime, but as he died possessed of nearly a million dollars, a magnificent monument, upon which was inscribed a glowing tribute to his virtues as a Christian, a philanthropist, a husband, and a father, was erected over his remains, and his family was received with open arms, by the most aristocratic circles of society. The family consisted of Mrs. Fromby, a stern, haughty woman, who had married her late spouse after his pecuniary successes had commenced, and who was decidedly his superior in education and social position; her son Dick, a fast youth of nineteen, and two daughters scarcely in their teens. A governess, Miss Fanny Armingdon, three female servants, and a man servant, completed the household. Mr. Fromby, in making his will, of which his widow was appointed sole executrix, had provided that Dick should not come into possession of his share of the paternal estate until he should be twenty-five years of age, and, consequently, until that time should arrive the young gentleman was dependent entirely upon his mother's bounty for the means of gratifying his tastes, which were not of the most economical description.

Miss Armingdon, the governess, was the daughter of an English dissenting clergyman, who had died soon after arriving in this country, leaving his daughter without means and without a relative on this side of the Atlantic. Under these circumstances, she had advertised for a situation as teacher or governess, and as she was an exceedingly accomplished young lady, she had been engaged, at a disgracefully meagre compensation, to supervise the education of Mrs. Fromby's two daughters.

These details, which I gathered at different times from various sources, I give here, that the reader may the better comprehend the incidents that follow.

Upon making my usual morning visit in search of items to the police court, one day in May, 185—, I was accosted by Officer Gifford, a special officer attached to the office of the chief of police, who informed me that he had a very interesting case coming up for examination that

morning, the case of a Miss Armingdon, a governess, who had robbed her employer, Mrs. Fromby, of Congress street, of the sum of two thousand dollars in bank notes.

"It is as clear a case as I ever knew," added Gifford. "We found five hundred dollars of the money in her trunk. But, by Jivers, for the first time in my life, I hated to make the arrest, for the girl is as pretty and innocent-looking a creature as you ever laid your eyes on."

Of course an event like this was a perfect boon to a reporter, and I took my seat at the table provided for the use of the press-gang, with my curiosity and interest stimulated to an unusual degree.

Mrs. Fromby, her son, and a couple of the female servants, were in attendance as witnesses, while Miss Armingdon, closely vailed, sat on a chair which had been provided for her, apart from the prisoners of a lower grade.

Several cases of drunkenness, assault, petty larceny, &c., were soon disposed of by the court, and then Miss Armingdon was placed at the prisoner's bar, directly confronting the witness stand.

As she took the position assigned her, and threw back the vail which covered her face, it seemed to me that I had never gazed upon a more beautiful being. She was above the medium height, possessed a form of exquisite symmetry, regular features, a profusion of brown hair most tastefully arranged, and a pair of dark gray eyes that, as she timidly cast a glance of piteous entreaty around the court-room, in an instant converted a majority of those present into her devoted partisans. The general expression of her countenance was one of ineffable sweetness and amiability; and for one, no sooner had I fairly seen her than I formed the opinion that no matter how strong the evidence might be against her, she was, by nature, utterly incapable of committing the crime which had been imputed to her. Her face was as white as the purest marble, except when, occasionally, during the examination which ensued, a momentary excitement would cause her cheeks to suffuse with a rosy tint which no painter's art could ever hope to imitate, at which times her wonderful beauty was heightened to a degree utterly beyond my power to describe.

Her bearing was that of a modest, self-possessed, well-bred lady. Of course she betrayed deep agitation, but with it was an air of self-respect and conscious innocence that made a powerful impression upon all disinterested spectators. The complaint was read and the examination proceeded, a lawyer by the name of Quidgeby appearing as Miss Armingdon's counsel—a very unfortunate selection, as he was a low, tricky pettifogger, in bad repute among the respectable portion of the legal fraternity.

Mrs. Fromby was the first witness called. She testified that on Tuesday morning (it was now Thursday), a package of money was brought to her house by the express agent, and delivered to her, containing the sum of two thousand dollars in bank notes. She counted the money and receipted for it, in the presence of the express agent, her son, her two daughters and Miss Armingdon, who were all in the room at the time. After the express agent had left, she locked up the money in a private drawer in a secretary which was in the same room, all the above parties being present during the whole time. No other person had entered the room from the time the

money was received until it was thus disposed of. The money consisted of three notes of five hundred dollars each, on the Chilicothe Branch of the State Bank of Ohio, and five hundred dollars in smaller bills of various denominations issued by different banks in Ohio and Indiana.

During the same forenoon, while no one was present, she had taken out the money and made a memorandum of the numbers of the three five hundred dollar notes, after which she had replaced them in the same drawer. She would not be able to identify any of the money with the exception of the large bills, the numbers of which she had taken.

On Thursday morning (the day of the examination), she had opened the drawer in which she had placed the money, and found there the express envelope in which it had been contained, but the money had been abstracted. She had immediately gone to the police office, and Officer Gifford returned with her to investigate the matter. Officer Gifford, in searching Miss Armingdon's trunk, had found in it one of the five hundred dollar notes, No. 52, which had been stolen, and which she positively identified as being her property. She was present when the trunk was searched, and saw the note taken from it. Miss Armingdon had access to the room in which the money had been left at all hours. On Wednesday Miss Armingdon had left the house, on the plea that she had some purchases to make, and was absent about two hours, something very unusual on the part of that person, who very seldom went out unless accompanied by her pupils.

Mr. Quidgeby undertook to cross-examine the witness, but his questions were of so outrageous a character, and were put in so insolent and overbearing a manner, that the lady flew into a violent passion, and the court interfered for her protection, reprimanding the counsel sharply for his unjustifiable impertinence; whereupon the latter sat down in a huff, and declined to pursue the cross-examination any further. During this scene, the fair prisoner appeared to be inexpressibly pained and mortified at the course of her lawyer, but did not utter a word.

The next witness called was Dick Fromby. On taking the stand, he appeared to be a good deal embarrassed, and protested that he came there very unwillingly, and that he was confident that Miss Armingdon had nothing to do with the theft.

At this his mother became quite indignant, and exclaimed that she understood very well how to account for his conduct. She didn't mind the loss of the money at all now, since it had been the means of opening her eyes to the scheme of that doll-faced hussy, who had evidently been playing her arts upon Richard.

The court rebuked Mrs. Fromby in peremptory xxx for her uncalled for remarks while Miss Armingdon flushed up and turned a look of scorn and indignation upon the old lady which made [her fairly] quail.

[The] police attorney informed Dick, that he was called there for the purpose of giving his xxx; he was there to state facts, and he would xxx confine himself to statements of what he xxx-vely knew concerning the case. Upon this [Dick] went on and gave his testimony, which [amounted] simply to a corroboration of the facts [that] had been stated by his mother. Nothing was elicited by his evidence. Although not [formally] acquainted with this young man, I knew [something] of his habits and associations, and [had not] formed a very good opinion of him. The xxx reluctance

with which he gave in his evidence against this poor girl, however, impressed favorably, and I came to the conclusion that he had a better heart than I had given him credit [for].

Officer Gifford next took the stand, and testified [to] his services having been called in to investigate the matter, in consequence of information [that] he had received, he had been led to search [the trunk] of the prisoner at the bar, and that at [the very] bottom of that trunk, covered by clothing [and] other articles, he had found the five hundred [dollar] note which was produced in court, and [which] Mrs. Fromby had identified as a portion of [the] stolen money. Officer Gifford further testified, [that] upon the discovery of this note in her trunk, [the] prisoner had become very much agitated and xxx-ed, and had not attempted to give any explanation of its presence there.

[The] Court inquired of Quidgeby, whether he [wished] to cross-examine this witness, upon which [the latter] replied: "It was evident that it was of xxx for him to undertake the cross-examination [of] a witness in that court-room."

[To] this the Court retorted, with a great deal of [asperity], that "counsel knew very well that no objections would be made to proper questions, [but] that the Court certainly would not permit [him] the brow-beating of witnesses or impertinent reflections upon its course—a matter which [counsel] would do well to bear in mind."

Quidgeby remained sullen, the Court [proceeded] to put a few questions to the witness, and [the] following dialogue ensued:

Court—"What took place between yourself and the accused when you proposed to search [her] trunk?"

Witness—"She handed me her keys without hesitation, remarking that I was welcome to [search] her baggage, and, indeed, that she was anxious that I should do so."

Court—"Did she manifest any apprehension or anxiety when you proceeded to open her [trunk]?"

Witness—"Not in the least, until the discovery [of the] note, when she appeared to be overwhelmed [with] terror."

Court—"Now, Mr. Gifford, as an experienced officer, did it not appear to you very singular that if this young lady was guilty of the [crime] charged against her, she should appear so [unconcerned] at the commencement of the search, yet so completely unnerved when the discovery [was] made?"

[When] the question was asked, the face of Miss Armingdon lighted up with an expression of hope [and] gratitude, which made it appear absolutely xxx in its loveliness.

Witness—"Not at all. I have a theory which accounts for her behavior, under the supposition that she had taken the money. Your honor [must] recollect that the envelope containing the [money]

was left in the drawer where it had been [deposited]. Now, supposing the prisoner had [taken] the bank notes—which, altogether, formed a considerable pile—and had deposited them temporarily in her trunk for safe-keeping, it is not likely that in her haste she would stop to count them. Although Mrs. Fromby had counted them in her presence, it does not seem that she knew what was the amount of the sum. Having left the envelope in the drawer, I will suppose that she placed them loose at the bottom of her trunk. Suppose that, on Wednesday, when she left the house, as the prosecution assumes, for the purpose of secreting her plunder in a place of greater security, she—in the state of agitation which would be natural at such a time, had accidentally left this note in her trunk without being aware of the fact—a suspicion which is in every respect both reasonable and probable—and we have just the state of things that would account for her subsequent action. Believing that she had removed the money from her trunk, she had no reason to dread the search; while the presence there of the note which she had overlooked at once unnerved and confounded her."

As the officer pitilessly enunciated his views, a change came over the countenance of Miss Armingdon that was distressing to witness. Consternation, horror, utter despair, cast their shadows over the beautiful features, that a moment before had been illuminated with hope, and, completely crushed, she dropped her vail to hide the gathering tears, while she trembled so violently that one of the attendants of the court-room hastened to bring her a chair, it being evident that her strength would not permit her to stand much longer. During the remainder of the examination she sat with her head bowed down, and apparently without taking any notice of the subsequent proceedings.

The next witness called was Bridget Callahan, a native of the Green Isle, who was employed as a servant of all work by Mrs. Fromby. As this woman is one of the most prominent characters who will appear in my sketch, a few words of description of her personal appearance will not be out of place at this stage of my narrative.

Bridget was a tall, raw-boned specimen of her sex, of florid complexion, with small, wicked-looking eyes, bushy black eyebrows, large, prominent teeth—which gave her capacious mouth a most cannibalistic aspect—and a nose which, for pugginess, surpassed anything that I have ever seen. She presented an astonishing display of flaming colors, in the way of hat, ribbons, and shawl; while the blue of her gloves was only equaled in intensity by the red of her arms. She would have made an admirable model for an artist engaged in getting up comic valentines.

Bridget manifested great trepidation on taking the oath; but once fairly started, she gave in her testimony with such extraordinary volubility as to require the frequent interposition of the police attorney to prevent her from branching off into entirely irrelevant matters.

The substance of her evidence amounted simply to this: She was in the employ of Mrs. Fromby; among other duties it was her place always to answer the door-bell; she did not think that any person could enter or leave the house without her knowledge; she saw Miss Armingdon leave the house on Wednesday, and return in about two hours; and she observed at the same time that she looked very strangely going and returning, but she did not remember having mentioned that fact to any one; she had seen no stranger in the house between Tuesday morning and Thursday

morning; she had seen Miss Armingdon enter and leave the room from which the money had been taken, frequently on Tuesday and Wednesday, but could not recollect at what hours.

She managed to drag in a great many statements having no bearing whatever upon the case, and showed herself what is termed a "swift witness" by her evident desire to fasten the crime upon the unfortunate prisoner. I disliked her appearance from the first. Before she was half through with her testimony, I was satisfied that she was lying; and when she had concluded, I had no doubt in my mind that she was herself the thief. I expected to see her break down completely under a cross-examination; but Quidgeby, who continued sulky, only asked her a few unimportant questions, when she was allowed to resume her seat.

No further evidence of any importance was brought forward, and at the conclusion of the examination, Miss Armingdon was remanded to jail to await her trial at the criminal court, the following month. She left the room in charge of an officer, without uttering a word, and without again raising her veil.

In a conference with my brethren of the quill, we unanimously agreed to suppress the name of the accused in our reports of the case, and to state, in our respective journals, that, although the evidence in the preliminary examination was such that the Court was obliged to hold her for trail, still it was to be hoped, and it was not at all unlikely, that ultimately she would be able to establish her entire innocence of the charge brought against her.

After twenty-four hours' reflection, I found myself more firmly than ever convinced that the beautiful prisoner was the victim of a terrible mistake, and I determined to devote my whole energies to the vindication of her character. As I was well acquainted with her jailer, I experienced no difficulty in obtaining an interview, and I found her much more calm and resigned than I had anticipated. I took with me a copy of each of the morning papers, all of which had put the matter in the most favorable aspect for her, and she manifested much gratitude for the kindly feeling displayed. I explained to her my own conviction of her entire innocence, and assured her that I would leave no stone unturned to make it manifest to the world. My familiarity with police matters, acquired in the exercise of my professional duties, would be of great service to me in this undertaking, and I endeavored to inspire her with more confidence than I dared to entertain myself, that I should be successful in discovering the real perpetrator of the robbery, but without saying anything in regard to what direction my suspicions had taken. Miss Armingdon gracefully and unaffectedly thanked me for the interest I had manifested in her behalf, and I took my leave of her, determined to spare neither time, trouble, nor expense in carrying into execution the design which I had formed.

My first step was to seek the cooperation of Officer Spritt, who was one of the most shrewd and experienced members of the police force. Between Spritt and Gifford, the officer who had arrested Miss Armingdon, a bitter rivalry existed, and I knew that this fact would be enough to at once enlist the services of the former upon our side. An interview with Mr. Spritt proved that I was not mistaken in my belief. I found him fully conversant with the facts in the case, and he had no hesitation in saying at once that Gifford, "as usual," had allowed himself to be completely bamboozled, and had "pulled the wrong party." I explained to him my own views on the subject,

to which he listened with a somewhat patronizing air, and without condescending to return my confidence, promised to give the matter his attention.

But this was not enough for my impatience. I knew that Spritt had a great deal to occupy his attention, and I determined, after securing his services, to do a little detective business myself, and see what discoveries I could make on my own account.

My first step was to make the acquaintance of Miss Bridget Callahan. By watching Mrs. Fromby's house, I found that that lady was in the habit of driving out in her carriage every morning about eleven o'clock, and that she was generally absent several hours. Bridget, while giving her testimony in the police court, had stated that it was her duty to attend to the door-bell. The opportunity for an interview was thereby presented at once, leaving only a pretext to be found. This was a work of no difficulty. In the course of a somewhat checkered life, I had strutted my brief hour upon the stage, during which [I] had gained some applause for my impersonation of Irish characters. Becoming satisfied that [my] talents were not appreciated by the theatre-going public, I had left the boards in disgust, but I had preserved my wardrobe—and my brogue, [either] of which I could call into requisition at a moment's notice. Moreover, I had acquired the [art] of "making up" for different characters in [an] effective manner—an accomplishment which [I] found of infinite service to me in the execution [of] my plans. And I would have defied my most intimate friend to have recognized "the gentlemanly local of the *Daily Earthquake,"* in the Hibernian gentleman who stood, with a basket of stay-lacings on his arm, upon the steps of Mrs. Fromby's mansion one noon, a few days subsequent to the court-scene which I have described.

I rang the bell, and presently it was answered by Bridget, who was highly indignant at [being] called to the door by a peddler. This I had anticipated, and was prepaped for. Holding up a bunch of stay-lacings, I named a price for them about one-quarter of their value, and the bait was instantly swallowed. No woman ever lived, I think, who could be absolutely indifferent to "an extraordinary bargain," and Bridget saw at once that I was offering her one. She invited me [into] the hall, where she left me to go to her room [for] the money required, which was only a few pennies, to complete the purchase. Before the transaction was concluded I was quite at home with her. No woman was ever so atrociously ugly as not to believe herself an object of attraction to the opposite sex, and in less than three minutes I had so flattered and cajoled Miss Callahan, that she was [on] the best possible terms with herself and myself. When I left, it was with her gracious permission to call again some day, if I should have anything [nice] to show her.

Fearful of exciting suspicion, it was nearly a week before I paid my second visit to the young lady whose acquaintance I was so anxious to cultivate. I had provided myself with a variety of ribbons and other articles which I thought would be likely to excite her admiration, and I was most cordially received. She made a few trifling purchases, and I improved the time while our negotiations were progressing to express my unbounded admiration of her personal charms and fascinating manners, overwhelming her with the most extravagant flatteries, all of which she received in perfect good faith and with unbounded complacency. Finally, I produced a cheap but very gaudy pair of ear-rings, which I begged her to accept as a token of my esteem, and then my footing was fairly established.

Before my second interview was concluded, she had informed me that Thursday was her night out, and that she generally left the house for a walk on Thursday evenings at about seven o'clock. The following Thursday evening found me positioned where I could command a view of the Fromby mansion. Punctually, as the clock struck seven, I saw a conglomeration of gorgeous colors issue forth, and had no difficulty in recognizing the astonishing hat, the stunning shawl, and the sturdy form of Miss Bridget Callahan. She walked slowly, and from time to time looked anxiously around, as if expecting some one. I followed cautiously at a distance, until I thought her impatience sufficiently excited, when I joined her. She pretended to be greatly surprised at seeing me but did not attempt to disguise her satisfaction at the reencounter, and we were soon engaged in [animated] conversation.

[As] my companion slipped her robust arm through mine, I could not help whispering to [myself]:

["If] Biddy only knew the game I am playing, [what] a fearful walloping she would give me!"

[As] to the physical ability of the lady to accomplish that operation, I could not doubt it for an [instant]. We indulged in a long walk, in which I xxx myself, and not without success, to gain [a] substantial footing in her good graces. I took [her to] a restaurant, where she partook of oysters [and a] couple of whisky punches, and either the [oysters] or the beverages gave a most extraordinary activity to her tongue, which kept in motion [constantly].

[Upon] returning to the house I stood outside the xxx door for a full half hour, with my arm [around] her expansive waist, while she made desperate love to me.

[By] this time she had taken the reins in her [own] hands, until at last she threw her arms around my neck, when I contrived to make an [excuse] for my immediate departure.

[I] have no doubt that my readers will be intensely xxx-ated at this, but not more so, I can assure [you,] than I was myself at the time. But I had [an] important object in view, and I determined not xxx-ed upon trifles.

[Up] to this stage of the affair, I had never once mentioned the subject of the robbery. My design [was] first to secure her unlimited confidence, and [once]-well, to abuse it, if you think proper to xxx it in that light, but, at any rate, to gain [as much] information possible from her having any [bearing] on the abstraction of Mrs. Fromby's money.

Xxx-d several interviews with Bridget after getting upon confidential terms with her, and the [subject] of the robbery was frequently brought into [the] conversation, but without affording me any [insight into] the mystery. I was unable to learn any facts in relation to the matter, and Bridget xxx pretended to be, very confident that Miss Armingdon, and she alone, knew what had become [of the] missing funds. Meanwhile the time was [wasting] rapidly away.

[One] Sunday evening I sat in the park, awaiting [my] Hibernian damsel, who had promised to meet [me] there. It was the last day of the month, and [on] Monday the Criminal Court, before which Miss Armingdon's trial was to take place, would commence its sessions. A few hours

previously I had [seen] Officer Spritt, who had informed me that all efforts to get upon the track of the real robber, [while he] still maintained the innocence of Miss Armingdon, had resulted in absolute failure. [I began] to feel discouraged, but yet resolved on [making] one desperate attempt to get at the [truth.] So, when I was joined by Bridget, I gave [her the] most affectionate reception, and we were billing and cooing like two turtle doves. [Without] any shame I confess that I lied to her xxx-inably. First, I bewailed in the most [pathetic] manner my lonely condition as an [unmarried] man, and intimated, rather than [explained] my desire to become a Benedict. Then [I painted] in glowing colors the brilliancy of my [prospects], after which I proceeded very cautiously [to] explain to her how it was that I was enabled to [sell my] merchandise at exceedingly low rates, and [realize] an enormous profit upon it. I informed [her that] I had a friend who supplied me with [goods] at much less than their actual value; that [it was] none of my business how he procured his [things]; I didn't know anything about that, and I [didn't] want to know. I believed he had other xxx-s who supplied him, and I presumed he [was] equally as indifferent as myself with regard [to the] original source of supply. All I knew [was] that I bought them and paid for them, and I would defy anybody to prove that I had ever committed an illegal act. I had saved a good deal of money, and I intended to buy a horse and cart, and peddle my goods through the country, where I could do a big business, without the slightest danger of getting into trouble. All I wanted now was a wife and a home, and in a few years I should be a rich man.

My charmer listened very attentively, and was not in the least shocked by the revelations I had made in regard to the questionable character of the business in which I represented myself as being engaged.

Thus encouraged, I ventured upon a bolder stroke. I related to her the case of a suppositious individual who had a thousand dollar note, which, for some reason or other—I, for my part, made it a point never to ask questions about matters that did not concern me—but, for some reason or other, this individual did not like to get the note changed, and offered to pay me well if I would dispose of it. So I took it to the friend I have mentioned, who at once gave me seven hundred dollars in gold for it, and I pocketed the snug little one hundred dollars for my services in the affair, which did not occupy half an hour altogether.

When I had concluded my account of this transaction, Bridget remained silent for some minutes, evidently in deep thought.

My heart beat violently. I expected every minute to hear something of those five hundred dollar bills. At last she spoke.

"Does this friend of yours," she said, "give more for things than a pawnbroker, and be like to pay if ye put 'em in pledge?"

"Yes; double or three times as much," was my answer.

After another prolonged silence, she remarked:

“Ye see I’ve some little trifles that me cousin that’s dead and gone give me, and as I had no use for them I just shoved ’em up at Old Soloman’s; but the dirty thafe allowed me nothing at all for thim to spake of, and so if you’ve jist a mind to take me tickets and git thim out, you shall have half what you can make by the job,” and with this she produced from some mysterious hiding-place in her dress four or five dirty pawn tickets, which she handed over to me.

Of course, after what I had said, I did not decline the transaction which she proposed, and soon after left her, without her having intimated the slightest intention of calling my services into requisition as a money-broker.

The next morning I proceeded to Mr. Solomon’s establishment, and, on the payment of a few dollars, received a miscellaneous assortment of articles, consisting of a costly silk dress, of an old style, however, a quantity of table and bed linen, handkerchiefs, &c., all of the finest quality, and none of which could ever have belonged to any cousin of Biddy. Making a bundle of the stuff, I took it to my lodgings, and lighting my pipe, devoted half an hour to reflection, at the end of which time I had arrived at the following conclusion:

My friend Bridget was undoubtedly a thief, and the articles that she had pawned were stolen, very likely a portion of them, at least, from Mrs. Fromby; but she knew nothing of the stolen money. I had succeeded in discovering a theft that I had not suspected, but not the slightest circumstance to connect her with the crime which I had expected to fix upon her.

The consciousness that she had really been guilty of dishonesty had made her timid, and fearful that she would be suspected of the more important theft, which was as much a mystery to her as any one else, and hence her trepidation upon taking the oath, and her anxiety to see Miss Armingdon convicted. I had been on a wrong track from the start, and my time and trouble had all been thrown away; yet not entirely wasted, after all, for if I had not discovered who had committed the robbery, I had at least satisfied myself that one suspected party had not, and that narrowed the field for investigation.

“Oh!” I thought, “if I only had a little more time I might accomplish something yet.”

Suddenly an entirely new idea presented itself to my mind. I immediately sought out Gifford, and requested him to detail to me, word for word, the conversation that had passed at Mrs. Fromby’s house on the morning of the arrest. He did so, as nearly as he could recollect it, and as he concluded, I remarked:

“Then, Dick Fromby was the first one to mention Miss Armingdon’s name in connection with the robbery?”

“Yes,” was the reply, rather hesitatingly given; “but he did not accuse her of it; on the contrary, he protested her innocence. He merely remarked that no one had seen the money put away except himself, his sisters, and Miss Armingdon, and that he would vouch for Miss Armingdon’s honesty before any court in the universe.”

“And Mrs. Fromby, upon this, at once said that she would not, and that it must have been her that committed the theft?”

“I think that was it.”

“And this,” I continued, “was the first time that Mrs. Fromby had appeared to entertain any suspicions in regard to the young lady?”

“It was the first time that she expressed any.”

“One thing more, Mr. Gifford; will you be kind enough to tell me who it was that engaged Quidgeby to defend Miss Armingdon?”

“I believe it was Dick Fromby.”

This was precisely the answer that I had expected, and without further remark, I left Gifford, to seek his rival, Mr. Spritt. To the latter I related my adventures with Bridget, and my conversation with the other officer.

“You have hit it at last, young man,” said Spritt, as I finished my story; “it’s young Fromby that made the haul, and by ringing in that infernal shyster, Quidgeby, to defend the girl, he calculated to procure her conviction for certain. I’ve had my eye on the scamp all along; but I have not been able to get a single point on him yet that would be of any use to us. There are two things certain: the girl must have a respectable lawyer, and the trial must be staved off until the next term.”

Fully coinciding in the views expressed by Spritt, I left that worthy official, and next proceeded to pay a visit to Miss Armingdon. I had not seen her since my first interview, and I found her in much better spirits than I had anticipated, while her beauty appeared more radiant than ever. The jailer’s wife, who had treated her with great kindness in every respect, had loaned her several articles of furniture, and she had managed to give her cell quite a cheerful appearance. She received me frankly and cordially.

During her imprisonment I had frequently sent her newspapers, magazines and flowers, but without any card or sign to indicate from whence they came. Upon her table I noticed my last floral offering, carefully preserved in a glass of water, and as I cast my eyes toward it, she turned her head away, with a half-suppressed smile, which satisfied me that she had divined my little secret; but she made no allusion to the subject.

I at once explained to her the object of my visit, namely, to impress upon her the necessity of putting her defense into more competent and reputable hands, and she at once gave me authority to make such arrangements in her behalf as I thought proper. At the same time, by my request, she promised not to inform Quidgeby that his services were to be dispensed with, until such time as I should think it best to give him the information.

With a great deal of difficulty, I succeeded [in] eliciting the fact from her, that, during her residence with Mrs. Fromby, Richard had [persisted] her with his unwelcome attentions, until

she threatened to complain to his mother, [whereas] he was in mortal fear of the old lady, he [became] very humble, and ever afterward treated her [with] the greatest deference.

This was another discovery that tended to [confirm] me in the belief that I was now on the [right] trail; and when I left Miss Armingdon, [I left] with more sanguine hopes of a successful culmination of the task which I had undertaken [than I] had ever before cherished.

My next step was to call upon Mr. Chittenden, one of the oldest and most influential men at the bar, and lay the whole matter before [him. He] manifested a good deal of interest in the case [and] readily undertook the charge of Miss Armingdon's defense. Further, after some persuasion [on my] part, he consented to my plan of [allowing] Quidgeby to remain in ignorance of this [arrangement], until he should be informed of it in court. Of course, I had a reason for this xxx procedure.

The grand jury had found an [indictment] against Miss Armingdon, and on the following day her case was called up. By favor [of the] Court, the prisoner was furnished with a xxx her counsel, and it was so managed, that [when] Quidgeby was seated at her left hand [but] Chittenden was at her right. The former practitioner appeared in high feather, with any [quantity] of books and papers before him. It [was the] first time he had ever been entrusted with [so] important a cause, and he appeared determined [to] make the most of the situation. But [he was] struck dumb with consternation, when, [at the] commencement of proceedings, Mr. Chittenden arose and quietly remarked, "that he appeared for the defense." Quickly recovering his possession, however, he addressed the court:

"I beg pardon, your honor, but there [must be] some mistake here. I was under the impression that I was counsel for the prisoner. At all xxx it is very certain that I was retained to xxx her defense."

The judge requested Miss Armingdon to [answer] the question which had arisen, and she xxx designated Mr. Chittenden as her counsel; [at] this Quidgeby gave a look of blank astonishment toward Dick Fromby, who was seated among the witnesses, at which Dick, who had just begun [to] comprehend the state of affairs, turned as [white as] a corpse. Mr. Chittenden noticed this, and [gave] me a significant glance, which showed [that he] fully comprehended the purpose of my little xxx. Indeed, I had arranged this scene in the [firm] expectation that it would result in precisely [the] manner in which I have described, and witnessing the agitation of Dick Fromby, [it was] impossible for me to doubt his guilt. And xxx the manner of Quidgeby, I was satisfied [that] there was a tacit, if not an expressed understanding between the two rascals.

Quidgeby undertook to bluster a little, but [was] very summarily suppressed by the judge. [Mr.] Chittenden then stated to the Court, that, [he had] been very suddenly and unexpectedly called [onto] the case, he had had no opportunity for consultation with his client, and asked a postponement until the next term, when he would be ready [for] trial. As Mr. Chittenden was a lawyer [of the] highest standing and great influence, his [request] was readily granted.

Although Mr. Chittenden, Spritt and [myself] had learned enough to render us morally certain that it was Dick Fromby who had stolen the money from his mother, we had not as [yet a] single

fact that would be worth anything [to a] jury. But we had gained a month's time, [and were] sure we were on the right track—two very important advantages.

[It] was about a week subsequent to the events [I] have just related, that Spritt called upon [me] with an important piece of information. Dick Fromby, who had been drinking harder than [usual] since the court scene, was going to New York on a flying visit, and would leave that [night].

"I don't want to flatter you, my boy," said Spritt, to me, "but from the way you got around [the] Irishwoman, I am satisfied you wouldn't [make] a bad detective, with experience, and if you [have] enough interest in the matter to follow Dick to New York, I think you will be able to get some xxx on him. You are well acquainted there, [and] he will be entirely off his guard. What do [you] say?"

[It] is useless to state that I jumped at the opportunity, and pleading important business, I procured leave of absence from my employers. I had [no] reason to suppose that Dick knew me, but [worrying] he might recollect having seen me in the court-room, I sacrificed a somewhat luxurious xxx-th of whiskers and mustache, and made such changes in my style of dress, that I was sure he would never identify me with any one whom he [might] have noticed. On my way to the cars, two [or] three intimate acquaintances passed me without recognition, and I was then satisfied that my metamorphosis was complete.

[I] arrived in New York without accident or adventure, and we both stopped at the Astor House. [I kept] myself altogether in the background, so as [not to] attract the youth's attention, but I never [lost] sight of his movements. It was late in the afternoon when we arrived, and while Dick [returned] to his room to make some changes in his wardrobe, I had an opportunity to slip over to the [police] office in the City Hall, where I obtained the assistance of an experienced detective, an old acquaintance, who returned with me to the [hotel].

After taking tea, my gentleman took a walk up Broadway and entered Niblo's. As I knew that he [was] a great admirer of the stage, I was satisfied [that] he would remain there throughout the performance, and after watching him to his seat, I [left] the house. The detective had an appointment which he was desirous of keeping, and went away, [promising] to meet me before the theater closed.

I have never witnessed a play which seemed to [be] so tedious as the first piece that was represented on that night. I was so nervous and impatient, that I found it impossible to keep my [seat] and I passed the time moving uneasily [about] the lobbies. Here I encountered an old [friend], Fred Harmon, with whom I had formerly [been] quite intimate, and to him I related the circumstances which had caused me to visit New York.

Between the pieces, Dick left the theatre and proceeded to a drinking-house in the vicinity; Fred [and] myself followed close at his heels. Standing [in] the doorway of this place, I saw an old acquaintance.

Newspaper reporters are obliged to know all [sorts] of people, and I acknowledge that at that [time] I was on speaking terms with a great many disreputable characters—among others the

individual whom I have just mentioned, Gus Spaddles. He was one of a class which still flourishes [in] this city, a fraternity which, at the present [time], is distinguished by a taste for long white coats, exceedingly showy hats, mustaches of nocturnal blackness, and colossal scarf-pins.

Members of this order may be seen standing at [main] corners and in the vicinity of fashionable [hotels] at almost any time; they are dignified by [the] police with the title of "Broadway statues." [Picking] up strangers or intoxicated citizens, and [ushering] them to gambling-hells is the most respectable of the means for obtaining a livelihood in vogue among these gentry.

It at once struck me that I could make Spaddles of use to me, and I immediately entered into a confidential conversation with him.

"Spaddles," I said, "I can put you up to a good thing, if you have a mind to follow it up."

"What is it?" he replied. "I am always ready for anything that has money in it, you know, provided it is not too rough."

"I've got a sucker for you, that, if you can get him to a faro-bank, is good for fifteen hundred or two thousand dollars, sure. He is a stranger in the city; thinks he is smart; is as green as a guard, and half-a-dozen glasses of good old Bourbon will just set him luney. If you want anything better than that, let me know where you think you will find it."

Spaddles looked at me sharply, and then said: "What do you want—a rake out of the proceeds?"

"Me? No, indeed; nothing of the kind."

"Then, how is it that you interest yourself in the matter? I don't think you would do such a thing; but hang me if it don't look a little as though you were setting a plant for me."

"Well, Spaddles," I answered, "I will tell you just what it is: I am down on the fellow, and I want to see him plucked; I don't care who gets the money, but I want to see him cleaned out teetotally. I want him to be taken to a skin-game, where he will have no living chance; and what is more, my friend and myself must witness the operation. It's the softest kind of a thing, and you can do it as well as not. If you don't choose to take it up, I will find somebody that is not quite so scrupulous. When I tell you there is a woman in the case, perhaps you will understand my object."

"All right," said Spaddles; "I understand you now. I will steer him to Charley Trall's, and if he gets out of his place with enough to buy a 'cocktail' with in the morning, I'll buy you a new hat."

"But remember that myself and friend must be along; he does not know either of us, and will not suspect anything from our presence."

"It's a go," said Spaddles.

"Then there's your man," said I, as Dick came out of the saloon, and we all followed him back to the theatre, at the entrance of which I met my friend, the detective. I hastily explained to him the scheme I had put in operation, and he approved of it, decidedly.

As I should probably require his assistance before the night was out, he told me that he would await me at a porter-house in the immediate vicinity of Trall's gambling-den—an all-night house, to which I could gain admittance at any hour.

Upon re-entering the theatre, I had the satisfaction of seeing Spaddles seated beside Dick, and the twain conversing, as if they had known each other for years. When the performances had concluded, they passed out of the building, arm-in-arm.

Harmon and myself kept the precious pair in sight as they made the rounds of some of the most noted haunts of dissipation in New York, and it was nearly one o'clock in the morning when they reached the gambling-hell of Charley Trall. We joined them at the door, and all passed in together. Dick was wild with liquor, and required no urging to induce him to play.

As I was a stranger there, I made a few bets myself, in order to prevent my being looked upon with suspicion; and as I was aware that Dick would probably be allowed to win at first, I backed the same cards that he selected, and thereby succeeded in landing a little stake, which would pay my expenses for several days. I felt no compunctions whatever in "despoiling the Egyptians."

Spaddles plied his man freely with brandy, and he grew more and more excited. At the end of half an hour he had lost over three hundred dollars, and his pocket-book was empty. He sat for an instant in silence, then called for more brandy. Spaddles brought him a tumbler, half full of fiery beverage, which he swallowed at a draught. Then, from the watch-fob in his pantaloons, he produced an exceedingly small parcel, wrapped in tissue paper. I stood directly behind him, and, with palpitating heart, I watched him as he opened it. With trembling fingers he undid the covering, and presently he unfolded to view the two five hundred dollar bills which I had so eagerly longed to see.

My suspicions had been correct; my work was nearly done. He was now perfectly reckless, and in an hour from the time that we had entered the den Spaddles had escorted him down stairs, without a dollar in his pocket, and sent him staggering down Broadway to his hotel.

Five minutes afterward, accompanied by the detective, we were again at the door of the hell. Harmon and myself kept in the shade, out of sight, while our companion knocked. A small wicket was opened by a black servant, who at once recognized the visitor, and calling him by name, inquired his business.

"Tell Charley to come here," was the answer. "Tell him he need not disturb his little game; I don't want to interfere with that, but I want to see him a minute; I have some information to give him."

In a moment or two Trall appeared at the door.

“Charley,” said the detective, “look out for counterfeit five hundred dollar bills on the State Bank of Ohio, Chilicothe Branch. There have been a number of them played into different games tonight, and if any are offered here, let me know, and I’ll make it right with you. I want to get the man that’s shoving them.”

“Five hundred dollar bills on the State Bank of Ohio, Chilicothe Branch!” exclaimed Trall, in consternation. “Why, I’ve taken two of them tonight. Well, I had ought to be shot. Here I took the d—n thief for a flat, and he was playing queer on me all the time.”

“Let me see them, Charley,” said the detective.

The proprietor of the pandemonium went into his den, and presently returned with the notes, which he handed to the detective.

“Let me see,” said the latter; “State Bank of Ohio, Chilicothe Branch, No. 31 and No. 45. All right; just what I wanted.” And he proceeded, very coolly, to fold them up and place them in his pocket. “The fact is, Charley,” he continued, “I have been obliged to *finesse* a little with you to get these pictures. The bills are good enough, but they were stolen, and I shall be obliged to keep them in my possession.”

“Damnation!” shouted Trall, in a fury, “do you think you can play such a game as that on me? No, sir; I won’t stand it.”

“Keep cool, Charley,” the detective replied; and, calling Harmon and myself to the door, he continued: “Do you recognize these gentlemen?”

“I have seen them,” said Trall, sullenly, as he glanced at us with a scowl.

“Well, then, you must be aware that they both saw the bills pass into your possession. In fact, the expectation of seeing the money passed was what took them into your place. I should have had the money, anyhow, if I had been forced to pull your crib to get it; and in that case I should have been obliged to haul you up for keeping a gambling-house, and these two respectable witnesses would have been obliged to appear against you. You have made over three hundred dollars out of that sucker as it is, and instead of getting indignant, you ought to be very thankful to me for letting you down so easy;” and with these consoling remarks from the detective, we departed, leaving the irate gambler to his reflections.

Daylight found me in the cars, on my way back to the West, with the two bank notes which had caused me so much trouble and anxiety safe in my pocket-book. Dick, out of funds, I was sure would leave at once for home, and my friend the detective had promised to have him “shadowed” while he remained in the city. My calculations were correct, for on arriving at my journey’s end, I found a telegram informing me that he was only six hours behind me. I subsequently learned that, fabricating a story that his pocket had been picked, he had pawned his watch at the hotel for his bill and money enough to take him home.

My first visit was to Miss Armingdon. As I entered her cell, my face must have told the good news I had brought, for her countenance, as she advanced toward me, was illuminated with unspeakable happiness. Shall I tell it? Without saying a word, I caught her in my arms and almost smothered her with kisses; and instead of resenting it, the young lady laid her head on my breast and went to sobbing away as contentedly as if she had been used to the position all her lifetime. Fanny told me afterward—I have always called her Fanny since that day—that she considered her conduct on that occasion highly improper behavior for a young lady on so short an acquaintance; but at the time she had never thought of giving the subject of propriety a consideration. All alone in the world, without a blood-relation on the Western Continent, a prisoner, accused of an infamous crime, she had come to look upon me as the only friend she had on earth; and when I came so suddenly upon her, evidently the bearer of glad tidings, she only had time to think that she was saved, that I had saved her, and that she—but I may as well stop where I am, or I shall be getting spooney.

A few hours afterward Dick Fromby arrived, and was met at the railroad depot by my friend Spritt, who conducted him at once to the stationhouse. Upon being confronted with the evidence of his guilt, he at once made a full confession, and acknowledged that he had placed the bill in Fanny's trunk, which had caused her arrest. The same day, the Court being still in session, the district attorney entered a *nolle pros.* in the case of Miss Armingdon, and she was at once discharged from custody.

Dick Fromby did not stand a trial. His mother bailed him out and sent him to California, where he was soon after shot in a drunken brawl. Quidgeby, whose action in this affair had been, to say the least, suspicious, migrated further West, where he cultivated politics with such assiduity that he was commissioned a brigadier-general on the breaking out of the war. I never heard of his distinguishing himself on the battle-field; but I will be bound that he was never behind-hand in claiming all that was due him in the way of pay and perquisites.

I must not forget my quondam sweetheart, Bridget. The articles I obtained from the pawnbroker I had given to Spritt, with directions to hand them over to the owners, if he should be able to discover them, but without compromising the woman. After trifling with her mature affections in the manner I had, I had not the heart to consign her to the tender mercies of the law.

Mrs. Fromby, after the loss of her money, had taken an inventory of her household goods, and finding various articles missing, had reported the same at the police-office. Spritt produced them at once, giving her some plausible story to account for their being in his possession, and himself carried them to her house, where she remunerated him for his trouble.

As he was leaving, Bridget followed him to the door, and asked him, "Did he have any idea who was the dirty thafe that stole those things?"

"Yes, Bridget," he answered, looking her sternly in the face; "I have very strong suspicions. Take care that you never get caught [in] anything of the kind or you will be apt to find that standing at the prisoners' bar is a very different thing from being in the witness-box."

So saying, he departed, leaving her pale with terror and gasping like a dying codfish, and that was the last that I ever heard, or cared to hear of Miss Bridget Callahan.

And now, if this was a fancy sketch, I should go on to say that Miss Armingdon turned out to be the heiress of boundless possessions in England, and a lady of the most distinguished ancestry. But as it is nothing of the kind, I am obliged to confess that the romance of her life terminated with her imprisonment. She soon after left the city which had been the scene of her trials, having previously married an individual at one time connected with the *Daily Earthquake*—a person, I am sorry to say, quite unworthy of so lovely and accomplished a wife, but whom she had loved very dearly—who adored her, whose humble home she has always made for him the brightest and most attractive spot on earth; and who, every day of his life, has reason to bless the hour when he first conceived the idea of turning amateur detective.

Frank Leslie's Pleasant Hours, February 1868