

Wednesday, - November 1, 1911.

WHAT I SAW FROM MY WINDOW.

[CONTINUED.]

What was my duty in the premises? When I took into consideration that I had not heard a word spoken, did not even know what had been stolen, and had only the pictures of the different scenes to rely on for proof, my position was a very peculiar one to say the least. It was certainly a very delicate business to call at that strange house, and describe to the proprietor what I had seen. All day long I wondered what course it was best to pursue—the while so utterly uncomfortable that work of any description was quite out of the question. Just at evening I was summoned to the parlor to meet a gentleman friend. I noticed immediately that he was in great agitation.

"I called," said he, "in behalf of a young lady friend of mine who is in great trouble. She has met or rather her acquaintances in the city. Can you—will you give her shelter for a few days until this storm of abuse blows over and she can again hold up her poor head?"

My thoughts immediately flew to the house of my neighbor, and I asked: "Does she live over there?" pointing in the direction. And she is the victim of a terrible accusation? Charged with stealing, isn't she?"

"Good heavens! yes," he replied. "How did you know? I hadn't the slightest idea that it had got to be common talk. I am afraid it will kill her!"

"I have not heard a syllable," I answered; "not one. I have simply guessed, that is all; and I know she is innocent, and perhaps, my boy, I can help prove it."

"God grant it!" said he fervently. "But how did you suspect? Who could have hinted at such a thing?"

"I tell you again that I have not heard a word—no one has hinted. Go for your friend, and I will do all that lies in my power to comfort and help her."

An hour after, Miss Hastings—for that was the name of the governess—was in my room, the most abrupt picture of misery I ever looked upon in my life. Her eyes were swollen with weeping; and when I welcomed her to my home, and assured her of sympathy and love, it seemed as if the child's heart would break.

"Oh, she sobbed, 'I had such a pleasant home until she came. Old Mr. Demming was so kind to me, and so thoughtful of me; and Mrs. Demming, too, did everything in the world that woman could do for my comfort; and then, my darling little Fred, and his papa. And now, just to think they all think me a little thief and I have loved them so! Merciful Father, how could they!'"

By degrees I succeeded in getting at the whole story.

Little Fred, was Mr. Demming's grandson, and little Fred's papa was a widower, and Miss Hastings was employed to take the place of the widower's little son.

"But who is she?" I asked with a shudder. "The woman who always dresses in white, with cherry-colored trimmings?"

"Then you have seen her?" she inquired looking up quickly.

"Yes, I have seen her. What relation is she to the Demmings?"

"Mr. Demming is her great-uncle, and has had the care of her education. She has been in Europe for the last three years, traveling with a distinguished professor and his wife. It seems that Mr. Demming has had charge of some jewelry which was left in trust for her until she should come of age. The day of her arrival he brought them home from the safe at the office, to see how she would like the jewelry, intending to have them ready for her at the expiration of the time, which was only three months. For the last two days they have all been consulting about it, apparently unable to come to any decision. I was called on yesterday to give my opinion, and when told what they desired of me, that is what Mr. Demming said: 'Let's hear what little Lottie suggests.' He always called me Lottie from the moment of my entering the house. I laughed and said: 'Little Lottie thinks that if she owned these jewels she should be very careful how she let them lie around the house long.'"

"That's so," said grandpa Demming; "but I have a little tuck-away corner where they are safe enough in the daytime, of course. I don't leave them down here nights."

"That's all I know about it," continued the poor child with a fresh burst of tears. "We talked a little while about the setting, and this morning I was told the diamonds were gone."

"Where were you?" I asked, "while the family were at tea?"

"I was at tea, also," she replied. "One of our servants was quite ill, and I went down long before it was time for the tea bell to ring, and toasted some bread. Then Mrs. Demming had a lame wrist, and she asked me to pour the tea."

"Did you leave the dining-room," I inquired, "for any reason, during the tea hour?"

"Not for a moment."

"What dress did you wear last evening?"

"This one," she replied, glancing down at her dark alpaca and bursting into tears. "What is the name of this piece?"

"Clara Mason."

"And you are sure those were her jewels?"

"Positive."

To be continued.

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