

led for Lever, Garnett & Co., the great watchmakers and jewelers, that the affair I have alluded to occurred. I did not take patterns or stock of jewelry, but represented the watch branch of the concern only, and carried with me on my journeys a stock of watches worth considerably more than a thousand pounds. These watches were arranged on trays in an oblong mahogany box, securely bound with brass and fitted with patent locks, and the box was of a size to go conveniently under a railway seat. It was my duty not to lose sight of this box when on the rail, and when at an hotel I always had it sent into my bedroom at night. On one occasion I was going to Ireland, and had taken the night express from Stafford, booking to Dublin, via Holyhead. I saw my box deposited under the seat of a second-class carriage, and had the compartment to myself till the train arrived at Chester. There another passenger entered, and seated himself in the further corner, on the opposite side to me. For a while I took no particular notice of the new-comer, but indulged in reverie while smoking this merschaum. [It was not so highly colored then as it is now, he added, parenthetically.] After some time I looked at my companion, and wondered who or what he could be. He was of angular and rather powerful build, and, being in ill-fitting, seedy black clothes, with a dirty white necktie and a shabby box hat, he had somewhat the appearance of a backsliding preacher or dissipated undertaker. But there were two little matters connected with this gentleman which I could not quite reconcile with either of these hypotheses. The first was, that, although his hair was rough and short behind, he had a long greasy lock twisted forward from each ear; the other, that out of a bundle he had with him protruded the dirty ends of a pair of corduroy trousers.

"Being tired, I soon gave up thinking about the man, as I could make nothing of him, and went to sleep. I was awakened by the train stopping at the Holyhead station. My late travelling companion had departed, and as I knew that every compartment would be searched and all the luggage taken down to the Dublin steamer, I left my box under the seat, went to the refreshment rooms for a short time, after which I walked down the rails to the pier and on board the boat. There was the usual

scene of confusion attendant on the departure of a Channel steamer at night—passengers wandering about, sailors bawling, hauling and calling, steam blowing off, and so on. The baggage had been deposited promiscuously on the deck, and some men with lanterns were engaged in sorting the packages and preparing to lower the larger ones into the hold. I did not see my box, but at first was not uneasy about it, believing it to be hidden somewhere among the rest; till, as one package after another was shifted and it did not appear, some misgivings came over me. I asked the men as unconcernedly as I could if they had seen a box of the description I gave; they had not, and then I became alarmed for its safety. My next step was to speak to the mate, who, on hearing of the valuable contents of the box, took a lantern and helped me in my search. We looked in every likely and unlikely place, but with no success. By this time the vessel was steaming on her way to Dublin, and the captain had descended from the bridge that the mate might take his place as usual. On learning what was the matter the captain asked if there were any other passengers in the compartment in which I had travelled from Stafford. I then thought of, and described, the man who had got in at Chester. Thinking he had probably stolen the box, and was on board the boat, we looked about for him. He was not among the cabin passengers, and I accepted the captain's invitation to go 'for'ard,' where we scrutinized those in the forecabin; but with no result, except that of making them wonder what on earth—or, rather, water—we were locking at.

"'I'm afraid it's a bad job, sir,' said the captain; 'but your only chance is to make yourself comfortable and go back by the return boat to Holyhead, where you will be able to make enquiries about your box of the station master. You'll be there in the morning, and I wish you success. I'm just going to have a glass of grog, and then I shall turn in.'

"Making myself comfortable was out of the question; but I did return by the next boat. I met with every attention I could wish for from the officials at the Holyhead station. Every nook and corner was searched; porters, engine cleaners, and all were had up and examined by the station master; but with no result."

Here the speaker paused to refill his pipe.

"Ah!" said Baldwin, "of course you never heard more of the box or its contents."

"Hold on," said Larkey, junior; "the yarn's not finished yet!"

"The rest may appear improbable," resumed he of the bald head; "but is true, I assure you."

"As you may imagine, I was nearly distracted by anxiety and want of rest; but it was of no use to wait about at Holyhead, so I determined on going up by the next train. The question was, where to go? I could not bear the thought of presenting myself before my employers minus their property, which had been entrusted to me, without making some further effort. As it appeared utterly hopeless to recover the box and its contents, I took a ticket to Chester, having some vague notion that, as the suspected party had entered the carriage at Chester, I might find him there."

"Not likely," said Larkey, senior.

"You are quite right, but in these cases one catches at a straw."

"I had settled myself in an empty compartment, when, just as the train was moving off, a man got in, and, after taking off his hat, pulled out of his pocket a newspaper, and appeared to read. He was an ordinary-looking individual—might have been taken for a farmer, or, perhaps, a well-to-do tradesman. After scrutinizing him attentively for some time, I moved towards him, and said, 'Excuse me, you are a policeman, are you not?' The man looked up from his paper, and gave me a searching glance, and said, quietly, 'Well, suppose I am?' I told him about my loss. He appeared to pay very little attention to what I was saying, keeping the newspaper in his hand, and looking at it from time to time, except when I described the man who got in at Chester, about whom he questioned me rather closely. When I had finished he said, 'I am a detective; but how do you know it?' 'By your boots,' said I. 'You have the regulation police boots.' My new acquaintance said there was little chance of my ever seeing the watches again, though he would do what he could for me if I would strictly follow his instructions, which, of course, I was glad enough to do; and they were as follows: 'At Chester there will be a delay of ten