

POLICE BUTTON A CLEW TO A BURGLAR MYSTERY.

Sherlock Holmes, or Somebody
Very Like Him, Is at Work
on This Case.

THE BROOKLYN DAILY EAGLE. NEW YORK, MONDAY, APRIL 21, 1902.

QUERY: WHO LOST THE BUTTON?

It Was Found at the Scene of the Rob-
bery, Along With a Bunch
of Keys.

Burglars, or somebody else, broke into the wholesale plumbing supply store of Thomas G. Knight, at 359 Pearl street, some time between dusk last night and dawn to-day. They were evidently after money and the only reason they didn't get any was because there was none there. They went through all the cash drawers, examined all the papers and didn't take anything. Although nothing was missing when an inventory of stock was taken to-day, the case is one which is interesting for itself alone.

The only clues which have yet been placed in evidence are a bunch of keys and a policeman's button, that is, a button from a policeman's coat. The case is nominally in the hands of the detectives of the Adams street station, but it was reported to-day that the best sleuths of the metropolitan central office have been notified and are at work. A rumor reached an Eagle reporter from one of the employes that a tall man with a long, pale face, somewhat resembling Sheriff Duke, had been seen to-day making a microscopic examination of the gilded button in the inner office of the company this morning. This rumor, coupled with the recent report that Sherlock Holmes had left England, gave color to the theory of the Eagle's informant that the great detective had been called in to lay bare the awful secret of the button and the keys. When asked if the conjecture were correct Superintendent Nicholson of the Knight Company smiled mysteriously, but would not deny it.

The employe who advanced the theory that the world famous Holmes had been called in to piece together the baffling and elusive shreds of evidence under a pledge of secrecy consented to tell what he knew.

"I happened to come into the store early," he said, "and I saw this fellow inside with that shiny thing in his hand. He didn't look up at all, but before I knew what was up he was standing facing me in the outer room. I didn't know what happened, but before I could exclaim at my surprise I felt his left hand tighten around my two wrists. I never saw such a grip as that fellow had. He looked into my eyes and seemed to see through me.

"No," he said under his breath. "The resemblance is striking, but you are not the man. The man who wore this was three-eighths of an inch taller than you and broke his little finger playing base ball at One Hundred and Tenth street and Eighth avenue nine years ago. How do I know? Well, never mind. I think this other chap has three children, two boys and a girl, and his wife's lower teeth are false."

"He turned away with a disappointed frown, but turned back again at once."

"Don't breathe a word of this," he whispered. "Don't even say you saw me here. This grows more complicated every instant. I may need you later. Here, see this button? Anything unusual about it? No? Well, look he e. See this dent. That was made by Devery's broken tooth, that one on the left side. He must have been very angry. This will uncover a lot of police history that has never been explained."

"I have here," he added, taking a small case from his vest pocket, "119 different sorts of police buttons, all that were ever used in New York. I know the exact shade and chemical composition of each. This one found in the area is a Murphy button, one of those patent ones that cost three times what it is worth. See Devery's tooth mark? That proves that this is the third button from the top on the left side. He chewed it because he was mad, and why was he mad? In due time I'll tell you the story of that button from the time it was made."

"This is the way the case looks now. Either this button was left to throw me off the scent or it was dropped by accident. In either case it will serve me. I already see light and what a sensation it will be when I convert the clues I have into evidence. You see, here we are. If they burglars they came for money. I know that because they left all these valuable bath tubs and this lead pipe and merely went through the money drawers."

"But they weren't professionals, or they wouldn't have come Sunday night. If not professionals, then somebody else. And who, let me ask you, would be likely to drop a policeman's button off his coat? Study over that and you will see something of my methods. Here is the question. Answer it and we are a long way toward finding out where it came from and why Devery bit it. Here it is in a form that you'll remember: "Button, button, who dropped the button?"

"I think I'm talking too much. This Mott street No. 9 is stronger than my Piccadilly brand. Don't breathe a word of this to any one. Wonder where Watson is?"

"Before I knew it he had slipped noiselessly out of the door and was gone. Later in the day the police came, but as there was nothing stolen they were in favor of letting it drop."

When the Eagle reporter saw Superintendent Nicholson he described the manner of entrance, which was by breaking in the gate and collar door on the Jay street side. When asked about the button he said: "Let the police explain that. We may have an explanation later."

The sergeant in charge at Adams street said: "Yes, there was a burglary there last night, but there wasn't nuthin' into it. They didn't get nothing at all. Policeman Yunker

reported it and Detective McCormick was sent out on it."

"What about the button?" he was asked.

"I don't know nothing about no button. If one was found it was one of them d—d Murphy buttons. They drop off if you touch 'em with a whisk broom."

"Do you expect any developments?" he was asked.

"Developments? Why, there's nothing into it."

"But who dropped the button?" the reporter persisted.

"Button, button, button," said the sergeant. "Won't I ever hear the last of it? Who dropped the button?"