



## LOST BIRDIE BOODLECHUG.

A DETECTIVE'S STORY.

"Yes, sir," said the detective, as he sa down in the easy chair, "as you remark, we see some queer things in our profession," and he darted his keen eyes in my direction, and lit the cigar with which I had just presented him.

"Now, sir, there was that affair of the lost Miss Boodlechug, you've heard of it of course?—No, well I'll tell you about it. I was sitting in my office one morning when an o'd gentleman entered; he appeared much distressed and gave me the following particulars: His daughter, Birdie, a girl of sixteen years of age, had suddenly disappeared during the previous night. She had left no information as to where she was going, and it was feared she had eloped with young Gunchump, who had been, for some time, clandestinely visiting her, as it had transpired. Mr. Boodlechug desired me to take the case in hand and search for his lost daughter. I did so. I accompanied the bereaved parent to his residence, and made a thorough examination of the premises. I discovered nothing at first which I considered would aid me in my hunt for the missing young lady, and as I was about to leave the house, somewhat disheartened, a parrot, whose cage was hanging outside the front door, gave vent to a series of shrill 'Ha, ha, ha's.' An idea struck me at once, and I pointed to the bird and asked, 'whose parrot is that?' The old gentleman informed me that it had been his daughter's favorite pet. I said nothing, but felt that I had a clue; so, taking the cheque for several thousand dollars which Mr. Boodlechug pressed on my acceptance with a promise of treble the amount if I was successful in finding his Birdie, I left the house. I hunted high and low for the object of my search but was doomed to disappointment. No tidings could I glean of Miss Boodlechug, though I left no stone unturned to discover her whereabouts. Time flew on; at first the old gentleman would call daily at my office with anxious enquiries as to how I was succeeding, but as day after day he met with the same discouraging reply, his visits became less and less frequent and at length ceased altogether, and, as I never saw him on the street I determined not to call on him till I had good tidings for him. I was not discouraged however. Stimulated by the prospect of obtaining the promised reward, I redoubled my efforts, but discovered nothing for many years; still I would not give in. I was then a young man, sanguine and full of hope. The laugh of that parrot was forever ringing in my ears; it seemed to haunt me, sleeping and waking. Thirty years rolled by. I was by that time nearly despairing of ever finding Miss Birdie Boodlechug,—hold on, don't interrupt me;—The annual exhibition was being held and I was sauntering, somewhat aimlessly about the Fair grounds when I was suddenly transfixed with surprise by something I heard behind me. The sound was nothing

more nor less than a feminine laugh, a series of 'ha' ha, ha's,' but the tone in which they were uttered I could never mistake. That laugh must have proceeded from the lips of the person who had taught Miss Boodlechug's parrot to laugh! I turned, and behind me, admiring some immense pumpkins, or, as her companion, a young man, fashionably dressed and on whose arm she was leaning, termed them,



'punks,' stood a young woman of about sixteen years of age, whose blue eyes, long blonde tresses and general appearance answered in every particular to the description I had obtained of Miss Boodlechug. But that laugh! there could be no mistake: It was the parrot's cachinnation to a T. I stepped up to the young lady and saying, 'Miss Birdie Boodlechug, I have found you at last; I shall require you to accompany me: I am a detective, and I have looked for you since May, 1853. I have your description here, as I got it then, and it tallies with your appearance in every particular.' She was surprised, as was her companion, and protested that I was mistaken and demanded to see the description of herself; I shewed it to her and told her why I wished her to go with me, when once more there rang out that never-to-be-forgotten succession of 'Ha, ha, ha's.'

'Why,' she exclaimed, as soon as her laughter would allow her, 'Mr.—Mr.—? and she looked at me inquiringly.

'Sleuthbeak,' I replied, giving my name—'Well, Mr. Sleuthbeak,' she cried, 'this Miss Boodlechug was lost in 1853. It is now 1883—and-and-don't you give ladies credit for ever growing any older—ha! ha! ha! I am only seventeen now; how very gallant you are, to be sure.'

I was horrified; I had never taken into consideration that even a lady's age will increase in thirty years. I saw my error and fled from the scene; I was dumbfounded and hoped the papers would not get hold of the affair, but they did, and that was what brought Mr. Boodlechug, now a very old, feeble gentleman, and accompanied by a lady whose age might be between forty and fifty, to my office. He was assisted to a chair, and as soon as he could get sufficient breath he said, 'I must apologize, Mr. Sleuthbeak, for my neglect, but the fact is that my daughter, who had merely gone to visit a friend on the night she disappeared and with whom she remained for three weeks, having written to inform me of her whereabouts though her letter went astray, returned at the end of that time, and I omitted to inform you of the fact, supposing that you would give up your search in despair. Yes, she came back all right, and here she is, introducing his companion. 'But I will give you half of the reward I promised,' he continued, for the trouble you have taken.' And he did, and there's the end of my yarn of the Missing Birdie Boodlechug."

"Dear me," I exclaimed, "how odd; I mean about you forgetting that she would be thirty years older by the time you fancied you had found her."

"Not so very odd, sir, after all," replied the detective, "I know several ladies who never grow a day older, let alone thirty years, after they attain a certain age. It was not so very odd, after all. Good morning, sir, good morning" and he was gone.

—S.

What is that—is it a circus acrobat? Oh, no, my son, that is a man who is kicking himself. What makes the man kick himself? He has been to a masquerade party and flirted with his wife all the evening.



"MUCH CRY AND LITTLE WOOL."