

A Daring Robbery.

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Mrs. Fitch's Necklace Stolen.

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Operation of the Detectives

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Quick Capture of the Thieves

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Recovery of the Valuable Treasure

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The Exchange of Satchels—The Officers Alarmed—The Plan of Their Movements—Distress of Mrs. Fitch—How the Arrest was Made—Identification of the Robbers—Statement of the Prisoner—The Necklace at Galt's, &c.
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Last evening, Lieutenant and Mrs. Fitch, who have been spending a few weeks in St. Louis, visiting General and Mrs. Sherman, arrived in Washington on the 9:10 train, and driving from the depot direct to Willard's, were assigned to parlor No. 12. Immediately on going to their room, Mrs. Fitch made the discovery of the loss of her diamond necklace, the royal present from the Khedive of Egypt. Thinking the simplest way of transporting the valuable jewel would be the most likely way of keeping it safe and from the clutches of thieves, she locked the necklace in a common traveling satchel, made of heavy green cloth and bound with brown leather. It was her purpose soon as she arrived at the hotel to take out the necklace and send it to the office to be locked up in the safe. Her feelings can be better imagined than described when she found the satchel in her possession filled with worthless trash and her necklace gone, and the further discovery was quickly made that a satchel similar in every respect to hers, so far as material and make are concerned, had been substituted for her own.

Mr. Cake was quietly called to the parlor by Lieutenant Fitch, and being made acquainted with the loss, and the facts attending it as far as they could be given, he advised that Mr. Clarvoe, chief of our detective force, should be promptly consulted, and he directed Mr. Harris, one of the clerks of the hotel, to take a carriage and go for the chief. Fortunately Mr. Clarvoe was at home, and by 10:15 o'clock, or in about forty minutes from the time of the arrival of Lieutenant and Mrs. Fitch, the facts attending her great loss were in possession of the chief of police, Major Richards, and the chief of the detective corps, Mr. Clarvoe. In the meantime Mrs. Fitch,

OVERCOME BY GRIEF AND FRIGHT

had been thrown into violent convulsions, and was utterly unable to give Mr. Clarvoe any additional information. On being closely questioned Lieutenant Fitch recollected that when they left St. Louis Tuesday morning the seat directly in the rear of them was occupied by a tall, dark-complexioned, neatly dressed man, and that he occasionally had slight conversations with him up to the time of reaching Harrisburg, where he was joined by a

young lady of remarkably prepossessing appearance, who took a seat beside him and kept it until their arrival in Washington. Lieutenant Fitch was sure that his wife or himself constantly had possession of their satchel all the way from St. Louis, and that it was not out of their hands but once, and that only for a moment, when, after arriving here, Mrs. Fitch laid the satchel on the seat for a second while adjusting her shawl.

Mr. Clarvoe then gave positive instructions that the knowledge of the loss should not get out, and going to headquarters immediately summoned to his aid the entire detective force, Messrs. Sargent, McDevitt, McElfresh, Miller and Coomes. These keen, vigilant officers of the law were all united in the opinion that when Mrs. Fitch laid her satchel down to fix her shawl the woman in company with the man adroitly

SUBSTITUTED HER SATCHEL

for that of Mrs. Fitch, and that both she and her accomplice were in the city. They could not have left by railroad after the robbery was committed, nor would they in all human probability attract attention to themselves by engaging a conveyance to leave the city at that time of night. The plans of Chief Clarvoe were quickly developed. He did not believe that robbers so daring and accomplished would be found consorting with thieves or in any of the dark and obscure places of the city. It was his opinion that they must either be in some private boarding house or in one of the hotels, and acting on this hypothesis, Detectives Sargent and McElfresh were assigned to work the western part of the city above Seventh street, while he, with Miller, Coomes and McDevitt, would attend to the balance. It was now nearly 12 o'clock. The preliminary arrangements for the search had been conducted with method and coolness, and the keenest judgment of the officers had been brought into requisition to make the capture sure, but the magnitude of the job created an intense degree of excitement.

THE VALUE AND BEAUTY AND CELEBRITY

of the necklace, the fact that it was the royal gift of an influential sovereign to one of the most favored of American women, the high character of Mrs. Fitch's parents and relations, the gorgeous ceremonials attending her recent wedding and the pride the officers must naturally feel in a successful result of their efforts to capture the thieves, all combined to produce a nervous determination they never felt before and an intrepid courage that would lead them through any danger. Our readers, in this connection, will remember that

THE NECKLACE

is (we can only at this hour of writing give a brief description of it) composed of a double row of diamonds, set in gold. Each tone is from three carats down to one half carat, and between every eighth diamond there is a pear-shaped diamond of large size surrounded by twelve good-sized diamonds; attached to the two rows are five festoons of diamonds, composed of fifteen diamonds each, and each loop is fastened with a pendant containing a pear-shaped diamond, surrounded by fifteen small diamonds, and besides these there are in the centre of three of the festoons large pendants containing pear shaped diamonds of

great beauty, surrounded by eighteen diamonds. The centre stone is a diamond of some fifteen carats, and the snap is one of about eight. The mounting is very heavy, and it is really quite a burden to carry it around the neck. The estimated value is five lackhs of rupees, or £50,000, or \$250,000, or a million and a quarter of francs. By a law of Congress it was admitted free of duty, and it was delivered to Mrs. Fitch at the custom-house in New York some six weeks ago. And unintentional error in the law makes it null and void, but as it was the clear intention of Congress that Mrs. Fitch should have her present free of duty, it was turned over to her with the understanding that the Government should for the present have a mere nominal control. It is one of the grandest, most superb ornaments ever manufactured, and could only be offered as a gift by a sovereign of princely revenues.

THE FIRST CLUE

to the robbers was obtained by Mr. Sargent. Armed with the usual authority to examine the records of the telegraph office he went directly to the Western Union office, corner of Fourteenth street and Pennsylvania avenue, and examined all the private telegrams which had been sent off since 9:15. There was only one that gave the slightest indication of having any relation to the matter in hand, and that was as follows:

WASHINGTON, D.C., 9:30 p.m.

March 31, 1875.

To W.C. Mardox, 107, Railroad street, Harrisburg, Pa.

Work accomplished. Return to-morrow. Meet me at 5:10 train.

PINK.

The fact that the dispatch was sent to Harrisburg, where the supposed robber had been joined by the woman, the phrasing of it and the peculiar signature, all led Mr. Sargent to question the clerk closely as to the appearance of the man who sent it, and his looks were remembered, for the reason that he changed a fifty-dollar bill in paying for the dispatch, and these corresponded with the description given by Lieutenant Fitch. Mr. Sargent immediately telegraphed to the chief of police in Harrisburg to arrest Mardox, and hold him until further orders. Then he and McElfresh quietly visited the Ebbitt House, the Arlington, Willard's and Imperial, examined the registers, and made such direct and circumstantial inquiries of the clerks of the hotels in regard to their late arrivals as they deemed proper, but all without eliciting any further information of the slightest possible use, except, perhaps, the fact that the robbers had not secured quarters in any of them.

In accordance with previous understanding they returned to headquarters at 12 o'clock to report progress, compare notes, and to receive additional instructions from Mr. Clarvoe, who, with McDevitt, Coomes and Miller, had, in the meantime, visited the National Metropolitan, St. James, St. Marc, the American, the Washington House, the Tremont, the Continental and the Congressional, but none of the late arrivals at any one of these hotels were of a nature to excite suspicion except in one case, and in nearly every instance the clerks of the hotels were acquainted with their guests, and could give satisfactory accounts

of them. The exception was at the St. James. There were four or five arrivals from the West by the 9:10 train, and among them that of a lady who was registered as

MRS. ALICE H. PINKNEY,

Jefferson City, Mo., and after being assigned to her room, No. 24, she remarked to Mr. Bunker that her husband was with her, and would be in after attending to an important engagement. There was nothing very suspicious in all this, but Mr. Clarvoe determined to place her under espionage, and accordingly Mr. Coomes was detailed to watch in the hall near her door and to arrest her if she attempted to go out, and her husband if he should come in; and to still provide more effectually for her arrest, Mr. Miller was directed, in conjunction with Mr. McDevitt, to keep a sharp lookout on the Avenue between Four-and-a-half and Seventh streets for the alleged husband's arrival at the hotel.

As soon as Mr. Clarvoe heard from Sargent and McElfresh what they had accomplished, and read the telegram signed "Pink," he was morally satisfied of the guilt of the party at the St. James. It was now 1 o'clock. A hasty note was dispatched to Mrs. Fitch to quietly take a carriage and come to headquarters if she could, as every hope existed of soon requiring her services in identifying the supposed robbers, but her condition was such that her physician, Dr. Garnett, absolutely forbade her going out. She was in high fever, and had tehn, for the past hour, been occasionally delirious. This manifested itself in most piteous wails concerning her loss, and in helplessly crying, "mother!" "mother!" "O, my dear mother!" Lieutenant Fitch, however, at once repaired to the detectives' office, and the very fact that he was sent for, as he remarked us, seemed to assure him that the stolen necklace would be recovered.

The entire strength of the force was now concentrated in and around that St. James. It was not deemed either necessary or prudent to make an immediate arrest of the woman for fear of giving the alarm in some way to her husband, but the strictest watch was kept over her, Mr. Coomes keeping his station in the hall and Mr. Miller having his in the office below, while the balance of the force was disposed cunningly on the outside of the hotel. For one long hour, which seemed almost an eternity to the officers, they kept their secret watch, and made their short patrols. During that time the arrest of three different citizens, answering somewhat to the description of the man, was made, but quickly discovering the errors made, they were liberated on the spot. Their skillful work and patient watching

WAS AT LAST REWARDED.

Clarvoe was walking on the north side of the Avenue, slowly down toward the National, and when about half-way between the St. Marc and the Metropolitan, he was overtaken by a man. Whether he then knew the officer or not is a mystery; at any rate, Clarvoe could tell by his quick impressions that there was something unusual about him, and the man's action at once plainly indicated that he was nervous. The single expression of "Good evening!" passed between them, but Clarvoe kept by his side, or just a little in his rear, until they reached Sixth street, when the man started to cross, and then suddenly turned round and commenced walking back.

Clarvoe then said, "Where are you going, sir?"

"To my hotel," he replied.

"Which is that?" asked Clarvoe.

"Willard's; I've got turned round."

"Suppose you turn round again and go with me?" said Clarvoe, stepping up and placing his hand on his shoulder. By this time Clarvoe's private signal had been made, and Sargent and McElfresh were at his side. The man saw that it was useless to resist, and he submitted to the handcuffs and was marched up to police headquarters, where he was immediately identified by Lieutenant Fitch as the man who had occupied the seat behind his all the way from St. Louis. Mr. McElfresh was then sent over to the St. James, with directions to Coomes and McDevitt to arrest the woman registered as Mrs. Alice H. Pinkney and bring her to headquarters, which was quickly and quietly done, and without informing her of the arrest of her pretended husband, she was locked in a room remote from his. Lieut. Fitch also identified her as the woman who took the trait at Harrisburg. The clerk in the Western Union office who received the dispatch was sent for, and being taken into the presence of the man under arrest he promptly identified him as the one who had sent the dispatch to Mardox. He gave his name as Bushrod T. Pinkney, and said, "He was from St. Louis, and had come to Washington on private business, and that the lady with him was his wife; that she had been visiting friends in Pennsylvania, and had joined him at Harrisburg by telegraphic direction." His wife was then brought into the room, and while she was telling a similar story one small trunk, the only baggage she had in her room at the hotel, was brought in by McDevitt. On the sight of it each of them

TURNED AS WHITE AS A SHEET,

and she, choking with emotion, asked why they had brought her trunk there. Feeling perfectly sure that he had the thieves caged, Clarvoe made no reply, but simply asked her for her key. After a despairing look at her husband she handed it to the Chief, and he proceeded at once to examine its contents and near the bottom of the trunk he found Mr. Fitch's satchel, and in it the necklace safe and sound, but the satchel itself had been cut. It was now 3 o'clock, and Lieut. Fitch left immediately to convey to Mrs. Fitch the glad news.

PINKNEY'S STATEMENT.

He is evidently a man of some general culture, of rather a refined appearance, and possessed of great nerve, and said that before being locked up he would like to make a brief statement. He said that "he was in the bar-room of the Southern hotel in St. Louis, Monday evening; that he knew [Lieut.] Fitch by sight; that while the Lieutenant was taking a glass of wine with some friends he overheard him remark that he and his wife were going on to Washington in the morning; that he proposed to settle up his accounts with the Navy Department and then resign, and that his wife would go with him. The thought occurred to

him that she might have her necklace with her, and that in some way an opportunity would occur to possess himself of it. He formed the project of accompanying them to Washington, and by the time they reached Pittsburg he was satisfied from the extraordinary care the Fitches took of their satchel that it contained valuables of some sort. At Pittsburg he telegraphed to Harrisburg to the woman who was with him, and whose real name was

ALICE H. MILLIKEN,

a professional thief, and belonging to a family of that name well known as thieves. He also told her in the telegram what sort of a satchel to bring with her, and while they watched every opportunity to make the exchange it did not occur until their arrival in Washington, where it was effected while Mrs. Fitch was fixing her shawl preparatory to leaving the cars. The rest of it you know. And now," says he, "I am prepared to take the consequences." All that Clarvoe said in reply was that he had probably done the best thing possible for himself under the circumstances, and that his frank confession might possibly mitigate his punishment. The thieves were then locked up in separate rooms, and they will be taken before Judge Snell this morning at 10 o'clock.

When the news of the recovery of her treasure was conveyed to Mrs. Fitch her revulsion of feeling

WAS ALMOST AS MARKED

in demonstrations of joy as it had been in grief. She clapped her hands and shouted, "Thank Heaven!" "Thank Heaven!" "Thank the officers!" and her delight was of itself, to her physicians, almost as dangerous to her reason as her grief had been. At this hour of writing (3:30 a.m.) she is comparatively tranquil, but expresses a firm determination to return to St. Louis in the evening train, and in obedience to her wishes Lieut. Fitch has postponed his contemplated business with the Navy Department, and will accompany his wife home.

Senator Sherman, who is now in the city, was made acquainted with the facts at 11 o'clock, and he at once repaired to the hotel and has been with his much beloved niece all the night.

The necklace, after it has been identified in court this morning by Lieut. Fitch, will be taken to Galt's where, during the day, in an inside show-case, it will be on exhibition, and all who visit Galt's will be able to see it, but towards evening it will be conveyed to the National Safe Deposit Company for keeping under Mrs. Fitch's orders.

Mrs. Fitch in referring to the robbery, expressed a wish to meet her friends during the day, and Dr. Garnett advised this course, as, in his opinion, it would have a tendency to make her feel reassured and more speedily restore to their wonted tone her much shattered nerves. It is at the least moment of writing, but we must say one word for the detective officers. Their skill, judgment and courage cannot be too highly commended, and we are already aware that they will receive suitable rewards.

April 1, 1875

daring_robbery

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