

A Detective's Adventure

“Sam or Me?”—A Tight Place for Thirty Seconds

A day or two since a Detroit secret service detective went into Saginaw county, Mich., after a man who was charged with having tampered with the mails. He had the name and description of the man, and was informed before starting that he would have to look out or he would get a knife or a bullet put into him, as the fellow, Samuel Large, had stated that he would never be taken without first having a good fight. Many offenders make this boast, but lack the backbone to set up to their words, and the officer did not pay much attention to the warning.

After he arrived at Saginaw he made a few cautious inquiries of an ex-Detroiter, and ascertained that Large was stopping with a relative about twenty miles from Wenona. He went down the river, and at Wenona learned that Large and his brother-in-law had left for home about two hours before, both armed. He was also informed that Large had in some way received a hint that “one of those Detroiters” was coming up to see him, and would, therefore, be on his guard. The detective hired a horse and started for the house over the road a foot deep with mud and water. It was within an hour of dark when he came in sight of the place where he hoped to find his man.

He hitched his horse in the woods, looked to his revolver and walked boldly up to the house. The children had witnessed his approach, and the men inside were prepared for him. Large's brother-in-law opened the door, spoke civilly, and the officer took the seat which was offered him. There was no sign of Large, and it was some time before the detective hinted at his business. He first made inquiries about pine lands, and then asked the price of real estate, so that the man was in doubt whether his visitor was a speculator or an officer of the law. The officer finally asked, as if merely inquiring for an acquaintance: “Oh, by the way, have you seen Sam Large lately?”

“Is it Sam or me you want?” replied the man, and he had not done speaking before he hauled out a navy revolver half as long as his arm and held it on a line with the officer's eyes. The men were about four feet apart, and for a long thirty seconds there was not a move or a sound to disturb the ticking of the clock. The revolver was cocked, held with a hand that did not shake, and the two men looked steadily into each other's eyes. The wife sat at the other end of the room, a spectator, and one of the children stood behind the father's chair. The detective thinks he lived a whole week's time in that half minute. He saw “shoot” in the man's eye, and was almost afraid of starting him into pulling the trigger as he replied, in a subdued tone, “Sam is the man I'm after.”

“That's a different thing!” said the man, lowering his revolver. “He went out the back door as you came in and is three miles into the woods by this time.”

Of course he would say nothing to criminate his relative to aid in his arrest, but was very friendly with the detective after he had ascertained that he was not after any one but Sam. He even walked down to where the detective hitched his horse, and his parting words were: “If you'd said you wanted me, or raised a finger, I'd have bored you through quicker'n wink! If you want to catch Sam I've no particular objection, but your best and surest way will be to shoot him first, and then arrest him afterward.”

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