

*Detectives of Europe and America,*  
or Life in the Secret Service.  
A Selection Of Celebrated Cases,  
Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Russia,  
Poland, Egypt, And America.  
A Revelation Of Struggles And Triumphs  
Of The Most Renowned Detectives On The Globe For The Past  
Twenty-Five Years.

by George McWatters

[Most, if not all, from *Knots Untied or Ways and By-Ways in the Hidden Life of American Detectives*. Hartford: Burr, 1871}

PREFACE.

Many partial friends of mine have thought I might do some good, and that I ought to, however little it may prove, to the cause of human happiness,—in the intent thereby of enlarging the security of the innocent from the machinations of the depraved,—by the detail of certain wily “offenses against the law and good order of society,” while demonstrating therein how sure of final discovery and punishment are the criminally vicious, however crafty and subtle, in these days, when the art of police detection has become almost an exact science.

What is specifically mine in these tales, *i. e.*, the recital of my own actual experiences and observations, and what is in part received from authentic sources in my professional acquaintance, will appear in the text of the narratives.

If any good to the world accrues from the publication of the histories of the cases involved in these recitals, through the instruction which they may afford to some, perhaps; or by their possibly enlarging the scope of the reader’s charity for the erring, or in any way. I shall be gratified.

G. S. McW.

PUBLISHERS’ INTRODUCTION.

DEEMING that the public would be deeply interested to know, indeed had a right to know, something more of the editor of the following work than gleams through the series of entertaining, instructive, and in many respects unparalleled articles which constitute this thrilling collection, we applied to him for his Autobiography, in details covering other portions of, and facts in his life, than are revealed in the wonderful experiences of his professional career, as brought to light in these articles.

But we were met by a reply, characteristic of most men of deeds rather than of words, that it would be wholly against his taste to furnish his own personal history: he was in ‘nowise desirous to vaunt himself,’ he said; ‘he had not sought,’ he continued, ‘by the articles in question, to

illustrate himself, or to play the part of a hero in any measure, but merely to contribute to the current literature and the history of the times a narration of sundry interesting facts, which, in their hidden and secret nature, are usually withheld from the general public.’

Throughout this book Officer McWatters has shown the modesty of a retiring and unassuming man; making no further allusion to himself, and his deeds and experiences, than necessary to sustain the thread of the narratives. He desired that the book should stand upon its own merits, and wished to be judged as an officer and an author, rather than by the merits of his own private life, be they great or small. In this he evinced a commendable pride and a good sense which we could not question.

Nevertheless we considered it fitting that we add to the book such facts as we might possess ourselves of regarding the career of a man whose life has been given, in so great part, to deeds of good, heartfully and freely done, and to humanitarian reforms, as has Officer McWatters’. We therefore engaged the services of a well-known and careful public writer, to collect and arrange the leading facts of the active and eventful life of Mr. McWatters. So faithfully did our literary agent do his work, as to provide us with a quantity of manuscript sufficient to make an octavo volume! more in bulk, indeed, than the following tales themselves. Obligated to condense this pile of materials, we have satisfied ourselves with what will here be found in brief, a running biography of Officer McWatters, together with sundry accounts of incidents in his life which have from time to time appeared in the public journals, and which seem to us to be most characteristic of the man in his daily walks.

#### BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

Officer McWatters was born in Scotland, and early taken to the North of Ireland, where he was reared, receiving the excellent instruction of the schools in that portion of the Green Isle, and while quite young moved to that busy metropolis, London, where he pursued his studies, married, and resided seven years; from which city he eventually migrated to America, settling in Philadelphia in the practice of the law. Professionally acquainted both in London and Philadelphia, with those “secret ministers of the law,” the public and private detective forces, he necessarily gave much of his time to the consideration of their deeds, and their great value to local communities, large cities, and even nations, and finally became attracted to their higher walks himself. To dwell here upon the talent he disclosed in his career in connection with the detective forces, and his marked fitness to deal with the most subtle problems of the profession, would be but to forestall the reader’s judgment, or abridge his privilege of forming his opinion, upon the records of the narratives which follow.

Associated with the most distinguished members of the bar during his residence in Philadelphia, it was a matter of course that a man of Officer McWatters’ peculiar gifts, and withal a most genial nature, with which we find him accredited very abundantly in the piles of manuscript before us, above alluded to, should be called upon to “undertake,” and entrusted with the execution of cases and projects in support of the “dignity and sure justice of the law,” which very few men in the whole land could be prudently commissioned to execute.

#### A HEART TOO SOFT FOR A LAWYER.

Officer McWatters, it appears, is a very sensitive man, tender of heart, sympathetic; and he often found it in the way of his duty to his clients as a lawyer to engage in things which gave him great pain. Such, for example, were the ejection of meritorious, poor widows from their little homes; the collection of rents due by indigent widows and orphans, or by sick fathers of families, out of money, as well as, through illness, out of work. In short, there was much in the practice of the law constantly in conflict with his humanitarian nature, and he was glad to withdraw from the practice, at last. The ferreting out of ingenious and desperate criminals accorded with both his sense of right and intellectual ambition, for in the higher fields of the detective's career, more real talent is often required than is necessary to conduct the most important cause at the bar.

#### DEPARTS FOR CALIFORNIA.

About the time of Officer McWatters' withdrawal from the active practice of the law, a great exodus from the United States, in fact from all parts of the world, to the California gold diggings, began. Mr. McWatters arranged his affairs, and migrated, with tens of thousands more, to the new El Dorado. But he was not happy. The mad strife for gold overwhelmed all other things. Men, in general, lost whatever of conscience they carried there, and the whole population was plunged in vices or crimes of one kind or another. Mr. McWatters found that he was not constituted to engage in such reckless warfare at the expense of all that was manly and good, and after nine months withdrew to New York, which has since been his home.

#### BACK IN NEW YORK.

Here we are compelled to push aside countless pages of manuscript, which, in book form, would doubtless delight thousands of readers, but too voluminous to be more than alluded to here, and many rich chapters in Mr. McWatters' life must, so far as the publishers of this book are concerned, go unpublished until such time as the distinguished officer's biography in detail shall be called for. Suffice that immediately after Mr. McWatters' settlement in New York, new and eventful careers were opened before him, both in his life as a detective officer and as a humanitarian, wherein he conducted himself with a faithfulness, dignity, skill, and honor which might well be emulated by all men in the same walks of life, but which only few could hope to equal. From New York, as his center, Mr. McWatters' experiences extended to all the principal places along the Atlantic coast, and over the old scenes of his life on the Pacific coast.

#### MR. MCWATTERS ENTERS THE METROPOLITAN POLICE FORCE.

Passing over a period in Mr. McWatters' busy life checkered with incidents and exploits of a marvelous kind in his career as a private detective, as well as much that is interesting of his active participation in many measures of a politico-reformatory and socialistic nature, we find that Mr. McWatters entered the Metropolitan Police Force in 1858, wherein he distinguished himself, for the period of twelve years, up to October 17, 1870, when he resigned his post,— not only as a most effective and reliable officer in routine duties, but also by many suggestions and plans of enlarging the utility of the force to the community in general. For instance, we find in the *New York World*, of date November 22, 1860, an article under the head "Information to Railroad and Steamboat Passengers," which dilates, to some considerable extent, and most complimentarily, upon the beneficent results to the public of the operations of a detachment of

the police force, "called the Railroad and Steamboat Squad," by which travelers visiting New York, and passing through, were saved from the impositions and robberies of ticket swindlers, hotel runners, unprincipled boarding-house keepers, etc., by encountering the travelers before they leave the cars and steamboats, and giving them all requisite information in regard both to the swindlers, and how best, most safely, and economically to conduct their sojourn in the city. The *World's* article concludes with stating that "this plan originated with Officer McWatters, who, we know, was for a long time an efficient, and one of the most popular officers attached to this section of the force."

How well Officer McWatters performed his individual duties in connection with this squad, might be illustrated by the quotation of an article entitled "Personal," in the *Daily Tribune* of July 7, 1860, which is most highly complimentary of Officer McWatters, but is too long to be incorporated here.

Mr. McWatters' onerous vocation as a policeman did not forbid his finding time for earnest participation in many matters not pertaining to his special duties as an officer. Indeed, it would seem that, with all his labors, he found more time to devote to good causes outside of his police duties than many men of leisure and benevolent spirit think themselves able to bestow. It is said that none find so little leisure time to do anything as the wholly indolent and unoccupied, and the more a man has to do of daily labor, the more time can he find to attend to extra calls upon his services. Officer McWatters seems to have practicalized this "doctrine," for, judging from the several hundred extracts before us, taken from the New York journals for a period of ten years, one would be led to think that Officer McWatters possessed the attribute or faculty of ubiquity, for we find him "here, and there, and everywhere" in the city, and without it, in attendance upon reform meetings, or advocating humanitarian measures from the rostrum, for Officer McWatters is a forcible public speaker. The suffering and starving people of Kansas (1861) we find elicited his warm sympathies and active exertions in their behalf, expressed by the practical mode of raising contributions for their aid. In the *Evening Post* of October 2, 1861, we find allusion to Officer McWatters as the Secretary of the Patriotic Association of Metropolitan Police (of which, in conjunction with the late Inspector Carpenter, if the writer is not mistaken, Officer McWatters was the originator), which was organized to afford support to the families of policemen who joined the Metropolitan Brigade in the war for the Union.

#### OUR SUBJECT AND THE PUBLIC PRESS.

The writer of this brief sketch is supplied with countless records, clipped from the public journals, of remarkable incidents, amusing, critical, etc., in Mr. McWatters' life, which cannot be cited in a cursory biography. Such men's lives are often illustrated by "hair-breadth escapes." Of these interesting accounts we make use here of the first one we chance to take up—a singular and odd affair, which was made mention of in the *New York Dispatch* of June 20, 1858—from which paper the account is copied verbatim.

"PUSILLANIMOUS HIGHWAYMEN.—TWO KNIGHTS OF THE ROAD FRIGHTENED BY A SPECTACLE CASE.—At a few minutes to one o'clock yesterday morning, Mr. G. S. McWatters was passing through Bleecker Street, near Mott. Suddenly two men sprang at him from behind a tree, one catching him around the waist, and the other making a grab at his throat. With a quick and

powerful effort, turning himself around, he managed to fling from him the one who had hold of his waist; and quickly taking from his side coat pocket a silver spectacle case, he drew his hand back with great emphasis, cautioning the other fellow not to advance a step, or he would stab him to the heart. The second fellow evidently mistook the glistening of the spectacle case in the moonlight as the gleaming of steel, for in double-quick time he took to his heels, followed by his companion, whose fall, as the result proved, had not detracted from his nimble-footedness. Mr. McWatters let the fellows run, very prudently avoiding imposing a task upon his lungs by calling for the police. It is thought they followed him for money, of which he had a considerable amount about him." Passing by multitudinous

#### INTERESTING PERSONAL INCIDENTS

in Mr. McWatters' career, found recorded in the World, Tribune, and other New York papers, and which regard his frequent saving of people's lives from drowning, etc., we would note the fact that in the "Riot Week," July, 1863, Officer McWatters did heroic work. According to Mr. David M. Barnes' book, entitled "Records of the Police during the July Riots, 1863," it is estimated that no less than fourteen hundred persons were therein killed, and thousands seriously wounded. It was a week of fearful excitement. The military and police showed no mercy to the mob. The mob attacked, among other buildings, the Tribune Office, and had just lighted a fire to consume it, when Officer McWatters appeared upon the scene, and (we quote from the work referred to) "was assaulted by a burly ruffian, armed with a hay-rung, who, by a powerful blow on the shoulder, knocked him down; instantly on his feet again, he more than repaid, on the heads of the rioters, the blow. The building was cleared speedily, and not a man in it escaped without severe punishment." But we need not dwell upon Mr. McWatters' prowess. He bore himself bravely in all his arduous duties, and with as much skill and wisdom as heroic gallantry.

#### OFFICER MCWATTERS' LITERARY ASSOCIATES.

Notwithstanding his constant and momentous public duties, Mr. McWatters always found time to enjoy to considerable extent the best literary society of the Metropolis. Among his personal and friendly acquaintances were not only the most distinguished "Bohemian" writers of the times, like Walt Whitman, the late George Arnold, the poet Charles C. Gardette, "Howard of the *Times*," etc., etc., a score or more of them, but such men as Stoddard the poet, Dana of the *Sun*, Ripley of the *Cyclopedia*, the late musical critic W. H. Fry, Dr. Wainwright, and hosts of others, all of whom Mr. McWatters was able to rely upon as true and appreciative friends, as well as associates.

#### LADIES' UNION RELIEF ASSOCIATION.

Among his other benevolent associations, Mr. McWatters found himself, during the latter part of the late civil strife, and further on in the last decade, engaged in the interests of the "Ladies' Union Relief Association" of New York, whose voluntary business it was to extend aid to disabled soldiers, and the families of deceased soldiers. With this Association, Mr. McWatters' experiences were often of a trying, pathetic character, called upon as he was to administer to the extremely distressed and suffering. In July, 1868, the Association presented to Mr. McWatters, as a slight recognition of his energetic labors, a richly-chased gold watch, appropriately

inscribed; which fact was, most complimentarily to him, noted by the *Times*, *Sun*, and the other leading journals of New York.

Among the manifold peculiar incidents which checkered Mr. McWatters' life in connection with the Relief Association, we introduce, a little further on, the tales, "Ten Dollars a Month," and "Mack and the Veteran," which our artist has appropriately illustrated. The Swindling Bounty-claim Agents. We ought not to fail to note here that in 1868-69, Mr. McWatters carried on a bitter war against a set of as great scoundrels as ever existed, known as "Bounty-claim Agents," who cheated the Government, and robbed the ex-soldiers unmercifully. He visited Washington, after having gotten sufficient facts together, and through the cooperation of Messrs. Wilson and Howe of the Senate, and Generals Butler and Logan of the House, procured the passage of an act "for the protection of soldiers and their heirs," for which thousands of soldiers have since blessed him. In this matter Mr. McWatters displayed statesmanlike sense, as well as great-heartedness.

McWatters, George. *Detectives of Europe and America*. Hartford: J. B. Burr Publishing Co., 1877.