A Detective Story.

BY A. C. N N D. YL-. ACCORDING TO BRETE HARTE.

BY H. S. M.

Stretched in the generous depths of an arm-chair I was slowly toasting before the grate fire in my London quarters when I was aroused by a sharp rap at the door. My visitor was Professor Fotlock Combs of Scotland Yard, a man much respected in the best criminal society.

As I was assisting him from his heavy ulster he remarked, "You have dined."

My hands shook from amazement. He surmised the reason and carelessly motioned toward my table, untouched since my recent dinner. I steadied myself on a chair. Surely such insight was evidence of supernatural power.

He seated himself in the chair which I had just vacated. With elbows resting on its arms and chin supported by his folded hands he sat meditatively peering into the distance.

I started to offer him a cigar, but caught myself, realizing that such an intellect would not dull its acuteness by useless smoke.

"Yes, I will smoke, thank you." "How, how—" I stammered with surprise. "I saw you in the mirror," he explained in a deprecatory tone. I looked. Sure enough, there I saw my image clearly outlined in the mirror. I faintly tottered to a chair.

He appeared to regret his thoughtlessness in so rudely jarring my nervous system and offered to describe to me a recent case in which he had been engaged.

"It concerns the famous Steyn-De Wett diamonds," he commenced. "I was called upon to attend a grand reception to the Duchess of Lampwick—a British production. The mineral kingdom of the British Empire was displayed at that reception."

"I was obscurely mingling with the throng, with one eye ever on the Duchess, when I noticed a young man a short distance away watching her attentively. I walked carelessly toward him, and had almost reached him when he moved toward the Duchess.

"I looked quickly toward her and saw that she had laid her fan, a fortune in itself, upon a chair. As the man passed the chair he snatched the fan and hastily slipped it beneath his coat. After loitering nonchalantly about for a few moments he started toward the nearest doorway. I approached the Duchess of Lampwick, and after warning her to exhibit no surprise told her that her fan was stolen.

"As I turned from her, the thief was passing from the hall. I followed him. When I reached the door he was far down a dimly lighted corridor. He heard the click of my heels on the marble floor, looked back over his shoulder and quickened his step. I likewise increased my pace. The distance between us was gradually decreasing, when the fellow, unable longer to bear the suspense, broke into a run and dashed through a door opening upon a fire-escape. When I reached the door I closed and fastened it; then I returned to my post in the reception hall."

I was about to interrupt, wondering why he did not secure his thief, when he motioned me to remain silent.

"Guards had been stationed about the building. At daybreak the fellow was found on the fire-escape with the Steyn-DeWett diamonds in his pocket."

"You see the fire-escape ended about fifteen feet above the ground. He had reached the end, and slid down a rod until his feet struck a crosspiece and felt for the ground with his foot. He stuck it into a hogshead of water. A second attempt met with a similar result; so, fearing lest some body of water was beneath him, he waited for daylight in order to investigate his position. There he was found by the guards."

"How fortunate!" I exclaimed.

A dark cloud overspread the massive countenance of Forelock Combs. "Fortunate? fortunate?" he exclaimed, "No! I had ordered that hogshead placed there."

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