

## *A Carbon Copy*

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### How a Law Firm Was Supplied with Their Opponents' Thunder

"Somebody interested in this matter is stealing our thunder," began Mr. Capias, of the famous law firm of Capias, Summons & Circuit, as he motioned an unassuming, quiet-looking, middle-aged man to a seat in his private room.

The quiet-looking man said nothing in reply. He sat down and waited, smiling pleasantly.

"He is not only stealing our thunder," continued the lawyer, sitting bolt upright in his huge leather chair and fingering nervously with a paper-knife, "but he is actually selling it to the other side."

"You have no idea who it can be?" replied the quiet-looking man.

"Not the slightest. I don't suspect any body in this office. Our clerks have all been in our employ for years. We feel we can trust them implicitly. But so important is secrecy in this matter that I have given nobody a chance to go back on us. My interviews with our client have been conducted right here in this room with closed doors."

Through long habit, the eyes of Henry G. Marshall, one of the most experienced detectives in the West, rested for a moment on the transoms. They were hermetically sealed. Two winters ago the crevices had been stuffed with cotton batting. It had never been removed.

"What letters have you written? Who has access to your press copybooks?" was his first question.

Mr. Capias smiled slightly. "The ability of these men is sadly overrated," thought he.

"Letters of this character I always write myself, copy myself in my private book, and that book I keep in that vault under lock and key. The leak is not in that direction. Now, what do you advise?"

The detective considered a moment.

"I will work on the case outside for a few days. I will watch your office and have those characters whom I may consider suspicious watched and shadowed. If I find no clew it may become necessary for me to take a place in the office myself."

"In my office!" ejaculated the astonished lawyer. "In what capacity, pray?"

"There are a variety of openings. I can come as a copyist, confidential messenger, constable, just as you wish."

Mr. Marshall took his hat and left. Mr. Capias said nothing of his interview with the detective to either of his partners. The case in question, a very important one, involving the recovery of a great estate, the Bangs litigation, was entirely under his management. What he loved best was to work in secret and astonish Mr. Summons and Mr. Circuit with his grand coups. These latter gentlemen, whilst excellent and painstaking lawyers, lacked the genius which undoubtedly distinguished Capias in the management of affairs. Retainers from great corporations came his way as naturally as water finds its own level. A great bank rang him up over the telephone one day.

“Please come over at once. We wish to retain you in an important matter.”

“My office is blankety-blankety-blank, Blank street. I shall be in from four to five, when I shall be happy to see you. I am now in consultation,” was the audacious reply of Mr. Capias who really had nothing more important on hand at that particular moment than usual.”

Messrs. Summons and Circuit were appalled. Capias was crazy to talk that way to such an institution as the Mutual Credit Trust, Loan and Universal Accommodation Association. They exchanged looks of alarm.

But Capias was right. There is nothing your great corporation reveres so much as independence. A man who declined to come out and see them must necessarily be a great lawyer. An official called that very day with an immense retainer, and confidence was restored in the breasts of Mr. Capias’ more timid associates.

But even Mr. Capias had been unable, with all his astuteness, to get to the bottom of the Bangs mystery – who was furnishing facts to the other side. He was opposed by very shady practitioners. Slivey, Tove & Sons had a very unsavory reputation in the profession of the law.

Neither could Mr. Marshall, the equally astute detective, succeed any better, it appeared. At any rate, he so informed Mr. Capias at the end of a week’s seemingly fruitless search, adding, however:

“The man must be in your office. I must come in there Monday morning.”

“Who is the new clerk in the outer office who spells injunction with a ‘g?’” inquired Mr. Circuit of Mr. Summons. “Did you engage him?”

“I did not,” emphatically.

Mr. Circuit’s face grew as long as that of a master in chancery who has lost his fees or the receiver of a fat estate which has settled amicably with its creditors.

“Capias must have hired him!” he ejaculated.

That settled it. If the new clerk had spelled injunction backwards it would have made no difference. Capias had hired him – that was sufficient.

For three days Mr. Marshall remained in the office of Capias, Summons & Circuit, where he soon became a prime favorite. If he was deficient in spelling, he was certainly the most amusing story-teller they had ever seen. Pretty little Mary Sunshine, the pretty type writer operator, pronounced him the greatest acquisition possible. Mr. Waxinski, the chancery clerk, declared him to be a superb judge of beers. As by an instinct he had tasted of that gentleman's favorite brand of malt beverage, only to unqualifiedly indorse his opinion that it was the best in the market.

There was one person in the office of Capias, Summons & Circuit, however, who appeared to take offense at this addition to the clerical force. His name was Henry Badinger. He had been promoted from office boy to docket-clerk, from docket-clerk to the position of confidential man. He was a jewel in the eyes of Messrs. Capias, Summons & Circuit. He was possessed of a prodigious memory. In the outer office he was nicknamed the Encyclopedia.

"What is the title of the Rush and Bust Company's case before Morton, Henry?" Mr. Circuit would ask, peering out of his especial den from behind his eye-glasses, and Henry would reply, off-hand: "Silas G. Rush and Timothy Flimsey Bust, trading under the firm name of Rush & Bust Manufacturing Company. General No. 381,246, term No. 4,938, document No. page 143. Files in the vault, box No. 86," with much more useful information on the subject.

It was this gentleman whom the new clerk decided in his own mind would bear watching. But a week went by and nothing came of his suspicions except his own discomfiture, which was mainly brought about, too, by the aforesaid Badinger.

The confidential man had been one of the first that the new clerk indulged in such little slips as "mean profits" "and as to your honors shall seem meet," etc. He was perpetually laying traps for the detective, and all that the trapped one could do was to grind his teeth behind his desk and emulate that Scriptural exemplar of the hardest of the cardinal virtues, Job. Only Job had his boils outside. He, the detective, could only "boil within."

"I don't want you over in the law library," Badinger remarked one morning.

"Mr. Circuit—" began the detective; but Badinger cut him short. Badinger was the only one in the office who dared to bully the junior partners, but he did it effectually.

Mr. Marshall left the library, however, only to appear a few minutes later in a disguise so perfect that it was wonderful how he had effected it in such a short time.

Mr. Badinger passed the little, bent man with the blue spectacles and short red hair a dozen times in the course of the morning; but he never suspected his identity. Behind those blue spectacles, however, a pair of steel-gray eyes were relentlessly watchful of the confidential man's slightest movements.

A boy passed the detective with a list of books in his hand which he saw Badinger prepare. He came back with an armful. Pretending to be occupied with important business, the detective looked and saw Badinger very distinctly mark each book with a pencil.

He immediately determined something was wrong. At all hazards he must possess himself of the list.

He arose and crossed to the table at which Badinger was seated.

“Excuse me,” he said, “have you Roroer on Railroads?”

At the same time he slipped the little list, which the boy had placed on the table, into his palm.

There was nothing about it to excite suspicion. It read simply:

Ayres v. Mason, 3 Mich. 142.  
Mulligan v. Smith, 59 Cal. 808.  
Hays v. Jones, 27 O. State, 218.  
Sharp v. Spier, 4 Hill, 76.  
Dillon v. Municp. Corp. Vol. 2 Sec. 728.  
Cooley on Taxation, 659.  
Wame v. Baker, 35 I.1.  
Roberts v. Easton, 10. State, 78.  
Black v. Marrey, 8 Md. 228  
Friend v. Coons, 25 N.J. 591.  
Lyle v. Winston, 6 Bradwell, 172.  
Nye v. Houston, 43 Ill. 125.

There were twelve books in all.

Pretty soon Badinger got up.

He began looking for his list. Not finding it, he sat down and made out another. The detective was sure of this, for he saw him pick up each book and read its title. Then he opened each book carefully and began searching for certain pages. Not finding them readily, he began marking the books afresh.

The detective was tremendously puzzled. It is against the rules of the library to mark the books. Why was Badinger so persistent in the practice? Could it be possible that in that way he was conveying a message to some confederate in crime?

He began to grow excited. Perhaps he was on the right track at last.

Badinger left the library. The boy gathered up the books and put them away. The detective arose and strolled past the table.

To his intense astonishment he saw the list still lying there.

He did not disturb it, but immediately retreated to a safe distance, from which spot he kept his eyes riveted upon the corner of the room where Badinger had been seated.

He waited and waited. Several lawyers came in the course of an hour and sat at the table. One even picked up the list and glanced carelessly at it; but he tossed it aside again.

Suddenly a man came through the library door who set his heart to beating.

Mr. Slivery, of the firm of Slivey, Tove & Sons, approached the table.

He was a very cautious man evidently. "He won't pick up that list yet," thought the detective; "but he'll pick it up nevertheless."

Sure enough Mr. Slivey, after a few minutes' wait, stretched forth a long, lean, skinny hand and took hold of the piece of paper. He beckoned up one of the boys and gave it to him.

The boy passed the detective on his way to the book shelves, grumbling as he went: "That's the second time I had that very list of books this blessed morning."

The detective watched Mr. Slivey closely for the next few minutes. He was but a very short time in the library before he got up and went out. The boy came and put away the books again.

"He's got his message sure," thought Marshall. "Now to find out what it is." He called up a fresh boy and gave the list to him in order to avert suspicion.

Unfortunately the boy he called was busy. He eyed the list for a moment and handed it to his companion.

"Here, Jim; take these books to the old fellow over there with the blue glasses."

Jim took it. He was simply thunderstruck.

"What's in the durned thing," he ejaculated. "That's the third time I've been asked for those books this morning."

However he took them over to the detective, eyeing him meantime suspiciously.

Marshall took the first book on the list and opened it at page 124. On that page he found underlined in pencil the word "further." He went through the whole list, picking out the marked words and writing each opposite its own book.

The result then stood:

Letter further another must before go I any more have expect night.

Read either backwards or forwards this message was rank nonsense. For a quarter of an hour Marshall kept revolving the words in his mind. Suddenly an idea flashed across his brain. With fingers trembling with eagerness he placed the books before him in their alphabetical order. A cry of joy, with difficulty suppressed, arose to his lips, as the result stood thus:

Expect another letter night must have more before I go any further.

Who was to expect another letter? Slivey, of course. And “night” simply meant “to-night.” And Badinger must have more money before he would “go any further.” He saw it all now.

With an extraordinary feeling of elation, the detective left the library. As he stepped across the hall to the elevator, he disposed of his wig and glasses and turned down the collar of his coat. When he stepped into the elevator, he was once more the new clerk of Messrs. Capias, Summons & Circuit. All trace of the old gentleman with his fiery red hair and the blue spectacles had disappeared. Perhaps he had gone over into the water office to pay his taxes. Who knows?

“It is infernally hot in this closet. Can’t I get out for a minute?” complained poor Mr. Capias.

“No, unless you want to spoil every thing. He’ll be here, I tell you, as soon as everything is quiet. You mark my words. You won’t have long to wait. It’s nearly eight now.”

“But I’m suffocating,” pleaded Mr. Capias. “I’m not accustomed to being shut up in closets. And he won’t come any way, for I heard him ring up a friend on the telephone and invite him to dinner.”

“I’ll bet a week’s wages that was a blind. How do you know he wasn’t just talking into the receiver, without any connection? Any one can invite people to dinner at that rate and not ruin themselves. Hark! What’s that? Hush, not a sound, mind you. I heard a key in the lock.”

It was quite dark in the closet in Mr. Capias’ room. They listened and heard a key inserted in the door of the outer office and caught the sound of footsteps cautiously approaching. In another moment a key grated in the door of the private room and a man entered.

By the light of a sulphur match which he struck noiselessly, they looked and saw Badinger – the confidential Badinger.

He lit a little piece of candle and placed it on the very desk where Capias had that day written an important letter in the Bangs litigation.

His eyes almost stood out of his legal head as he saw his favorite clerk lift up his thin blotting pad and take therefrom a sheet of carbon and a very thin sheet of tissue paper.

On the latter was an exact facsimile of the letter written [to] his client that afternoon. Unconsciously, Mr. Capias had been furnishing Slivey, Tove & Sons with carbon copies of his correspondence.

Overcome with indignation, Mr. Capias rushed from his hiding place, and seizing Badinger commenced pounding him with both his fists. Entirely taken by surprise, the unlucky clerk offered not the slightest resistance. He would have been murdered but for the timely interference of the detective.

“There! That’s enough for that fellow. Discharge him. You can afford to let him go, for now we have Slivey, Tove & Sons in a box, and don’t you forget it. Besides, you can’t afford to have this thing blown on, Mr. Capias. You’d be the laughing stock of Chicago.”

Mr. Capias saw he was right. He contented himself with dismissing Badinger from his service. Next morning the famous suit of Bangs vs. Bangs was settled forever. – Austyn Granville, in Chicago Journal.

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