

Capturing a Statue

With Paint, Wig and Beard a
Work of Art May Easily
Be Made Repulsive.

In the course of my long and eventful career I have the honor of planning various schemes which have taken a conspicuous place in print of audacity in the records of crime, but perhaps in none of these transactions was such audacity more prominent than in the incident of the carrying off of the Apollo statue from the residence of Sir Titus Blaydes, Bart., the statue in question being the work of the famous sculptor Apelles and being valued by experts at \$250,000.

One evening I was sitting in a restaurant finishing an after dinner cigar when a short, foreign looking man, expensively dressed, came and sat down beside me.

"Excuse the liberty I take in addressing you," he began courteously, speaking with a strong foreign accent, but in perfect English, "but your fame has indirectly reached my ears. I think I have the honor of addressing Mr. Godfrey Vince?"

"That is my name," I returned, much amazed. "May I ask what you desire with me?"

He came very close and, sinking his voice, said in a whisper, "I want you to carry off for me the Apollo statue from the house of Sir Titus Blaydes at Longworth Court."

One glance at the card told me all. It bore the name of Count Antonio Delarocca, the famous millionaire collector of the antique, whose gallery at Milan contained priceless glories of ancient masters.

"I recognize your name, count, and shall be glad to be of service to you. But may I ask what constrained you to fix upon me as the instrument of your designs?"

"I chanced to be present at your trial over the Wigmore case, when, as you will remember, you escaped with a light sentence, though the evidence showed you to be an artist in crime. I kept my eye upon you, resolving to offer you this delicate mission directly the government no longer required your services."

"I shall be delighted to do all in my power for you count, but first of all you must tell me in detail what you require done."

"Most certainly," he made answer, as he offered me a cigar and relit his own. "During the past four years I have made countless offers to Sir Titus Blaydes for his Apollo, the offers being made through secret agents of mine, for naturally the baronet would not part with the statue to a rival collector such as myself. My last offer was no less than \$250,000, but this also was unhesitatingly refused."

He paused and blew a great cloud from his cigar. Then he resumed: "I am a man of iron will, and what I set my heart upon I always obtain. Sir Titus has proved unamenable to fair means. I will now assail him with the only alternative—stratagem. Yes, merely stratagem, not robbery, for on the day that you hand over to me the Apollo statue I shall forward him anonymously the sum of \$250,000. And you, my friend, would receive \$25,000. Come, is the bait sufficiently tempting?"

Before we parted he gave me his address in Milan, for which place he was leaving on the morrow, and it was to this address that I was to convey the statue if my efforts proved successful. I may add that he left with me the