

A Detective's Story

by J. Weldon Cubb, Jr.

PATTER-8X31-43-12.-PATTERRE

CAVASSA

I looked up from the paper I held in my hand, and glanced curiously at the man before me.

“The money, mister,” he said, slouching his hat down over his eyes, and evading my keen glance.

“And how do I know but you are playing a game on me with a view to obtain the reward?”

“You can either give me back my paper, or the money,” he said, resolutely.

I opened a drawer in my secretary and took out a roll of bills, watching the man furtively. I saw his eyes glisten with a look indescribable, and thought I detected a motion of his hand towards the money. I paid him one hundred dollars, however, and saw his form slide from the room, when I threw myself back in my chair, and sat with the little piece of paper in my hand, engaged in deep thought.

“Eight plus thirty-one, minus forty-three, minus twelve, patter patterre.”

What could it mean?

I thought over all the incidents connected with the “job” I was working up ever since I had been engaged as detective upon it by Mr. John [Bartelme], two weeks before. I thought of the vastness of the sum taken, and of the great number of jewels, as well as of their immense value. No clue could be found which would lead to the detection of the perpetrators of this robbery, which, for boldness of execution, was one of the most wonderful I had ever heard of.

The residence of John Bartelme, a wealthy, retired banker, had been broken into; the door of his private safe blown open, and over thirty thousand dollars in money, and bonds and jewels, amounting in value to one-half of that sum, feloniously abstracted therefrom. I had offered the servants of the place, with Mr. Bartelme's cognizant authority, the sum of one hundred dollars for any clue they might find, and the hostler, who had just been my interviewer, a villainous looking fellow, had brought me [a] small piece of paper with the letter and figures before mentioned upon it, stating that he had found it on the floor of the private room of Mr. Barteleme, where the safe was located, the morning after the robbery but had not deemed it of importance until now. The burglar had effected an entrance to the house by means of a basement window.

I was in a maze of perplexity and distress, and but for the thought of the encouraging smiles of Lilian Baretlme, the old gentleman's daughter, in whom I had taken a strange interest. I would

have thrown up the case in despair. I wandered carelessly from my room, and finally towards the residence of Mr. Barteleme.

“You seem distressed about this matter, my friend,” said the old gentleman, kindly, as we were seated in the library conversing on the subject, “but there is no necessity of being so, for I feel assured you will gain some clue to the perpetrators of the robbery. The hero of the Minard Delevan burglary”—he referred to a former exploit of mine, in the detective line—“will surely not fail in this. I have every confidence in your success.”

I blushed modestly.

“I thank you, Mr. Barteleme,” I said, in a gratified tone of voice. “I shall renew my investigations with redoubled zeal.”

With his usual hospitable generosity, the old gentleman invited me to remain to dinner, and thereafter to join in a rubber of whist, with himself and [daughter],—for I was an old-time acquaintance of his,—to which I gladly acceded.

The old man soon tired of cards, and left Miss Lilian and myself alone in the drawing-room, to discourse sweet music, and enjoy ourselves as best we might.

Alone once more with her! Ah! coward heart, to tremble so at the lightest touch of her braiding garments! To flutter in a strange compound of emotions, and to bow down in adoration before the queen of love and beauty.

“Will you please allow me to look at the paper you spoke of, Mr. Baldwin,” asked Lilian Barteleme, sweetly, as we were seated on the sofa, and I was relating to her this new phase in the case.

“Certainly,” I said, politely, abstracting the “document” in question from my pocket-book and handing it to her. “Although you will be puzzled to make out what it means. Perhaps, too, it bears no connection whatever with the burglary.”

She perused the paper attentively, and for full five minutes was silently puzzling her dear little head over its contents.

“I have it!” she said, brightly, suddenly.

“Have what?” I asked, wonderingly.

“The key to the problem,” she answered confidently. “Listen: 8 plus 31, 39; 43 minus 12, 31; 39 minus 31, equals 8.”

“Well!”

A triumphant look came into her eyes as she leaned forward with every mark of pleased success

in her beautiful face, and confidence in her tone.

“Pater patterre; thieves jargon; latin: *pater patriae*.”

I am still mystified.

She smiled archly.

“*Pater patriae*—father
Washington. No. 8. Washington street, Cavassa!”

I sprang to my feet with a cry of delight. Her quick intuition had indeed solved the problem. *The thieves had removed the stolen jewels to No. 8 Washington street, and “[Cavassa]” was the leader of the gang.* The paper was intended for use in case of failure of memory.

Two hours later I had summoned several brother detectives to my presence, and in hurried tones gave the main points of the case and my very recent discovery.

It is needless to give to the reader the details of my successful raid upon the “fence,” at the locality mentioned. There we found the villainous Nastler, who had been hand and glove with the thieves and confessed his share in the affair. There, too we recovered the missing jewels, and a greater portion of the stolen bonds and money.

Old John Bartleme was in ecstasies at my wonderful knack at detecting, as he called it[.] But when I told him of his daughters share in the transaction, and asked him for her hand, having first assured myself that she reciprocated my deep affection, telling him that her brain would be a material aid to me in my profession, he at once unhesitatingly [accepted] me as a prospective son-in-law.

I have long since given up the avocation of a detective, but Charles Balcom, *Jr.*, bids [fair] to become as (*reputed*) skillful a detective as his father, whose last exploit in the detective business gained him of the sweetest little wives in Christendom.

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