

## An Amateur Detective

How He Located the Missing Securities.

By CLARISSA MACKIE

Henry Ord lighted another cigar and waited impatiently for the re-appearance of his chief clerk. Every three minutes he consulted his watch and compared it with the electric timepiece on the wall between the windows. He had an important engagement at 11 o'clock, and it was now 10:30. Smithers was getting more stupid every day.

He brought his feet down from the desk with a thump as the secretary returned with a worried expression on his long, pale face. Mr. Ord reached for his hat and held out his hand.

"Give me the securities, Smithers," he said.

"I can't find them, Mr. Ord," said the clerk diffidently. "I thought perhaps you might have them in here."

"Here?" snorted Mr. Ord impatiently. "If I had them in here why did I send you to the vaults after them?"

"I have looked everywhere, sir. They are not in the vaults nor any other place in the office. I will question—"

"No need to question anybody," cut in Mr. Ord, sinking back in his chair and tossing his hat into the ticker basket. "I gave you those securities day before yesterday, with instructions to lock them in my private box in the vaults. You returned the key to me then, and I have just handed it to you now. I haven't had occasion to go to the box since Thursday. Now, where are those securities?"

"I don't know, sir," returned Smithers respectfully.

"Now, Smithers, this is the third time this has happened—securities have disappeared in this same way during several days until the market interest in them has abated. It's an old gag and won't work again. Now, who do you think is at the bottom of this?"

Smithers fidgeted nervously and looked out of the window at the blank wall of another building. "Really, Mr. Ord, I haven't formed an opinion," he said rather meekly.

"Haven't, eh? Well, I have," thundered his employer, fixing the chief clerk with a hard stare.

Smithers jumped nervously. "Indeed, sir," he said.

"Yes, indeed, Mr. Smithers. I'm going to ferret this mystery out before 2 o'clock. See! This office is the worst managed affair in the city of New York, and you are the most inefficient chief clerk I ever employed. Got that?"

"Yes, sir."

"See that row of books on the shelf?" Mr. Ord pointed his ruler at a narrow shelf laden with cloth-bound copies of Conan Doyle's books.

Smithers bowed respectfully.

"Detective stories, every one of 'em. I've read 'em all," said Mr. Ord. "I shall solve the mystery of the disappearance of those securities by the same methods as those employed by Sherlock Holmes," went on Mr. Ord. "Do you wear plasters, Mr. Smithers?" he asked coolly.

The chief clerk stared at this personal question, fired so abruptly from the lips of the great Mr. Ord—great in the financial district.

"Sometimes," he said guardedly.

"Have you one on now?" snapped Mr. Ord.

"Yes, sir," blushed Smithers.

Mr. Ord smiled with satisfaction. "Mr. Smithers, sir, you have been with me for three years, and up to this time I have never detected you in a grave error. I have trusted you implicitly, and I have always found you faithful and honest. In fact, I have no fault to find save that the office has no system whatever, and I can never find anything when I want it. Got that?"

"Yes, sir," Smithers replied dazedly.

"Now, sir, you admit you are wearing a plaster. How do I know that those securities are not concealed within your plaster, huh?" Mr. Ord looked from his astonished clerk to the red bound volumes of

Sherlock Holmes' adventures and patted his chest knowingly. "How do I know, sir?" he repeated.

"Really, I couldn't say, Mr. Ord," began Smithers and then as if the real meaning of his employer's insinuation had pierced some sensitive spot at last he added forcibly: "But I wouldn't do such a thing, you know, Mr. Ord, begging your pardon."

"You wouldn't, eh? How do you know you wouldn't?"

"I couldn't, sir," protested Smithers warmly. "You see the plaster I'm wearing is a bunion plaster and I couldn't get the securities."

Mr. Ord raised a fat forefinger. "I didn't ask you for details regarding your personal ailments, Mr. Smithers," he said icily. There was silence for a few moments. Once more he turned to his clerk.

"Did you mention to anybody that those bonds were in the vault?"

"Not a soul knew of their presence there except yourself and me, sir."

"Did you check over all the other securities in my box?"

"Yes, sir, and every other security in the vault," returned Smithers earnestly. "Begging your pardon, Mr. Ord, you might recollect that in every other instance of loss of papers they were afterward found to have been mislaid either by Mr. Carson or yourself."

"Enough!" said Ord sternly. "I have no such recollection, young man! Now," pointing an accusing finger in the face of his uncomfortable clerk, he continued with measured accents: "those bonds bore a date stamp impressed with purple ink. How did purple ink come to be on your hands and face, Mr. Smithers?" Mr. Ord shot a glance at his bookshelf and then his eyes came back to the face of his clerk. For the first time Smithers' face wrinkled into a faint smile. "I was assisting Miss Fenn to adjust a new ribbon in her typewriter," he said primly. "Before I had time to remove these stains you called me."

"Is it one of the duties of my chief clerk to assist the stenographers with such duties?" thundered Mr. Ord fiercely. "What do I hire office boys for, eh?"

In Mr. Smithers' opinion office boys were hired to loaf around the corridors and discuss baseball topics.

"Huh! I don't approve of courting in the office, Mr. Smithers," remarked Mr. Ord, his critical eye still on his employee's pink face. He pressed a button beside his desk and the door opened promptly, admitting a tall, slender girl whose black hair was twisted in the latest fashion and whose bright brown eyes seemed to take in every detail of the situation in one swift penetrating glance. Her gaze swept her employer's desk and then came to attention at Mr. Ord's curt accents.

"Sit down, Miss Fenn."

She did so, flapping open a notebook and poised her pencil.

"I don't wish to dictate. Have you seen or heard anything of the L. D. bonds since they were put in the vaults day before yesterday?"

Miss Fenn nodded. "Why, yes, Mr. Ord. Don't you remember you sent me to the vault for them this morning after you talked with Mr. Hughes over the telephone? You were reading when I came back, and you used the bonds as a bookmark as you closed the book to resume dictating. Why, there they are!" She picked up a red covered book from under his nose and removed several beautifully engraved certificates from between the pages of "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes." There was a sickly smile of enlightenment on Mr. Ord's face.

"Thank you, Miss Fenn; you may go now," he said with an effort. When the door had closed behind her trim figure Mr. Ord recovered his self possession. He picked his hat out of the basket, placed it on his head, compared his watch with the clock, nodded approval at the hour of 12 and drew the telephone receiver across the desk.

"By the way, Smithers," he said genially without turning his head, "I suppose if you're going to get married you'll need a little more money, eh?"

"I really couldn't say that I'd thought about it, Mr. Ord," said the clerk meekly.

"Well, just tell the cashier to add another hundred to your salary. I'll O. K. it. Don't mention it! Hey! Central! Give me 3369 Livingston. Hello! Hughes & Car-

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| Butter Fat (net).....              | 35       |
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| Geese, per pound.....              | 16       |
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way? Ah, Hughes; about that L. D. Now—"

Smithers closed the door softly behind him and paused in the tiny outer office where Bessie Fenn sat before her machine staring dreamily at a blank sheet of paper on the roller. The young man leaned over until his breath fanned her cheek. "Bessie," he whispered, "he's raised me another hundred. I'm sure I can take care of your mother as well as you. Will you marry me soon?"

Bessie's nimble fingers rapped out three letters and an exclamation point, and then on the fair blank sheet there appeared a word written in purple letters: "Yes!"

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