

An Excess of Talent?

[Original.]
Patsy Dolan, professional burglar, appreciating the opportunity offered at Colonel Bridges' fancy dress ball and realizing that he could not personate any one so well as himself, resolved to attend as himself or rather as the public conceived him, with a coil of rope thrown over one shoulder, a dark lantern in one hand, a revolver in the other (not loaded, of course) and a jumny sticking out of his pocket.

On the night of the ball, having made himself look as little like the real Dolan and as much like a stage burglar as possible, he put on a mask to cap the costume as well as to conceal his unrefined features and proceeded to Colonel Bridges' residence. Seeing the colonel at the front door taking the names of the arriving guests, Patsy withdrew to the rear, climbed a trellis and effected an entrance into a closet on the second floor, from whence he emerged among a crowd of guests pouring in and out of the dressing rooms. Concluding that for the time being there must be more people upstairs than downstairs, he descended and entered the main drawing room, where stood the family waiting to receive the guests.

"What an original idea!" exclaimed Miss Bridges as Patsy sailed into the room. "As sure as you live that's Ben Harker. I'd know him in any costume. I knew he'd come in something unique. Why doesn't he come up to speak to us? Oh, I forgot; a burglar wouldn't know enough for that."

As soon as Miss Bridges could leave the position of hostess she sought out the burglar. She thought it would be fun to pretend to mistake him for the real thing.

"What are you doing here, sir?" she said. "I'm going to call a policeman and hand you over to him."

If Patsy's face could have been seen through his mask he would have betrayed himself, but it couldn't, and this gave him time to recover his assurance, which admonished him to bluff.

"You're compainment' me costume," he said at a venture.

"It's splendid. What's that sticking out of your pocket?"

"Shure, it's me Jimmy!"

"You're the best character in the room. How did you come to think of it?"

Patsy drew a sigh of relief.

"Ben Harker," continued the girl. "You didn't think you can fool me. I knew you the moment I saw you. Come, let's go into the ballroom."

She led the relieved Patsy away and forced him to stand with her in a square dance. He had no sooner displayed his awkwardness than his partner burst into a laugh, and every one in the set was convulsed with mirth at the blunders of the burglar. Indeed, it was not long before nearly every one in the room was watching him. This was too much success, and he tried hard to dance like the rest, but the harder he tried the worse he failed. When the dance was finished he told his partner that he was tired and must go upstairs for a rest, but she would not permit the best character at the ball to retire for a moment.

"Oh, there's a policeman," she exclaimed. "How nice it would be for you two to know each other!" And she dragged the unwilling burglar to the cop.

"Here's a burglar for you, Mr. policeman. You'd better take him to jail. You two are the best made up of any in the house. You're both splendid."

"Are you an old offender or new to crime?" asked the policeman to keep up the ballyhoo.

"I'm a yung bir-r-d," replied Patsy. "Ever cracked a crib?"

"Never a cent. I'm as innocent as the day I first wint to Sunda's school."

Miss Bridges clapped her hands. "He beats you," she said to the policeman. "Isn't he a perfect character?"

"As near the real thing as any I ever saw," replied the cop in a dry tone that made Patsy wish he hadn't such remarkable talents for impersonation.

"He wants to go upstairs and rest," said Miss Bridges to the policeman. "Do you think the jewelry would be safe?"

"Don't it," replied the cop.

"I think I'll take him into the supper room. I'd like an ice."

"Watch the spoons if you do."

These pleasantries were "harmless."

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the other two, but came rather too near home for Patsy.

"I'm thinkin'," he said, "I'm obtrudin' meself betwixt two frien's, and the requirements of polite society requires me lavin' ye. Good evenin'."

"I don't think it safe to let you travel about the house alone," said the policeman. "You'd better stay by me till the time comes to unmask." Then, turning to the young lady, he added, "Don't you think so?"

"Unmask?" said Patsy, an ill concealed alarm in his voice. "What's that?"

"I think," the officer went on, "that your presence at the unmasking would not help these festivities to pass pleasantly, and you'd better unmask elsewhere. Come with me. You're wanted."

The last five words were not only familiar to Patsy, but were spoken in a familiar tone. Patsy followed the policeman out of the room, Miss Bridges looking on admiringly.

"How well those two play their parts!" she said to herself as she turned away without suspecting that a real policeman had arrested a real burglar.

Patsy unmasked on the sidewalk and spent the night behind bars.

"Me taken for playin' parts was too much for m," he said to himself. "O should go on the stage."

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December	32 1/2	31 5/8
May	32 1/4	32 1/4

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May	13.55	13.77

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