

A Detective's Story

by Wm. L. Terhune

I WAS employed as a special detective on the New York force in the spring of 18—, when one day as I was lounging in the office I was summoned before the Chief on special business. When I arrived at his office he quietly motioned me into a private apartment, and the following conversation ensued:

“Walters,” said he (Walters was my name,) “I have a special, or, in other words, a very particular case for you to work up; it is one I fear that will be no child’s play, but will demand all your cuteness and energy.”

“Well,” said I, “tell me the full particulars, give me any clues you may have, and if any man can work it up I think I am the one.”

“Well,” was the reply as he drew his chair close up to mine, “here goes, and if you succeed, I will pledge you one thousand dollars cash the moment the job is done; but the particulars are as follows:

“For some time past, complaint has been made here by a great many jewellers that they have frequently missed, at various times, from their respective stores, valuable articles, and, in particular, diamonds; but the thief they have been unable to discover; and thinking the matter a small one I said nothing of it, and in fact it slipped my memory until this morning, when Mr. Farrand, of the firm of Farrand & Doolittle, came here in great haste, and said he had been robbed of diamonds to the amount of twenty-five thousand dollars, and he offers a reward of one thousand for the recovery of the goods, and as the robbery took place only this morning, now is your chance to see what you can do, and if you succeed it will be no small thing for you.”

“Of course I will undertake the job,” said I; “but have you no clue whatever by which I may gain some information?”

“Nothing at all,” was the reply, “except a kid glove which Mr. Farrand found in the store, and he does not know whether that belongs to the culprit or not.”

“Where is it?” I asked.

“Over to Farrand & Doolittle’s store, No. — Broadway,” was the reply.

“Well, I will go over and see him,” I said, as I left the office, and in a few moments I arrived at the then large retail jewelry establishment of the above-named firm, and inquiring for Mr. Farrand I stated my business, and asked to be shown the glove, which was brought to me; it turned out to be a lady’s kid, of a light blue color—so peculiar was the shade that I could recognize its mate among a thousand.

“It is of no use,” said the wealthy merchant. “I have few hopes of ever hearing the first word from the stolen goods; some adroit thief has got them and ere this is far away.”

“Tell me,” said I, “what customers have you had this morning that looked at your diamonds?”

“That would be a hard matter to tell,” said he, “as they have been taken out to show to fifty different individuals, and it was only in examining the case that I missed them.”

“What were the articles taken?” I again asked him.

“One diamond set, valued at ten thousand dollars; another at eight thousand, and one ring worth two thousand; and a third set valued at five thousand,” said he.

“Are you in the habit of having such valuable articles in your showcases?” I asked.

“Not of this kind,” was the reply. “These were only there temporarily.”

“Very well, I am much obliged for your information, and I will do the best I can for you,” said I.

“If you succeed you will never want for a friend,” I heard him say as I closed the door.

My idea was now to go home and prepare for my hunt, as I termed it. So walking up Broadway—I had gone as far as Fourteenth street—I met a friend of mine, by the name of Soden, and stopped to have a few minutes’ conversation with him.

While we were talking I saw an elegantly dressed lady approaching, and as she came up to us I was terror-stricken to behold in her own hand *the mate to the glove which I possessed*, and turning quickly to Soden I inquired of him if he knew who she was.

“Yes,” was his reply. “She is Madame Petrie, and only lately arrived here from France; she has furnished a splendid residence in Fifth avenue, and gives extensive *fetes* nearly every week.”

“Much obliged for the information, but I must leave you now, and hope to soon see you again.” So saying, I hurried down Broadway again (the direction taken by the madame), and, keeping at a safe distance, followed her until I saw her go in the jewelry store of Messrs. G— & B—. “Here is my time,” thought I; so I passed in, and asked to see some sleeve-buttons. The clerk showed me quite a number, but none suited, until the madame passed again out of the store, when, going to the clerk who waited upon her, I asked him if he was sure all his goods were right.

“He replied, “Yes.”

“Examine them again,” I said.

This he did, and eyeing me closely said, “My God! what shall I do? I miss a pair of diamond earrings.”

“Keep still,” said I, “and I will get them for you.” Leaving the store I was just in time to see my bird turn the corner of Eleventh street, so going on a fast run I soon came up to her, and gently tapping her on the shoulder, told her she was my prisoner.

“Your prisoner, sir? how dare you insult a lady in the street? If you don’t leave me I shall call for help,” said she, in a well-feigned voice, and I saw at a glance that she was not to be taken very easily.

“Madame,” I said, “I know who you are, and what you have done this day; submit without resistance and all be well, but if you offer any, it will only be to your own mortification.”

“I will go with you,” said she rather meekly. “But I shall prove that I am no felon.”

It will be unnecessary to dwell any further on my story; suffice it to say, I escorted her to the police headquarters, where she was searched, and all the missing property found upon her, and she at last confessed she was a noted French shoplifter.

The various firms from whom the goods were stolen were overjoyed to receive them back again, and Messrs Farrand & Doolittle made me a present of one thousand dollars more than the promised reward.

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