

A Peculiar Case—A Detective's Story

There is a case that I will call to mind now that is rather a peculiar one, and that never was published yet. One day when I was in the office a fine-looking woman came in and said that her house had been robbed. Her name, she said, was McLoud, and she lived somewhere near Lefferts Park—Macon street or Monroe street, I don't know which—anyway, it was in the locality of Lefferts Park, and she, her husband and two children, lived there in pretty good style. She reported that her bedrooms had been visited by a thief, and that the bureau had been visited by a thief, and that the bureau had been robbed of nearly \$2,500 worth of jewelry. This jewelry was all her own—presents that she had received from her husband when she was married—and the jewels were kept in a little Japanese cabinet, which was also a present, and which for safety she locked in one of the upper bureau drawers. Well, I went to work on it, and supposed some second-story thief had been at work there, and, obtaining a full description of the jewelry, I started off to New York and Brooklyn pawn-offices trying to search up the goods but it was no use.

Mrs. McLoud was so anxious after the property that I did really make extraordinary efforts to secure the goods, but I couldn't find a trace of them. At last I suspected this Mrs. McLoud herself. I can't exactly explain to you why; but there was too much earnestness about her to suit me. She was always so anxious to find out if I had recovered any of the articles or if I had got on track of them, and yet I observed that she seemed to be relieved when she was told that I could not get a trace of the jewelry[.] I thought that I had no right to suspect her; she was pretty well off, lived in good style, her husband seemed to be in excellent circumstances, and I couldn't conceive what reason I should have to suspect her, or, in suspecting her—what reason I should have for her being the thief; but somehow or other I could not get it out of my head that she knew more about it than she cared to tell; and at last I set to work to theorize the thing down. I came to the conclusion that she knew the thief, and that for some reason she wanted to hide him or her, or whoever it was. Then I commenced to work on that idea. I found out who her friends were, whom she associated with, etc., but not the faintest speck of light on the case did I get. She used to suggest ideas, too, such as (after I had told her I had been all over New York and Brooklyn) "Don't you think that these thieves would be too clever to take such property to New York; wouldn't they rather sell it in some other town?"

I had almost given up the idea of making anything out of the case, when it struck me that the only servant that they had—a young girl—might have been the thief, or had some crooked man on the outside who had put her up to steal the jewels. As a last resort I went for the servant and accused her point blank. She denied all knowledge of the theft, said that she never had been accused of such a thing before, cried like the mischief, and there was the deuce to pay generally. I had previously inquired as to the girl's character and found it to be exceptionally good. I at last said to her, and some good angel must have prompted me, "When did you see these things last? You say that you clean up Mrs. McLoud's room, and sometimes find jewelry on the dressing-case, where she has left it?"

The girl told me that the last time she saw them was when Mrs. McLoud was in the room, one afternoon, about to dress. She had occasion to go in for something and Mrs. McLoud was putting several articles of jewelry in a piece of chamois leather, and there was cotton placed between the different articles. This was the last the girl saw of them. Soon after Mrs. McLoud went out. I found out, on further questioning, that this day was just one day before the robbery was reported to me, and a new light struck me. I was satisfied, from the information in connection with Mrs. McLoud's action, that she had robbed herself. What for I couldn't divine. What she had done with them I couldn't tell. I was in a quandary and yet I felt sure that I was right. After telling the girl to say nothing of my interview with her to anyone, and assuring her that she was not under suspicion, I determined how to act. I told her to tell Mrs. McLoud I wanted to see her. In a couple of minutes I was sitting alone in the back parlor with her.

"Oh! I hope you have brought me good news," she said, but with an expression on her face that I was satisfied meant that she hoped I had not.

"No, I can't say that I have as yet," I returned. "Mrs. McLoud, I want to ask you a few questions about that jewelry. (I watched her face closely, and saw an anxious and nervous expression take possession of her features, but pretended to be ignorant of it.) When did you wear them last?"

Apparently relieved, she said: "I can't tell. I hadn't worn, at once, the half of my jewelry for some time. I am not in the habit of being flashy."

"Well, you are sure it was all in this little cabinet?"

"Oh! yes. I always kept my watch and rings, and everything up there, you know and locked it up, and then locked the drawer for greater security, and both locks had been broken open."

"You had this jewelry distributed in these cabinet drawers?"

"Yes. I couldn't keep all of it in one."

"Yes," I said, "I think I can produce your property for you."

She gave a start, but recovered herself and said with affected composure, "Can you? I hope so, so much."

"The thief," said I, boldly hazarding all my suspicions on the assertion, "broke the locks of the drawer and broke the lock of the cabinet, too. I think the thief was a woman."

"A woman!" she said nervously, and very much excited.

"Yes," said I, for I knew I had her, "by a woman, and by a woman who knows this house and that room very thoroughly, too. This woman stole the jewelry and carried it off in a piece of

chamois skin, the different articles being laid in cotton, so that they would not be damaged. Now I can get you the articles and arrest the thief. Do you want me to do it?"

I shall never forget the look she gave me; she nearly fainted and for a minute or so never spoke a word. "It all rests with you," I said, with a smile. "If you persist in your efforts and want to make a charge against the thief, why, I must do my duty." The result of the whole thing was just this: I had made a bold stroke and was right. She confessed the whole thing. What do you suppose induced her to do this?"

"I can't tell," said the reporter.

"Well, she simply wanted to dress as well as, and most likely to outshine, other of her female acquaintances, and her husband, who was a steady-going, though prosperous business man, didn't give her enough cash to be luxurious, and she ran up milliners' bills and dressmakers' bills, trusting to economy in her household expenses to defray them. She couldn't fetch it, and she planned this robbery. She broke the locks on the drawers purposely, to give a color of theft to it, and with this money paid the indebtedness that she was afraid to inform her husband of. She begged me not to tell him. I did not, but I guess she had a pretty severe lesson.—*Brooklyn (N. Y.) Eagle*.

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