

SUNDAY, MARCH 3, 1912.

THE FIRST MUNICIPAL WOMAN DETECTIVE IN THE WORLD

Commissioner Waldo Rewards Mrs. Isabella Goodwin with a First Grade Position in Recognition of Her Work in the Famous Robbery Case Below the "Dead Line"—The First of Her Sex to Win Such a Rank.



ARRIVE HULL TOWN AS 'SWEDE ANNE'—THE 'WOMAN IN THE CASE.'



DETECTIVE, ARRESTING, AND MEN UNDER ARREST FOR THE 'DOLLAR HOLD-UP.'



MRS. ISABELLA GOODWIN.



THE TAXICAB THAT WAS HELD UP.

A QUIET, medium-sized, unassuming woman, dressed neatly in black, sat in her apartment on the top floor of a very unassuming apartment house in the heart of Greenwich Village, and in an unassuming but impressive manner told a tale of detective work that was as thrilling as anything in fiction.

It was the tale that gripped the country within the past week—about this woman's share in the running down of the men concerned in the Trinity Place taxicab robbery, wherein desperate criminals got clean away with \$25,000 after beating two clerks into insensibility—all at midday in a thickly populated section of downtown New York.

It has been a long time since such an absorbing crime story was unfolded at Police Headquarters, and because the inevitable woman was concerned not only in the robbery but in the detective work that swiftly followed, the case immediately became unique in police annals.

Mrs. Isabella Goodwin is the unassuming woman detective, and it was not easy to get her to talk at all about her share in the work that was done, and then only after Police Commissioner Waldo and First Deputy Commissioner Dougherty had given her liberty to talk.

Commissioner Waldo has a theory that it interferes with the effectiveness of a detective to have too much publicity thrown about his or her work, for detectives, like criminals, accomplish most in the dark. In Mrs. Goodwin's case, however, he decided that she had fully earned the gratitude of the public, and that the public was entitled to a glimpse behind the scenes. Besides, Mrs. Goodwin has many interesting things to tell of other cases she has been concerned in that are now nearly forgotten.

In recognition of her effective work in this case and others the Commissioner has just advanced her to first grade in the Detective Bureau with pay of \$2,250 a year. Thus she wins, in addition to this reward, the unique distinction of becoming the first municipal woman detective in the world.

Mrs. Goodwin has none of the earmarks that are usually associated with detectives. She is not dashing or brilliant, the type one would suppose to be most effective with a certain criminal element, nor yet spectacularly made up in the latest fashion. She has a kind, motherly face. Her dark hair is not yet streaked with gray, and her gray eyes are full of expression and sympathy. A broad forehead denotes intelligence and her whole manner would lead one to take her for a married woman of the well-to-do class.

But just as readily she could be taken for a widow—which she is—or a spinster. Her nondescript appearance is a studied art with her, for in her calling she accomplishes more by having no distinguishing marks that would make her stand out from the multitude. Moreover, she habitually wears a thin black veil, so that her features are well protected.

For nearly fifteen years she was a police matron attached to a station, and in that capacity she came into personal contact with every important criminal of her sex that was arrested in New York during that time. For the last year and a half she has been doing special detective work under assignment from the chief of the Detective Bureau. In this capacity she has done laborious sleuth work and has been responsible for the arrest and conviction of more crooks, swindling clairvoyants, spiritualists, and fake medical practitioners than all the other women investigators or detectives doing similar work in the city put together.

It was this woman who obtained the

evidence which resulted in the arrest of Cole, the Christian Scientist, and only last Thursday, after she had played her part in the bringing to justice of the taxicab bandits, she was the star witness in the court proceedings against Cole.

"I have already said more than I intended to about the robbery case," said Mrs. Goodwin to a TIMES reporter, "and I would rather talk about the other things I have been concerned in. Of course the work I have done before this robbery occurred has had no such spectacular results, but it will give a better idea of what kind of training I have had to go through to make me capable of the more responsible work."

"To begin at the beginning, I think I

was born for just such work as I am doing. I think highly of the work, too. I have a great fondness for it, and I don't think I would have been satisfied to have done any other line of it.

"My husband was a Roundsmen, and I always look the deepest interest in police work. When he died, about seventeen years ago, I was left with four children on my hands, and I determined to become a police matron. I took the civil service examination and got on the eligible list.

"Mr. Roosevelt was then Police Commissioner, and as soon as I was appointed I threw myself body and soul into the work. I grew to like it, and, although it has its ups and downs and furnishes about as much hard labor as almost any other profession, it has its compensations also, and the excitement always keeps one's interest at the fever point.

"I was assigned to the Mercer Street Police Station, and there I remained until a year and a half ago, when I was ordered to the Detective Bureau. I have a son now, by the way, who is also a detective assigned to duty at Police Headquarters, so you see it seems to run in the family. My youngest daughter, Marjorie, is also interested in the work, and is already bothering me to make a detective out of her.

"The Mercer Street Station, owing to its proximity to Police Headquarters, is one of the most important in the city, for there all women prisoners from Headquarters are taken to be searched or attended to, and for this reason I soon began to get acquainted with notorious women criminals. My experiences as a matron stood me in good stead when I took up regular detective work.

struck by the article, and said to me: "I believe that fellow is a faker. Go up and look him over."

"I went, and, sure enough, he had an elaborate fortune telling establishment and was proficient in all the various 'stunts.' He told me the most ridiculous things about myself, not one of which was true, and I admitted that he was right with such a show of sincerity that pleasure shone all over him.

"I paid him the fee and then, when he was arrested, you never saw such a crestfallen man. He could tell me the most wonderful things about my past and look far into my future—all for \$2, of course—but he couldn't get the slightest inkling from his psychological powers that I was a detective and was after him. This fellow was convicted, and how he glared at me when I testified against him in court!

"The methods used by these fakers are so crude that it seems impossible that a person of ordinary common sense would be taken in by their silliness. For instance, one of the tricks of the trade I learned early was their method of determining whether their victim is married or single. Of course this works best with the women, for they come for advice in a highly nervous condition as a rule and pay little attention to the trivial things. As soon as the victim takes her seat before the fortune teller she is asked to cut the cards with her right hand if she is married and with her left if she is single.

"That ought to furnish a clue to what is going to follow, but it is seldom noticed and when, a few minutes later, the fortune teller solemnly informs the victim that she is married or single the victim simply gasps with astonishment.

"All the other tricks are about as simple, but the most peculiar part about it is that oftentimes the victims know that the fortune teller is lying, but they do not resent it and actually believe what he says, against their better judgment.

"Why, there was one case not long ago where a fortune teller wrote a series of articles for a New York newspaper on the art of fooling the people. He exposed all the tricks of the trade and told how easy it is for the charlatans to get the public's money. Most people thought that the man had been hired to expose the fakers, but Commissioner Dougherty had led a sure in so many seasons. All I had

to do was to tell that experience in court and the man was convicted.

"The fortune tellers have a simple way of getting their victims to come to them again and again.

"Many women who think their husbands are not faithful go to these fakers for advice. The faker quickly diagnoses the case and hazards the information that the victim has had a quarrel with her husband. He then tells her that her husband is attentive to a blonde or a brunette and suggests that if the victim will bring around one of her husband's handkerchiefs or some other object, she will concoct a 'remedy' to bring back the erring one's love. That insures another visit, and then some other flimsy excuse is hit upon to bring the victim to her again.

"If the victim finds fault because the 'cure' does not work, the fortune teller simply says that the victim was not in a 'receptive condition,' or that she did not 'concentrate her mind' in the way she was told.

"Of course I have made many enemies as a result of these investigations, and many of them would like to get revenge, but I am not afraid. It is this element of danger that makes the work fascinating. One woman doctor got her revenge in a peculiar manner once. I had paid her \$2 for a cream to rub on my face to become beautiful, or something like that. As she was not a regular practitioner, of course she was arrested. I told on the witness stand about my experience, and when it came to the woman's turn to testify and she was asked why she had sold the cream she snapped:

"I did it because her face was so dirty that I thought it would be a common act of decency to give her something to clean it."

"She was so manifestly pleased with this thrust that she actually did not seem to mind her conviction.

"I attribute my success in this work to the fact that I use ordinary common sense. My intuition is strong and I am thus able to size up quickly some little weakness in the fakers and I play on it all I can. None of them, apparently, ever suspected that I was a detective.

"I never overdress the part, and when necessary I assume simple dress. Of

course, a woman detective must be shrewd and quick in expedients. She must seize any little advantage rapidly and turn it to her account. More valuable than all is the quality of intuition, the ability to 'feel' or sense things for which at first you have no actual proof. I think that the reason why a woman sometimes succeeds where a man fails is because she is more strongly endowed with this intuition.

"She must also be a good mixer and be able to make acquaintances easily among all classes. She must also have plenty of self-control and courage, and finally she must have perseverance, the trick of never giving up once the trail is started. I suppose this could be called patience, and it takes experience to develop that trait in the right way. The long, hard schooling I received in my work of detecting fortune tellers, and fake healers served me in good stead in the work I was ordered to do regarding the taxicab robbery.

"One morning Commissioner Dougherty sent for me and outlined what he wanted me to do. The Commissioner thought the thing all out, and told me just what I would have to do. Would I take the chance? Well, rather! I don't think I hesitated a moment for a detective whose heart is in the work must take things as they come.

"I never dreamed there would be any notoriety in it, and I went to work merely out of a sense of duty. My home life is so managed that I can leave at a moment's notice and stay away as long as necessary. I had to live in a low dive for I didn't know how long, and I made up as a servant of all work and applied for the place.

"I haggled over the wages just to show that I wasn't too eager for the job, and accepted it at \$4 a week. I wore a plain, dark, rather shabby suit, old hat and shoes, so that I wouldn't look too neat, and then I simulated the walk or rather shuffle of one who was not used to anything better.

"I had to work hard, of course, and it was work of the most uninteresting and displeasing kind. I grumbled a little now and then, and did things sometimes in a slipshod way, and I guess the inmates of that rooming house never gave me a second thought.

"I swept and scrubbed the floors, made beds, washed the dishes, and answered the door, as well as ran errands for the inmates. I told them I had no other place to sleep, so they let me sleep in a dark, wretched little hole—or rather my bed was there, for I didn't sleep ten hours the whole week—and I ate scraps and leavings.

"I didn't get a clue for the first few days, but I made myself 'solid' with the people there, and after that it was just a case of listening and watching and trying not to get caught or arouse suspicion.

"I early saw that I had to cultivate friendly relations with the two women I was set to watch, Swede Annie and Myrtle Hoyt. The former was the friend of Edward Kinsman, also known as 'Eddie the Book,' one of the suspects in the case, and I strained my ears to get a mention of his name.

"I ran errands for Swede Annie and Myrtle Hoyt and became the confidant of each in turn. My experience among the women detectives of the underworld had taught me one thing—that these kind of women are fearfully jealous of each other.

"This class also will not hesitate to talk to servants, for, like every woman, they need sympathy and don't often get it. Therefore when Swede Annie would have a dispute with Myrtle and the latter would go out for a time, Swede An-

nne would tell me things. In her time Myrtle Hoyt would do the same, and I soon became possessed of interesting secrets.

"Of course I had to listen at keyholes and manufacture excuses to get into the room where the women were entertaining their men friends. I picked up many significant bits of conversation in this way. One night after I had been listening at the keyhole of the women's room for hours I heard Swede Annie say: 'Well, Eddie the Book turned the trick all right.' That was the turning point of the work, and I redoubled my efforts.

"There were three days in which I did not have eight hours' sleep. Swede Annie and Myrtle Hoyt seldom came in before 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning, and then they were intoxicated. I had to listen to a great deal of disgusting conversation and see sights that were revolting, but I stuck to it with grim determination. I drank coffee to keep awake, but the sleeplessness almost drove me crazy. What with hard manual labor all day and sitting up all night, I felt pretty well tuckered out before the week was up.

"Early one morning I got into Swede Annie's room and discovered that she had returned from Albany with a new hat and suit. I got the names of the dealers and telephoned these facts to the Commissioner, who ascertained in Albany that the purchase had been made with five-dollar bills by a man of Edward Kinsman's description. Then I learned enough to make certain that Kinsman was one of the robbers. I knew when Kinsman returned and learned of his plan to take Swede Annie to San Francisco last Monday. Last Sunday night I was able to get this information to the Commissioner over the telephone.

"My hardest work was to slip out and telephone what progress I was making to Deputy Commissioner Dougherty, who must have spent as many sleepless nights as I did. He was always there to advise me. I seldom thought of the danger I was running, but as I look back on it my flesh creeps sometimes, for these robbers were desperate men and I guess my life wouldn't have been worth much if they had suspected.

"My experience among the criminal classes has been that they are a very stupid lot, taking it all in all, and committing the most glaring errors. They do shrewd things sometimes and then nullify their efforts by the sheerest nonsense. They are a peculiar lot, these crooks, and it is fascinating to study them."

Mrs. Goodwin says her experience in criminal work as well as among the credulous has not made her cynical.

"Human nature is the same the world over," she went on, "and every person has something good in him, if you can only get to it. It is the cruelty of women who willingly allow themselves to be fooled that is inclined to all sympathies and belief in good things. I suppose when one comes to study them there are not many of these at heart, but they are confined to the class of women who have money and do not have to work or do sensible things to occupy their minds, thus furnishing a vent for their servitudes."

"Despite my peculiar work I try not to neglect my home. A woman's first duty is to her family, and I have tried always to remember that."

Mrs. Goodwin's children bore her out in this particular. There is not a more satisfactory home in all the city, they declared. Sifting the action to the work, Mrs. Goodwin, police matron and detective, bustled about her household, preparing supper.