

Who Stole the \$4,000 Ermine Stole?

A Very
Puzzling
Real Life Adventure
Which Reads Like a
Motion Picture
Tragedy



The Adventures of Mrs. DeBarros' Valuable Neckpiece in Six Curious Scenes.

SCENE ONE—The Young Bride is Thrilled with Admiration at the Splendid Fur Adornment.

SCENE TWO—Sitting Behind Her at the Waldorf, Mrs. Vanderbilt Remarks on That Exquisite Wealth of Ermine.

SCENE THREE—A Burglar's Eye is Also Entranced with It and, Watching His Chance, He Steals It.

SCENE FOUR—Returning to Her Apartments and Finding the Stole Gone She is Broken Hearted.

SCENE FIVE—Coming Out of a Theatre Several Weeks Later Mr. DeBarros Whispers—"Look, Violet! Is That Your Stole?"

SCENE SIX—On the Shoulders of the Passing Stranger Was, Indeed, Her Stolen Stole—and the Other Scenes of the Tragedy Are Now Being Enacted in the New York Courts.



Mrs. Violet Fleury DeBarros.

It was a balmy October evening. The New York theatre crowds were slowly emptying to the sidewalk when something suddenly happened.

Mrs. Violet DeBarros, leaning on the arm of her husband, emerged from a theatre entrance, and as she looked down to watch her steps her husband cast an eye forward at the throng.

"Look, Violet!" whispered Mr. DeBarros in her ear, "Is that your stole?"

In another instant a dozen men and women in front of her were surprised at what seemed the unnecessary haste and rude jostling of a very pretty and a very earnest young woman.

An instant later they were still more startled to see the gliding form of Mrs. DeBarros at the side of a young woman who wore a gorgeous ermine stole. Clutching the fur with eager fingers, Mrs. DeBarros brought the stranger to a standstill and, as the young woman turned about expecting to face a thief, she heard these words from the banker's wife:

"Pardon me, but I think you have my missing ermine stole!"

Dumfounded with astonishment but relieved to find that she was not in the hands of a highwayman, the young woman held firmly to one end of the long, sweeping fur and said:

"I don't know what you mean to imply, but I will tell you that this ermine stole was a present to me."

"Quite likely," said Mrs. DeBarros, "and I wish to make no charges against you nor to imply anything. But I repeat that you certainly are wearing the very same ermine stole which was stolen from my apartments."

The crowd had closed in about the two young women and Mr. DeBarros, realizing that some definite step must be taken, motioned to an approaching policeman and

explained that it would be necessary to request the wearer of the fur to come to the nearest police station and explain how she came into possession of the stole.

A few moments later the next act in the tragedy took place in front of the police sergeant's desk at the station house.

Turning to Mrs. DeBarros the sergeant said: "Do you charge this woman with stealing your fur?"

"No. I make no charges."

"Then what do you want to do?"

"This is my stole, and I want my property," Mrs. DeBarros said firmly.

"But maybe you are mistaken about its being your fur," the sergeant replied cautiously.

"No. I cannot be mistaken."

"But all furs look alike," said the sergeant. "You will have to prove that this particular thing is yours."

"That I can do," said Mrs. DeBarros with quiet confidence.

"You can?" inquired the sergeant doubtfully. "Now how can you prove that this fur that this lady was wearing and says was given to her is the very same fur that you say was stolen from you over in your apartment near Riverside Drive?"

"Quite simple. I will prove it to you at once. Drawing a jewelled hatpin from her hat Mrs. DeBarros glanced at the sharp point and reached for the end of the stole.

"Wait!" shouted the startled police sergeant. "What are you going to do?"

"I am going to open the lining and prove that the skins are mine."

"But I don't know whether they are your skins or not. All skins look alike, don't they?"

"But every one of the little ermine pelts in that fur stole is stamped in indelible ink with my initials."

A look of incredulous astonishment swept over the face of the police sergeant.



Mrs. DeBarros with the Ermine Stole and Muff.

He peered at Mr. DeBarros with an inquiring glance and then fixed his gaze upon the young woman who stood with open-mouthed astonishment at the drift of the conversation.

While pondering the proposition of opening up the lining of the garment, the sergeant played for time by saying to Mr. DeBarros:

"Are you the husband of this lady here who claims this fur?"

"Yes, I am."

"Do you know whether the stole which she says was stolen from her had the inside of the skins marked?"

"Yes, that is true."

Then turning a judicial eye on the young woman who had been wearing the fur, the sergeant said:

"Do you know if there is any mark of identification on the skins?"

"No," replied the young woman. "This was a present to me by my fiancée, and, of course, I never broke open the lining to look inside."

"Are you satisfied to have this lady here show us whether those skins are really marked with her name or not?" inquired the sergeant in his endeavor to play safe.

"Well," said the sergeant, "they sure are marked V. D. B., just as you said."

With darkening brow the officer fixed a glance upon the young woman, then said:

"Now, what have you to say?"

"I repeat exactly what I said before," returned the young woman calmly. "This fur was a present to me. If it was stolen from this lady here I did not know it nor did the person who gave it to me."

"Well, who did give it to you?" asked the sergeant, picking up his pencil.

"Mr. Lester Jacobs, the theatrical manager. You can telephone to him and he will come here immediately and substantiate what I say."

The sergeant called the number and Mr. Jacobs at once started on his way to the police station.

While the little party were awaiting his arrival the sergeant made a memorandum of this conversation with the young woman who had been found with the fur on her shoulders.

"Name: Mildred Loeb. Business: motion-picture actress."

Mr. Jacobs then arrived and in response to the police officer's questions explained that he had bought the fur from two young

"Certainly I am willing," the young woman said promptly.

"What are your initials?" the sergeant asked.

"V. D. B.," Mrs. DeBarros replied.

"Go ahead," said the sergeant.

"Open it up and we'll see what we'll see."

Mrs. DeBarros, who had held the hatpin poised in front of her, now ran her fingers down toward the sharp point of it, grasped it firmly and drawing the stole close to her eyes searched for the fine silk threads of the lining. With deft touch she soon picked open six or eight inches of stitches, laid back the lining and with a pleasant little smile of triumph held the garment up to the gaze of the police sergeant.

"Paid \$150 for this piece of fur? Some bargain!" the sergeant mused under his breath, and then handing a slip of paper with the names and addresses of Burns and Mariano on it to two detectives, said:

"Bring these men in right away."

Then turning to Jacobs the police sergeant said:

"How did you come to be dealing with these men?"

"I knew one of the fellows slightly," Jacobs replied. "I met him and he told me he had a fine piece of fur he would like to sell. I made an appointment to meet him at his apartment, where both of the men live. As I contemplated buying it for Miss Loeb, I asked her to come along and see how she liked it. Naturally she was delighted with it, and after some bargaining they agreed to sell it for \$150, which I paid."

"What is the fur worth?" the sergeant asked.

"I don't know," replied Jacobs. "I have never had any experience in buying furs."

"What do you say it is worth?" inquired the sergeant, turning to Mrs. DeBarros.

"I don't know what it is worth now," replied Mrs. DeBarros. "The stole was purchased in Europe before the present high prices of furs. It is made of specially selected matched Russian ermine pelts. I have been told that it is worth at least \$4,000 now—perhaps even more."

"How did it happen that they only stole this stole when they broke into your apartments?"

"Oh, that was not all I lost. The thieves went through everything—the closets, my trunks and bureau drawers and just about cleaned them out. They took half a dozen evening gowns, but this ermine stole was the thing that upset me the most."

"It had been so much admired, you know," continued Mrs. DeBarros, fixing an affectionate gaze upon the ermine. "It always attracts attention and has been so much complimented and I was so proud of it. Were you at the Bluebird Ball in honor of Maeterlinck, the poet?"

"Well, no. I couldn't go that night," said the sergeant with a smile.

men—Harold Burns and August Mariano—whose addresses he gave. They had offered the stole for \$200 and Jacobs had finally secured it for \$150, he said. Miss Loeb had been present at the transaction, corroborated Mr. Jacobs' statements and the sergeant looked up at the ceiling thoughtfully.

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"Well, no. I couldn't go that night," said the sergeant with a smile.

"It was at the Waldorf-Astoria and Mrs. Vanderbilt had a seat just behind me. I heard her say, 'Just look at that magnificent ermine!' So you see how much I naturally prized it almost more than anything I had. Can you let me take it home with me now?"

"Well, not just yet. It seems to be yours all right, but it is material evidence and we will have to keep it until this case is thoroughly sifted and we find out who broke into your place and stole it."

Mr. and Mrs. DeBarros drew off to one corner of the big room while Mr. Jacobs and Miss Loeb stood chatting together in another corner. The sergeant went on with the regular business of the precinct station house and the magnificent stole nestled beside his elbow on the police desk.

Before long the detectives returned, bringing with them the two young men.

"Are these the men you bought this fur from?" asked the sergeant.

"Yes, they are," replied Mr. Jacobs without hesitation.

"Where did you get this fur piece?" inquired the sergeant, glancing from one to the other of the two men the detectives had just brought in.

"I never saw the fur before," said Burns. "He didn't get the fur from me," said Mariano.

"Lock them up, officer," said the sergeant, "and put this piece of fur in the safe." Then turning to the other interested members in the party, he added, "Be at court in the morning at 9 o'clock. That is all."

In the Magistrates' Court the details of the previous evening were gone over again and when all the testimony had been offered, the police magistrate turned to Burns and Mariano and asked: "What have you to say?"

"Nothing," both men replied.

"Held in \$2,500 bail for larceny to await the action of the Grand Jury," said the Judge as he waved to the officer to take his prisoners to the cell room.

Who stole the stole?

Have the police by good luck gotten their hands upon some of the West Side residence and apartment house robbers? It will be interesting to see what the next act in the tragedy of Mrs. DeBarros' \$4,000 ermine stole develops when Burns and Mariano are put on trial.