

In front of the house the grass is rather long. I was walking on it at the time and when I received the blow I was right in front of the gate. You examine that grass and see if there are any signs of a fall on the grass, or if any one has been dragged along it, for I feel sure that I was carried from that spot into the house."

"I will go and examine it," I said, much struck by his intelligence, "and now good-bye for the present and don't get down-hearted."

"Goodby, sir; God bless you," he cried, and then I left him and wended my way toward the house.

On the way I met the inspector, who inquired if I had learned anything.

"Yes," I replied, "a good deal. I think that I can almost prove the arrested man's innocence."

He looked rather disappointed, but did not ask for any particulars. I believe he thought I was mad. I reached the front of the house and carefully searched the grass. Soon I found a place where it looked disarranged, and, getting out my lens, I carefully examined it. Yes, there was the mark of the fallen man; a little further back was the mark of another man, who had evidently stood there some time. But search as I would, there were no signs of any one being dragged along. But, stay, I suddenly alighted on a footprint, then another, and another right up to the gate, then across the garden, till they ended by the forced window. Suddenly an idea struck me; the footprints seemed very deep. I made one or two beside them, mine were not nearly so deep. What did this point to? The maker of them had been heavily laden. There could be no doubt of it, the villain had taken off his own shoes and put on those of the arrested man; then he carried him across the garden and thrown him through the window unconscious, pouring a glass of the drugged wine down his throat, then he had robbed the dead man and departed. But there were a few queries unanswered:

First—How did he know the wine was drugged?

Second—How was it there were no signs of his departure?

Third—How could he carry the valuables away, for I had been informed they were very heavy? In my own mind I had proved one man's innocence; but a harder task lay before me—to prove another man's guilt.

Search as I might, I could find no more traces, and the matter became more puzzling. The burglar seemed either to have flown away or to be still in the house. This feeling was augmented later on, when I went to the nearest station and inquired if any strangers had been about. To my surprise, they positively affirmed that I was the only stranger that had come or gone for the last few days. The next station was some ten miles off; it was not likely they would have carried their spoil that distance. When I reached my lodging and thought the matter over there was only one possible conclusion. The murderer must be still in the village, and some of the stolen property must be still hidden in the house or grounds, and in the evening I determined to watch the house, for there I was convinced lay the key of the mystery.

About 10 o'clock I cautiously crept into the garden and scaled a tree which stood in a direct line with the old man's bed room, I have been in a few strange positions, but never in such a one as that, before or since. For there I sat, perched in that tree for two mortal hours, in the most uncomfortable of positions, and nothing occurred.

Presently I saw the light in one of the bottom rooms go out, and soon after the old man himself came up to bed. First he very carefully drew his window curtains together, which shut me out from all view. But I meant to see some-

how, and, noticing that the ends were left uncovered, I cautiously descended from my perch, and, after taking off my boots, began to climb up the creeper which covered the house and was as thick as a man's wrist in some places. My heart beat violently as I neared his window; the stem of the creeper was getting thinner, and one false step might ruin all, but I reached it at last, and, by bending under the window, had a fine view. The first thing that surprised me was that he had not begun to undress; but a greater was in store, for, after walking across the room and locking the door, he touched a board in the wall—which was of panelled oak—and it sprang open, revealing a small, secret chamber. It might have been Aladdin's Cave, for it glittered and shone, even in that pale light. It contained the stolen property!

What happened during the next few minutes I cannot tell, my brain was too dazed to observe. All I could think of was, the old man had the stolen property. When next I looked he was packing the things into parcels, wrapped in rags and old paper, so that they looked like rubbish. As I watched him, I observed that he no longer painfully hobbled about, but rather flew over the floor in his joy. Soon they were all wrapped up, and the secret panel was slid noiselessly into its place. I watched with great interest for the next development, but I am bound to admit that it staggered me. The old man fumbled about his beard for some time, when it suddenly fell off, revealing the face of a man about forty; then the wig followed suit, and the metamorphosis was complete. It was a young man in disguise. The mystery was solved. Soon after he extinguished his candle, and I went to my lodgings to ponder over the strange case.

In the morning we arrested him, to his great surprise, but, after having his beard and wig removed, he was too astonished to lie, and confessed his guilt. Needless to say, the suspected man was released at once.—Tit Bits.

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