

## *The Detective of the Present—Finn and Jourdan*

Editors' note: *Following is an editorial burlesque from the Brooklyn Eagle of May 4, 1874. It takes the shape of an Abbot and Costello-like cross-talk act that ridicules the inefficiency of the police under the administration of Major General James Jourdan (1832-1910), one of the Republican appointees to the new Brooklyn Police Commission. It centers on the failed investigation into the 1872 murder of Music Professor John B. Panormo and the arrest of an innocent man.*

*Most important for us, however, is that by 1874 detective literature seems to have formed a separate, recognizable genre with its own canon.*

Time was when a detective was a man who detected things. A detective is still that in some European countries; and he still detects things—in novels. There's Bucket in "Bleak House" who detects Lady Dedlock, and there's that detective in Collin's story of the "Moon Stone," quite a detector. New York used to have Old Hayes, who could detect a thing or two; Paris has had Vidocq, and Bow street has had Forster.\* But the race has died out entirely in America, and is dying out in England.

Commissioner Jourdan, of Brooklyn, has been making an effort to raise up a detective or two and has actually produced Corr and Bill. Corr and Bill were raised to the Vidocquian task of tracing a mystic murder. Finnan is a hatter; and Finnan has been in States Prison. That ought to be enough for any detective such as Corr to conclude that Finnan did the deed. Edgar A. Poe could not reason out a conclusion clearer than that. So Corr went to where Finnan was making hats.

Is Finnan here? Yes—want to see him?

No. There's a stake to be made out of him.

I don't want to make a stake, but you can see Finnan.

No. Didn't want to see Finnan where the boss didn't want to make a stake.

The shrewdness of Vidocq, the patience of Javert, pale, before the astuteness of Corr.

Finnan was told they were "after him." Here I am, says Finnan; and Finnan goes after Corr. Finnan goes to work in another hat factory. Corr comes in.

Is Finnan here?

Yes—Want to see him?

No—no—But there's a stake to be made out of him.

I don't want a stake; but you can see Finnan.

No. No!

Persistent and shrewd is Corr, Who but he could ever have thought of speaking to the second Boss just as he had spoken to the first. That stake was a great idea—great—very great. If one of

the boss's hatters had wanted a stake. Panormo's murderer was found at last. It wasn't Corr's fault they didn't want a stake.

Corr made up his mind to arrest Finnan. So he went to New York and arrested McNulty. All the same to Corr; but not to McNulty. Corr had to let McNulty go at once.

Then upon the tablet of that immense Brain flashed a new thought!

McNulty, you know Finnan?

Yes.

There's a big stake in Finnan.

Don't want any stake.

But there's money in it!

Don't want any of it.

Corr was amazed. In the language of the street flabbergasted. Here were three men not one of whom wanted a stake! Vidocq himself never saw or heard of such a thing.

Finnan went on making hats.

Corr's mighty mind was *non-plussed*.

"I'll put Bill on him," said he, "I will. I'll put Bill on him. I'll see Jordan—I'll spend money on this thing—the City's money. I'll put Bill on him." Just here Corr was sublime.

He actually did put Bill on Finnan. The unquiet ghost of Panormo shut up. Jordan gave out money, and Finnan and Bill who was put upon him had a good time spending it.

Bill who was sleeping with Finnan asked two liquor dealers if they'd seen Finnan.

No.

Let's all have a drink.

Corr was outside. Drinks all around.

You haven't seen Finnan?

No.

Let's have another all round.

I saw him eighteen months ago.

Ah, ah! Let's have another drink—Pass cigars.

Bill goes out to Corr.

Well, Bill, there's a big stake in this.

All right; got any more money?

Yes.

Give me a ten. Hang me, if I don't introduce you to the landlord. Wait here.

Detective waits. Bill goes back.

Drinks all round. Pass the cigars. Saw Finnan eighteen months ago.

Ah! fill up again.

Then Bill and Finnan go and have a nice time without Corr; Bill had the money the city supplied.

Finnan, says Bill, did you kill Panormo?

No.

Let's have a drink.

Finnan, says Bill, did you kill Westerman?

No.

Let's have another drink.

You're sure you didn't?

Wasn't in the county at the time.

Not in the county! Then I'll give you up to Jourdan.

All right—pay for another drink.

All right. Drinks!

Bill, I'll go down to the lager beer saloon; you can fetch them fellows there, and be done with it. I'm tired of spreeing at Jourdan's expense, and want to go a hattin'.

All right—one more drink, eh?

All right.

Finnan goes to lager beer saloon. They come for him, take him, let him go again, and he goes to hattin'.

Thus was accomplished the greatest piece of detective work since the days of Hawkshaw.

Jourdan is a great man, and Corr is a great man, but Finnan is the detective.

\*Andrew Forrester is the name attached to a number of collections of notebook detective stories published in London in the 1860s.

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