

Tracked by a Human Weakness

By WILLARD BLAKEMAN

One morning the quiet town of Silver Waters—named for a stream running through it—was horrified at the announcement that Leonard Marston had been found murdered in his bed. Silver Waters was a summer settlement of wealthy persons who were not there in winter, but Marston had remained beyond the usual time, and the tragedy occurred late in November.

The house had evidently been entered for the purpose of plunder. It was generally known that Mrs. Marston, who was in the city at the time of the murder, had a great deal of valuable jewelry. Some of this was at the country house, and it was all taken by the robbers, as were her husband's studs, sleeve buttons, scarfpins, etc.

When the police, who were called in at once, came they took possession of the premises, allowing nothing to be touched till the arrival of Dempsey, a detective, who was to make a thorough examination.

Dempsey had a reputation of being one of the most skillful probers of crimes in America. When he arrived he began his search for something the criminal or criminals had left as a possible clue. There were no footprints, which are usually considered the most important pointers. Indeed, after an hour's methodical investigation Dempsey had discovered nothing. Then his eye caught a small object under a dresser from which Mr. Marston's belongings had been taken.

Drawing an electric lamp from his pocket, he flashed it upon the object and revealed a stud. Taking it up, he saw that it was a mosaic and recognized it as one that must have been made in Italy. Evidently in taking it from the box in which it and other articles of like character had been kept the thief had dropped it and it had rolled under the dresser.

This was the only clue that was found. Dempsey inquired of Mrs. Marston how many studs of the set her husband had possessed, where they had been procured and any other information the lady might give. He was told that there were three studs in the set, with a pair of sleeve buttons to match. She had brought them from Rome with her after her last visit there during the previous summer. The design was the same on all the studs and the sleeve links, a copy of the head of a statue in the Vatican called the Apollo Belvidere.

"That will do," said Dempsey. "It may be a long chase, but if persisted in the thief and murderer will at last be found."

Dempsey did not begin to probe the matter till a month after the robbery, then he got up a circular, a copy of which he sent to every pawnbroker and manufacturing jeweler in America. He gave a description of the mosaic stud and a picture of it. He got nothing from any pawnbroker, but from a jeweler he received a letter stating that two studs answering the description in his letter had been made into a pair of earrings in his shop. Dempsey responded to the letter in person and learned that the work had been done for a woman. She was well remembered by the clerk who took the order and was described as about twenty-eight or thirty years old, large, rather flashy in her dress, and her face and neck had been "calcimined."

From this point Dempsey worked with a large corps of assistants, whom he employed to go to public places of

amusement, dining places, cabarets—indeed, such places as are frequented by the floating population of cities. Nevertheless a year passed with no results.

At last one of Dempsey's assistants, a girl about sixteen years old, reported that a friend of hers had told her that she had sat next to a woman at a movie show who wore mosaic earrings representing "the head of a man with curly hair." The assistants were instructed to follow the person if met with and note the residence. But the woman with the earrings could not be found. So the game was lost.

But Dempsey went at once to the city where the discovery had been made, hired a special corps of assistants and went about himself where pleasure loving people go.

One evening after dining at a cabaret he was lighting a cigar and about to move on when a woman entered, brushed past him and took a seat at a table with her escort. Dempsey's eyes were out for earrings, and he thought those the woman wore were mosaics. He took a seat at a table near the one at which the couple sat, but not near enough to get a close view of her earrings. The man ordered drinks, after which the couple danced. While they were dancing Dempsey took a seat within a few feet of the one the woman had left, though his back would be toward her. When she returned she took the seat she had occupied before. Dempsey turned around and, seizing one of the earrings in his hand, brought it to within a proper focus for his eyes.

When Mrs. Marston was going to bed that night she received a telephone message from Dempsey stating that he had found the stolen studs, the wearer had revealed the thief and murderer and he had been arrested.

"How did you do it?" asked the widow.

"It came through a human barbarism—a passion for adornment—which civilization has not eradicated," was the reply.

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