

A Robbery Reversed

By HOWARD FIELDING...

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AS to Mrs. Willard's diamonds, the sequence of incidents was certainly out of the ordinary. The lady, alone in her carriage, was on her way to the house of a friend with whom she intended to spend the evening. It may have been about half past 8 o'clock.

"Martin," she called to the coachman suddenly, "drive home again." Mrs. Willard could bring clearly into view a jewel casket containing some thousands of dollars' worth of diamond ornaments, but she could not see Mrs. Lee Willard in the act of putting it away in the cunningly devised hiding place in the head of the quaint, old-fashioned couch that stood by the north wall of the apartment.

No member of the family was at home except her niece, Miss Amy Barton, who had gone to her room with a headache, and Mrs. Willard's maid would probably have joined the other servants in the rear of the house immediately after her mistress' departure. The butler was a new man.

When the carriage drew up abreast the door Mrs. Willard sprang out before the spy footman could offer his assistance, and at that instant she descried a dark figure hastily withdrawing into the mouth of the narrow court that ran along the north side of the house.

"Who is there?" she cried. The figure seemed to hesitate and then came forward into the light of the avenue.

"It is I, Mrs. Willard," said this suspicious character, lifting his hat.

"Tom Lawrence?" exclaimed the lady as if he had been a schoolboy, although there really was little difference in their years. "What were you doing there?"

"I stepped in out of the wind to get a light," he replied.

"A light for what?" she demanded.

"For my cigar, of course," he answered, with a trace of embarrassment.

"I've thrown it away now."

She looked at him for ten seconds closely.

"I want to talk to you," said she at last. "Come into the house. Oh, that's all right," she added, seeing his look of surprise. "You won't see Amy, though, upon my word, I believe you would have done so if I had not returned so soon."

"Your husband?"

"Is out of town," she interrupted.

"But he would approve my course if he were here. He won't let you call on Amy?"

"Because I haven't enough money."

"Because you haven't enough stability of character," answered the lady severely, though, as before, she spoke in a tone too low for the ears of her liveried servants. "But come, I have a reason for haste."

She ascended the steps just as the door opened in response to the footman's ring. Passing the butler, she turned a keen eye upon him, for something in his appearance struck her as unusual and vaguely disquieting, so much so indeed that she asked him sharply what was the matter.

"I don't know, mum," he replied. "I do feel ill, mum, but it's only just this instant—a little bit—er—dizzy like."

"You have been drinking, I am afraid."

"A sip of beer, mum, with my dinner," he replied, "the same as is allowed the other servants—no more, I do assure you."

Mrs. Willard turned away, at the same time commanding Mr. Lawrence by move of her hand to wait her return. As she ran up the stairs she had a glimpse of Miss Amy Barton in the hall above. The young lady seemed to be fully and very becomingly dressed and to have quite recovered from her indisposition. Mrs. Willard found the door of her dressing room open, and the place was in disorder.

She ran across the room. The little secret nook in the head of the couch was open. Casket and jewels were gone.

Mrs. Willard was not an excitable woman, and her self command in emergencies was excellent.

"Where have you been since I went out?" she demanded of the butler.

"I never got out of my chair, mum, till you came back," said he.

"What makes you talk so strangely?" she asked. "You are drunk; you have been asleep."

"I protest that it ain't so, mum," he answered, with tears in his eyes. "I'm sick, I'm taken sudden with something, I don't know what."

Then he suddenly regained his self control and got upon his feet.

"What's wrong—what's wrong, mum?" he cried excitedly.

"All my diamonds are gone."

"But—but," stammered Lawrence, "this man could see that door from here. It isn't possible!"

"In view of his condition"—she began.

"I was all right," groaned the butler. "I was as well and wide awake as ever in my life till I got up to let you in. Nobody went near that door or I'd have known it."

"Ah," said Mrs. Willard, "here is Lucy!" The trim maid entered at that moment by a door at the rear of the hall, and she stared in amazement at her mistress.

"Lucy," asked Mrs. Willard, "how long were you in my dressing room after I left?"

"Not above a minute, my lady," replied the girl.

She was too well trained to ask "why" except with her eyes.

"My diamonds are gone, Lucy," said Mrs. Willard. "The door is broken, the room is all torn to pieces, and the diamonds are stolen."

"But where—where was he?" demanded the maid, pointing to the butler, who had again fallen into the chair. "What's the matter with you?" shaking him by the shoulder. "You've gone and got drunk, and the house has been robbed. He must have left the front door open after you."

The butler was muttering to himself. "One thing is clear enough," Lawrence interposed. "This whole business is a plot. This man isn't drunk. He's drugged—with morphine, I should say. But what beats me is that the house should be robbed first and the man drugged afterward, for it's a perfect certainty that he was just beginning to be affected when we came in."

There was a ring of the bell at that moment, and the footman, who had remained during all this scene close by the door, opened it, revealing two men. They stepped into the hall—a heavy, sandy haired, red faced man holding by the arm a thin, dark, foreign looking individual.

The burly man was Detective Sergeant Brice.

"I beg pardon, ma'am," he said, addressing Mrs. Willard. "I'm a headquarters detective, and my general business is circulating round through this neighborhood looking for house-breakers of various kinds. I caught this fellow prying open one of your windows on the alleyway just now. I'd been shadowing him for an hour or more. He says he used to be a servant here and that he was coming to see another one. Same old story, of course. I brought him in to see if you could identify him."

"His name is Davoll," said Mrs. Willard in the tone of one dazed. "He was my butler before this man. But—but you say you've followed him for an hour and that you caught him before he actually got into the house?"

"Yes'm. Why not?" said Brice.

"Because the robbery has already taken place?"

"It has?" exclaimed the detective.

"Within half an hour."

"No, ma'am; excuse me," said Brice. "Nobody has robbed this house within a half hour or an hour either. This man's been hanging around for as long as that, and my partner and I have had our eyes on the premises."

"But my diamonds are gone," said Mrs. Willard, and she gave Brice the story, including the drugging of Norton, the new butler, now so completely overpowered that it was thought best to send the footman for a doctor.

"I guess he drugged himself," said Brice. "It's an old game. We'll find the diamonds hidden somewhere about. They must be in the house, for only one person has gone out of it, and you brought him back with you."

"Tom," exclaimed Mrs. Willard, turning to Lawrence.

"I admit that I made a call of a few minutes upon Miss Barton," said the young man. "She herself let me in. We remained in the hall. Norton, your

which you have been stolen—robbed—will you cause these men to let me go; to make 'no charge,' as they call it?"

"Certainly," replied Mrs. Willard. "Tell me who did this and where the diamonds are, and I will make no charge against anybody. I am not anxious to appear in the police courts. What I want is my property."

She glanced at Detective Sergeant Brice, who spread out his hands, palms upward.

"All right, if you say so," said he, and he removed the handcuffs from Davoll's wrists.

"Your promise is made," said Davoll. "Your honor you have pledge me, eh? Is it not so? Ver' good. Now, then, this man Norton, who have taken my place, was drugged at dinner. The poison act slow, ver' slow. It was intend by the thief to leave the hall door open by and by, when this man would be sleeping in his chair. You, coming home, would say: 'Drunken brute! You leave my house open to thieves!' You go upstairs. You find the lock broken, the room thrown all about. 'A thief!' you say. You know not how long the diamonds have been gone."

"You come home too soon. For that reason you see everything coming the wrong way, with its last end before its front. The robbery is done, the servant is drugged, and then the thief breaks into the house."

"The thief?" echoed Mrs. Willard.

"I have your solemn word," said Davoll hastily. "No charge at all, eh? Nobody to be punished—nobody whatever? Is it so?"

"If my diamonds are returned," said Mrs. Willard, "that will close this case."

"All right," exclaimed the Frenchman. "The diamonds they are here."

He thrust his hands rapidly into various pockets and brought forth the entire lot of jewels.

"You—you!" exclaimed Officer Brice. "Why, it ain't possible!"

Mrs. Willard was scanning the gems with care.

"They are all here," she said. "Now tell your story. No harm will come to you or any one else because of this."

"Ah, madame," responded Davoll, "it is so good of you to say that! When these men trapped me and brought me here I thought all lost. Figure it to yourself, me with the plunder in my pockets. But they know it not, and by quick wit I find a way of escape through this bargain that I have made with you."

"Now, then, a friend of mine in this house drug this man Norton. That same friend take the jewels and set them by a window in the basement. While these men watch me after I pry the windows open I am filling my pockets with gems from the casket which stand just inside. It was my friend also who broke the lock of the door of your room and make everything to look so much upside down. After I get the jewels she throw the box into the court."

"Lucy?" exclaimed Mrs. Willard. "Where is she?"

"She have gone," replied Davoll gravely. "I have give her plenty time. It was for her as well as for me that I make my bargain. You comprehend? It was all lost. If these men drag me to the station house they search me and find the gems. They discover everything. It was for me to think quick, I tell you, when they brought me in here. Ver' good, I think, and your promise—you will keep it? You will not cheat me, eh?"

"Not I," said Mrs. Willard. "I am in many ways too much relieved."

And she looked at Tom Lawrence out of the corner of her eye.

stern foremost, so far as I can see," said he, "but I'll swear that nobody has carried those diamonds away from this house. They're here, and we'll find 'em."

"They searched the house from top to bottom vainly."

"Well, I don't just exactly know what to make of it," said Brice, "but this fellow that we nabbed must have had something to do with it. We'll take him over to the station house and lock him up."

Davoll fell on his knees before Mrs. Willard.

"I swear to you," he cried, "that I have nothing to do with this crime. I was starve. You discharge me: I get no work; nothing to eat. I come to beg a crust. This crime, it is plain! I read him like a book."

"Yes, you can—not!" said Brice.

"Madam," cried Davoll, "if I disclose to you who did it and say to you where you can find the diamonds of

120 acres 1 1/2 miles S. E. of Kalispell, 60 acres under cultivation, timber and water, good granary, 12x10, granary, 12x10, granary, 12x10, granary, 20 acres, four and one-half miles northwest of Kalispell, 50 acres in winter wheat, 150 acres ready for seeding, 40 acres in hay, 120 acres irrigated, 50 acres in pasture, 200 fruit trees. Price \$16,000. Easy terms.

100 acres on Big Fork river, four miles from the town of Big Fork, three acres cleared, small meadow, fruit, cabin, and good stable. Price \$1,500.

150 acres stump land six miles north, some cleared land, cabin and stable, plenty cord-wood. Price \$1,500.

320 acres, ten miles northwest, 60 acres open land, running water, about 1,500,000 feet of saw timber, good stock range. Price \$50 per acre.

36 acres, one mile west of Flathead lake, about 14 miles from Kalispell, fair improvements, small orchard, spring. Price \$1,500.

10 acres one mile from town, 120 fruit trees and small fruit, irrigating ditch and water right, one-half crop with place. Price \$1,500.

40 acres on Stillwater river, seven miles from town, three room house one and one-half stories, chicken house, stable, 35 acres under cultivation. Price \$1,200.

120 acres four miles from town, house, granary, hay shed, good spring, a good farm. Price \$4,500.

160 acres 2 miles west of Columbia Falls, 75 acres timothy, 15 acres grain, 7-room log and frame house, good root cellar, frame granaries, 16x25 and 8x14, log barn 16x25, two hay sheds, 16ft high 18x36 and 20x32, good well. Price only \$4,500.

160 acres, log cabin 14x20, good log barn 20x30 two story, good root house, good chicken house, about 20 fruit trees bearing, about 3 acres cleared. Price \$1,500.

160 acres ten miles west of Kalispell, log cabin in 12x20, small stable 12x14, 6 or 7 acres fenced, spring and creek, about 20 acres could be irrigated, good grazing, about 1,200,000 feet of timber, 1/2 acre and a little place. Price \$1,500.

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24 acres 3 miles from Kalispell, 1 house 7 rooms, 1 house 3 rooms, stables, sheds, chicken house, 3 granaries, orchard, all the machinery, wagon, team, etc. Price \$14,500. A very complete place in every particular.

160 acres 5 miles from Kalispell, house, barn, sheds, 25 acres broke, balance pasture, 300 bearing fruit trees, price \$2,000.

160 acres 5 miles from Kalispell, new 2 story house, 9 rooms, new barn, 75 or 80 acres under cultivation, about 100 fruit trees, 1/2 acre strawberries. Price \$4,200. A good place for the price.

200 acres, 7 miles from Kalispell, good 6 room house, 2 story barn, cow stable, cellar, granary, blacksmith shop, wood shed, smoke house chicken house, two wells, good orchard, harvester, wagon, team, etc. Price \$50 per acre on terms to suit purchaser.

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240 acres 12 miles east of Kalispell, fine land, 150 acres under cultivation, balance timber, rented for 1904. Price \$8,500.

120 acres 2 miles from town, all tillable land well fenced. Price \$5,000.

240 acres, 160 acres of which can be irrigated, ditches all made, good water right, reservoir, all level land, fine soil, 6 miles from Kalispell, no improvements except fencing. \$50 per acre. Can be made one of the finest meadows in the state.

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Acres near town, \$150. per acre, fine soil and well watered.

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Good business lot and store building on Main St., price \$2,200; rents for \$400 per year.

House and lot east side, 7 rooms, water, sewer connections, electric lights, barn, and fruit trees, price \$2,200.

House and lot, two rooms, shed, \$400.

House and lot in High School addition, five rooms, good well, price \$450.

House and lot, 4 rooms, kitchen, 7 rooms, good barn, wood shed and well, price \$1,000.

Corner and inside lot, one house 6 rooms, one house 3 rooms, rents for \$250 per month, price \$1,200.

Two houses and lot—one house 3 rooms, one house 3 rooms, cellar, frame stable, \$1,200.

House and lot, 3 rooms, barn, and wood shed price \$650.

House and lot, \$800. 1 1/2 miles from town.

House and lot, good location, 5 rooms, close to schools, \$1,200.

Two houses and lot, one house 5 rooms, one house 2 rooms, good well, price \$900.

House and lot, 4 rooms, kitchen, pantry, closet, well, lot fenced, wood shed, \$1,200.

Frame Lodging House, water and sewer connections, price \$2,200.

House and corner lot, east side, some furniture, price \$900.

House and corner lot, 3 rooms and kitchen, stone foundation, cellar, wood shed, lathed and plastered, fruit and shade trees, \$1,000.

House and lot 3d Ave. east, in good location, price \$1,200.

House and lot, Blk 1, \$800, rents for \$8 month.

House and lot, Blk 2, price \$750, rents for \$12 per month.

House and lot on east side, 7 rooms, lathed and plastered, price \$1,400.

House and lot in good location, 5 rooms, bath room furnished, lot and cold water, pantry, cellar, stone foundation, lathed and plastered, water in house, sewer in alley, barn, chicken house, price \$1,400.

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Lot 11, Blk 30, \$200, monthly payments.

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