

From the Albany Evening Journal
*A Famous Detective Officer:
Or, How He Managed*

The city of New York possessed an officer who had acquired a great reputation as an adroit, sagacious, and, better than all, a successful detective. His fame was in no wise “contracted within the pent-up Utica” of even the great metropolis of our country. It pervaded the State, and by the powerful instrumentality of the press, had permeated all sections of the Union. Not fame alone, however, had rewarded his efforts, nor was that the only recompense he sought. Wealth had been gathered in his coffers. He had been employed in very many cases when the large amount of property involved had brought a handsome remuneration for its recovery. The world knew little, if anything, of the means by which he had attained such eminent, and, in many instances, such singular success. The parties whose property he recovered, and who so gladly remunerated him with munificent largesses, may have had reason to suspect that he bargained with guilt to bring about such miraculous results, and such golden harvests, but in the fullness of their joy they did not loiter to make inquiry, or to seek discovery by the process of reason.

But the tide which, “taken at the flood had led him to fortune,” had begun to ebb. Others, quite as skillful, had grown up to measure strength and fame with him. The easy and accessible avenues that he had travelled to success were quite as open to others, and they used them. For some time he had done nothing to give renewed spur to his celebrity, and enable him to keep pace with others who were passing him on the goal to success.

He came hither in the summer of 185—. Obtaining a private audience, he announced his purpose to be to obtain a warrant for the arrest of one or two persons upon the charge of being engaged in the utterance of counterfeit money.

They resided, or at least “operated,” in the contiguous village of ———, then and for a long while well known as a great *entrepot* for that kind of illicit traffic. But few inquiries were made, and but little evidence exacted, and the process was issued. Nothing more was seen, heard, or thought of the officer or the case till the expiration of a week. Then the officer returned, and with a prisoner in his keeping.

An examination of the case was entered upon. The prisoner quickly and impulsively insisted upon having the privilege of procuring legal counsel, and coupled his request with a vigorous asseveration of his innocence. There was present a third person, who seemed then and subsequently to act in the capacity of *amicus curiæ* to the prisoner, while his relations with the officer were friendly and confidential. This circumstance, though not then the subject of comment or curiosity, subsequently contributed much to the development of the facts of the case. An attorney was procured through the efforts of this friend, and the latter engaged earnestly in the brief consultation that ensued between counsel and client. As the examination of the case progressed, every ebullition of surprise, denial, or innocence on the part of the accused was repressed by the effort of this impromptu friend, and who was quick to proffer the balm of consolation to assuage any swelling grief. The attorney, too, counseled resignation to his client, with a peculiar

fervor that, had a spectator suspected the case to be a curious one, might have thought there was a singular affinity between the counsel and the party, who, while he thus evinced kindness to the prisoner, was undeniably in the interest of the prosecution. The case, however, proceeded with accustomed form, and those who, from a sense of regard for the law, and the interests of the public, rejoice in the detection of the guilty, would have believed that there had been caught, and impaled for punishment, one of that fearful horde of counterfeiters that had so long burrowed at the place in question, and scattered throughout the community the mischievous fruits of their criminal labor.

The officer was the sole witness. If anything had been wanting to give the assurance of belief that instinctively arose from his recognized reputation for sagacity, method, and directness, it was to be found in the force of his testimony, all whose parts dove tailed with one another, and with the semblance of truth, with mechanical accuracy, and which fastened itself about the prisoner with links of steel.

The relation of the testimony was that the officer, assured of his eventual triumph, had been lying in wait and in disguise, for an entire week, that he might encompass the party with such unmistakable and overpowering proof of guilt that no ingenuity nor circumstance could shake their force. The arrest had been made at the very moment when all these living proofs should have been accumulated in one fearful volume, and the evidences of the prisoner's guilt "overwhelmed him to men's eyes."

The prisoner and another, then alleged to be a confederate, was seen to leave in a wagon a house long reputed to be a rendezvous for men of that calling, and a depot for the manufacture and sale of counterfeit bank notes. They were suddenly stopped upon the highway by the officer, who sprang upon them from his lair. He was supported in his sortie by the person before mentioned, who on the examination had so kindly aided the prisoner in the procurement of counsel, and the alleviation of his griefs. By some mishap, whose circumstances none stopped to inquire about, the companion, and supposed confederate of the prisoner, escaped out of the wagon and avoided arrest. Upon the person of the prisoner was found a large number of counterfeit notes of a late emission, freshly issued from the mint, and unsoiled by use. In the wagon was discovered a considerable quantity of bank note blank paper, ink, and other articles used in the manufacture of that paper currency that enables so many men to live without the drudgery of business labor.

This testimony established a clear case. The counsel, even without consultation with his client, abandoned all attempt at defence, and acquiesced in the necessity of the prisoner's detention. The latter urged the justice of, and his ability to give bail. But a brief interview between the officer and the counsel, and a subsequent one between the latter and his client, terminated any further suggestion about bail, and the prisoner was speedily committed.

So soon as a railroad could carry the successful officer to New York, and give time for the busy hand of a compositor to put type in legible shape, the account of this arrest was published in the newspapers of that city. It was embellished with all adulatory comments

of editors, glowing with unrestrained praises of the officer for the miraculous skill and tact which he displayed in the pursuit of his purpose, and the working up of his case.

Another jewel was added to the coronet of his genius, and another star illuminated the firmament of his fame. The press throughout the country took up the story thus instinct with the living evidence of truth, and awakened the rhapsodies of all who detest crime, and rejoice at its detection. The officer was hailed as one possessed of most wonderful genius and tireless assiduity, and to all this measure of adulation was superadded the generous gratitude of a public that saw in this achievement a check put to the perpetration of that offence against trade, whose results were being sown broadcast throughout the country.

The prisoner remained in jail a few days, and till at least until the fervor of the excitement upon his arrest here and elsewhere had passed away, and then was liberated upon sufficient and responsible sureties. The case, in common with many others, was sent in due form to the grand jury. At the session of that body there was none to urge a prosecution of it. The officer had been called far away upon some more pressing business. There was, of course, no proof. The case was dismissed, and, like thousands of others, it passed into the oblivion of unconcern and forgetfulness.

If the reader has not anticipated the sequel to the story, it shall be given here.

The case, from its inception to its close, was wholly fictitious, and gotten up by the officer for the sole purpose of reanimating his fame and employment! The party who was arrested, however equivocal his reputation, was wholly innocent of any crime in this instance. His fellow, who, as stated, fled from the wagon at the time of the arrest, had been employed as an agent to aid in the consummating of the scheme. He had manipulated and affixed all the evidences of seeming guilt that were used to connect the prisoner with the crime. He was, of course, permitted to escape. The friendly offices vouchsafed to the prisoner after his arrest were all done through the procurement of the detective. The luckless victim who was thus made, for the time being, to play the part of a seemingly guilty criminal, was quieted into silence and submission by the counsel of his friends, by the proffer of rewards, and by the assurance of future succor, if, as was possible, he should fall into more perilous toils of the law, and which succor was to come through the mediation of the officer, whose caged "pigeon" he had to content himself with remaining until the case and its purpose had been pushed to final consummation.

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