

The Seal-skin Sacque

It was a very neat, pretty little house, and the rent was so reasonable that I consulted the agent about the matter.

"Well, sir," he said, "it's a bit of luck, your being able to get the house, this way, in the middle of the year. The family as has it—the Waterses—took it when it was first built, two years ago, and we haven't raised the rent on them since. They're in some trouble. I don't know the rights of it; but I hear as how Mr. Waters was arrested for assault or something, and wouldn't give his real name for fear it would kill his poor old mother, and wouldn't consult any friends for the same reason; and, before he hardly realized it, he was railroaded, and there he is in jail and his wife letting the house to reduce expenses and leave her free to get him out."

"A very queer story."

"Well, that's the way I heard it. There's a man going round the neighborhood with a petition to the governor for Waters. Perhaps he'll come to you and you can find out more from him. I do hear that Mrs. Waters is selling off most of her things on the quiet, to save the ruination of an auction; and I guess you could pick up whatever fixings you want very cheap if you take the house."

I did take the house, and my women-folk did pick up several things—kitchen furniture, awnings, and stair-carpet—very cheaply. As they managed the bargaining, I did not see Mrs. Waters; but they described her to me as a pretty, small, sad woman, who had no children and was broken-hearted at the loss of her home. The man with the petition came round, as the agent had predicted; but I declined to sign the paper without knowing more of the circumstances. All that the petition told me, in addition to the agent's story, was that Mr. Waters had been sent up, under the name of Jones, for assaulting a policeman while on duty.

Three or four weeks passed, and a general house-cleaning was ordered. Under the marble slab of the butler's pantry, where it could hardly have been placed, except by design, our servant found a folded paper, which turned out to be a receipt from Fox & Martin, the furriers, for a seal-skin sacque, "valued at two hundred and fifty dollars," left for safe-keeping during the summer, by Mrs. J. D. Leplane. Charges for storage and insurance, five dollars. It was a printed form, the name of the depositor and the amounts being written in ink. I knew Fox & Martin to be a reputable firm. The name of Mrs. J. D. Leplane was unknown to any of us.

My wife, who has a wise head, advised the sending of the paper to Mrs. Waters. Where was she? I learned that some communication with her had been kept up through her former servant, who had taken another place, a few blocks off. Letters for Mrs. Waters which had arrived at the house had been forwarded to her by this servant. The receipt for the seal-skin sacque might be sent in the same way. Mrs. Waters had secured a position in a dry goods store and the servant knew her address.

I objected that Mrs. J. D. Leplane might not be Mrs. Waters, and that to intrust the receipt to any stranger was simply giving her the right to claim a two hundred and fifty dollar sacque upon the payment of five dollars. No; I would first find out whether there was a seal-skin sacque, and then hunt up Mrs. J. D. Leplane.

"You are going to take a great deal of unnecessary trouble about other people's business," observed my wise wife.

"It is my duty," I replied, loftily. But I was secretly conscious that curiosity and a desire to do a little amateur detective work were more potent with me than duty.

So I went to Fox & Martin's store, showed the receipt, and asked if the sacque was all right.

"Certainly," replied the clerk; "we have insured it."

"How about the value mentioned in the receipt? Is that what the sacque is really worth?"

"Yes, sir. It may have cost you more when you bought it; but that is the value we put upon it now. Do you want to take it out?"

"No, not yet, I'll wait till the cold weather."

"All right, sir."

The next day I went to the store in which Mrs. Waters was employed, and recognized her, from my wife's description, at the notion counter looking very widow-like in her black uniform dress. She had never seen me before, and was rather startled when I called her by name. Noticing this, I gave my own name, which she knew at once.

"They call me Miss Waters here," she said. "Thank you very much for forwarding my letters, though they were only circulars and things of that sort. I hope you like the house,

and that everything was satisfactory."

"Quite so. I did not call about the house. I want to ask if you know a Mrs. J. D. Leplane."

"No"—thinking a moment—"no, I don't remember any such name."

"Could she have lived in the house before you moved in?"

"No, sir; we moved in before the house was quite finished."

I remembered that the agent had told me this.

"Was she not a visitor of yours—a relative, perhaps?"

"No; I have no relative or friend of that name. Leplane? Leplane? No; I don't know any such person."

"Here's my reason for asking," and I placed the receipt for the seal-skin sacque on the counter before her. "It was found, by accident, under the marble in the butler's pantry. We thought that perhaps you had put it there and forgotten it."

"No; I never saw this before."

"I fancied that you might have left the sacque and given another name for—for—well, for some reason or other. You see the address of the house is quite correct."

"Yes; but I couldn't have done that. I never had a seal-skin sacque."

"Then how do you suppose the receipt got into the butler's pantry?"

"I don't know; I don't suppose anything. Indeed, sir, I know nothing whatever about it."

"Well," said I, "the sacque is at Fox & Martin's. I have been down there and they say it's all right. If you don't care to say anything about it, here's the receipt. It must belong to you or some of your people, as the butler's pantry has never been disturbed since we came into the house."

"But I can't take it, sir," she murmured, much distressed. "Indeed, it is not mine, nor anybody's belonging to me. I don't want to have anything to do with it."

"Why not? It's clearly your property. Fox & Martin tell me that it's worth two hundred and fifty dollars, so you could easily get one hundred dollars for it if you sold it, and a hundred dollars will come in handy now. You have forgotten about it, or your husband—"

"Oh, sir, don't!" she exclaimed. Then, changing her voice, she whispered: "Please pretend to be buying something; the floor-walker's coming this way." Aloud: "Would you prefer silk ones, sir?"

I bought a couple of handkerchiefs, pushed the receipt over to Mrs. Waters with the money, waited for my change while the floor-walker lingered near, then went away, without the chance of another private word. But when I opened the memorandum paper in which my change was wrapped, there was the receipt for the seal-skin sacque!

II.

My report of these detective proceedings was not received with that sympathetic appreciation which I had the right to expect from the wife of my bosom. I was accused of wanting to flirt with the pretty Mrs. Waters. Was there anything like flirtation in the conversation just detailed? No; but there might have been in my looks and manner. My excuse for calling upon Mrs. Waters was very flimsy, and so were the handkerchiefs I had been induced to purchase. If I had not been thinking of Mrs. Waters I would never have bought such handkerchiefs. So on and so on. Every married man knows the routine.

All the same, there was the seal-skin sacque, and every day or two, Tweed's question recurred: What are we going to do about it?

I had the happy but dishonest thought of advising my wife to go and pay the five dollars and get the sacque. It belonged to us as much as to anybody. There was evidently no such person as Mrs. J. D. Leplane. Who had assumed the name, deposited the sacque, and hidden the receipt in our butler's pantry were unsolvable mysteries. No matter; the sacque was a fact, and a two hundred and fifty dollar sacque for five dollars appealed to any woman who was always hunting the stores for what she called bargains.

But this mite of a woman was adamant. What! Wear a sacque that belonged to somebody else? What! Be arrested on the street, or at the theatre, with that sacque on her back? If I had sent the receipt to Mrs. Waters, nothing more would ever have been heard of it. Now, since I had muddled the whole affair, the only course left was to advertise for Mrs. J. D. Leplane. As for the trouble and the expense—it served me right.

I did not quite follow this feminine logic; but I did advertise. First guardedly, in the "Personal" column; "Wanted, the present address of Mrs. J. D. Leplane." "Will Mrs. J. D. Leplane please communicate with subscriber in regard to her seal-skin sacque?" Then, more frankly, in the "Lost and Found" column. No replies were received to these advertisements. Mrs. J. D. Leplane did not exist, or did not read the papers, or did not want her seal-skin sacque.

One day, after these advertisements had been repeated three or four times,

I was told, when I came home to dinner, that a gentleman named Carhart was waiting for me in the reception-room.

As I entered, he rose and closed the door behind me. A quiet, stoutly built man, with a round, ruddy face. I had met a hundred such men, but could not remember him individually.

"You have been advertising," he asked, "for a Mrs. Leplane about a seal-skin sacque?"

"Yes, I have."

"Would you know the sacque if you saw it?"

"No more than I know you. Don't you think you had better introduce yourself before we talk any further?"

"I am Sergeant Carhart, of the detective force. This is my badge; here is my card."

"All right. What can I do for you?"

"Tell me, please, all about this seal-skin sacque affair. I have got hold of bits of it from Fox & Martin and from your servant; but I want to get the whole thing to rights."

I told him the story, as clearly and briefly as I have told it to you. He listened attentively; but, with the natural jealousy of a professional, did not praise my amateur work. When I had concluded, he made no comments, but asked:

"May I take a look at that butler's pantry?"

"Certainly; but there's nothing to see in it."

I conducted him to the pantry. He tapped the top of marble with his finger.

"The receipt was found stuck under this slab?"

"Yes; just as I told you."

"Have you a kitchen knife handy? Thanks. That will do nicely." As he spoke, he slipped the knife under the slab, pushed it to and fro, and then lifted up the top of the basin.

"Ah! I thought so," he continued, pointing to several small, neatly folded papers placed carefully beneath the marble.

"What! More seal-skin sacques?"

"Yes, sir; and a few diamonds, and a lot of jewelry—in fact"—looking at the papers—"the whole bundle that we have been searching for so long. Well, well, that is a clever cove, that Waters. But we have him now."

"Why—what—explain yourself?" I exclaimed, more astonished than ever.

"These, sir," said Sergeant Carhart, flourishing the papers, "are part of the proceeds of that big robbery on the avenue last spring. You remember? Martinez—Spanish family—servants suspected. I knew that Waters was in it; but I couldn't prove anything. Every pawnshop was watched and searched. None of the stolen property had been pawned. No; he invented this dodge of leaving the articles with respectable firms for repairs or safe-keeping till the affair had blown over. See here! Fox & Martin; Wickham & Turner; Tiffany—who would think of looking in such places for stolen goods? I didn't. None of us did. Nobody would have been the wiser now if it hadn't been for your advertisement."

"But you arrested Waters and had him sent up under another name?"

"No; we no, sir; he got himself arrested, hoping that he would be safe in jail until the robbery was forgotten. But he overdid the business, and got three years as an old offender instead of the three months he expected. I saw through his dodge and gave the judge the tip. But I couldn't find the bundle. How clever he was! He worked it beautiful!"

"Did Mrs. Waters know about it?"

"She! Bless you, no; such a clever man wouldn't have trusted a woman with dynamite like these papers. It was part of his stock in trade to keep her innocent. She's helped him many a time without her knowing it. If you had sent her this receipt, as your wife advised, she would put it away till he came back to explain about it, and nobody would ever have known anything of it. That's what he calculated on. He is clever!"

"And, of course, now—"

"Now we'll give him ten years at least, instead of three. It'll be a little inconvenient for you; but that can't be helped."

"How inconvenient for me?"

"Why, you see for yourself that the whole house will have to be carefully searched now. He may have some other hiding-places like this. We'll go through it with a fine-tooth comb. Then we'll want your servant-girl's evidence about finding the receipt for the seal-skin sacque, and yours about interviewing Mrs. Waters, and that'll about do us."

III.

I sunk upon a chair and groaned aloud. Why do I never take my wife's advice, and why do I always regret not having taken it? I had meant to do a good action, and the result was more imprisonment for the husband of Mrs. Waters and no end of worry and bother for myself. When I looked up, Sergeant Carhart was eying me sympathetically.

"You don't like the fuss and that, do you, sir? Well, there's a little something on the other side of the account. There's the reward."

"What reward?"

"Why, the one thousand dollars reward for finding the property and securing the conviction of the criminal. I guess you are entitled to that, as you hunted the thing down till I came on the trail. Any rate, you will get part of it sure."

Perhaps I shall. If I do, half of it must go to the servant who found the receipt, and the other half is already donated—by my wife—to that poor Mrs. Waters, who has been discharged from the store and can find no other employment. We have had to move. Would such a wife live in what she at once called a robber's den? Our new house does not suit us so well. I have been examined, cross-examined, questioned, cross-questioned; my portrait—not a bit like me—has been published in the papers, and I am popularly supposed to have had some share in the burglary, or to have acted as a fence for the plunder.

Worse than all everybody including my wife and the officials, blames me for interfering in what was none of my business. Mrs. Waters, with whom I was confronted by order of Inspector Byrnes, put this point very neatly:

"Oh, sir," she cried, "why couldn't you leave well enough alone? Nobody wanted the seal-skin sacque, and what did it matter to you?"

True; but yet I had only done my duty.

ARMY REQUIREMENTS.

QSome idea of the magnitude of the requirements of an army such as the British now have in the field in South Africa is afforded by the details given of the stores and animals sent out up to a short time before the occupation of Pretoria. These included 170,000—600 small arm cartridges, 500,000 artillery cartridges of various calibres, 175,000 horses and mules gathered from all parts of the world, 300,000 khaki suits, 370,000 pairs of boots, 420,000 blankets and tents, sets of camp equipment, harness and other articles in similar proportions. Besides, great quantities of meat, bacon, preserved vegetables, groceries, flour and biscuits, and forage were shipped.

First Beautiful Snow Poem.

You print many poems from people, and I thought you would like some of mine. I think they are better than many you have printed in your paper. This one is about beautiful snow which has just fallen. If you like this, I can send you more. I have written lots about birds and our river and nature. They will like them best because they come from the heart.

BEAUTIFUL SNOW.

The snow has fallen white and nice; It covers everything.

It covers field and barn and fence; Also the birds that sing.

And now we have the time for sleighs. The boys and girls will meet And travel fastly o'er the snow Upon the roads and street.

Cheer up, cheer up, unhappy youth And see the snow a-falling. Come, let us slide along the road, For you it loud is calling.

The horses are a-prancing round, And they must well be shod To keep upon the icy road. As slowly home they plod.

If you can't use this poem, send it back, but I think your readers will like it. Yours, HENRY SHOOKS.

Shook, Manitowish county, Wis. P. S.—I won't charge nothing for this. H. S.

Very Likely.

Mrs. Rabbit-Heaven! Guess the man who owns this land. I guess he's after his rent.—New York Journal.

America has made nearly £12,000,000 profit by supplying goods to the British Army in South Africa.

A gentleman is invariably introduced to a lady, and that irrespective of rank or age.

The Queen Regent of Spain has been appointed arbitrator on pending international differences between Chili and Peru.

The Countess of Westmoreland, a sister of Lady Warwick is more domestic than titled women in general, and is noted for her success as a horticulturist.

The first Army medal was struck by Cromwell, to commemorate the battle of Dunbar. The second one issued was that for Waterloo, although in order of service the Peninsular should occupy this place.

Never interrupt anyone who is speaking, this habit is extremely rude, it embarrasses a shy person, and angers a passionate one, and it spoils all interest roused concerning the information partly conveyed to the audience. And yet how often in the best circles do we hear half-a-dozen people all trying to speak at the same time, and cutting one another's sentences short in a manner suggestive of nothing that can be termed cultured or refined.

While repairing a temple the Chinese cover up the eyes of the idols in order that the deities may not be offended at the sight of the disorder.

If a man in China doesn't pay his debts at the usual time—the new year—his creditors carry away the door of his shop, thus permitting all the demons and evil spirits to enter.

Chinese women believe that the evil spirit holds possession of all the high points of the earth, and that is why no Chinese woman can ever be induced to climb a mountain.

SCRAPS OF SCIENCE.

The planet of Neptune was discovered with the telescope in 1846.

The human population of the globe consumes 100,000,000,000 cubic yards of oxygen in a year.

The spectroscopic, by the aid of which we are able to tell what the sun is made of, was invented in 1859.

A scientist says the weight of the air which encircles the earth is equal to that of 581,000 cubes of copper, each 1,003 yards square.

SALVATION ARMY.

Mark Hanna's description of the Salvation Army as the kindergarten of Christianity isn't bad.—Boston Herald.

Salvation Army methods, with street parades, may be open to criticism, but the work they do among the poor deserves the highest commendation. These people do not go stumping for the sake of seeing poverty, but to relieve poverty.—Baltimore American.

LIFE A CENTURY AGO.

One hundred years ago a man could not take a ride on a steamboat.

He could not go from Washington to New York in a few hours.

He had never seen an electric light or dreamed of an electric car.

He could not send a telegram.

He couldn't talk through the telephone, and he had never heard of the hello girl.

He could not ride a bicycle.

He could not call in a stenographer and dictate a letter.

He had never received a typewritten communication.

He had never heard of the germ theory or worried over bacilli and bacteria.

He never looked pleasant before a photographer or had his picture taken.

He never heard a phonograph talk or saw a kinetoscope turn out a prizefight.

He never saw through a Webster's unabridged dictionary with the aid of a Roentgen ray.

He had never taken a ride in an elevator.

He had never imagined such a thing as a typetting machine or a typewriter.

He had never used anything but a wooden plow.

He had never seen his wife using a sewing machine.

He had never struck a match on his pants or anything else.

He couldn't take an anesthetic and have his leg cut off without feeling it.

He had never purchased a 10 cent magazine which would have been regarded as a miracle of art.

He could not buy a paper for a cent and learn everything that had happened the day before all over the world.

He had never seen a McCormick reaper or a self binding harvester.

He had never crossed an iron bridge.

In short, there were several things that he could not do and several things he did not know.

THE WHIRL OF FASHION.

Accordant plaiting is more highly favored this season than it has ever been.

White panne velvet rivals white and tinted craped satin in the making of the after and dinner waists.

The Duse coil, arranged low at the base of the neck, is revived among other novel evening coiffures.

Small, dainty turnover collars, larger corolletes, twice around ties, directoire and empire bows and ruffles are made up of every sort of material.

Some of the new round hats to wear with demure costumes turn up in a very deep curve at each side, and the reticulate portions are entirely covered with ermine fur.

The inch wide strips of costly fur are in constant use in the making of dressy winter gowns and wraps. These are little more than a narrow fringe, yet they are very effective.

Ribbon scarf ends for the neck, shoulder knots, belt bows and sleeve straps are finished with small gold aquilettas; also the long, pliable sash ends of India silk, crepe de chine and liberty satin on belted tea gowns and expensive French negligees.

There are but few of the fancy effects in dress that are not repeated upon the sleeves. They are gathered and draped and tucked, stitched, strapped, buttoned, braided or laced and trimmed with fine gold braid, beaded aquilettas, plaited frills, laces, nets, velvet ribbons, etc.

FOWL AND THEIR FRUIT.

Hens will not lay in a house so cold that their combs will freeze.

Light colored yolks are said to indicate lack of iron and sulphur in the food.

Too much wet or sloppy food given to the young poultry often causes scours.

Coal ashes should not be put in the dust bath until the clinders are sifted out.

Never shut the fowls up in such cramped quarters that they cannot take sufficient exercise to promote digestion.

Crude petroleum is cheaper than kerosene, is better and if often applied to the hen roosts will soon destroy all lice.

The food gives flavor to the meat and color to the egg. Tainted meat should never be given fowls, nor any spoiled mess.

A gill of linseed meal mixed with ground grain given to six hens is the best and cheapest medicine for bowel diseases.

The medium sized breeds are more robust and can look out for themselves better, and on this account are better adapted to the farm.

The advantages of an incubator are not that they are always better than a hen, but rather that with their aid you can hatch chickens at any time, so as to strike the market at the right time.

CHINESE ODDITIES.

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CAUGHT THE ROBBER

THE OFFICIALS HUNTED FOR HIM IN BRASS BAND FASHION.

One Instance in Which This Style of Detective Work Succeeded Admirably—How the Culprit Was Forced Into a Confession.

How do detectives detect? It all depends. There is no rule. That which solves one mystery today will make another more impenetrable tomorrow. According to one of the most noted detectives of this country, the rule of common sense is the best to follow.

Take a case narrated by this detective. He was called up on a long distance telephone, which in itself is not in accordance with the general idea of telling a detective of a crime. The message said that a farmer had been robbed of \$8,000 in gold and asked that an operative be sent to the town near the farm. The message was received at night. The following morning a man from the agency went to the office from which the message was sent and announced his business just as a commercial traveler would announce his. Nothing in his appearance indicated that he was a man of mystery.

The man who sent the message said to him: "A farmer," mentioning his name and describing the way to the farmer's house, "had \$8,000 in gold. He kept it in a box under his bed. One day while he was at work on his farm the money was stolen. That's all there is to the case."

The detective hired a horse and rode to the farm. He saw the farmer, but the farmer could tell him no more than the man in