

EARTH'S PLEASANT VOICES.

There is no solitude on earth—
In every leaf there is a tongue—
In every glow a voice of mirth—
From every hill a hymn is sung.

Capturing a Statue

With Paint, Wig and Beard a
Work of Art May Easily
Be Made Repulsive.

In the course of my long and eventful
career I have the honor of planning
various schemes which have
taken a conspicuous place in point of
audacity in the records of crime, but
perhaps in none of these transactions
was such audacity more prominent
than in the incident of the carrying off
of the Apollo statue from the residence
of Sir Titus Blaydes, Bart., the statue
in question being the work of the
famous sculptor Apelles and being
valued by experts at \$250,000.

One evening I was sitting in a restaurant
finishing an after dinner cigar
when a short, foreign looking man,
expensively dressed, came and sat down
beside me.

"Excuse the liberty I take in addressing
you," he began courteously,
speaking with a strong foreign accent,
but in perfect English, "but your fame
has indirectly reached my ears. I think
I have the honor of addressing
Mr. Godfrey Vince?"

"That is my name," I returned, much
amazed. "May I ask what you desire
with me?"

He came very close and, sinking his
voice, said in a whisper, "I want you
to carry off for me the Apollo statue
from the house of Sir Titus Blaydes
at Longworth Court."

One glance at the card told me all.
It bore the name of Count Antonio
Delarocca, the famous millionaire
collector of the antique, whose gallery at
Milan contained priceless glories of
ancient masters.

"I recognize your name, count, and
shall be glad to be of service to you.
But may I ask what constrained you
to fix upon me as the instrument of
your designs?"

"I chanced to be present at your trial
over the Wigmore case, when, as you
will remember, you escaped with a
light sentence, though the evidence
showed you to be an artist in crime. I
kept my eye upon you, resolving to
offer you this delicate mission directly
the government no longer required
your services."

"I shall be delighted to do all in my
power for you count, but first of all
you must tell me in detail what you
require done."

"Most certainly," he made answer, as
he offered me a cigar and relit his own.
"During the past four years I have
made countless offers to Sir Titus
Blaydes for his Apollo, the offers being
made through secret agents of mine,
for naturally the baronet would not
part with the statue to a rival collector
such as myself. My last offer was no
less than \$250,000, but this also was
unambiguously refused."

He paused and blew a great cloud
from his cigar. Then he resumed: "I
am a man of iron will, and what I set
my heart upon I always obtain. Sir
Titus has proved unamenable to fair
means. I will now assail him with the
only alternative—stratagem. Yes, merely
stratagem, not robbery, for on the
day that you hand over to me the Apollo
statue I shall forward him anonymously
the sum of \$250,000. And you, my
friend, would receive \$25,000. Come,
is the bait sufficiently tempting?"

Before we parted he gave me his address
in Milan, for which place he was
leaving on the morrow, and it was to
this address that I was to convey the
statue if my efforts proved successful.
I may add that he left with me the
sum of \$2,500 as a guarantee of good
faith.

On the following Monday I journeyed
down to Longworth court, and,
mingling with the crowd, entered the
spacious mansion, I soon gained admittance
to the gallery.

The more I contemplated the business
the further and further away did
the count's reward seem, and by the
time I reached London I was in a despairing
mood. I retired to bed, resolved
to think no more of the matter,
though on the following morning I
visited two of my oldest chums, Jack
Grimes and Tom Harris, and put the
case to them. They sneered at the affair,
declaring it was impossible.

It therefore came about that the
matter passed out of my mind until
the end of November, when it was
brought back to me in a curious manner.

I happened to enter a theater one
night where a play was being enacted
in which a distracted hairdresser, being
pursued by a statue which had
been miraculously endowed with life,
suddenly conceived the idea of painting
her face and dressing her in modern
attire, so as to render her appearance
more conventional when she was
tracking his steps.

An idea flashed through my brain
when I witnessed this incident. I did
not wait for the end of the play, but
leaping into a hansom, drove to our den,
where, by a lucky chance, I found
Grimes and Harris ensconced in arm-
chairs and smoking peacefully.

They both looked up quickly, but did
not speak.

"My plan is this," I went on, speak-

ing very slowly, so that their rather
sluggish brains might follow me. "I
propose that we three disguise our-
selves as police officers, you two as
constables and I as inspector. We
arouse Sir Titus Blaydes one night and
inform him that we have reason to be-
lieve that burglars are in the house.

"While he is waiting and I am there
to keep him company, you two fellows
make track for the gallery, and when
you get there you proceed to make up
the statue in the guise of a modern
burglar by means of coat, trousers,
muffler, overcoat, cap, shoes, beard,
whiskers and grease paint, all of which
you can conceal about your persons.

"Directly the disguise business is
completed you fire a revolver. Hearing
the report, I rush up to the gallery
with a long face to tell Sir Titus that
the burglar, a desperate ruffian, has
been accidentally shot. You two men
will then carry down the supposed
burglar, whose face will be covered
with a handkerchief."

Grimes drew a long breath. "Well,
I'm blowed!" he exclaimed hoarsely,
as he knocked the ashes from his clay,
"if that ain't the rummest an the cut-
test dodge as ever I came across. Yer
'ard, gov'nor, yer 'and. It's a pleasure
to commit a felony with a bloke like
yer to boss it."

The evening of Dec. 1 was a typical
foggy night. By the time St. Giles'
church struck 12, a cab containing
Grimes, Harris and myself was on the
way to Longworth Court.

The dressing of the statue had al-
ready been rehearsed a dozen times on
a plaster Apollo which I had bought in
Euston road, and there was therefore
little to fear in the way of a break-
down unless Sir Titus insisted on ac-
companying the supposed constables in
search of the imaginary burglars. However,
in all probability he would do
nothing of the sort; at worst, if he
did so, we would simply abandon the
business and go home.

Longworth Court was some 15 miles
from London, and it therefore took us
the best part of three hours to reach
our destination.

We alighted at the end of the lane
leading to the mansion, and bade Flow-
ers, one of my oldest and smartest
chums, to wait till he heard our whistle
before driving up to the door. This
precaution was taken in case any local
police chanced to be hanging about the
house while we were engaged inside.

We then marched boldly up the drive
and rang the bell. After an interval of
five minutes there was the sound of
heavy bolts being drawn, and the door
swung open, disclosing a white haired
old man whom I took to be the butler.
He gave a cry when the light from his
lantern fell on our faces and un-
iforms.

"Calm yourself, my good man," I
said, assuming an official voice. "You
have nothing to fear. From information
received, we believe that burglars
are in the east wing of this house, and
we have come to catch them. Arouse
your master immediately."

Sir Titus Blaydes, a thin, pinched up
little man, appeared quickly. He was
evidently quite as scared as his butler,
and when we told him our mission he
wrung his hands.

"Be quick, officers," he screamed, his
face blanching with terror, "and I will
wait here in the hall till you return.
Stay, inspector. You might stop with
me in case the blackguards should
come this way."

During their absence Sir Titus, with
chattering teeth, conversed with me,
telling me how he had always dreaded
such an attack, and how it had come
to pass. His reflections were inter-
rupted by a loud report, which rang
out sharp and clear through the still
house.

I darted from the hall and an instant
later returned, with a gloomy mien.

"I regret to say, Sir Titus," I cried,
"that the man has been shot dead.
There was only one of them, but he
made terrible resistance, and in the
struggle his own weapon went off, the
bullet entering his brain. We will take
him away at once."

I thought my heart would stand still
when, after the supposed corpse had
been brought toward the door, Sir
Titus came forward and exclaimed in
a quick, hurried tone: "Stop! Set it
down. Strangely enough, in all my 38
years, I have never seen a dead man.
Let me see the face of this one."

There was nothing to be done but to
let the morbid baronet have his way
and trust to luck and to the deception
of wig, paint and beard.

The baronet knelt beside the statue
and raised the handkerchief from the
blood stained face. Then a look of dis-
gust crossed his patrician features, and
he rose, having carefully replaced the
handkerchief.

"Take it away, officers," he said. "A
more repulsive and ruffianly looking
countenance I never saw. Crime is
stamped on every feature."

And that was how the millionaire
collector of the antique characterized a
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