

STORY OF LITTLE MRS. HOPE

Who Was Rather Short on Jewelry and Diamonds.

And Who Was Accused of Adding to Her Stock by Theft and How Her Name Was Cleared.

There were 20 of us making up the party at an English country house for the shooting season, and it so happened that while all were of course well known to host and hostess seven or eight were strangers to each other until introduced at the house. I do not think there were over three or four who even knew little Mrs. Hope by name or could tell anything of her past. Nor did a great deal leak out about her farther after she had been generally introduced and had come to be a favorite with both men and women. She was petite and blond. She had a baby face and big blue eyes, and your first impression of her was that she was a child, and a very innocent child at that. In the billiard room it was whispered that she was a distant relative of Col. Saunders, our host, and that she had married a scamp and been so ill used that a divorce had been sought for. It was generally agreed that it must have all been the husband's fault and that the man who would ill treat such a light hearted, baby faced wife, deserved something beyond contempt. She was by long odds the best looking woman among the eight or ten, but as she was not given to flirtation and as she looked pretty without artificial aids she was forgiven for her handsome face and became a general favorite. The man who leaves business for a week or two for an outing seldom takes along jewelry or money of any account, but nine women out of ten must carry their diamonds wherever they go. There was a brave display of gems at Rose Hill with all except little Mrs. Hope. She had two or three finger rings and a bracelet or two and made a poor showing compared to the rest. This was corroborative evidence that she was none too well fixed financially, but she did not display the slightest feeling of envy, and no hints were thrown out to hurt her feelings. A country house full of wealthy guests is a bonanza for a sly thief, and the colonel warned the ladies from the outset to be careful of their jewelry. All of them agreed to act upon the advice and then, woman-like, carelessly left every ornament lying around. On the fourth day of the party a lady named White missed three valuable rings which had been left lying on a table in her room. They had been taken in broad daylight while the ladies were on the lawn and while the maid was temporarily absent from the room. It was impossible that any outsider could have got into the house, and it seemed impossible to trace the theft to any particular servant. Counting maids, valets and the house retinue, there were about 20 people in the house aside from the guests. Mrs. White's loss was kept a secret for several days from all but host and hostess, but the colonel's quiet detective work brought no reward.

The second loss was more serious. A Mrs. Willmere left her jewelry lying about after dinner and at bedtime discovered that she had been robbed of every single article. The value was at least \$3000, and as she and her husband were both excitable people the loss could not be kept quiet. Between the finish of dinner and bedtime we were scattered about the house and lawn, with the servants moving to and fro, and no stranger could have entered the house without being seen. The bedroom window was up, but no ladder had been used. It seemed to be plain enough that some servant had secured the jewelry, and one by one the entire lot were summoned before the colonel's court of inquiry and interrogated. There wasn't one without a good character, nor could suspicion justly attach to any one. It was long after midnight before we got through, and next morning the sergeant from the police station was called over. He couldn't suspect one of the guests, and he could find no grounds for suspecting one of the servants, and he got out of it by looking wise and saying that Mrs. Willmere had probably mislaid her ornaments. Unfortunately for her she was rather absentminded, and we presently came to accept the theory, though she searched her rooms over and over again without discovery.

The losses did not break up the party, as might have been the case. The colonel and Mrs. Willmere came to some mutual understanding. I think the detective advised them to call it a "mis-

lay" and thereby put the thief off his guard. Col. Saunders insisted that every jewel of value be locked up in the family safe, and when this had been done every guest became a Sherlock Holmes. There were 20 guests and 20 theories. Everything from an owl to the stable boy was under suspicion. The detectives' theory, as he gave it to the colonel privately, was that a smart thief disguised as a lady's maid or an upper servant had entered the house and committed both robberies. Of all the theories this was the most absurd but of course the man felt bound to make a move of some sort. The jewelry had been locked up for four days, and things had quieted down, when the colonel started to produce it in honor of a government official who was to arrive that evening. I say he started to, because he no sooner attempted to unlock the safe than he discovered that the bolts had been shot. As he pulled the door open he uttered a groan, and the sight of his haggard face was evidence enough that something was wrong. The safe had been opened by means of a key, but had not been locked again. Every article of jewelry was gone, and the value of the lot was not a cent under \$10,000. In seeking to render his guests safe the colonel had helped to despoil them. It was impossible to say at what date the robbery had happened, and the only thing to do was to telegraph up to London for a detective. While waiting his arrival no servant was allowed off the grounds, and of course no guest could well leave while under fire. It was a painful position for every one, and the detective rather added to it when he got to work. As soon as he was in possession of all the facts he said to the colonel:

"These robberies were committed by one of your guests. They must all assemble in the drawingroom and submit to having their rooms searched."

Rather than subject them to such an indignity the colonel offered to pay the full loss out of his own pocket, but this no one would hear to. All were willing for the search to go on, and host, hostess and detective made it. Nothing was found. The detective clung to his theory, however, and took another look at the rooms and was given the names of their occupants. There were three rooms which communicated, and those three were occupied by the colonel, his wife and little Mrs. Hope. The door between the rooms of the colonel and Mrs. Hope was bolted on her side and had been for years. This door caught the eye of the detective, and after an examination of the bolt he said:

"This bolt has been worked within three or four days, as any locksmith will tell you, and this door has also been opened."

"Do you know what you are saying?" sternly demanded the colonel.

"I do, sir. You carry the key of the safe in your pocket. To get that key some one has entered your room by this door at night."

"But Mrs. Hope's effects have been searched along with the rest."

"Her effects—yes. She has the jewelry on her person. Let your wife search her."

The colonel was furious and his wife indignant. They would answer for little Mrs. Hope as for themselves.

"I can do no more," answered the detective. "One of your guests is the robber, and it is the guest occupying this room. If you will call her up here I believe I can break her down in ten minutes."

After long hesitation little Mrs. Hope was called up. She came smilingly, and no pair of eyes ever revealed greater innocence. A layman would have sooner suspected a toddling babe.

"Now, then," began the detective, "you are the robber. You took Mrs. White's jewelry, and you robbed the colonel's safe. You got the key from his trousers by opening this door. You have the jewelry on your person."

For the space of 30 seconds the baby faced woman regarded him with wonder, indignation, fear and anguish. Then she gasped for breath and sank down in her tracks.

"Search her," said the detective as he left the room. Ten minutes later he was called in. The little woman lay weeping on the sofa, and the missing jewelry was spread out on the table.

"God help us!" said the colonel as he looked from the officer to the recovered treasure and back.

"We must help ourselves," replied the man as he looked at the woman with pity in his eyes. "Mrs. Saunders, your maid must go. You must fix the price with her. She must get away as soon as possible, and the plunder must be found in her room later on. She will get safe away."

Three hours later the jewelry was "found" in the maid's room, and everybody else was cleared of suspicion and made happy. The maid had been gone two hours, and the detective

doubted whether she could be found in big London, though of course he would use every effort. Little Mrs. Hope was ill for a day or two under the nervous excitement and so had a good excuse for leaving Rose Hill. So far as I know not one of the guests suspected her. Indeed as the maid had left a written confession before she bolted how could any one else be suspected? This being the case, you may wonder how I got hold of the inside facts in the case. Well, that's a matter of no concern as long as I have given you the full particulars. Perhaps the colonel trusted me further than he did the others. As for little Mrs. Hope, it was want of money probably that induced her to turn robber, but I have always tried to make myself believe that she couldn't have realized what she was doing. M. QUAD.

The Last Round.

Editor Nugget:

On this, the eve of the presidential election, I want to thank you for the courtesy your paper has shown me, and the accuracy with which you have published my letters.

I have still a few remarks to make for the benefit of the writer who styles himself "Light and Truth," but who falls far short, if his letters are any criterion, of possessing either. I stated some of the reasons why the people of the United States should support the Republican party, as it is the only party, in my estimation, that has ever passed any effective legislation for the country.

I also called attention to the true cause of the present strike, namely, the laws passed by Democratic legislators of the South, and this is the party he represents and calls upon the American people to place them in control of the government; the party that is incapable of making proper laws for the states they control! He tries to take the blame off the party and place it on the individual by saying Northern capitalists who are Republicans control the southern coal mines. Now, Mr. Editor, while I do not concede that which is merely a bold assertion, and hence no argument, I hold that we are dealing with the abilities of the respective parties to govern the country in such a manner as to protect all in their individual rights and at the same time make such laws that will so control individual enterprise that the rights of all will be properly conserved.

If capitalists have gone into the Southern states and taken advantage of Democratic legislation, the blame, whether they are Republicans or Democrats, must, perforce, lie with the party that made the laws, and that is the party that now seeks for control of the federal government! Shall they have it? I guess not.

A word as to trusts and combines. The Democratic party evidently counts greatly on the forgetfulness of the people in their endeavor to humbug them. But the American people remember well (aye and so do some Canadians) that W. C. Whitney, when secretary of the navy during Cleveland's administration, Democratic Senator Payne of Ohio and President Cleveland, with other Democrats, formed a coal trust, which proved to be one of the most infamous combinations of the age, that literally impoverished a whole people. I cannot go into detail. "Light and Truth" (?) will no doubt remember it. Say nothing of bond issues! But what about the cotton trust made up of Democrats to a man? The same may be said of the salt trust; likewise the eastern sugar trust; to say nothing of the present ice trust, wholly made up of Democrats. Think of these, I say, and then cease "baying at the moon;" cease howling about trusts and combines if you have any love left for the Democratic party, the worst combine of all—"Bryanism and Tammany"—the tale of the fox and the goat in a new aspect, with Reynard as Richard.

Tomorrow the Americans people will show their good sense by returning McKinley to the presidency, and Americans in the Klondike will show their appreciation, since they cannot vote for him, by forwarding him the Nugget souvenir.

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