

## *William Roberts And His Forgeries*

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A Man Of The Olden Type—His Sad Story About His Wife And Himself—They Adopt A Bright Boy— The Wife’s Prophet Speculations About The Boy —The Boy Grows Up, And Goes To College— A Pleasant Year—He Learns Certain Mysteries Of Life—Students’ Pitched Battle With The Faculty Of The College—Of The “White Horse”—A While In A Lawyer’s Office—Becomes A Merchant—Making Money Too Fast—A Fatal Hour—The Vortex Of Wall Street—Sundry Forgeries—A Strange Career—An Important Witness Lost And Found In The Insane Retreat, Hartford, Conn.—A Terrible Complication Of Affairs; Lawyers And All Baffled—I Am Called In To Work Up The Case—Difficulties Encountered—Fate Interposes—Wentworth, The Insane Witness, Recovers—A Vast Difference Between Black Ink And Blue Ink—Dying Of Grief—An Unhappy Household.

by George McWatters

I WAS sitting one day in my office, about noon, in July, 1858, with windows up, coat off, my legs sprawled upon the table, and fanning myself for a breath of living air out of the sweltering atmosphere. I had tried to enjoy my position (but there was no joy for me on that day) only a few minutes, when I heard a strong tap at the open door, and without looking around, I called out, “Come in!” with what I suspect was a peculiar emphasis, for presently an old man stood before me aghast, as if he knew not what to think.

“You are Mr.—?”

“Yes, sir, the same.”

“Mr.—the detective officer?”

“Yes, sir, the detective officer. But pray, sir, take a seat,” said I, seeing that the man meant business, doubtless; and I pointed him to a seat near the window.

“What can I do for you, sir?” I asked.

“That’s just what I’ve come to see,” said he.

I scanned the man. He was evidently from the country. His manner and dress showed this; but there was something remarkably intelligent about his well-cut, smoothly-shaven face, which was square at the base, with those wide cheeks, which distinguished so many of the rare men of revolutionary days. Jefferson’s face will give one a good notion of what I mean. This style of face has gone almost “out of fashion” in these days, only one here and there having been transmitted by the sires of the republic. I am always attracted to these faces, and although they denote firmness, amounting to obstinacy sometimes, I have never found one not belonging to a man of unquestioned respectability and probity.

“It’s a warm day, sir,” said I, as he took his seat; “and you must pardon me for my being in undress, sir; but, really, I can’t endure a coat to-day. Wouldn’t you like to pull off your own? Make yourself perfectly at home, sir.”

“O, no, sir; thank you. *I* am not warm; on the other hand, I am cold,” and the old man buttoned his coat about him.

I was surprised, for I saw that he was evidently healthy, and then I conjectured that his frigidity on that hot day must proceed from intense mental suffering, and I asked him, —

“Did you call to see me professionally?”

“Yes, sir; I have been recommended by my attorney, Judge Hoffman, to call upon you and lay a case before you, which he says you may possibly be able to work out; and if *you* can’t, he tells me to give up trying further. He has exhausted his powers upon it, and my all depends upon it,” and the old man’s voice discovered a slight tremor as he uttered the last words, and excited my interest intensely.

“Tell me your story in detail, leaving out nothing that you can remember, however trivial, and I will listen patiently; take your time.”

The old gentleman, taking me at my word, and beginning with a “You must know,” recited his own early history, which had no bearing on the case in issue, as I soon saw; but I let him go on; so much had his real trouble weighed upon his mind that he seemed to think the line which led to it ran through his whole life.

He was a farmer and a country merchant, who had, at the age of twenty-two, succeeded to the estate of his father, who was also a farmer and a merchant; that is, he “kept store” in a respectable country farming town, and “carried on farming” besides, with the aid of “hired men,” whom he supervised. He was a man—that is, my visitor—of more than ordinary information, probably a great reader, and at one time the leading “Whig” of his place—the village oracle, in fact, at whose “store” the country people gathered of nights to hear him talk politics, and doubtless to debate among themselves the issues of those days when Clay was the idol of the great, respectable Whig party of the land. The old man was able to narrate a story with great fidelity, and showed a mind well disciplined. I had but few questions to ask him, as he went on in his narrative, and when he had concluded, I had already conceived a theory of the case, which in due time I proceeded to verify in practice.

He was then seventy-eight years old, he said; was married at thirty-four, his wife still living. They had had one child, a son, born in his father’s thirty-seventh year, but who died at the age of four years, just when he had begun to be most interesting, the delight, of course, of his parents. The old man descanted, in pathetic terms, upon his desolation over the loss of that dear child, and said it came near bringing his mother to her grave; that she had never since been the same woman as before; that she never laughed aloud now, as she used to when they were first married, being then a woman of very jocular habits, and full of boisterous fun. “Since then,” said he, “she has only faintly smiled, now and then, over something which pleased her fancy or met her hearty

approval. No ordinary occurrence can bring a smile or a tear to her eye. But she is a dear, dear woman; and now that a great grief is upon us, I suffer more for her sake than my own.”

The old man’s voice grew husky as he proceeded, and I confess that, accustomed though I was to tales of horror, and feeling always that nothing of a wretched nature could ever surprise or move me to deep emotions, I felt for him nevertheless, and entered into the spirit of his soul before I knew what were its griefs.

The old gentleman continued his tale.

“For some years after the death of our child my wife was disconsolate beyond my power to give her any relief. She used to keep to the house constantly; never went abroad among the neighbors, but treated them all kindly when they called at the house, and with no diversion except her household duties, led almost a hermit’s life, avoiding seeing whomsoever she decently could. I fitted up a little private room for her, and beguiling her time with reading and with her devotions she spent most of her days. I sought every means, to comfort her; called children to the house to play. She was very fond of children, and would chat and chatter with them to make them happy, as if she too enjoyed it; but there was always a sadness mingled with her smiles upon them even. But I must not stop to tell you too much of this. And now, sir, in our old age has come a grief which weighs her down as did the loss of our blessed, only child.

“I must tell you that, after years had passed, I finally induced my wife to consent to my adopting a bright boy—a cheerful, handsome lad of eight years of age whose father was a good, honest laborer on my farm, but had been killed some months before by the falling upon him of a tree which he had cut. He having lost his life in my employ, I felt a particular interest in his family, and having aided the mother to get situations for her five other children, had defrayed her expenses back (with an infant in arms) to her native place in Rhode Island, according to her desire, and took the boy, of whom I spoke, to bring up, educate, and establish in business.

“At first my wife, though she admired the boy’s beauty and his manners, which were very gentle, did not open all her heart to him, and had misgivings that in her state of mind she should be able to do by the boy as she ought. And one day, after he had been with us a few weeks, she said to me, ‘What if William should not grow up a good man? Sometimes I feel, I know not why, that he will not. He is very “deep,” and if his talents, as he grows up, should chance to take a wrong course, he might be a very bad man, and it would break my heart to think that we had brought him up in the place of our angel who is in heaven,’ and she burst into tears, and I consoled her; but, sir, the terrible day which she seemed to then anticipate, has come,” and her heart *is* broken indeed.

“I know, sir, you must lose your patience to hear me talk of these things, but though I am old in years in comparison with you, yet it is not years that makes me so weak to-day. I feel as if I were a hundred years old, and you must pardon my imbecilities.”

I assured the old man that I was far from being impatient with his story, for I knew full well that he could never make me an intelligent narrative of the facts I should need to know, if his business proved of real importance, until he had delivered his mind of these special burdens; and

so I waited patiently to the end of his story, which it took far more time to reach than I can afford in this narrative.

The young, adopted lad, William, it seems, enjoyed all the advantages of the village school, and of the preparatory academy in the shire town of the county in which the old man resided, and whither, at a distance of some twelve miles from his own home, the old man (taking his wife often) visited the lad at least once a week, and sometimes twice, especially if by any means the old gentleman could contrive to have a “business” excuse for going there, during the boy’s whole course at the preparatory school, so great was his affection for him; and, finally, being well prepared, and giving high promise of becoming a great scholar, and a great man, the lad, or now well-grown young man, was sent off to college. During his first collegiate year he bore himself faultlessly, and achieved a high position in his class, in some branches of study being at the head. The old gentleman said that his own pride was never so flattered in all his life as when the boy came home at the end of the year and all the village was talking of the honors he had won. He said he felt a relief then, as if he had a staff well grown, and to grow still stronger and stronger in the coming years, upon which to lean in his own declining years—a young counsellor, whose judgment already good, would grow better and better.

The boy had always been good, courteous, and obliging to the old man and his wife; but now, at the end of his first collegiate year, he seemed to have grown still better, if possible. Vacation being passed in perfect happiness for that household, the old gentleman accompanied William back to college, the wife bidding them God-speed on their journey, with copious tears flooding her face. ‘Come back, William, just as good a boy as you now are, and I will try to be better to you than I have ever been,’ said she; and William bade her dry her tears (while his own blinded his eyes), told her that she had always been more than a mother to him, and assured her that he thought of her and his happy home a hundred times a day, and could not, he hoped, but grow better himself every time he thought of home.

“We thought,” said the old man, “then, that that was the happiest day of our lives; and when I returned home, after seeing William back again in the college, we talked over, day after day, the happiness of the parting hour, and every letter we got from William, who always wrote once a week at least, prompted us to remember that ‘holy day,’ as we called it, and we talked it over and over.

“But the next collegiate year brought William home, with a different report about him. He was still forward in his classes, but during the winter term had begun to grow a little wild; had attended a dancing-school privately, against the rules of the college, and had begun to feel himself ‘man enough to control his own conduct,’ etc. Indeed, on account of the expression of a great degree of obstinacy and self-will, with not a little defiance of the professors on a certain occasion, when they had thought best to gently hint a sort of reproof of some act of his, William had come near being ‘suspended,’ as the phrase is, for a while; that is, dismissed from the college for a season, to return on conditions. But he was not suspended finally, and had come home still a member of the college. But he had had a taste of certain liberties, had learned to look upon some things, such as ‘card-playing for fun,’ and which he had been used to look upon with horror, as a foolish, sinful way of spending time, as not, after all, so very bad. But I need not recite these things; for his career was from the good, gently at first, and by slow steps to the

bad—much like that of everybody else who has followed the like path. William did not finish his junior years, finding it convenient to withdraw from the college during the spring term (as he was, by the grace of the faculty, permitted to do, instead of being expelled, in consideration of the entreaties of his adopted father, the good old man, who had been sent for to confer with the faculty). William had been engaged, with a score of other students, in some mischief, which, though not seriously bad at first, led to a terrible fight between these students and the authorities of the college-town, or city, rather, in which William had drawn a pistol, and attempted to make use of it (as he always claimed, however, in strict defence of his life), against some of the opposing party. But the pistol, being fortunately snatched from his hands, no blood was shed. William would not acknowledge to the faculty that he had been wrong in drawing his pistol with the purpose of making bloody use of it, but, on the other hand, insisted that, under like circumstances, he would do the same again, in self-defence, as he claimed. The faculty would not yield, and permitted him, in conclusion, to withdraw. And William went home, a somewhat altered young man, but beloved by all the villagers about him, some of whom, however, sometimes said, there was ‘a great deal of the “wild-horse” in him which has got to come out in some way, some time;’ but they little thought what lay in the line of William’s career.”

Having thus left college, the question arose, what William should do, what profession or business he should pursue? First, he was inclined to take up the study of the law, and entered the office of Mr. Mills, the only lawyer of the village; but Mr. Mills was far from being a profound or scholarly man, had but a meagre practice, and, on the whole, William, who had read over Blackstone, Chitty’s Contracts, and some other works whose names the old man had forgot, and of which I know as little, came to the conclusion, that though he liked to read law, he should not like to practise it, and that course was abandoned: and William, thinking he would become a business man entered the old man’s little store. After a while he was intrusted to go to the city and make the little periodical replenishing purchases, and developed great taste and sagacity in his purchases. In fact, he had rare talents as a merchant, and it was not long before a place was found for him in New York, with a then ruling firm, where he speedily advanced, so as to be offered an interest in the concern. He had managed to lay up a little money for himself, but the old gentleman furnished him ten thousand dollars more, —a large sum, it was then thought, — the villagers thinking that the old gentleman was almost wild to part with that sum, which would then have bought two or three good farms in the vicinity of the village. Thus provided, William went into the partnership, and his business went on flourishing till, at the end of five years, he became the second member in importance in the concern; and though not married, had built a very fine summer residence in the outskirts of the old village, and filled and surrounded it with every comfort.

“I fear William Roberts is living too fast,” some old villager would say. “He’ll make money easy and spend it as easy. Easy comes, easy goes, you know.”

“O, no, he won’t. He knows the value of money,” another would say. “The old man’s taught him that. He knows how to hold on to a dollar.”

“You see,” said the old man, with a curious look in his eye, as he related what he used to hear (and sometimes overhear), that his neighbors said, ‘that they always thought me, up there, a little *too* economical.”

But William Roberts had made money too fast, as the sequel showed; he lived too high, contracted expensive habits, and, eventually, it got to be rumored that he indulged sometimes “in cards for fun;” but now the “fun” meant, the excitement of gambling for money. His business house knew nothing of this, and were unsuspecting of it for a long while, though William made large drafts upon it; but these not being more than he was entitled to, nothing was said about it. But finally he insisted on drawing at one time—when the house really needed the money to help *carry* on its business—the sum of five thousand dollars, and was rather curt and severe upon his partners on their remonstrating; and they began to look about them, and came to learn of Mr. Roberts’s gambling habits; and, fearful of him, arranged, after a long while, to buy him out, accepting his figures on demand. This was the most fatal hour in his life.

With some fifty thousand dollars, cash in hand, Mr. Roberts could not control himself, and, with the spirit of gambling upon him, rushed deeper into dissipation—more deeply than ever. Together with his gambling pursuits at night, Mr. Roberts went into Wall Street by day, drawn there by the allurements of certain acquaintances, who presented to him visions of stupendous wealth to be early won. Mr. Roberts was, withal, a self-reliant man, and believed he could take his part among the bold and fiery contestants of the street; and went into that vortex, where so many brave souls have been wrecked, with greatest confidence, only to find himself, at the end of six months, penniless and poor, save in the country residence, which has been before alluded to. He applied to his adopted father now; told him the whole story; and evidently penitent over his wanderings and rashness, was again aided into business in a comparatively small way. But his talents were good, and for a while he pursued a line of success. But the old gambling mania came over him again, and he fell; and this time deeper than before.

In his extremity, he had forged certain drafts on the bank in which his firm did business, intending to keep all dark, and make these good in time. Though they were not large, he found he could not meet them at the proper time by the fitting deposits without further steps in crime. So he resorted to the country bank, in which his adopted father kept his funds, with drafts in the name of his father, from time to time, which were borrowed and paid; but these came so frequently as to excite the suspicions of the president of the bank, that Mr. Roberts was getting an undue influence over my client, his father; and so one day meeting the old gentleman (whose real name I have no right to disclose, but whom we will call Mr. Brown, for convenience), the president said, —

“Mr. Brown, Mr. Roberts seems to have occasion to use a great deal of money.”

“Yes, yes,” replied Mr. Brown, “he is doing a fine, large business since he’s got, on his feet again, after his ‘failure’ ” (for it was by the modest word ‘failure’ that Mr. Brown always referred to the disastrous career of Roberts among his country friends).

The president, believing from Mr. Brown’s reply that all was correct with Roberts, since he, if anybody, must know all about his business, he thought, said no more, and moved on. However, something suggested to him, when Roberts came to present the next check, to make matters more satisfactory to the bank, and to avoid any complaint on the part of Mr. Brown, against whom the debit side of his account was getting fearfully large, that when the day of settlement should

come, he, Roberts, should obtain Mr. Brown's power of attorney to draw when and in what amounts he should like.

The president, on future reflection, thought Roberts acted a little "nervous" over this suggestion; but Roberts's ready acceptance of the advice caused him to forget it on the instant, and he had no suspicion whatever that Mr. Brown's name was counterfeited on the checks. In proper time Roberts appeared with a power of attorney, duly made, and purporting to be Mr. Brown's, which was securely lodged in the bank.

By and by Mr. Brown, who used his bank mostly as one of deposit, being then retired from business, and having money enough for his current wants accruing from the rent of some two or three farms, and his store-house, and interest on money lent to surrounding farmers, and having no business occasion to often visit the bank, going one time to the shire town on business, thought he would make a friendly call at the bank for a moment on his friend the president.

On his calling, the usual hand-shaking and salutations took place, and were followed by the usual gossip about a little of everything and nothing; and Mr. Brown, who had been invited to a seat in the directors' room, rose to retire, bidding the president good day. As he was passing out, he spoke jocularly to the president, —

"The banks' breaking, I suppose, does not disturb *you*? Bank's sound, I take it. You've got my deposits all safe as the rest, I dare say, eh?" with a little chuckle, as if he thought he had expended a little salutary wit.

"Yes, perfectly safe, what there's left of 'em. Can't tell you exactly, without looking, how the account stands; but some balance yet to your credit."

Brown thought the president was joking, laughed a little, and went out. He had not gone far on his way, however, when, recalling the president's manner when speaking, he began to think he wasn't joking. But Mr. Brown drove on and on. At last he got to be uneasy, and determined to go back to ask the president what he meant by that word "balance." The president was surprised by the query, and answered, —

"Why, I mean that Roberts has not yet drawn out all your funds on that power of attorney."

"Power of attorney? What do you mean? "

The president was confounded. He saw that old Mr. Brown was either forgetful, or that there was some wrong somewhere. He caused the cashier to look up Mr. Brown's account, and draw the balance, and presented the same to Mr. Brown; who, in turn, was confounded, said he had given Roberts no drafts, or any power of attorney. The latter was produced. Mr. Brown could not believe his own eyes. So perfectly like his own signature was that of the power of attorney, that he clasped his hand to his head, and after deep thought for a few moments, said to the president,—

“Well, I would not believe it. It seems like a dream to me. I cannot remember when I signed that power of attorney; but I must have done it in some hour of weakness for there’s John Wentworth’s name to it as witness, and I know his handwriting well. He has borrowed money of me often, and given his notes. But, see here, if my name is forged, so may John’s be. I don’t know anything about this power of attorney.”

The checks drawn before the power of attorney was presented by Roberts to the bank were new to Mr. Brown. He was surprised by his exact signature to these, and the filling out of some of them as well, in his own handwriting apparently. But sure he could not remember ever giving one of them.

“Do you think,” said the bank president, who understood the situation of things if these should all prove forgeries, and wishing to save the bank from loss, —“do you think sometimes, Mr. Brown, that your memory fails you at all as you grow older?”

“O, yes,” said the honest old man, “I do. I find I forget a good many things. Well, well; have I come to this? “

What occurred thereafter, would be wearisome to recite in detail. Suffice it that search was made for Wentworth, the witness, by both Mr. Brown and the bank; but he was not to be found immediately. His signature was shown to several persons who knew his handwriting, and all declared it his. Roberts, in some way, got wind of the old man’s having visited the bank, and he, too, was not to be found, and so matters stood for a while.

At last it was found out that Wentworth, who had a pretty good farm, which he worked only a part of the year, and occupied himself as a peddler, with a wagon, through quite a large circuit of country the rest of the time, had been taken to the Insane Retreat, at Hartford, Conn. His “team” having been run into and capsized one night on the road by another “team” furiously driven by some drunken men, Wentworth being violently thrown against a large rock, head foremost, and receiving such injuries as quite severely damaged his mind. He, therefore, could not be “improved” to determine whether his signature was veritable or not.

Mr. Brown had, meanwhile, persuaded himself that the “power of attorney” was a forgery; that he had *not* suffered any such mental weakness at any time as would have allowed him to give such an instrument to Roberts.

In fact, he knew that it was a forgery. Great though his grief was over the heartless conduct of Roberts, Mr. Brown could not make up his mind to tell his wife the facts. She noticed his sorrow, which he, upon her frequent inquiry, attributed to bodily ills, and time went on. Eventually Mr. Brown made up his mind that perhaps he ought to be willing to bear a part of the loss; and after consulting his lawyer about it, went to the bank, and generously offered to compromise; to lose half his deposit, if the bank would pay him the other half, or sixteen thousand five hundred dollars. But the directors seeing the advantage they had of him, refused to entertain his offer for a moment, affecting to believe the drafts and power of attorney genuine.



At last Mr. Brown broke the matter to his wife. She was struck with horror; but in the end counselled him to let it all go, inasmuch as they had enough left to “scrub along on the rest of their lives,” as she expressed it, with economy. But the manner of his old friend, the president, when announcing to him the course taken by the directors, had greatly piqued Mr. Brown, and he was determined to have all his money at last. The great legal difficulties in the way were, however, insurmountable in the opinion of his attorney, who had exhausted his own resources in trying to get the proper testimony to set aside the power of attorney, and finally Mr. Brown had applied to me.

I had heard his long story with greatest patience, seeing nothing tangible up to this point to take hold of. Wentworth might not recover in years, if ever; Roberts was out of the way, and would, perhaps, never be found. All his neighbors would identify Mr. Brown’s signatures as veritable, and he himself had admitted to the bank president, on the day of the disclosure of his claimed indebtedness, that he found himself frequently forgetful; and had half admitted that he might have been led to sign the power of attorney in some hour of weakness. The case was desperate. I pondered it over a while, and finally asked Mr. Brown if he could give me the *date* of the power of attorney. He could not. I asked him then to go to the bank with some friend, and ask to see it, and note the date; telling him that this was the first essential thing for me to know. Before Mr. B. left my office, I had planned a course of operations, all of which I did not develop to him, however. In the course of a few days Mr. Brown sent me a letter, saying that the date of the instrument was the 26th of June, 185-. I turned to my diary for that year, and found where I was on that day, —at Coney Island, with quite a large party, who went down on the excursion steamer Belle, early in the day, and were gone all day; and, as I knew Roberts very well by sight, I was sure that I remembered his being there that day. Light began to gather in my mind. Perhaps Mr. Brown, too, could remember where he was that day; and I sent for him, told him what I wanted to know; and he was sure, on reflection (as was afterwards found certain), that he was visiting, during a week which covered the 26th of June, with his wife, some old friends at Danbury, Connecticut. So much being learned, I lost no time in hunting up parties who were at Coney Island that day, and established the fact, beyond doubt, that Roberts was there.

Next I turned my attention to Wentworth’s case, and found that he was at Philadelphia that day, and the day before, making some purchases; and also found a letter from him to a brother, dated at Pittsburgh, Pa., on the 29th of June, in which we found a statement to the effect that he had left home on the 24th of June; had been in Philadelphia for a day or two; had gone from there to Pittsburgh, and should be “back about the 4th of July.” We also found a man who had come on from Pittsburgh to New York with Wentworth on the 3d of July, and who had met him there several times a day, and for several days before. Armed with these facts, we went to the bank, and presented our evidence frankly, and were surprised at the officers’ then refusing to pay over the money.

Suit was brought by Mr. Brown for the recovery of his money, and the bank undertook to keep it in court, thinking to weary out old Mr. Brown, and effect a compromise, perhaps.

But the old man grew more vigorous and confident as court after court sat, and the case was put over upon one pretence or another. But this, after all, was no disparagement to Mr. Brown’s cause, for, before he could force the suit on to trial, Wentworth recovered his mind and health;

and being apprised of what was going on, declared that he had not seen Roberts for several months before the 26th of June, and had not seen him since; and knew that he had never witnessed such an instrument for Mr. Brown. Wentworth also kept an accurate business diary, which covered all the time, and corroborated the testimony that we had secured of his being on that day, and before and after, in Pittsburgh, etc. Wentworth accompanied Mr. Brown and his attorney to the bank to see the power of attorney, and they were informed that it was at their attorney's; but the officers would give no order that he might see it. But Mr. Brown's attorney, conceiving that the bank's attorney would not refuse him a professional courtesy, took Mr. Brown and Wentworth to his brother lawyer's office, and they were at once shown the document. Looking at it for a moment in astonishment, Wentworth exclaimed, —

“No; that signature is not mine. The ‘e’ in the name ain't just as I make it; besides, I haven't signed my name, or written a letter, or made an entry in black ink, in many years (the signature was in black). I always use blue.”

“But,” interposed the bank's attorney, “you may not have had blue ink at hand when you witnessed that instrument.”

“I tell you,” said Wentworth, in a manner which could not be mistaken for its firm honesty, “I never witnessed that instrument. I never can use anybody's else pen, and I always go prepared,” said he, taking out from his side coat pocket an old, long, portable inkstand, with a pen held in its leathern case. “There, I've carried that, now, for over eight years, and I have never written a word from any other inkstand, with any other pen but my own, or any kind of ink but blue, in all that time.”

His manner convinced the lawyer of the bank that it was of no use to go to trial with such testimony against the bank, and he very frankly said so; and that he should advise immediate settlement, which he did; and old Mr. Brown recovered his whole deposit, with interest from the time he brought suit, and with sundry “costs.”

But both he and Mrs. Brown declared that they felt no better after the recovery of the money, for, after the struggle to obtain it was passed, and the excitement was over, the heartless conduct of Roberts seemed to oppress them only the more, and Mr. Brown, after a year or two, pined away and died. Mrs. Brown is still living at this writing, an unhappy woman, when I last saw her.

As for Roberts, it is believed that he is leading a miserable life in the mining districts of California, under the name of William Simpson; but this is a conjecture, founded on testimony hardly sufficient to be relied on.

Thus were wrecked Roberts's bright hopes, and the happiness of his faithful old adopted parents. Playing cards “for fun,” at first, not unfrequently leads to disastrous, deplorable, ends—to unalterable wretchedness.

McWatters, George. *Knots Untied: Or, Ways and By-Ways in the Hidden Life of American Detectives*. Hartford: Burr and Hyde, 1871. (848 pages)