THE MIDNIGHT WATCH.

It was during the time of my connection with the Blankborough police force that the incident related in the following lines occurred. Although there is nothing startling in the details, and the unraveling of the mystery with which they deal required no great amount of sagacity on my part, still, I am inclined to think that there is sufficient interest about the affair to warrant me making it public.

I was engaged with the superintendent one morning on some routine business when a note was handed in from Mr. Bridgnorth, a well-known solicitor practicing in the town. The superintendent read the missive and turned to me.

"It is a case of pilfering Sampson," he said, "and the thief, of course, cannot be discovered. There is nothing requiring your services this morning—go and see what you can do in the matter."

I put on my hat and went as directed. Mr. Bridgnorth's place was well known to me and I was soon the occupant of a seat in his private office.

"I have been a good deal concerned of late," said the solicitor, turning to the business at once, "about the abstraction of certain sums of money from my cash box in my desk, and as I fear that I am being robbed by some one in the office, and cannot put my hands on the actual offender, I am compelled to seek the aid of the police."

"Quite so sir," I said, "and it will be both the duty and pleasure of the force, and of myself, to give you every possible assistance in the matter. How long have the pilferings been going on?" I asked.

"About a week or ten days," was the reply, "and the robberies always take place at night after the office is closed."

"How do you know that?"

"Because I count the cash in my desk every evening before locking up, when everybody has left, and again the next morning before anyone arrives," said Mr. Bridgnorth.

"What are the sums you've missed?"

"They have varied. One night £5 were taken, another £7, a third £3, and so on. Altogether, I have been robbed of 55 sovereigns, and I do not know where it is going to end."

"Have you any suspicion of whom the thief may be?"

"None whatever — unless —" Mr. Bridgnorth hesitated.

"Go on, sir," I said. "Give expression to your thoughts; they furnish a clew."

"I was going to say," continued the solicitor, with some apparent reluctance, "unless it be Hartley; but I cannot believe him guilty of such a thing."

"Who is Hartley?" I asked.

"My confidential clerk," replied Mr. Bridgnorth. "He has been with me ever since he was a boy, and his character has always been above reproach."

"Then why should his name occur to you in connection with these thefts?" I queried.

"Well, it is like this," said the solicitor. "Hartley and I are the only persons who sleep on the premises, and as there are no signs of burglarious entry, and the thefts always take place in the night, I am, in spite of myself, driven to a certain conclusion."

"The natural one in the circumstances," I ventured. "But tell me; you keep several clerks in addition lo Hartley?"

"Yes; four others."

"At what time do they leave?"

"Six o'clock."

"When do you lock up?"

"About 6.30 or 7."

"You lock your desk and the office door?"

"Yes."

"Does anyone besides yourself possess keys to either?"

"Hartley does, of both."

"And you say he sleeps on the premises?"

"Yes."

"No one else?"

"Myself."

"But you do not live here, Mr. Bridgnorth?"

"Quite so. My residence is on the outskirts of the town, but for several nights past I have been sleeping at the office."

"In order to catch the thief?" I queried.

"Indeed that was not my motive at all," said the lawyer quickly. "And as a matter of fact, the robberies have only occurred since my sojourn in the place; they never happened before."

"Very likely. But, assuming that Hartley is the thief, can you suggest a motive for his pilferings?" I asked.

"None whatever," was the reply.

"What kind of a life does he lead? Steady?"

"Nobody more so."

"Doesn't he bet or gamble?"

"Neither, to my knowledge. He is engaged to a very respectable girl, and I know as a fact, that he shortly contemplates housekeeping."

"Ah, there is a motive for pilfering!" I said with a shrug of the shoulders.

"How so?" asked the solicitor.

"Why, a house requires furniture, and furniture costs money," I said.

"Then you think Hartley is helping himself to my cash to fit up his house?" said Mr. Bridgnight sadly.

"It looks remarkably like it," I said. "But we shall probably see. Of course, you have not charged him with the thefts?"

"No, for I cannot persuade myself of his guilt."

"And he has no knowledge of the object of my visit?"

"None, so far as I am aware."

"Very well, let him keep in the dark for the paesent. Meanwhile, can you tell me the object of your sleeping on these premises the last few nights?"

"Well," said Mr. Bridgnorth, slowly, "it is this. For some little time I have found myself out of sorts. There is nothing really the matter with me, that I know of, but I have been spending a good many sleepless nights, either getting no sleep at all, or only sufficient to do me little good. Under the impression that a change of apartments is sometimes a remedy for insomnia, I decided, as I am a bachelor and have only myself to please, that for a night or two I would sleep here, where there is lots of room and accommodation."

"I see."

"Well," went on the solicitor, "the change answered admirably. From the very first night I slept soundly, save for some persistent dreaming, which nightly haunts me and leaves me somewhat unrefreshed in the morning. The old woman who comes in to do for Hartley finds it little extra work to prepare a dormitory for me, so I have remained for the present. This is the explanation.

"Thank you, sir. We will now try to run this thief to earth. What I propose is very simple. Find me a hiding place here tonight—a screen or a cupboard will do, for I am used to cramped quarters—and I will see what is to be seen. Lock your door and desk as usual, but provide me with a key of the latter in case I need it."

Mr. Bridgnorth agreed and shortly after I took my departure. As I passed through the outer rooms I got a look at the clerks, and in particular at Hartley which I was enabled to do without exciting suspicion. Judging from appearances the fellow looked anything but a thief, having a frank, open countenance, and lacking altogether that shiftiness of vision characteristic of almost every rogue. Aware, however, that there is nothing more deceptive than externals, I went away little doubtful that Hartley was my man.

Late that evening I presented myself at Mr. Bridgnorth's door, and was received by that gentleman in person. The office was closed, the clerks had all gone home, and Hartley was out, presumably lovemaking. Mr. Bridgnorth found little dfficulty in securing me a retreat behind a cabinet which stood in one corner of the office, and here I ensconced myself with as much comfort as the circumstances permitted.

At 10.30 the solicitor retired, locking both his desk and the office door before going upstairs and providing me with a duplicate key of the latter, as I had desired. Hartley would be home, he informed me, about 11 o'clock, and would doubtless go straight to his room.

The lawyer's estimate proved correct, for almost exactly on the stroke of the hour a key turned in the lock of the outer door, and the confidential clerk entered. He had no occasion to come into the office in order to reach his apartment, but on his way past he paused a moment and tried the handle of the door, and finding it fastened, went on his way. A minute later, I heard the closing of his chamber door and my watch began.

The time passed slowly away. Twelve o'clock struck, then 1 and 2, and I had begun to think my vigil would be in vain, when in the stillness of the night, I heard a door softly opened above, and a cautious footstep slowly descended the stairs. It paused at the foot of them, close to the door of the room of which I lay hid, and I next heard the jingling of a bunch of keys, as if the possessor of them were selecting the right one to fit the lock. A moment later the portal opened and the pilferer entered.

The place was in darkness and I had to strain my eyes to watch his movements. The lantern I had I did not desire to use until the right moment, for it was my hope to capture the thief in the very act of his larceny. I had not long to wait. Wrapped in a long gown and withou shoos, the pilferer glided stealthily to the desk and fitting a key in the lock, lifted the lid. He then opened the cash box and took out some of the coins.

Now was my time. Slipping from my hiding place, I turned on my lantern. I was startled, for the man I encountered was Mr. Bridgworth himself, and I could tell by his closed eyes that he was fast asleep and of course, quite unaware what he was doing.

Seeing that the light from my lantern bothered him somewhat, for he passed his hand several times dreamily across his face, and I replaced the shade and the somnambulist at once closed and fastened the desk and then walked out of the office, locking the door behind him. I followed.

He retraced his steps up the stairs, and going to a cupboard on the landing, stooped down, rummaging a second or two, among some old rubbish at the bottom, and seeming to deposit his coins there. He then entered a chamber adjoining. Peering cautiously into this I saw the sleeper divest himself of his gown and get unconsciously into the bed he had a few minutes before left.

"Well, Sampson," said Mr. Bridgnorth, when he came down the next morning. "What is the result of your watching? Have you discovered the thief?"

"I think I have sir," was my reply.

"And is it—is it—Hartley?" inquired the solicitor anxiously.

"No, sir, it is not Hartley," I said.

"Thank God for that!" ejaculated the lawyer, fervently, as if the statement of the fact relieved him. "But, then," he asked with some surprise, "who is the culprit?"

"Before I tell you that," I replied, "kindly see how much you have been robbed of during the night."

He went to his desk, counted over the coins, and said:

"Four pounds!"

"That makes, in all—?" I queried.

"Fifty nine!"

"Come with me, Mr. Bridgnorth," I said. "I should not be surprised if I can put you in possession of your money!"

With a puzzled air the lawyer followed me up the stairs to the cupboard I mentioned, the door of which I opened. A pained expression came over the man's face as he watched me.

"How strange!" he murmured, half to himself, half to me. "I have been dreaming every night of the recess in connection with these pilferings, and the things inside it all seems familiar to me, though I have never once seen them before."

"Stoop down, sir, and feel in that corner," I said.

He did as I bade, and drew out sovereign after sovereign.

"Count them," I said, when he had got all that he could find.

"Fifty nine!" he exclaimed, going over the pieces, one by one. "The exact amount of my losses!"

"Just so," I said, "and now, if you will come back to the office, I will tell you who is the thief, before Hartley domes down."

We returned to his room, and there I informed him, to his intense astonishment, of what I had witnessed. "If you will pardon the liberty, sir," I said, at the conclusion of the narration, "I should advise you to see a doctor. You are evidently suffering from some mental affection, which, if neglected, may develope into a disease, the effect of which you cannot foresee."

The lawyer acted upon my suggestion and called in a specialist, who ordered him a prolonged rest. A trying and complicated case in which he had been recently engaged had apparently proved too much for him, and brought on this peculiar form of brain trouble. When last I heard of him he had returned, seemingly quite restored; and Hartley, his confidential clerk, married to a charming wife, was about to be taken into partnership with him.—*Tit-Bits.*

They Say.

That good book-keepers are the covers.

That many a man is kept poor by his friends.

That ideas win far more success than achieved ideals.

That the *might haves* are more trying than the *could nots.*

That a bargain is not a bargain when you cannot afford it.

That a boy who studies electricity has a bright future before him.

That the Irish faction won't come together. They wouldn't be Irish factions if they did.

That money talks, indeed, but this year, it has also set everybody else a-talking.

That the Recording Angel needs a thorough knowledge of short-hand to keep tabs on some men.

That breathing through the nose is the only proper way to sleep. If you awake in the middle of the night, and your mouth is open, get up and shut it.

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Beside My Grandfather's Grave.

REV. T. O. CROUSE, IN N. Y. OBSERVER.

I stood alone in the old churchyard,
In the facing light of day;
Beneath my feet were many graves,
Where friends of my childhood lay.
On marble stones I read their names,
Once household words to me,
While out from the past in vision dim,
Rose wondrous imagery.

I lived again in my childhood home;
Returned were my boyhood years;
On scenes long passed I fondly looked,
Thro' the mist of falling tears.
I saw our house with its low, long eves,
The smithy that stood hard by;
I watched again the blaze on the forge,
And the sparks like meteors fly.

My grandsire's form and face I saw,
In manhood's middle prime;
I heard again his anvil ring,
Its faithful, measured chime.
That music had a meaning grand,
As heard in memory's ear;
And lessons ne'er to be forgot,
Were in its strokes so clear.

It spoke of honest toil and thrift,
Of cheerful, wise content;
Of sturdy virtue, and a life
In faithful service spent.
Each day, for him, this message had,
The voice he did not slight,
"Whate'er is given to be done,
Go do it, with thy might."

At peace with God and all mankind,
He carved no wealth or fame;
The richest gift to children left,
Was his untarnished name.
So here beside his honored tomb,
I lift my heart to heaven,
And pray that virtues such as his,
May to his son be given.

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we are showing some unapproachable specials in broken lots in MEN'S SUITS, also BOYS' and CHILDREN'S, one, two, three and four of a kind, left from our unprecedented large sales, all new and fresh, but no regular assortment in sizes. These are jobs and will not last long, so be early and reap the benefit. Sell goods is the word, this is what we are here for.

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