

THE 'STALLWORTH' MYSTERY

A New York Detective's Story of a Strange Dual Life.

DEATH REVEALS A LAWYER'S SECRET

What a Clever Man Can Accomplish in the Way of Mystifying His Friends and the Public—The Discovery.

"People who commit a crime and try to escape detection, or those who attempt to disappear for any reason, usually make discovery easy by doling and hiding too much," said a well-known New York detective while discussing a recent case of mysterious disappearance with a correspondent of the Globe-Democrat.

"Several years ago I was convinced by the startling developments in the Stallworth mystery that it is comparatively an easy matter for a man fairly well known to lead a double life, change his name and identity, or disappear altogether in a big city like New York. In fact, it frequently happens that a man who has lived a dual life for years is discovered and exposed by accident.

"But the story of the Stallworth mystery will show what a clever man can accomplish in the way of mystifying his friends and the public.

"I was detailed to investigate a robbery that had occurred in a private house uptown. The bed room of the lady of the house, which was situated at the rear of the second floor, had been entered and a quantity of valuable jewelry stolen. The family was away at the time, and the burglar had gained entrance through the window of the room, showing that a ladder had been used. The window had been fastened with a catch on the inside. The burglar broke a pane of glass, put his hand through and unfastened this catch so the window could be easily raised. A light ladder ten feet long I saw would have enabled him to reach the window from the ground.

"The burglar evidently knew just where to find the jewels, for the house showed no evidence of having been disturbed. None of the servants knew where the jewels were kept, so they were not suspected. It was quite a puzzling case, and after several examinations of the house I concluded that the burglar would have to be traced through the pawnshops.

"I had just left the scene of the robbery after my third visit, and was standing on a nearby street corner, when a well-dressed man of middle age came up and spoke to me pleasantly. I did not recognize him, but he was about to turn away when he remarked that the robbery was quite a mysterious affair.

"What do you know about it?" I asked, not liking his impertinence.

"Very little," he replied pleasantly. "I live near by, and read of it in the newspapers. I recognized the man in the Central office man, King, when you spoke of the courts."

"As the man spoke he handed me his card, which read:

EDGAR STALLWORTH,

Attorney at Law.

"I had never heard of the man, but somehow he interested me. First of all he had what I call double eyes. That is, there was an expression in his eyes that is hard to describe, but when looking straight at me he seemed to have a second pair of eyes that looked through and beyond me in a mysterious way. He talked freely of the robbery, and remarked that men who commit a crime no matter how atrocious and cautious, almost invariably left some tangible clue behind them. I told him the man who committed this robbery had had no such clue.

"On that proposition we differed, and he proposed that I take him to the house with me and let him look at the room.

"I am somewhat of a amateur detective," he said, in explanation of his remark. Then he went on to tell me that he had done much detective work as a part of his law business, and that he was an enthusiast on theories of crime and methods of criminals. By this time I had classed the fellow as a harmless crank, but he was a good talker and interested me very much.

"The upshot of it all was that I took him back to the house and showed him the room where the robbery occurred. He first looked at the bureau drawer that had been broken open. That finished, he shook his head and went over to the window, which the burglar had entered. I was watching him closely, and soon after he began to examine the window I saw him smile in a satisfied way.

"One point is settled," he suddenly exclaimed.

"What is that?" I asked.

"The robbery was committed by a glazier."

"How do you know?"

"Because he did not break the glass. He used a putty knife to remove the pane and then dropped the glass to the ground. Only a glazier would have opened the window in this way."

"I had to confess that all of the broken glass was found in the yard; none in the room."

"Here is another point; a better clue, perhaps. The putty knife used had a gap in the blade near the pole, and at intervals you will observe a rough spot, indicating the gap in the knife blade."

"I looked for myself and saw that he was right."

"Now, this robbery was committed by some workman who did a job of work in the house at one time or another, and by accident or design learned where those jewels were kept. He was accustomed to standing on a ladder at his work. So he used a ladder and came in through the window, and was watching for him when breaking locks on doors. He opened the window as a man in his trade would open it, and went to the right place to find what he was after."

"I felt somewhat chagrined, but proceeded to inquire if a glazier had been at work in the house recently. I was told that one had put in some new glass in the windows of the room where the robbery occurred some three months before."

"That's our man," said Stallworth, "but I do not understand why he waited so long."

"I learned the name of the contractor who had the job, and through him got the name of his employee who did the work. We went to the room of the fellow who he was out, searched it and found the stolen jewels. The fellow was arrested later."

"My amateur assistant did not appear elated over our success, and seemed me to take all the credit of the capture."

"Clumsy fool, all of them are," was his only remark when he found that his theory was the right one."

"That was the way I made the acquaintance of Edgar Stallworth. I was interested in the man from the start, and he took quite a fancy to me. He probably would not have done so if he had known the real reason for my interest in him. From the first I had a conviction that the interesting and interesting living mystery and that some day I would learn his secret. I did not exactly suspect him of being a criminal, but I believed that he would sooner or later develop a mystery for mysterious crime that would cause him to try his own hand at puzzling the police and the public."

"I found that he had a fair law practice and enjoyed an excellent reputation among members of the profession. But of his private life I learned nothing. I had not much time, reason nor inclination to shadow him and learn his habits, but I made some inquiries and could find no one who ever knew where he lived. Only his office address was in the directory."

"We remained friends for several years, and he frequently assisted me in my work at times with great success. He possessed in a high degree a faculty for solving the actions of criminals and getting at the secret of apparent mysteries. He was what we would call in our profession a theoretical detective, and his theories were usually sound ones. But while we met often, worked together on many cases and discussed his theories for hours at a time, the man himself remained as great a mystery to me as ever. He never spoke to himself or his own affairs, and there was something in the manner of the fellow that forbade impertinent questions."

"I had been very busy for two or three months on small cases, and had not seen

Stallworth during that time, when I read in the newspapers one morning of the disappearance and supposed suicide from a Fall River boat of one James Stallings, a retired merchant. The man had purchased a ticket for Boston and gone aboard the boat in New York. Friends and members of his family were at the pier to see him off. He remained in his stateroom until shortly after dinner, and was not seen again until after midnight, when two of the deck hands saw him smoking by the outer rail. When the boat arrived at Fall River he was not on board, and it was supposed that he had fallen or jumped overboard. The case was followed up closely by the reporter, and the suicide theory was strongly supported by the facts they discovered. The missing man was a very reticent, mysterious fellow, even his wife and daughter, his only family, knew absolutely nothing of his business affairs. Supposed to be in good circumstances, it was found that all he left his family was an insurance policy for a large amount. This seemed to confirm the suicide theory, and as soon as the widow applied for payment of the insurance the companies started an investigation.

"One of the first things they learned was that the man had spent most of his time away from home for the past five years. Even his wife never knew where he was when he was absent, and she did not know the character of his business. The very few friends and acquaintances of the missing man, who could be found, knew nothing of his business affairs. They knew him simply as a retired merchant. He belonged to no clubs or lodges, and had no intimate friends.

"The man was gone, and there was no positive proof of suicide, but the company contested payment of the insurance policy in the hope that something in their favor might be discovered. That was the way the matter stood, when I one day ran across my friend Stallworth. Almost his first question was to ask what I thought of the disappearance of the man from the Fall River boat.

"I told him that I had paid little attention to the matter.

"Why, that is a wonderful case," he exclaimed, with more animation than usual.

"I have been studying that very closely," he said, "and I am convinced that all of bungling, so far, the insurance company will have to pay the money unless it can produce the man alive."

"I told him that I failed to see anything remarkable in the case, as men had disappeared in that way before, some committing suicide, perhaps, others falling overboard by accident, and still others having escaped from the boat without detection.

"But in the latter case they were always found," he replied.

"Well, this man will be found if alive," I told him.

"Never!" Stallworth exclaimed with emphasis. This man planned too well. All the proof of his being on the boat was seen late at night, and did not leave the vessel when she landed was well supplied. The man has vanished. The mystery is complete.

"The manner of the man surprised me. I had never before seen him so emphatic, but the proof of his being on the boat, and this affair seemed to come up to his idea of a complete and perfect mystery."

"A month passed before I saw Stallworth again. One day I was assigned to a case of mysterious disappearance, and I turned to him for assistance, knowing that he would thoroughly enjoy the work.

"A woman from Brooklyn came to headquarters and reported the disappearance of her husband. He had been gone for three months, and she had been unable to find any trace of him with the aid of private detectives. She did not want the matter made public, but wanted the police to aid her in the search as best they could.

"The story told by the woman was so remarkable that we first investigated to find if it was true. She was a woman past 50, and was a widow five years before, when she met a man who gave the name of Edward James. He represented himself as a lawyer in practice in this city, but of his family or his past history the woman knew nothing. She did not know his address or the names of any of his friends. As she confessed herself, the man exercised some strange influence over her, and she accepted all his statements without question.

"They were married within two months after their first meeting, and had lived very happily together, although her husband was even more of a mystery after marriage than before."

"He would frequently remain away from home for a time, telling his wife that he was absent on business, but never where he was. He never went out with her, not even for a walk in the street, telling her that he had no society except his own."

"The woman was quite wealthy when she married James, and she gave him money whenever he asked for it. He had induced her to give him large sums to invest, as he said, and told her afterward that the money had been lost in bad investments."

"She accepted all he said and did without question, and she was that she had possession of all her money. I learned that on the day he left home she had given him \$10,000 in cash, which he said he wanted for safe and secure investment. With this money he came over to the city, and that was the last she had seen or heard of him."

"I told the woman frankly that I thought she had been deceived and robbed by a clever swindler, and that she would never see the man again. She would not believe this, and I promised to do what I could to find him. I had the woman give me an accurate description of the man, and I was started by the likeness to my friend Stallworth, although, according to her account, her husband was a younger man by ten years than the amateur detective."

"There was little chance of finding any trace of the fellow, I thought, but next day I called on Stallworth and gave him an outline of the case, omitting the name.

"The 'Splendid!' he exclaimed, rubbing his hands in glee when I had finished.

"Very clever fellow, evidently, but if he has hanged the job anywhere we will find him! What is his name?"

"He knew him by the name of Edward James," I replied slowly, looking Stallworth straight in the eyes.

"James, James, Edward James! Seems to me I have heard the name somewhere," he replied, never averting his gaze, nor showing the slightest trace of surprise.

"Up to that moment I had a theory, I need not say what it was, but the manner of my friend convinced me that I was wrong.

"The double eyes of the man were looking straight into mine, one pair of them, while the others seemed to look into space beyond me without a quiver. I thought at the time that if my theory were right and the man was acting, his was the greatest actor living."

"My vague suspicion that this man Stallworth would one day commit a crime of some mysterious character and never lift me up to 'I learned the name of the contractor who had the job, and through him got the name of his employee who did the work. We went to the room of the fellow who he was out, searched it and found the stolen jewels. The fellow was arrested later."

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"I had been very busy for two or three months on small cases, and had not seen

when he was acquainted and see if we could strike the trail of the missing man. It was a cold winter day and the streets were covered with ice. We were crossing Broadway directly in front of a truck when Stallworth slipped and fell. Before the driver of the truck could pull up his horses they were upon the prostrate man and a heavy iron-hoof struck him in the head, breaking his skull.

"I saw at once that the man was fatally injured. He was still conscious, however, and while waiting for an ambulance I asked him for the address of his family."

"I have none," he answered slowly, while a grim smile played over his pale face.

"Is there anything in your work for you—any message I can deliver?" I asked.

"He shook his head and was silent for a moment. Suddenly he looked at me with that strange expression, like two depths of eyes in one, and said: 'This last case of yours is a good one. I don't believe you will find the man you are looking for. Sorry I cannot work with you on the case. There may be a blunder somewhere, but I think not. It seems to be a complete mystery.'"

"By this time the ambulance had arrived, and as Stallworth was lifted into it he faltered. He did not revive, and died soon after reaching the hospital."

"It took me several hours to make up my mind to tell my wife, but finally I went and brought over to the woman whose husband was missing. I took her to the hospital and asked her to look at the face of the dead man. At sight of it she uttered a cry, and then, in a blunder somewhere, but I think not. It seems to be a complete mystery."

"My suspicion was verified at last, but I was almost sorry that it was so. The fellow had been so very clever in his work it seemed a pity to expose him now that he was dead. But the one point settled, another theory formed itself in my mind, and I decided to act upon it."

"I hunted up the wife and daughter of the man who had been lost from the Fall River boat and brought them to see the body of Stallworth. At sight of the face that could no longer conceal a mystery both women fainted away. They had recognized husband and father, and the Stallworth mystery was revealed."

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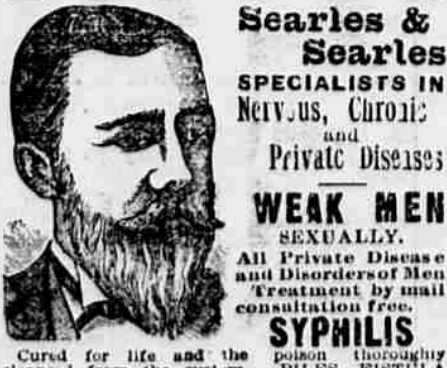
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