

## *Detective Pierson's Queer Dream*

Said Detective Pierson, "It was queer." Detective Pierson was a tall man, with sharp features, and just the slightest tinge of a reddish mustache. He wore a suit of dark bluish clothes, and a black hat; in his right hand was a slight orange tree cane, and his left pulled somewhat nervously at his mustache. "Yes, it was queer." You see, the first information that he had of there being any amount of counterfeit money in the city was a circular letter addressed to the Chief from New York, and which stated that from certain information received, a gang had started for this city with over \$10,000 worth of fives and tens. This "gang" was led by a man who was described to be about thirty years of age, stout built, dark eyes and hair, bushy side whiskers, and with bad teeth, and the third finger of the left hand missing. On this information we were obliged to work. It was useless, we knew, to wait until their presence was detected by the counterfeit money afloat in the city, because by that time, especially if the notes were well executed, they could have passed a sufficient number satisfactorily, and would have left. All that was left for us was to trace the gang at once and arrest them before they had time to commence operations. To effect this we had only the description of the leader to work upon, the others were perfectly unknown to us, and we might have passed them in the street any day.

So accordingly we watched around for about two weeks without success, when information came to us that a ten dollar counterfeit bill had been presented at one of our banks, and so well was it executed that even there it had been at first accepted as genuine. I at once went to the bank and was shown the note, it was perfect with the exception that in one of the signatures the usual flourish was wanting, appearing blurred and indistinct. The teller could not remember whence it had been received, and so that settled the matter.

Shortly afterwards I was walking down St. Charles street, when I was struck by the appearance of a man standing on the corner of Common. Why I was struck I do not know; there was nothing extraordinary in his appearance; he was stoutly built, with black hair and eyes, and a smooth face; yet, singular to relate—and there is where the queer part comes in—I was positively fascinated. I do not know how it can be, but it seemed exactly as if I had fallen in love with him, and was absolutely insane. I at once determined to find out who he was, and crossed over. There was one or two of the boys standing at the corner, and I spoke to them.

The stranger was standing with his hand thrown carelessly over the letterbox, and I noticed, in a cursory manner, that on his left hand he wore a glove. This appeared strange, as it was summer, but might be accident. I asked who he was, and was told his name was 'Steiner,' from Cincinnati, and I was introduced. I thought he started just a little at the mention of my name, but he quickly recovered and smiled. I noticed that he had beautiful teeth and they were white as ivory.

Interchanging a few words I left, and walking up to the central office was occupied in various business until late at night, when I went home. It was about 12 o'clock, and I undressed and laid down, shortly falling into a dose. Suddenly it seemed to me as if I was standing on St. Charles street with Steiner, and he invited me to his room in the hotel. I went, and he quickly changed. He was a short, stout man, with dark eyes and hair, had bushy whiskers, bad teeth, and the third finger on his left hand was missing. In my dream it seemed as if I looked steadily at him and he

at me. I grappled with him, and we clutched and fell, his hand was on my throat, and I awoke. It was a dream, but a singular one. Somehow detectives are used to singular means and ends, and I will honestly say that I then believed in my mind that Steiner was the leader of the counterfeiters, and the man we wanted, but how was I to prove it? He had a smooth face and good teeth; I had not seen his hand. It is true he could easily have shaved his face and worn false teeth, and as to his hand, he wore a glove, and I could not arrest a man who appeared well known on the suspicion excited in a dream. That day and the next I waited for Steiner, but did not see him. On the night of the second day I went into the hotel. He was standing there talking to a lady, just in the vestibule. She turned and said good-night as I entered. He touched his hat, and I saw that the third finger of his left hand was missing.

I spoke:

“Good evening, sir.”

He replied: “Good evening.”

We sauntered out together. “Will you smoke?” I asked.

“Yes.”

We walked in, and getting a cigar, lighted it. It was hot, and he asked would I have a lemonade. I assented; we drank, and he gave the barkeeper a ten-dollar bill, which I noticed in the signature was defaced and blurred.

He was mine. I touched him on the shoulder and requested him to step outside. I showed him my badge, and stating that I was a detective officer, arrested him and locked him up in the First Precinct Station. I was happy I had worked out a case that had baffled all of the detectives. Next morning we arranged my prisoner before the court.

“And did you convict him?” we asked. “How about his teeth and beard?”

“Well,” said Detective Pierson, “that was the queerest of all. I didn’t. He wasn’t the man, being the son of a rich merchant in the West. He had lost his finger in the war, never had any whiskers, and his teeth were his own. To crown all, the man I wanted was subsequently arrested in Texas. Since then I never believed in dreams.

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*Fayetteville [TN] Observer*, January 16, 1873