

A Detective Story—All a Mistake

The Boston *Traveller* tells this story:

Some years since a gentleman stopping at one of the hotels in Washington, D.C. (who upon this occasion will be called Brown), sent a letter from the hotel to his wife in New York, containing \$50. The letter was not received, and Mr. Brown visited the Post Office Department to make a complaint. In due time a case was made out and placed in the hands of a well-known and experienced detective, whom, for this occasion, we will designate as Seekem. After putting this and that together, Seekem came to the conclusion that the clerk of the hotel was the guilty party, and proceeded to demonstrate his convictions. With this object in view, he prepared a couple of decoys for the young man's benefit. Letters from the hotel were forwarded to the Post Office morning and afternoon, so Seekem first went to work on the morning mail, but his decoys turned up all right.

Seekem then started on another tack. He gave about \$50 (bogus) to Mr. Brown and persuaded him to write to Mrs. Brown, enclosing the money, and leave the rest to him. The letter was written in a very conspicuous place, at a dining table at the hotel, it being arranged that no one should see him write the letter except the suspected individual, who was called upon to furnish paper and an envelop[e]. Mr. Brown remarked to the clerk that as Mrs. B. did not get his last remittance he must send her some more, at the same time denouncing post offices in general and the Washington office in particular, where, he said, he had no doubt his money had disappeared.

The letters from the hotel were received at the Washington office, and there was no letter for Mrs. Brown of Fifth Avenue, New York. Seekem was greatly elated, feeling sure that he had at last entrapped the suspected thief. He went carefully through the Washington office so as to make sure that there was no mistake. The letter, however, could not be found. Seven o'clock that evening found Seekem at the hotel in consultation with the proprietor and Mr. Brown. It was determined to arrest the suspected clerk at once. The supposed culprit was called up. He denied all knowledge of the affair, and Seekem was compelled to abandon the job for the time being.

Nothing more was known about Brown's letter until three days afterwards, when Brown himself entered the post office in a very excited state of mind and inquired for Seekem—said he must see him—that it was of the utmost importance that he should see him at once. Brown's wife had been arrested for passing counterfeit money, and was then held under \$10,000 bonds for examination. The murder was out and the hotel clerk was innocent!

Something had to be done immediately for the lady, and that night Seekem left for New York, visited the United States Commissioner, explained matters, and procured Mrs. Brown's release. Now for the secret of this singular proceeding. On the afternoon in question, when the letter containing the bogus money was sent to Mrs. Brown, the clerk took a walk down to the depot at about six o'clock, to see a friend off, taking what letters there were in the hotel box along with him, and dropped them in the postal car at the depot—the train leaving at seven o'clock. Mrs. Brown's letter went through to New York, and she subsequently went out shopping. She

tendered in payment a bogus \$10 bill, and the storekeeper objecting she offered another, which was also declined, the dry goods dealer informing her that both were counterfeit. Then she showed him the remainder of the \$50 that was sent to her, and he pronounced it all bad. Meantime a clerk had been despatched for an officer, and Mrs. Brown was taken into custody. The lady protested in vain, and was taken to a station house, where a friend of Mr. Brown's gave bail for the wife's appearance for examination. The husband was then notified.

Commercial Advertiser [New York, NY], May 3, 1871

South-eastern Independent [McConnelsville, OH], May 19, 1871

Iowa Voter [Knoxville, IA], May 25, 1871