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Advertise in "Evening Telegram."

THE ADVENTURES OF A LADY DETECTIVE.

From time to time my work takes me into private houses, sometimes as a guest at a big house party, sometimes to a ball or great reception. This necessitates my having, I may incidentally remark, a full wardrobe of smart gowns and evening frocks, for, of course, I appear on such occasions as a friend of the hostess. My dress bills for this purpose amount to a good sum in the year, and I have to constantly renew my wardrobe, for I must take care to appear but seldom in the same frock or gown. My work at private houses varies a great deal.

I may have to watch a lady who has been suspected of stealing some of her hostess's valuables, or I may be commissioned to find out if one of a party is cheating at cards, or I may have to obtain evidence to be used in a divorce case or action for slander.

They Seldom Reach the Courts.

Behind the scenes in the great fashionable world dramas as strange, indeed often stranger, than are ever seen on the stage are constantly being enacted, and the strangest never or rarely see the light of the Law Courts; they simply end in the disappearance of some of the chief figures in them from the social world. Occasionally you may catch a reflection of some of these society dramas in some such announcement in the press that Lord—or Mrs.—has sold or let his—or her—house in town and intends living abroad for the next few years.

A few years ago I went down to a great country house where there was a big gathering of many well-known men and women in society. A diamond necklace had been stolen from a lady; the matter had been kept very quiet and no one except the lady in question and the host and hostess knew anything about the affair.

I was introduced as a guest, and, of course, no one in the house had the least idea that I was not one.

One of the Guests was a Thief.

My hostess was quite frank with me regarding the whole matter. She told me that she did not suspect any of the servants, and could only come to the conclusion that it was one of the guests, and she mentioned the name of one and the reason for her suspicion. I asked her for a list of the names of the guests, and saw among them the name of a certain gentleman upon whom my suspicions at once fastened; for I knew, though, of course, his hostess did not, that a similar offence had been brought home to him some years back. He was not, I may say, the person whom the lady of the house suspected.

My suspicions were further confirmed when that night this gentleman told his hostess that he would have to depart the next day. I left directly after he did, for I determined to shadow him, and it was most important that I should not lose sight of him for a moment for the next couple of days.

Pawned the Necklace for £200.

I had, of course, to disguise myself. In order to do this I walked to the railway station, which was about a mile from the house. I carried a small handbag and effected my disguise in a disused cottage by the roadside. I reached the station a few minutes in advance of the gentleman I suspected, and went up to London in the same train with him. Three hours after arriving in London I succeeded in obtaining conclusive proof that he had stolen the necklace. I followed him to a pawnshop, and on his leaving it, ascertained that he had pawned the diamond necklace for £200.

He was not prosecuted, but I believe he had to leave the country. In this particular case, I was rather lucky, and was able to "work" it very quickly; but, of course, I get a lot of cases that are very much more troublesome and difficult. I remember once going to a country house to try to secure evidence against a certain lady in a slander action that another lady wanted to bring against her, and through whom I got invited to the house party in question. My business was to see if I could overhear the lady in question uttering any slander against the other lady.

Well, I was at the house for a week and never heard the lady do anything of the sort. My own impression was, and is still, that she had never uttered the slander attributed to her by my client, which I may incidentally remark was one of a very serious character. Anyhow, my client insisted at last on bringing the action for slander, though she was strongly advised not to do so by her solicitors, and, of course, she lost it, for she practically had no case.

Asked to Catch a Card Cheat.

On several occasions I have gone to private houses to watch certain ladies or gentlemen who were suspected of cheating at cards. I remember some years ago I went as a guest to dinner at the house of

a well-known American lady in society, and until my arrival at their house I did not know anything about the case. I simply received a telephone message in the morning from Mrs.— to say that she wanted me to come to her house that evening at seven and stay to dinner. When I got to the house my client informed me that she wanted me to watch a certain Mr.— when he was playing cards, after dinner.

There was not in his appearance, by the way, the least suggestion of a villain. He was a small, slight, insignificant looking man, with dreamy blue eyes, light hair, and a rather childish expression.

I Watched for Four Hours.

After dinner the party adjourned to the drawing room and began to play poker. I did not join the game, and neither did my hostess. To make a long story short, I watched the game for nearly four hours before I discovered the gentleman in an actual act of cheating. What he did was to slip some cards from the bottom and middle of the pack to the top when taking up the cards to deal, and being a finished card-manipulator, he could do this so quickly that no one who was not watching him very closely could possibly detect him.

In accordance with an arrangement with my client, directly I saw him cheat I rose and left the room, and the gentleman was there and then accused of cheating by the hostess.

The accusation took him completely by surprise, and he admitted to having done so. Before he left the room he made a confession of having cheated on eight different occasions, and undertook to refund eleven hundred pounds, which he had won from these ladies and one gentleman of the party on various occasions in the past month.

A Ridiculous Charge.

I have had some rather amusing cases in the course of my work at private houses. Once an elderly gentleman (he was certainly over seventy) came to my office with a long risqué story about his wife and a gentleman whom he suspected of making love to her, and he wanted me to come to a ball that his wife

was giving and "keep an eye on her."

He gave me to understand that his wife was an extremely pretty, vivacious young person, and told me that he wanted to know exactly how things stood between her and the gentleman mentioned, "before he proceeded to take any extreme measures"—whatever they might be.

He had a niece living in Paris whom his wife and never seen, and I was to be introduced to her as this niece, and he was to tell his wife that she had come to London for a week or so. Well, I went to the ball, and I shall never forget my feelings when my client presented me to his wife.

She was certainly not a day less than fifty, and to imagine her guilty of carrying on a romantic intrigue with anyone was really ridiculous. She was, as a matter of fact, an extremely nice lady, and her husband's suspicions about her were evidence that the old gentleman was falling in to his dotage.

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