

# THE STOLEN DETECTIVE

By Lucius Withers

Illustrated by Dorothy Dulin.



ALMOST directly across the street from the apartment that I was watching I caught sight of a "To Let" sign staring out from one of the front windows of an upper flat. It would not be the first time that an apartment had been left unlocked following inspection by a possible tenant, I thought, as I hastily crossed the street.

There was no inner locked door at the entrance, and the door to the flat itself was unlocked. I made myself as comfortable as possible near the front windows. I kept watch until the noon hour, with no result. Two grocery boys, a parcel boy and the driver of a meat market delivery wagon came and went, and there were no others. Then, beginning to grow hungry, I deserted my post and visited the little delicatessen store into which the old dweller in the apartment opposite had disappeared the day before.

I was making my way back to my post, carrying a light lunch in a paper bag, when I almost ran into a man at the one corner between the store and my destination. We both looked at each other in astonishment. It was Phillips, and he gave a gasp of surprise. It was with difficulty that I refrained from doing the same thing. He greeted me respectfully.

"I see, sir," he said after the first greeting, "that you are interested in the home of my relative; perhaps you would like to meet him?"

For the moment I was taken completely aback, and did not know how to answer him. Then I did some rapid thinking. I reasoned that it would be useless for me to deny that I had come to view the apartment, in view of my previous inquiries at the Willoughby home. On the other hand, I feared that the man was about to lead me into a trap. Even at the moment I thought I detected a malicious gleam of satisfaction behind those heavy lids. He evidently sensed my hesitancy and its cause, for he said: "Come, sir; it's all right. My word for it."

I followed him across the street and up the stairs, with the strange resemblance that I had noted before taking stronger hold on me. There was the same carriage, the same carrying of the head, the same sloping shoulders. They took possession of me, despite the fact that, as on the previous occasion, I noted the essential differences between this man and he whom I had looked upon in wonder at the Fenning reception.

I knew, or rather felt, that I was taking my life in my hands in following the man, but it seemed to me that he had practically dared me to go with him, and I was never one to take a dare if there was a fighting chance. Besides, I had not been so foolish as to come on this mission unarmed; that little flat nosed revolver lent a certain feeling of security.

Phillips let himself in with a latch key and bidding me wait just inside the door after he had closed it, he walked down the hall and entered what I took to be a bedroom door. My glance followed him down the hall and noted on the tiny shelf between the four legs of a little table holding the telephone a pair of gray suede shoes, high heeled and dainty, that had never been built for men's wear.

A brief interval passed and then Phillips came back, followed by the old man in the greasy skull cap. The old fellow recognized me and smiled sheepishly. That smile made me a bit uncomfortable; it was altogether too amiable under the circumstances.

Phillips led the way into the front apartment, which seemed to be fitted up as a sort of hybrid sitting-bedroom. I was struck by the fact that though the place was frugally furnished, it was scrupulously clean, and set it down to the gray suede shoes. I was, therefore, all the more unprepared ten minutes later when Phillips,

## Synopsis

DUGALD McCALMAN, broker and art connoisseur, is called in to help the police solve the mystery of the missing "Opal of Doom," owned by Henry Willoughby, Chicago millionaire, who has renounced the title of Baron Berwyn and come to America. McCALMAN calls in his friend Hendy, and while giving him the history of the opal, receives a telephone message from Reggie Willoughby to the effect that his father was slain in bed. McCALMAN and Hendy go to the Willoughby home. Examination fails to reveal any trace of the murderer, and while waiting for the coroner they are startled by a woman's shrieks. Reggie says that it is his mother, and leaves the room. Hendy becomes suspicious of the butler and thinks he can give some light on the murder.

Returning to McCALMAN's apartment, they find a note threatening him with death if he does not drop the case. The next night he sends Hendy to a reception to watch Catherine de Alvarez and Axel Axelsen, two famous European crooks, where he sees a man who strongly resembles Phillips, the Willoughby butler. He follows the two crooks toward the Willoughby house, where they kidnap a woman whom Hendy thinks is Clarice Willoughby. In trying to stop them he is knocked unconscious. Later he learns that Clarice is in her own room asleep and that Phillips has been out to visit his uncle. Not hearing anything from McCALMAN, Hendy looks up the uncle, but can get no satisfaction. In a picture show he recognizes Catherine de Alvarez and follows her to the home of Phillips' uncle. Returning home, he finds a note from McCALMAN saying that he had allowed himself to be stolen, but was in no danger. The next morning he meets Clarice Willoughby, who tells him that there is a secret in her mother's life which she cannot solve.

who had presented me as a friend, and who had carried on an intermittent conversation with our host through an ear trumpet, calmly declared that Mr. S. Marks, who proved to be no mute, but only deaf, occupied the apartment alone. I kept my counsel and listened with what good grace I could summon to the unimportant talk, evidently carried on to allay my suspicion.

It was during a lull in this conversation that I heard the sound of a key turning in the front door. Phillips heard the sound, too, for he jumped up and hurried out into the hall, closing the door behind him. He returned a moment later and seated himself without vouchsafing an explanation. I began to feel decidedly uncomfortable. With but the two against me, the odds I had figured were not so uneven, considering that one of them was an old man, but this later arrival had put a new color on the situation.

I must have displayed some of the nervousness I felt, for after some more of the inconsequential talk Phillips consulted his watch and declared that it was time for him to get back to his duties.

The three of us got to our feet. With a gesture indicating the hallway, Phillips fell behind me. Fearful of an attack from the rear, I stepped quickly out into the hall. At that moment a shaggy dog hurled himself, snarling, at my throat.

With a cry of fear I evaded the brute, which fell against the closed door behind me. Phillips had slammed the door shut as I emerged into the hall. I whipped out my revolver and was about to put a bullet between the eyes of the brute as he picked himself up. But he was too quick for me. He turned and hurled himself at me again. I met him with a smashing blow from the pistol butt, and he fell limp at my feet. A moment later he straightened out, whined and died.

Behind me the door opened softly, and I whirled about to look into the surprised eyes of Phillips. The look of disappointment on his face was, for an instant, unmistakable. But he seemed to remember himself almost instantly and inquired solicitously for my welfare.

"He's a terrible brute, and when I saw

that he was loose I slammed the door before I remembered what I was about, sir," he explained.

The old man was close on the butler's heels, and I saw that the death of the dog had angered him deeply. My anger also was up.

"Let me out of here!" I commanded curtly.

"Certainly, certainly, sir," answered Phillips. There was no doubt of the panic in his voice, and I noted that his hand shook as he put on his hat and turned the front door latch.

I knew that the two of them had counted on the dog, and now that the brute had failed them they were nonplused and not prepared for what might follow. I knew my cue was for a quick exit before they had had time to regain themselves wholly.

Phillips left the building with me and together we walked a block toward the elevated station, three squares away. There he left me, explaining uneasily that he would go home by way of a surface car.

It would have given me the greatest pleasure to have shot him between his sloping shoulders as he walked away from me along the side street. The attack by that savage dog had angered me almost beyond measure, and I could get little satisfaction from the fact that it had been the brute instead of Phillips who had paid the penalty of treachery with its life.

Feeling assured that the butler was glad enough to get clear of the neighborhood, for the time being at least, and that there was little likelihood that he would return to the flat that afternoon, I made my way to the cab stand under the elevated station at Sixty-third street. I engaged a taxi to be kept waiting for me at a point close to the empty apartment from which I kept watch. I felt that she whom I had been set to shadow would in all probability leave the apartment in an automobile. After posting my chauffeur and making necessary arrangements with him, I returned to my place behind the windows.

But no automobile appeared before the building across the street, and it was not until after the street lights had been switched on that I saw the woman, veiled and clad as she had been on the previous

day, come out of the entrance and walk quickly toward the corner.

I made my way into the street as swiftly as possible and reached the pavement just as she whom I believed to be Catherine de Alvarez was turning the corner. I followed her as she hurriedly made her way to Sixty-third street. She did not enter the elevated station, but awaited the arrival of a west bound surface car. I followed her aboard and made my way to the front platform, where I could keep watch on her as she sat well toward the middle of the car.

We rode westward for two miles, until reaching Ashland avenue, when she alighted and boarded a car going north. I followed her, wondering a bit why she had not asked for a transfer. For many blocks we rode back toward the city. Reaching the malodorous neighborhood about the stock yards, I was surprised to note her signal for the stop. She hurriedly jumped out into the street and made her way north for a block. I followed as closely as discretion would allow. Then she turned east for two blocks to Turnbull street, and then north again. The trail of this fashionable suspect was leading into strange places, and I began to feel a bit uncomfortable. More than once an inquisitive city editor had sent me into this district on one mission or another, and I was not unfamiliar with the locality, but I knew the personnel of the vicinity, and I would have preferred that the trail led elsewhere.

At the end of the block I saw a policeman turn the corner and make his way toward us. From this I snatched a crumb of comfort, which tasted sweet in my mouth until I saw him stop and converse with the woman for a minute, after which they turned and continued together for another block, at the end of which they entered a frame building on the corner.

Approaching more closely, I saw that the building was one of those ramshackle affairs which would be allowed in no other section of the city. The first floor was given over to a saloon, which from the legend over the door I learned was Bohemian. Up one side of the building ran a rickety flight of stairs, at the top of which was a closed door.

Not wishing to enter the saloon after the pair, which action I knew would result in inquiries that I might not care to answer, I made my way across the street, determined to keep watch, for a time at least, to see if the woman would emerge again. The meeting with the policeman puzzled me. If she whom I had followed was Catherine de Alvarez, what business had she with the police?

I saw a light spring to life in the front windows of the upper story, and found time to hope that my quarry would not remain long where she was. My lunch had been a light one, and I was hungry. More than this, a stiff wind had sprung up out of the northwest and it was rapidly growing bitterly cold.

### CHAPTER XIV.

#### A Pavement Encounter.

MY PRESENCE on the sidewalk did not elicit that curiosity from the few passersby which it might have caused had the night been less bitter. The few persons who did pass gave me quick, curious glances and hurried on, evidently seeking shelter from the icy cold wind which was blowing furiously.

I was about to quit my post, defeated by aching face and feet, and go in search of heat and something to eat, when the door of the saloon opposite was flung open and the big policeman came out. He made a bee line toward me. I thought, for the moment, of making a run for it. I do not know why I wished to do this, but that was my first impulse. However, the policeman gave me no time. It seemed to me that he was standing in front of me in a menacing posture almost before I had assured myself that he was seeking me.

In the light from the swaying arc in