

## *Stumpy's Dodge*

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The following incident occurred some ten years ago in the city of Philadelphia: Benjamin Yardley, a veteran detective of this city, was entertaining a fellow detective—an old boyhood's friend, James Gardiner by name, who for a number of years had been to California, as a detective in San Francisco.

Gardiner had come East, to spend the Christmas holidays among his old friends, and Benjamin Yardley was one of these friends.

In referring to some of his adventures on the Pacific Coast, Mr. Gardiner alluded to a "slippery customer," named "Stumpy"—a small, neat and compactly built fellow without a particle of beard on his face; he had the features of a woman in every sense, Gardiner said, and, from a habit he frequently indulged in by masquerading in feminine garments he was perfectly at home in the feminine character he assumed.

Then he con't, at will imitate the feminine voice to perfection, although his natural voice was a deep baritone—even in speaking.

Nine years ago, Gardiner continued, "Stumpy" made a "grand haul" by entering the premises of an opulent lady, just before dawn—after the lady had returned from a ball—and, after stupefying her with chloroform robbed her of all her diamonds, which she had worn that night, and securing quite a sum of money besides, left for parts unknown.

By the description the lady gave of the burglar, it was apparent that "Stumpy" was the offender, and Gardener was detailed to hunt him up.

The slippery fellow, however, left no trail behind him when he left the city, and from that day he was seen no more in California.

"What reward was offered for his apprehension?" asked Yardley.

"Five thousand dollars," was the reply.

"And the value of the jewels and money?" pursued the veteran, in a thoughtful tone.

"Between forty and fifty thousand."

"Had he confederates, think you?"

"It was supposed not."

"No female, eh?"

"Not to my knowledge," replied Gardiner.

Yardley fell into a train of thought and while thus employed, his companion glanced over at the paper. He finished this and glancing at Yardley he was surprised to find his friend, usually so lively, still thoughtful.

“What is it, Ben?” he asked, “solving a problem?”

“Possibly,” was the laconic reply.

“Tell us all about it,” said the other, in a bantering tone.

Yardley slowly raised his eyes to the face of the speaker and said,

“Gardiner, my boy, what would you say if I were to tell you that I believe I could take you to the residence of “Stumpy?”

The California detective jumped from his chair and cried!

“You don’t mean it?”

“I do.”

“And you will lead me to his hiding place?” pursued Gardiner, in an animated tone.

“To his place of residence—yes; but he does not hide, to all appearances,” was the smiling reply.

“What name does he go by?”

“Nine years ago he called himself ‘Miss Caroline Dorsey,’” said Yardley, with an amused smile, “but at present he is known as the ‘wealthy Mrs. Montague.’”

“Married?”

“Apparently so; at all events there is a man living with her representing the ‘Mr. Montague.’”

“Otherwise a female in disguise as a double guard against detection?” observed Gardiner, sententiously.

“Possibly,” returned Yardley, “although I think Mr. Montague is in reality a man.”

“Well, admitting all that, he is of no consequence,” remarked the other, “it is ‘Stumpy’ we are after. Will you introduce me?” he asked, facetiously.

“Does he know your person?” asked Yardley.

“I think not,” Gardiner replied, “Yet to make sure I shall assume a disguise when the introduction takes place.”

“Very well,” said Yardley, smiling again as an idea entered his fertile brain. “You shall be introduced, but not by me. I have a friend who will do that while I stand aside and observe the effect.”

“What effect?”

“You shall see.”

“But tell me about the advent of this most delectable ‘Miss Caroline Dorsey[,’]” said Gardiner.

“That was my intention. It can be told in a few moments, so to speak,” returned Yardley. “She came here representing that she came from Ireland with her parents, both of whom died on the passage and were buried at sea. She obtained a situation as a chambermaid with a respectable family on South Fifteenth Street where she [remained] a year, then left them with the intention of going into the trimming business with the money she had saved out of her earnings.

She opened a store and stocked it well—so well, in fact, as to elicit the surprise of her late employers, who sometimes called on her.

Two years later she sold out at a bargain, and lived in retirement for two or three years, when the ‘Wealthy Mr. Augustus Montague put in an appearance and wooed and won Miss Dorsey.’”

“The pair are then really wealthy?” Gardiner asked in an earnest tone.

“So one may judge by their manner of living,” was the reply.

“The result, undoubtedly, of that ‘grand haul’ of diamonds[,’]” the other remarked.

“Quite possible” was the grim rejoinder.

“Where do they live, and what are their usual habits?”

“Their residence is on West Green street, and Mr. Montague divides his time by visiting the brokers’ offices on Third street, and absenting himself for a period of three or four days every fortnight. The lady seldom leaves the house.”

“Possibly on a plundering expedition.” observed the California detective, referring to Montague.

“Very likely,” responded Yardley.

On the following evening the Montague’s gave a reception, and Messrs. Gardiner, Yardley & Co. were there. The “Co.,” was a quiet genteel young man whom Yardley found extremely useful as a “spotter,” and a “shadower,” in his peculiar line of business. His name was Walter Rainsford, and he was generally looked upon as a young gentleman of means, inasmuch as he dressed well and went much into society.

“He and Mrs. Montague were quite intimate, and he it was who first suspected the sex of that lady, and so informed Mr. Yardley; hence both of these public officers kept a pretty sharp eye on the fictitious female, and ultimately were confirmed in their belief that Mrs. Montague was a man in disguise, but failed to discover his motive. Mr. Gardiner, however, furnished the motive, and these three gentlemen now resolved to make a proper investigation of the matter.

Any one witnessing the introduction, not being aware that the spurious lady was a man, would never for a moment have suspected such to be the case. The sweeping bow she made would have deceived any one, almost, and the smile that accompanied it was most brilliant and bewitching.

Yardley stood in the shadow when the parties were introduced, and distinctly saw the lady give a perceptible start when the name of Mr. Gardiner of California, fell upon her ears.

“We have struck our game,” was his mental observation, and he was perfectly correct, for Mrs. Montague subsequently interrogated Walter Rainsford very closely in reference to the gentleman. But that “innocent,” quieted her alarm by saying that he met the gentleman at a hotel and being fortunate enough to render him a slight service an introduction followed, and they became mutually pleased with each other.

Had the lady been aware of the real profession of Rainsford this explanation would not have satisfied her—she would have regarded it as a “a made up lie” to serve a purpose. But not for a moment suspecting his avocation, the answers he gave to her questions quieted her fears, and the momentary alarm subsided.

It was evident that “Stumpy” was acquainted with Detective Gardiner by profession at least, if not acquainted with him personally.

On the following day Gardiner observed that he was “shadowed” by an apparent countryman, and shrewdly guessed that “Stumpy” was the employer of the fellow.

In order to completely hoodwink the rogue, Gardiner pretended to make a number of purchases in Market street wholesale houses, which fact was, of course, made known to Mrs. Montague, and was calculated to still further quiet her fears.

In the meantime Mr. Montague left the city on his periodical journeys, and was followed by Rainsford in disguise. When the latter returned and reported to his employer he surprised him not a little. Mr. Montague like his reputed wife was a fraud. He was simply a big woman in disguise and was know by the demi-monde of New York as “Big Ann” and was a well known prostitute of Murray street in that city.

Yardley did not apprise his friend of what he had discovered in reference to Mr. Montague, but resolved to aid him in securing the greater criminal—“Stumpy” first, after which, if the other was found guilty of any crime to take her also into custody.

Gardiner concluded to take the rascal during the absence of Montague, as it could be done more

quietly, and Yardley agreed with him, urging him, however, to use the utmost caution since “Stumpy” was such a slippery customer.

“I shall be careful,” replied Gardiner, with a confident smile, as the pair sauntered out of Mr. Yardley’s residence.

“Condemn that fellow,” he immediately added, as he saw his ‘shadow,’ sauntering leisurely along on the opposite side of the street.

“He is dangerous now,” remarked Yardley, gravely.

“Why so?” the other asked.

“Because he saw you with me and will so report to “Stumpy,” who knows my profession.”

“Ah.” cried Gardiner in real alarm. “I was not aware of that; I must act promptly, or by Jingo, [‘Stumpy’] will slip away.”

Gardiner crossed the street after taking leave of Yardley, and he approached the seeing countryman that had just a moment before parted with a boy with whom he had been conversing.

“Can you tell me where the Mayor’s office is?” he asked of the fellow.

“Nix forstay,” was the reply, and the detective was positive that the response was derisively given.

He resolved therefore to keep him in view until an officer appeared and then give him in charge for an imaginary offense so as to prevent him from communicating with “Stumpy.”

This was accomplished very neatly but the fellow appeared to take it coolly and offered no resistance on being arrested; only when he was led away he turned to Gardiner, and closing one eye he remarked:

“Now you think you’ve done it?”

The detective stared at him, but beyond that simple remark the man spoke no more.

“Confound him, what did he mean?” Gardiner muttered, musingly, “can there be any significance in the words?”

He had a warrant for “Stumpy’s” arrest in his pocket and resolved to push the matter at once.

He hastened to see Yardley and together they proceeded to the Montague mansion. They were admitted by the servant who informed them, however, that madam was indisposed and could not see any visitors.

“But our business is very urgent,” Gardiner remarked, “and it is imperative that I see the lady.”

“I will tell her so,” was the quiet response, and the girl left the parlor. Gardiner and Yardley quietly followed her which she apparently did not observe for she never turned her head as she proceeded up the stairway.

At the chamber-door, however, she turned and a look of surprise sprang into her face.

“Why do you follow me?” she asked.

“To see your mistress,” was the reply from Gardiner.

“This is her chamber,” rejoined the girl, “and you may enter if you choose,” saying which she abruptly left them, and they heard the front door close as if she had left the house.

They opened the door, some one was lying in bed with their back turned toward them, but by the garment they supposed it was a female—real or pretended.

Gardiner approached the bed and laid a hand on the figure’s shoulder, then uttered an exclamation, and grasping the occupant he drew it forth and flung it on the floor with a muttered curse. It was a “dummy” and “Stumpy” had “skipped.”

A slippery customer indeed! “Well?” said Yardley, with a smile at his friend’s look of dismay.

“Gone but not forgotten,” was the grim reply, and they departed from that house in disgust.

“How will you proceed next?” asked Yardley.

“Knowing my game as I do I shall just make up my mind to do what I came East for—enjoy myself with my old friends and drop thief catching the while.

And thus ended this adventure which promised such grand results.

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