

MR. WILLCOX'S LOST WATCH

A Detective Thinks the Company Director Had None.

HAS BEEN IN SANITARIUMS

In Court Where Accused Waiter Is Discharged, Mr. Willcox's Interest in Child Actress Appears.

The case of the alleged theft of a watch belonging to Charles H. Willcox of Westport, Conn., a Director of the Willcox & Gibbs Sewing Machine Company, which was brought into court on Sunday by the arraignment of William Fagan, a waiter, who had aroused Mr. Willcox's suspicions, proved yesterday, when Fagan was discharged, to be one of more than ordinary interest.

Yesterday evening Detective Walsh of the West Twentieth Street Station told Mr. Willcox in the presence of a reporter for THE NEW YORK TIMES that he did not believe that Mr. Willcox had the watch at all when he entered the house 263 West Twenty-fourth Street, where it was alleged to have been stolen, adding: "Your friends have been around after you here and told us not to be too eager to find the thief, as this was probably all a delusion on your part. Personally, I think now that it was a delusion."

Mr. Willcox has, it is stated, on two different occasions been treated in a sanitarium. The second time he was for a few months in a sanitarium at Cromwell, Conn. According to Mr. Willcox's statement, persons suffering from all sorts of ailments, including lunacy, are treated there, but he was there because of broken-down nerves, and not because of any suspicion of mental derangement. Mr. Willcox says that he was a privileged patient while there, perfectly at his freedom, ate at the doctors' table, and was discharged as perfectly cured two or three years ago.

Mrs. Anna Taliaferro, at whose home in Twenty-fourth Street Mr. Willcox said he lost his watch, declared last night to Mr. Willcox's face that he had told her that he had been at the sanitarium only a few months ago.

The story which culminated in the arraignment of Fagan in court Sunday and yesterday, suspected of an offense that the police do not think was committed, is one, as stated, of exceptional interest. Mr. Willcox is a bachelor, about sixty-five years old, a gray-bearded man of pleasant, kindly appearance, and for many years a devotee of athletics. About two years ago he was in the studio of a photographer, and there he saw and greatly admired the photograph of little Mabel Taliaferro, a child now ten years old, who is playing in "The Children of the Ghetto."

The picture showed a winsome, intelligent face, and Mr. Willcox, who says he is very fond of children, asked the photographer for it. He indicated the child's mother, who happened to be in the studio, as the one to be asked. Mr. Willcox was introduced to her, and an acquaintance there formed which ended in Mr. Willcox calling at the house and meeting little Mabel.

From that time on Mr. Willcox has taken an exceptional interest in the child. He at one time offered to pay the mother the amount of the salary Mabel earned if she would take the child off the stage. He has called regularly since then, has sent the child flowers, luxuries, even furniture, loaned her a sewing machine, and offered to get her a new piano. He has paid her doctor's bills and paid her cab hire, and he said last night that if she had been his own child he could not have thought more of her than he did.

He made arrangements to have electric bells put in the Twenty-fourth Street house, where Mrs. Taliaferro and her two little daughters live, connecting Mabel's room, respectively, with her mother's room, the kitchen, and that of Mrs. Bradford, who is employed to go with the child to and from the theatre, so that at any moment she could get anything she wanted by pressing a button.

According to Mrs. Taliaferro Mr. Willcox had also planned to have the balcony taken down from in front of the front parlor windows, as the child's room is in the back part of the parlor, and he feared some thief might use the balcony to get in by. In the last few days, further without the knowledge or consent of the mother, he had brought plumbers into the house to alter the plumbing, which he thought defective, and had ordered running water established in the child's bedroom, which is only separated from the rest of the parlor by a curtain and pole. "I have spent hundreds of dollars on that child," said he last night.

Recently when Mabel was playing with "The Children of the Ghetto," in Philadelphia, Mr. Willcox came to the belief that she was sick. According to his account, he consulted Dr. Guernsey, (a Philadelphia relative of Dr. Egbert Guernsey of this city,) and on his advice had her removed to the Colonnade Hotel and put to bed. There, he says, Mr. Tyler, manager of "The Children of the Ghetto" Company, appeared in a rage and demanded that the child be allowed to go on with her part, as she was "keeping a thousand-dollar house" waiting. Mr. Willcox says he refused, and the next day was invited to go to another hotel, and took the child and her attendant thither.

Some of these facts came out in Jefferson Market Court yesterday, when Fagan, whose case had been postponed, was ar-

raigned before Magistrate Flammer. As Mr. Willcox explained it, he had come to the Taliaferro home about 1 o'clock Saturday afternoon, while the family and Mrs. Bradford were away, had been let in by Lizzie, the old servant, and had taken off his coat and vest and left them in the parlor, the gold watch and chain being in the vest, while he went upstairs to the bathroom to wash. He had been having the plumber in, and had soiled his hands among the pipes.

The waiter had come in to get some dishes which had been sent in with a breakfast for Mabel from a restaurant that morning while Mr. Willcox was upstairs. Therefore, he suspected the waiter at first. Then he changed his tune, decided to withdraw the complaint against Fagan, and said he suspected a man he had seen in the bathroom of the house.

Mr. Willcox handed the Magistrate some undecipherable notes about the case. He also told him that he was a moral bachelor and a knight errant. "I think Fagan is an honest man," said he, "but I cannot say the same about the man who was barefooted and lightly clad in the bathroom." He also reminded the Magistrate of a song called "All on Account of Eliza," and said that this case was "all on account of Mabel Taliaferro."

Magistrate Flammer said he was obliged to discharge the prisoner. Mr. Willcox told him at the time that he (the Magistrate) was not discrediting the Court, but discrediting himself. Finally Mr. Willcox shook hands with the Court, Fagan, and the detective and left.

Yesterday evening he went round unbidden to the Taliaferro home, and Mrs. Taliaferro ordered him out of the house.

He was about to leave when a reporter called. "I have ordered this man out of my house many times," she said. "If I only had a man to depend on I would fire him out at once. This notoriety is the cruelest wrong he could have done my daughter."

Mr. Willcox began to explain to the reporter how he came to lose his watch, when Mrs. Taliaferro cried: "You are telling only untruths! Let me say to you that I believe you came here with no good motive. You never had your watch here at all. You simply pretended to lose it in order to get this thing into court and get all our names in the papers."

Mr. Willcox admitted when Mrs. Taliaferro, who appeared in great distress and indignation, brought the matter up, that he had been interviewing dramatic critics to get them to mention Mabel. He also admitted that he had said he would join the Gerry society, and Mrs. Taliaferro seemed to think efforts of the Gerry society to prevent the child's playing were due to him. This he denied.

Mr. Willcox was next faced by the man he had seen in the bathroom, who rents a room from Mrs. Taliaferro, and admitted that after all he didn't suspect him of stealing the watch. Mrs. Taliaferro bitterly upbraided him for insinuating in court that she did not give her child proper medical care, and said Dr. Egbert Guernsey pronounced that the child did not need medicine. She finally called Mr. Willcox "a scoundrel," which he bore good-humoredly, and declared he never should re-enter the house.

Mr. Willcox then went to the West Twentieth Street Station to upbraid Detective Walsh, who is on the case, with not meeting him at the Taliaferro home, but he got little satisfaction, and ended by saying he would take the case to headquarters. Detective Walsh told a reporter that Mr. Willcox's friends had reported to Sergt. Hooper that he was subject to delusions, and that when in one of his "fits" he might charge any one with any offense. Mr. Willcox said he thought the friend who had been in to ask after him and had spoken of the delusions was his attorney, John H. Parsons of 253 Broadway, and declared he would have something to say to Mr. Parsons about it.

Mr. Willcox is a man of wealth. He stays usually at the New York Athletic Club when in the city or at Everard's Baths in West Twenty-eighth Street. His sister, Miss Kate Willcox, lives at their home in Westport, Conn.