

Millions in Jewels of Wealthy and Fashionable Women Recently Stolen

How Professional Thieves

All Over the Country Are Watching Social Affairs and Following Their Victims Until the Opportunity Arrives

FASHIONS and customs in crime change, as in everything else, in accordance with changing conditions and circumstances.

The old-fashioned bank burglar has gone out of business because the vaults of the modern big banks are too skillfully guarded.

The old-time big jewelry store robberies have practically ceased because the valuables are too carefully protected to afford opportunity for wholesale thefts.

The epidemic of bond robberies in the financial sections which startled the country last Winter have been pretty well ended because brokers, banks, and the bonding insurance companies have learned a lesson and are safeguarding securities more carefully.

At the present moment American thieves have centered their attention on the jewels of wealthy and fashionable American women, because this is found to be the easiest field of operations. For the last six months there has been a more or less important jewelry robbery almost every night in some fashionable section of the country, and very few of the burglars have been caught. Everybody remembers the Caruso robbery of nearly half a million dollars' worth of jewels early last June. This case was given wide publicity in the newspapers, but of the multitude of other jewel robberies here and there throughout the country very few details reached the ears of the newspapers.

Why have professional thieves turned their attention industriously to women's jewels? The reasons are not hard to seek. In the first place the jewelry possessions of wealthy American women run into countless millions. Where is there a multimillionaire American's wife who has not from a hundred thousand dollars' worth to a million dollars' worth or more of jewels? It has been estimated that within the walls of one public building, the Metropolitan Opera House, on many an occasion there are jewels to the value of ten millions in the hair, on the ears, around the throats, on the fingers and on the clothes of the women present.

Indeed, at some social functions or fancy dress occasions, one individual woman of social prominence sometimes wears not only all her own wealth of jewels but loads down her headdress and costume with many added jewels, borrowed for the occasion from wealthy friends. The picture printed elsewhere on this page of Mrs. Benjamin Guinness shows the noted banker's wife costumed as Semiramis, Queen of Nineveh. She wore with this costume a splendid jeweled crown lent by her friend Mrs. John Astor, worth \$100,000, and other jewels belonging to other friends, the whole collection being worth not less than \$2,000,000.

If a wealthy man owns securities running into the hundreds of thousands he does not keep them in his house or on his person or in his office. They are securely locked up in the vaults of a bank or safe deposit company. But if his wife owns a two hundred thousand dollar necklace of matched pearls and another half million dollars' worth of miscellaneous rings, brooches and jewels, they cannot be given the security of a safe deposit vault if the owner is to wear them and get any satisfaction out of them. Here lies the secret of the repeated and successful raids upon the private jewel collections of fashionable and wealthy women. It is easy for a thief to make a list of millionaires' wives who own valuable jewelry. The next step is to watch the movements of the owner of the gems. Sooner or later the opportunity will come for the thief to find the jewels removed from their customary hiding place or place of partial security.

If the cautious husband of the owner of the jewels has a fairly secure receptacle in his town residence, then the thief may have to patiently watch him until the family moves to the country, and the robbery is pulled off in the Summer home, as the Caruso burglary was.

But if both the town house and the country house are provided with quite secure receptacles for the jewels, then the thief may find his opportunity while the jewels are in transit on a train. Mrs. Arthur Whitney was robbed of thirty thousand dollars' worth of trinkets on an east-bound Pennsylvania train.

If neither the town house nor the country house nor the railroad train gives opportunity, perhaps the intended victim can be reached while stopping at some hotel. Thus Elsie Janis, the actress, lost fifty-eight thousand dollars' worth of jewels at the Hotel Seelbach, in Louisville, Kentucky, last April.

And so the ocean steamer, the automobile and other times and places give the opportunity to the thief who has marked his victim, patiently watching her perhaps for weeks and finds his chance unexpectedly and seizes the opportunity.

Sophia Lyons, the most expert American jewel thief known to the police, in a burst of confidence told how she and her con-

federates had sometimes spent an entire year watching a woman before the opportunity offered. One enormous haul of jewelry was made from an American woman's bedroom in a hotel in Monte Carlo after they had watched her New York residence, her country house at Newport and followed her on social visits to Chicago and Washington, had crossed the ocean with her on the steamship, had taken rooms in the same hotel in London and in Paris and in Nice and finally caught her off her guard one night after her return from the Monte Carlo Casino to her hotel apartments. It was a long investment, Sophia Lyons explained, of time, patience and money, but it paid handsomely when the thieves at last got into their hands a million dollars' worth of jewels.

How the watchful robbers seize time and opportunity has been vividly illustrated by several recent robberies where the thieves have awaited the occasion of a social function when the women had the jewels on their necks, bosoms and fingers. Here the coveted valuables were in the open, away from their customary places of hiding or security. Could the thieves follow those jewels and get hold of them before the owners took the time or precaution to lock them away or hide them away?

Some time during the night of October 13 more than a hundred thousand dollars' worth of gems were taken from the bedrooms of the members of the Sleepy Hollow Country Club at Scarborough-on-the-Hudson, near New York. The ladies had attended an exclusive dance on the floor below. The festivities were carried over so far into the early morning that many of the guests decided to remain at the club over night instead of returning to their homes.

Here was the opportunity. Whatever had been the custom of the owners of the jewels, whatever had been the hiding place of security in the homes of the owners, here came the moment when somewhere in those bedrooms, probably within the reach of a thief's fingers, the jewels at last were lying unprotected.

Even bolder and more cruelly crude were the operations of two Chicago jewel thieves who watched the departing guests from a whist party at a residence on South Troy street in the early morning hours of that very same day when the Sleepy Hollow Club jewels were being stolen near New York.

As six women guests at the whist party were leaving in an automobile two robbers, pistols in hand, jumped on the running-boards. One held his revolver at the chauffeur's head while it was still within sight of the bright lights of the South Troy street residence and ordered the driver to go to the entrance of a nearby park. Here the thieves stripped the ladies of their jewels and escaped through the shrubbery.

At the home of Mrs. George McFadden, Jr., near Philadelphia, thieves in the night made their way to a box containing jewelry to the value of \$250,000. This included a string of pearls worth \$150,000 and was one of the finest owned in the United States. No trace of this has been found and by now, probably, the rope, consisting of 165 pearls, has been taken apart and each pearl put in another setting.

This robbery was discovered after a reception at the house, and while the McFaddens felt confident of the integrity of all their guests and servants, the detectives inclined to the belief that some traitor guest or servant was the thief. At the home of Mrs. William Sackett Duell, of Meadowbrook, Pa., a function of note was held a couple of weeks ago. Soon after the last guest had departed Mrs. Duell retired to her room and to her amazement and dismay saw that her jewel box had been ransacked and rare family jewels worth over \$25,000 abstracted. Her distress was the more acute because she was forced to the realization that she had actually been graciously entertaining the thief that evening, that, perhaps, she had even been reckoning the thief on her list of cherished friends.

Toward early Summer \$75,000 worth of jewels were stolen from the home of Mrs. Hamilton Fish, the well-known social leader, at No. 510 Fifth avenue, New York City. This robbery has always been shrouded in mystery, as neither the family nor the police would admit anything. But the robbery was reported, just the same, and a servant suspected.

And so it has gone. These are but some of the more important jewel robberies that have had police, detectives and the surety companies by the ears for the past year, not in New York alone, but all over the country.

There seems little to suggest in safeguarding household jewels. Samuel B. Brewster, who has charge of the burglary department of the American Surety Company, says that employees and their references should be more carefully examined. Nine out of ten letters of recommendation are forgeries.

Women should be less ostentatious of their jewelry in public. They should be very careful about showing it where there are strangers.

They should also be more careful about their jewelry at home. They misplace some of it and think it has been stolen. Later it is found. That encourages the servants to abstract some of it at a later date, hoping that the mistress will think this time it is mislaid.

But even a strict obedience to these suggestions would not seem to be a very efficient safeguard for household jewels.



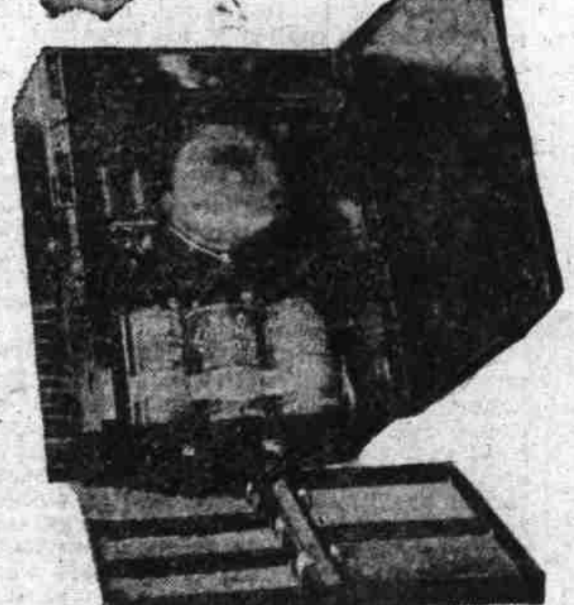
Mrs. Benjamin Guinness at a Fashionable New York Fancy Dress Function in the Costume of the Queen of Nineveh, Wearing Two Million Dollars Worth of Jewels, Which Included Her Own Collection of Gems and Other Jewelry Borrowed from Fashionable Acquaintances, Among Which Is Seen the \$100,000 Jeweled Crown Loaned Her for the Occasion by Her Friend, Mrs. John Astor.



Some of the Jewels of the Famous and Valuable Collection of Mrs. William B. Leeds. Photo by Amie Dupont.



Mrs. John R. Drexel Wearing Some of Her Famous Jewels. Photo by Amie Dupont.



The Useless Burglar Alarm Jewel Case in Which the Caruso Jewels Were Kept, but Which Afforded No Security Because the Thief Was Able to Pick Up the Whole Thing Under His Arm and Carry It Off.

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