

A Detective's Experience

The Missing Jewels

Those who have read the "Moonstone," said Mr. F., will remember how the experience of Sergeant Cuff, was set at naught by the eccentricities of a dreamer. My own life furnishes an episode somewhat similar to it, but with this difference: The party most interested here was guilty of meditated wrong, while there the effect of imagination and great anxiety united to confound the experience of the great London detective.

A young lady's jewels had been stolen from her room on Esplanade street, and Mr. I. and myself were sent for to look them up. Arriving at the house, we were shown to the room where the robbery had been committed, and examined it carefully. It was a large, elegantly furnished apartment, and showed no evidence of having been entered by violence. Costly articles belonging to a lady's toilet were scattered through the room. The jewel case still lay upon the bureau. The light of the morning sun streamed in at the open window, and flashed upon many a rich vase and beautiful trifle. Pictures hung on the wall, and gold and silver work in many a curious and rare device set off the elegance of the chamber. A splendid watch, set with jewels, was left untouched. Rich shawls and laces, and robes of great value, had been passed by, and only diamonds had been taken.

The young lady herself was in the room, calmly observant of all that passed. There was a shade of anxiety on her face, nothing more.

"Madame, have you no suspicion as to who did this?" I asked her.

"Why do you ask me?"

"Because, if you have, it may save some trouble."

"I have nothing to tell you," she replied, in a tone that aroused my suspicions at once.

She was a tall, stately-looking lady, with whom it would be difficult to associate the idea of crime. Vast resources, furnished with every luxury, and her every want was gratified almost as soon as expressed. She [could] not have made away with her own jewels; yet her manner convinced me she knew in what way they had disappeared. I motioned my companion from the room and then addressed her.

"You say you can give me no information?"

"None, Mr. F."

"And yet you know how they were taken?"

"Me?" The great black eyes flashed with surprise, and the indignant blood stained neck and face.

“I said so; and you must permit me to repeat my observation. You can tell me all about it.”

She looked at me with a strange, frightened expression; the flush faded from her face, and a dull, grayish pallor took its place.

“Believe me, sir, I know nothing,” and a sob crept into her broken words of entreaty; “how should I know!”

“That I cannot tell; but Miss M— your room has not been entered with violence. No professional robber has been here, or these things, almost as valuable as those taken, would not have been here. Access could not have been gained by the windows, for they have not been disturbed. Your door was locked on the inside and bolted. No mere felon did this deed. Miss M—, you must tell me who is the criminal.”

Her excitement, as I proceeded, became marked and noticeable. Her face was rigid with fear, and her hands twitched nervously.

“Perhaps I lost them at the party.”

I knew she was not in earnest.

“No; that is not likely.”

As I spoke my eye lighted on a handkerchief laying on the floor. I picked it up without her observing me, and made an excuse for leaving the room for a moment.

I neglected to state that her aunt first discovered the robbery. Entering the room at an early hour, she found the jewel case open and the diamonds gone. She inquired of her niece where they were.

“In the case.”

“No, they are not here.”

“I put them there.”

“Then they have been stolen,” and the alarm was given.

The young lady had manifested unusual apathy, and had rather discouraged the idea of a search. [Maybe] she had mislaid them, she said; they would turn up again.

Reaching the hall I found the name of the gentleman on the handkerchief—Paul Esben—a gay man of the town—by many thought to be an adventurer, and yet a pet of the ladies. More than one parent had to interpose to prevent his wedding his daughter. He was heartless, soulless, moneyless. I knew him well.

Returning to the room, I asked Miss M— if she knew Mr. Esben.

She seemed a little surprised, but answered readily that she did.

“When did you see him last?”

“A month since.”

“Not later?”

“No.”

“Has he ever given you any keepsake or present?”

“Never!”

“Does he visit here?”

“No—my uncle will not allow him!”

She was scanning my face eagerly as I asked her these questions, and was evidently interested deeply.

“How came his handkerchief in your room?” I showed it to her.

“What? His handkerchief in my room!” She stood before me like a lioness at bay. Her tall figure was drawn up to its full height, and the beautiful woman looked in that indignant attitude never more peerlessly lovely.

“How did it come here?” I asked.

“Left by himself,” she said. “I will tell you all,” she said, speaking rapidly, and evidently carried away by her passionate resentment.

“I liked the man. I sympathized in his peculiar position—the education, habits and tastes of the gentleman without the means. He told me last night he wanted a large sum of money. I did not have it, but I loaned him my jewels with which to raise it. The jewels were not stolen; I gave them to him myself.”

It would never do for the world to know this, and I told her as much. I kept her secret faithfully, but I got back the jewels. She is dead now, and there are none living who know the event of which I speak, save Mr. I. and myself. It will do no harm to publish it, as a curious incident in a detective’s experience.

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