

## *The Detective's Story*

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I had been down to Liverpool on some incendiary job and was returning to town by early train one morning. At Crewe I purchased a London paper, and while unfolding it, my eye caught the following advertisement in what is now called the "Agony Column"—

GOLDIE TO WEE WIFIE. —Aabmco duet fagnhdik jnokolwmwnh oe prqe rysotu unvwex Myezeat Bmce dteofm gohrir jokwln mingohpt Qorns Sttuevpws zoyfzasat bmcadrettignhs Cjhkulrmenhoop rqirlsit vuivswixtyaz nanbccldeefrg Philiajcfkel amtnaonpydr r isstakubvew wxayr zeaf bacidle afnghijkl dlomfnor pyqoru.

Now, I have a method of solving simple mysteries of this kind which is infallible. I postponed the process of it in this case, however, until I had called to mind where I had before seen the words "Goldie" and "Wee Wifie" together.

In a few minutes I remembered "the Marquis"—the most ingenious and daring of all the burglars and swindlers I have ever known who had not been trained to the "business" from youth. This man had been a chemist in a good way in South London, but "went wrong" through drink and gambling.

Ten years before I had sent "the Marquis" away to prison for that period. At that time a bunch of old love letters fell into my hands. They were memories of better days, when he and his pretty wife called each other by pet names.

I knew that Goldie, or "the Marquis," had been liberated on ticket nearly twelve months before, and was surprised that I had not already seen him back in town. Here was a clue to his whereabouts and mode of livelihood, and so I set to unravel it.

Long before reaching Stafford I had deciphered the mysterious advertisement. How few people understand the tragedies that underlie some of those announcements occasionally! This plainly told me that a burglary—with violence, if necessary—was contemplated. It contained an assignment of a place of meeting between the released burglar and his wife, and I determined to be a witness of that meeting, safely disguised.

That, however, was not to be. Before reaching Rugby there occurred one of the most fatal of railway collisions, and I was one of the most seriously injured.

The terrible accident happened on Thursday. The meeting was to have taken place on the evening of Friday. Weak, ill, and nearly prostrate from cold, I arrived in London late on Saturday night, and after forwarding a message to headquarters, I re-booked for the Countess of Denver's residence, Roycliffe, near St. Albans.

The snow was being swirled about in bewildering eddies by the cutting wind, and although I am the abstinentest of men, I was impelled to visit the refreshment rooms and indulge in some hot drink. My illness had made me less acute than usual, and yet I could not help noticing a very old man with thin grey hair, wearing blue spectacles and black clothes several sizes too large for

him, because he appeared to hover about me curiously. He wore a voluminous white neckcloth, and I put him down for a Methodist parson.

At St. Albans he got out of the same train, I and entered the Railroad Hotel after me. He stood beside me while I drank my warm whisky. I certainly was not myself that night.

A fly brought me to the door of Roycliffe—a fine mansion surrounded by a terraced park, semi-circular drives sweeping from one elevation to the other.

It was nearly eleven o'clock, and the household were about retiring to bed, when my arrival was the means of postponing that arrangement. My card was sent upstairs. I longed for bed myself, but duty made me struggle against sleep. I could scarcely keep my eyes open. I determined to come to the point at once. Upon being introduced to Lady Denvers—a tall, handsome, and still youthful widow—I began:

“Your ladyship took into your service about ten years ago the presumably innocent wife of a man who had been imprisoned several times for burglary?”

“I did,” she returned. I pitied the poor creature. Has anything occurred?” and the lady paused.

I drew the newspaper from my pocket, and indicated the advertisement.

“Oh, that is Greek to me, laughed the beautiful dark woman.

“Pardon me,” I said, absently.

I began to imagine I had been drugged, and was thinking when and where that could have been accomplished.

“I have been ill, my lady,” I continued. “I saw that on Thursday while traveling from Liverpool. I was hurt in the collision, and could not come quicker.”

“You must have some refreshment;” and she was about to ring the bell.

“Presently, madam, if you please,” I faltered. “The advertisement, puzzling as it appears, it is simple enough. It reads thus: “Goldie to Wee Wifie. Am out, and know where you are. Meet me tomorrow night on steps of St. Martin’s Church, or I’ll visit and clear place at any risk. Beware! Fail, and I’ll do for you.””

“That accounts for Mary Carson’s absence, then,” cried Lady Denvers. “She left to go to town yesterday, and has not returned. But how do you make that message out?”

“You perceive, my lady,” I replied, “the first five letters are A. a, b, m, c. Take the first, third, and fifth away, and you isolate the A, m, or “Am.” The first, third, and fifth being the first three of the alphabet, it leads one to take every following alternate letter, and we find the whole

alphabet repeated over and over to the end. Cutting out these alternate letters leaves the message I have read, bare and clear.”

“Very ingenious,” said Lady Denvers.

“Very simple—to us,” I proceeded. “Goldie and Wee Wifie were the pet names Mark and Mary Carson gave each other years ago.”

“I know it,” cried Lady Denvers. “The poor creature has told me everything. Do you believe that she can have left me to join that guilty man?”

“She is not here madam.”

“But she may be detained forcibly,” cried the good countess, who could not make up her mind to believe the woman guilty or ungrateful.

“That is not the point, madam,” I said. “It is plain to me that a burglary is contemplated here.”

“Oh,” smiled the lady, “who would come out on such an errand on such a night as this?”

“The Marquis acts promptly when he makes up his mind. From the beginning of his career of crime he treated his wife with terrible cruelty. He used to beat and pet the woman alternately, like the tigerish brute he is. By threats and blows he may have torn from her—presuming her innocent—sufficient knowledge of her house and its contents to enable him to succeed in midnight robbery—unless he is prevented.”

“And you have come”——

“For that purpose, my lady,” I answered almost rudely. I wished to be alone that I might, to use a slang phrase, “pull myself together.”

I was soon left in a spacious room opening from the hall. A fine supper had been supplied me. I had insisted on not alarming the servants, being confident of my own ability to cope with any intruder.

Imagine my horror when I began to feel my limbs becoming heavy as lead, my eyelids resolutely closing. I felt sure now that my drink had been tampered with, and—I fell back nearly unconscious, despairing at my heart, into the luxurious easy chair which had been wheeled in front of the blazing fire.

A square table stood in the centre of the room, on which had been placed a hall lamp with a pale pink opaque globe. On the mantleshelf a handsome timepiece ticked deliberately, until at length its “click, click” became maddening.

Click, click! and I became so powerless that it seemed best for me to succumb to inevitable influences cheerfully. The wind howled outside, and I could hear the loose snow dashed fitfully

against the window panes. I made an effort to rise to open the shutters, when the thought rose that a light would alarm the coming marauder; so I dismissed it, and gazed helplessly at the clock until the blue-spectacled, grinning face of that old Methodist parson waveringly intervened.

Click, click! and my surroundings became invisible, but only seemingly for an instant. The old white haired parson again amused me. Then he annoyed, for he kept close to my elbow, still grinning gleefully. Once more I opened my eyes.

Click, click! How drowsy that incessant ticking makes one. The first had become unaccountably dim and low. The walls, with their hunting pictures, were shimmering in a kind of wreathing mist. At last darkness and a cold blight fell upon the hitherto warm room, and then vanished altogether.

Suddenly, as I thought, a piercing scream woke me up. I could not move for a moment. It was repeated once—twice. Then the clock struck slowly—one, two!

I had been fast asleep two hours.

Another scream startled the house.

Every faculty acute now, I by a great effort of will cast aside my drowsiness, threw the door open, and rushed up the grand staircase, as the servants descended from the upper stories, to find the beautiful countess standing in the centre of a long corridor, in night attire, her long black hair streaming down to the floor like a veil over her tall form.

The moon was shining brightly. A black figure dashed against the French window opening at the end of the corridor on the balcony, as the heroic noble-woman fired a revolver she had torn in a most terrible struggle from the burglar's grasp.

He smashed the great square of plate-glass and disappeared over the edge, or parapet, of the balcony, pursued now by me.

The leap was a terrible one, but was followed by others equally awful. The flying robber avoided the circular drives spoken of, jumping fearlessly from the parapet of one terrace to the gravel walk of the other, until he reached tire level of the lodge.

There was an ornamental lake in view of the road, and I was close behind him. Turning, he presented a pistol full at my face, and fired—and, thank heaven, missed. In ducking to avoid the bullet I recognized the large black clothes and white neckcloth of the man I supposed to be a Methodist parson. Wig and spectacles were gone. A superhuman effort enabled me to rise; but from illness and the leaps, I was still reeling. "The Marquis" caught me in his arms, and threw me right into the cold water, over whose surface a thin film of ice had been forming. The scoundrel escaped. Detectives are not always successful.

I was soon rescued by the servants. The countess had struggled magnificently, when, awaking, she found "the Marquis" departing with the contents of her jewel-safe and dressing-case. He had

entered by a back window, gone coolly to the lady's room, and, while she slept, taken the keys from under her pillow. Jewels were stolen valued at four thousand pounds.

I never was more annoyed in my life with a case, and so I labored vigilantly to capture "the Marquis."

Disguised as a Jew picture-dealer, I visited Barney Moss, the well-known "fence," one night. I not only secured without assistance the whole of the Denvers' family diamonds, but about ten thousand pounds' worth of other long-stolen property.

When I left Barney at Thames-street that night, he snarled:

"You've copped me, my tear, but you haven't got 'the Markis' yet. Clever, ain't ye?—I don't think. You've often been in his company lately, but you carn't tumble to him. He swears he'll make you trink mit him next Derby Day, an' I'll bet he will, for he's a hot 'un the Markis is. It was him that drugged you at St. Albans that night."

Barney went away for twenty-one years before the great Epsom meeting came off.

I knew there was something in that boast. Some men delight in narrow and useless risks.

Disguised as a "nigger," I went to Epsom. I play the banjo pretty well, and could sing well then.

Just after the second race I was playing at the entrance to Harry Broome's tent. I heard a voice say:

"I promised to treat a slop or two here today."

I looked round at the speaker, and saw an elaborately-clad swell, in dust-coat, white hat, green veil, and eyeglass. His hair was yellow, with Dundreary whiskers to match. "The Marquis" had a faculty of disguising the appearance of the muscles of his face, the form or weight of his body, and his height. These whiskers were beautifully glued to his cheeks, but they betrayed him.

"Wanted to treat a slop?" said I. "Better stand me a pint, Cully."

"Who the deuce are you?" he asked, contemptuously brushing past me.

"Jack Poynter!" I cried, throwing my banjo away, and pulling off his hat, wig, whiskers, moustache and all.

"Ha!" he cried, with an effort to get away, but the crowd was too great.

Before he could draw his "shooter," I had him nearly crushed in my arms, and the "bracelets" on.

He had a lot of pals, who tried to rescue him, but there were too many of us about.

At his house hundreds of pawn-tickets were found, by means of which some of the less valuable of the jewels of Lady Denvers were found, of course, freshly mounted. His wife, innocent, broken down from ill-usage, was found under charge of a coarse hag, who was well paid for acting as gaoler.

When “the Marquis,” or Goldie, went to prison for twenty-one years, “Wee Wifie” was again rescued by the beautiful Countess Denvers, who has long now enjoyed another and a higher rank. The lady often relates to her friends the story of a Cipher Advertisement. —*The London Budget*.

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