

The Nether Side of New York

Private Detectives

by Edward Crapsey

I.

Broadway is a street of marvels and mysteries, where all tricks of trade have place and the last resorts of scheming knavery are found. These are of many kinds, of which some have mounted to the decrepitude of lofts, while others are lodged in the dignity and prosperity of second floors. One of these latter is situated in the commercial heart of the city. It is a Private Detective office.

The visitor going up the broad stairs finds himself in a large room, which is plainly the main office of the concern. There is a desk with the authoritative hedge of an iron railing, behind which sits a furrowed man who looks like an animated corkscrew, and who, the inquiring visitor soon discovers, can't speak above a whisper, or at least don't. This mysterious person is always mistaken for the chief of the establishment; but in fact, he is nothing but the "Secretary," and holds his place by reason of a marvellous capacity for drawing people out of themselves. A mystery, he is surrounded with mysteries. The doors upon his right and left — one of which is occasionally opened just far enough to permit a very diminutive call-boy to be squeezed through — seem to lead to unexplored regions. But stranger than even the clerk or the undefined but yet perfectly tangible weirdness of the doors is the tinkling of a sepulchral bell and the responsive tramp of a heavy-heeled boot. And strangest of all is a huge blackboard whereon are marked with the figures from 1 to 20, over some of which the word "Out" is written; and the visitor notices with ever-increasing wonder that the tinkling of the bell and the heavy-heeled tramp are usually followed by the mysterious secretary's scrawling "Out" over another number, being apparently incited thereto by a whisper of the ghostly call-boy who is squeezed through the a crack in the door for that purpose. The door which the call-boy abjures is always slightly ajar, and at the aperture there is generally a wolfish eye glaring so steadily and rapaciously into the office as to raise a suspicion that beasts of the prey are crouching behind that forbidden door.

Nor is the resulting alarm entirely groundless, for that is the room where the ferrets of the house who assume the names of detectives, but are more significantly called "shadows," are hidden from the prying eyes of the world. A "shadow" here is merely a numeral — No. 1 or something higher — and obeys cabalistic calls conveyed by bells or speaking tubes, by which devices the stranger patron is convinced of the potency of the Detective Agency which moves in such mysterious ways to perform its wonders. If any doubt were left by all this paraphernalia of marvel, it would be dispelled from the average mind when it came in contact with the chief

conjurer, who is seated in the dim seclusion of a retired room, fortified by bellpulls, speaking tubes, and an owlish expression intended to be considered as the mirror taciturn wisdom. From his retreat he moves the outside puppets of secretary, shadows, and call-boys, as the requirements of his patrons, who are admitted singly to his presence, may demand. It is he whose hoarse whispers sound sepulchrally through the tubes, who rings the mysterious bell, and by such complex means despatches his "shadows" upon their errands. It is he who permits the mildewed men in the other anteroom to be known only by numbers, and who guards them so carefully from the general view.

By these assumptions of mystery the chief awes the patrons of his peculiar calling, of whom these are pretty sure to be several in waiting during the morning hours. These applicants for detective assistance always sit stolidly silent until their separate summons comes to join the chief, eyeing each other suspiciously and surveying their surroundings with unconcealed and fitting awe. One is of bluff and hearty appearance, but his full face is overcast for the moment with an expression half-sad, half-whimsical; it is plain that a conjunction of untoward circumstances has raised doubts in his mind of the integrity of a business associate, and he has reluctantly determined to clear or confirm them by means of a "shadow." Next to him is a fidgety furrowed man, bristling with suspicion in every line of his face, and showing by his air of indifference to his surroundings that he is a frequenter of the place. He is in fact one of the best customers of the establishment, as he is constantly invoking its aid in the petty concerns of his corroded life. Sometimes it is a wife, daughter, sister, niece, or a mere female acquaintance he wishes watched; sometimes it is a business partner or a rival in trade he desires dogged; and he is never so miserable as when the reports of the agency show his suspicions, whatever they may have been, to be groundless. It is but just, however, to the sagacity of the detectives to remark that he is seldom subjected to such disappointment. Whatever other foolishness they may commit, these adroit operators never kill the goose that lays their golden eggs. Beside this animated monument of distrust is a portly gentleman, his bearing in every way suggestive of plethoric pockets. Paper and pencil in hand, he is nervously figuring. He makes no secret of his figures because of his absorption, and a glance shows that he is correcting the numbers of bonds and making sure of the amounts they represent.

It is plain that this last is a victim of a sneak robbery, and, the unerring scent of the chief selecting him as the most profitable customer of the morning, he is the first visitor called to an audience. Large affairs are quickly despatched, and it is soon arranged how a part of the property can be recovered and justice cheated of its due. Very soon a handbill will be publicly distributed, offering a reward for the return of the bonds, and it will be signed by the Agency. The thief will know exactly what that means, and the affair being closed to mutual satisfaction, the thief will be at liberty to repeat the operation, which resulted in reasonable profit and was attended with no risk.

There is also in the room a sallow, vinegary woman of uncertain years, and it seems so natural that a man should run away from her, we are not surprised that, being voluble in her grief, she declares her business to be the discovery of an absconding husband. But near her is another and truer type of outraged womanhood, a wasted young wife, beautiful as ruins are beautiful, whom a rascal spendthrift has made a martyr to his selfishness until, patience and hope being exhausted, she is driven to the last extremity, and seeks by a means at which her nature revolts for a proof of but one of those numerous violations of the marriage vow which she feels certain he has committed. It is a cruel resort, but the law which permits a man to outrage a woman in almost every other way frowns upon that one, and she is driven to it as the sole method of release from an intolerable and degrading bondage. In such cases as this might perhaps be found some justification for the existence of private detectives; but they themselves do not appear to know that they stand in need of extenuation, and so neglect the opportunity thus presented to vindicate their necessity by conducting this class of their business with, even for them, remarkable lack of conscience. Anxious always to furnish exactly what is desired, their reports are often lies, manufactured to suit the occasion, and once furnished they are stoutly adhered to, even to the last extremity. Frequently the same Agency is ready to and does serve both parties to a case with impartial wickedness, and earns its wages by giving to both precisely the sort of evidence each requires. Sometimes it is made to order, with no other foundation than previous experience in like affairs; but sometimes it has a more solid basis in fact. Two men from the same office are often detailed to "shadow," one the husband and the other the wife, and it occasionally happens that they have mastered the spirit of their calling so thoroughly that they do a little business on private account by "giving away" each other. That is to say, the husband's man informs the wife she is watched, and gives her a minute description of her "shadow," for which information he of course gets an adequate reward, which the wife's man likewise earns and receives by doing the same kindly office for the husband. In such cases there are generally mutual recriminations between the watched, which end in a discovery of the double dealing of the Agency, and not infrequently in a reconciliation of the estranged couple. But this rare result, which is not intended by the directing power, is the sole good purpose these agencies were ever known to serve. Lord Mansfield, it must be admitted, once seemed to justify the use of private detectives in divorce suits, but he was careful to cumber the faint praise with which he damned them by making honesty in the discharge of these delicate duties a first essential. Had he lived to see the iniquitous perfection the business has now attained, he would undoubtedly have withheld even that quasi-endorsement of a system naturally at war with the fundamental principles of justice.

The waiters in reception-room are never allowed to state their wants, or certainly not to leave the place, without being astonished by the charges made by the detective for attention to their business. Whatever differences there may be in minor matters, all these establishments are invariably true to the great purpose of their existence, and prepare the way for the exorbitant bill by a doleful explanation of the expenses and risk to be incurred in the special affair presented

dilating especially upon the rarity and cost of competent “shadows.” Now the principal agencies estimate for them at \$10 a day, whereas these disreputable fellows are found in multitudes, and are rarely paid more than \$3 a day as wages; their expenses, paid in advance by the patron, are allowed them when assigned to duties, as they frequently are, involving outlay. The general truth is that these agencies, being conducted for the avowed purpose of making money, get as much as possible for doing work, and pay as little as possible for having it done. In their general business of espionage they may make a perhaps only a moderate profit on each affair they take in hand; but in the more delicate branches of compounding felonies and manufacturing witnesses fancy prices obtain, and the profits are not computable. It is plain, knowing of these patrons and prices, that reasonable profit attends upon the practice of the convenient science of getting without giving, which, notwithstanding its prosperity and antiquity, is yet an infant in the perfection it has attained. Awkward, flimsy, transparent as they ever were, are yet the tricks and devices of the knaves who never want for a dollar, never earn an honest one, but never render themselves amenable to any statute “in such case made and provided.” To say that the master-workmen in roguery who do this sort of thing are awkward and transparent seems to involve a paradox; but whoever so believes has not been fully informed as to the amazing gullibility of mankind. The average man of business now, as always before, seems to live only to be swindled by the same specious artifices that gulled his ancestors, and which will answer to pluck him again almost before the smart of his first depletion has ceased. Only by a thorough knowledge of this singular adaptation of the masses to the purposes of the birds of prey, can we intelligently account for the vast beevies of the latter which exist, and are outwardly so sleek as to give evidence of a prosperous condition. When we know that the “pocketbook dropper” yet decoys the money even of the city-bred by his stale device; that the “gift enterprises,” “envelope game,” and similar threadbare tricks yet to serve to attain the ends of the sharpers, although the public has been warned scores and scores of times through the public press, and the swindlers thoroughly exposed, so that the veriest fool can understand the deception, we need not be amazed at the success which attends the practice of these arts. The truth is, that a large proportion of the victims are perfectly aware the fleecing is intended when they flutter round the bait of the rouges; but they are allured by the glitter of sudden fortune which it offers, and bite eagerly with the hope that may be supposed to sustain any gudgeon of moderate experience of snapping the bait and escaping the barbed hook. Human greed is the reliance of the general sharper, and it has served him to excellent purpose for many years. But some of these operators must depend on actuating motives far different from the desire of gain in money; and chief among them are these private detectives, who draw their sustenance from meaner and equally unfailing fountains.

It is not upon record who bestowed a name which is more apt than designations usually are. The word detective, taken by itself, implies one who must descend to questionable shifts to attain justifiable ends; but with the prefix of private, it means one using a machine permitted to the exigencies of justice for the purpose of surreptitious personal gain. Thus used, this agency, which

even in honest hands and for lawful ends is one of doubtful propriety, becomes essentially dangerous and demoralizing. Originally an individual enterprise, the last resort of plausible rascals driven to desperation to evade honest labor, it has come to be one of associated effort, employing much capital in its establishment and some capacity in its direction. All the large commercial cities are now liberally provided with "Detective Agencies," as they are called, each thoroughly organized, and some of them employing a large number of "shadows" to do the business, which in large part they must first create before it can be done. The system being perfected and worked to its utmost capacity, the details of the tasks assumed and the method of accomplishment are astonishing and alarming to the reflecting citizen, who has the good name and wellbeing of the community at heart. Employed in the mercantile world as supposed guards against loss by unfaithful associates or employees, and in social life as searchers for domestic laxness, these two items make up the bulk of the business which the private detectives profess to do, and through these their pernicious influence is felt in all relations of life. Were they however only the instruments of rapacious and unreasoning distrust, they might be suffered to pass without rebuke as evils affecting only those who choose to meddle with them; but as they go further and the community fares worse because they are ever ready to turn a dishonest penny by recovering stolen property, which they can only do by compounding the crime by which it had been acquired, it is evident that they are a peril to society in general no less than a pest to particular classes.

It is a shame and danger of our country that love of property is permitted to so overbalance all other considerations, that is the almost universal police experience when a robbery is reported that the loser makes the recovery of his property the first and nearly always the only object of his solicitude. He is ready to do anything short of sending good money after bad, to recover what he has lost, and will invariably sacrifice the right of society to punish the thief, to regain even a portion of his treasures. He hampers the officer of the law at every step if that official endeavors to secure the criminal rather than his plunder. Indeed, there is no obstacle to the proper administration of justice so insuperable as these greedy victims of thievery. A case which has just occurred so plainly illustrates this grave public danger, that its statement will not be unprofitable. In June last a gentleman going home at 2 o'clock in the morning was knocked down in Bleecker Street with such violence as to inflict a permanent injury to his jaw, and then robbed of his watch and money. He was of course indignant at the police inefficiency which had permitted such a crime, and loudly demanded the recovery of his property and the punishment of his assailant, just as all such victims do at first. After much labor the police finally established the identity of the highwayman, but found also that he had left the city. He was, however, one of the best known of a gang of ruffians who have made the once aristocratic Bleecker Street one of the most infamous and dangerous localities of New York; and a watch being kept for his reappearance, he was arrested within an hour after his return to his old haunt. But almost within the same hour one of the fellow's comrades visited the victim, returned him his watch, and made

prodigal promises of further recompense if the prosecution was not pressed. As a consequence, the victim, who had before averred that he could swear to the identity of his assailant beyond mistake, now became doubtful, and when forced to admit that the prisoner was the man, flatly refused to prosecute. The whole power of the law had to be used to make him appear, and when finally the highwayman pleaded guilty in the Court of Oyer and Terminer, and was sentenced to a term of ten years in State's Prison, the victim had the effrontery to stand up before the judges of the land and plead, as well as his broken jaw would permit; for the pardon of the outlaw.

While this case is in some respects an extreme one, it is by no means uncommon, and the District Attorney of New York can certify that thieves find their surest refuge in the cupidity or maudlin sympathy of their victims.

The private detectives are ever ready to aid and abet this willingness to compromise with robbery and to assist in the work of making thievery safe and profitable. The Police Commissioners of New York have never had the courage to inform the public of the number of burglaries and robberies annually committed in the metropolis; but enough is known in a general way for us to be certain that there are hundreds of these crimes committed of which the public is not told. The rule is to keep secret all such affairs when an arrest does not follow the offence, and hardly any police official will venture to claim that the arrest occurs in more than a moiety of the cases. There are hundreds of such crimes every year where the criminal is not detected, and hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of property stolen of which the police never find a trace. These facts furnish the basis for the common belief that somebody is continually compounding felonies, and that a large part of this stolen property is continually findings its way back to the legitimate owners through means inimical to the best interests of society. The most casual and superficial reader of the daily papers infers as much, when he cannot take up an issue of any one of them without the risk of stumbling upon an advertisement in which some thief is invited to return certain property, "when a suitable reward will be paid and no questions asked." To a deplorable extent some officers of the law have been engaged in this disreputable commerce with thievery, but the bulk of it has been and is done by the private detectives. With them it is natural, for it is their sole purpose to make money, and as they are not sworn officials of the law, they do not feel themselves called upon to cage a thief at every opportunity.

Let me now give some instances to show how private detectives work in their profitable field. In all of the cases cited, names will be suppressed, for the reason that it is intended to arraign a system rather than attack individuals.

Not long since, a person known as a private detective installed himself in the confidence and employment of a large retail house in Broadway, by means of his representations that he knew all the shoplifters and pickpockets, and thus was able to "spot" any of them the moment they entered the shop, and so could save the firm and its patrons thousands of dollars every year. As a matter of fact, he knew none of either criminal class. His presence on the premises therefore did

not have the expected effect of preventing depredations. Confidence in his ability to perform as he had promised waned with each successive robbery, and our blatant detective soon saw that he must catch a thief or be himself caught in a palpable false pretense. He was equal to the occasion. By dint of many inquiries among the police, he came to know the persons of two noted female shoppers, one of whom, by the way, is an exceedingly handsome woman. He made the acquaintance of these outlaws, and, calling upon them at their home, represented himself as on the "cross," and proposed a job in which he should be a partner in the profits in consideration of the assistance he would give in carrying it out. This aid, he averred, would be most effective, as he had "fixed" the clerk at the lace shawl counter, and that person would be conveniently blind at the moment chosen by the thieves to slip the costly articles from the counter into the immense pockets they all have suspended to the waist, under the dress. The women did not rise eagerly to the bait thus presented; on the contrary, they at first absolutely refused, partly through distrust of him and partly from repugnance to stealing when necessity did not drive them. But he was so eloquently persuasive on the absolute safety and great profit of the operation, that they at last consented, and named an hour when they would be at the store to do the job. When the time arrived Mr. Detective had all his preparations made to "spot" and capture them in the act. As he had no legal authority to make an arrest, he detained a policeman who was on post in the vicinity of the store, by his confident assertion that there would be work there presently. True to their promise, the women came, and he, true to his villa[i]ny, pounced upon them the moment they had slipped several of the lace shawls into their pockets. The policeman was called in, the women given into custody, and, with the stolen property upon their persons, the evidence of guilt was so complete that both were eventually sent to State's Prison. The detective flourished hugely on the credit of that detection, and, not content with receiving the plaudits and presents of his immediate employers, went to all retail dry goods houses in the street claiming a recompense for caging two such dangerous characters. The truth of the way in which he had caged them soon came out, but it failed to have its proper effect of sending him to keep his victims company at Sing Sing.

The incidents next to be related were developed by a thorough investigation of the rascality they involved, and constitute one of the most curious and characteristic specimens of private detective work ever discovered. A man who was forced to leave Canada because of the authorities pressing him for explanations of certain smuggling transactions, came to New York as a natural refuge, and speedily finding a suitable associate, set up a private detective agency in the neighborhood of Wall Street. The two men soon struck a new vein of villa[i]ny, and followed it with a persistence that was admirable, and a clumsiness that counted largely but safely on the credulity of the business world. One Monday morning, one of these plausible gentlemen waited on the agent of a principal line of ocean steamers sailing between New York and Liverpool, with a marvellous story of contemplated crime of which he had obtained knowledge by the stale

device of overhearing a conversation. His revelation was to the effect that he was on board the ship which sailed on the previous Saturday, just before her departure, and happened to overhear a conversation between one of the officers, whom he did not particularly designate, and a man of Jewish appearance, whom he did not know. The purport of their talk was an arrangement for the bringing over a large quantity of goods, which were to be smuggled on board at Liverpool and to be got ashore at New York, without reference to the customs dues. It will scarcely be credited that the agent, who is of the one shrewdest of the business men of New York, swallowed this chaff without a single grain of allowance; but he did. Dismayed by the prospect of having his vessels made the means of violating the laws, and his fears already seeing ships and cargoes confiscated as a penalty, he asked what should be done with an earnestness that proved the game of the schemer already driven to cover. The detective was fully prepared with an infallible preventive, which was of course the employment of himself and associates to watch and thwart the smugglers. The agent could see no other means of escaping the impending disaster at so cheap a rate; and without the least inquiry as to the character or antecedents of the persons with whom he was dealing, he concluded a bargain whereby they became regular employees at high salaries with the duty of voyaging between New York and Liverpool on the steamers of the company, for the purpose of thwarting the smuggling operations. They were not the men to allow a good thing to pass away from them for lack of effort to retain it, and they were swift to furnish both the agent on this side and the owners in Liverpool with the names of persons whom they had detected in the conspiracy. Some of these purported to be names of residents of Liverpool, and others of New York and Chicago. This game had been played for several months when the suspicions of the owners were aroused, and upon an investigation of the facts so far as it could be had on the other side, they became so doubtful of the good faith of their employees as to order the New York agent to thoroughly sift their antecedents. The result was that the private detectives were themselves speedily under the espionage they pretended to have established upon the smugglers, and were proved by Detective Farley, of the New York police, to be as unconscionable liars as ever obtained money by false preten[s]es. Their story from beginning to end was an utter fabrication, concocted for the sole purpose of fleecing the steamship company of a first-class living for many months, besides a large sum in actual money.

Such cases as that just related are of course not common, as the opportunity for the display of the peculiar talent in this peculiar line is seldom offered. It is, moreover, a branch which is soon exhausted; but in the line of felonies compounded there is an unfailing field for exertion. It is difficult, however, to obtain details in any case, as neither party to so questionable a transaction is apt to talk about it afterwards. The information at hand on this point is principally derived from persons calling at police headquarters for aid in the recovery of stolen property, about half of whom, in response to sharp questioning, admit that they have had the matter in charge of private detectives, and have been fleeced. In such cases money has been paid down in advance, to a quarter of the value of the treasure, in return for which the loser had unredeemed promises to

recover the property. In this branch of the business there is no actual compounding of crime, but only a promise that it shall be done; and it is altogether about the meanest work in which private detectives engage. There are, however, some cases of compounding felonies, where the facts are sufficiently full for use. That now to be related has been told before, but cannot be dinned too often in the public ear.

Two years ago, a bank in an interior town of Maryland was entered by burglars, who got away with a large amount in bonds and other securities, the most of which were marketable. There was a large reward offered for the recovery of the property, which stimulated detectives everywhere to extraordinary exertions, and the case was snapped up not only by the regular police in the Eastern cities, but also by several private detective agencies. There was a vast deal of genuine work done upon the case by the New York officers, and done remarkably well. By a series of adroit operations continued through many days, the possessors of the bonds were finally lured into a trap set for them, and seized with stolen securities worth nearly \$100,000 upon their persons. Both being well-known burglars, and one of them the most noted and dangerous of professionals, their arrest, under circumstances that seemed to insure them a protracted period of compulsory service to the State, was a matter of public congratulation. But unfortunately all the stolen property was not secured with them, and within two days both were walking Broadway again free men.

Exactly how the affair was managed could never be ascertained; but it is positively known that the New York officials making the arrest were careful to technically evade the responsibility of future and undoubtedly expected developments, by delivering the prisoners to a private detective and taking receipt for their bodies, which was subsequently flourished on the "thou canst not say I did it" principle. The private detective was to take the burglars to Maryland for trial; but if he did so, he must have been provided with seven-league boots and the courts of that commonwealth gifted with marvellous celerity; for within a few hours of the time he assumed charge of them both prisoners were seen in Broadway as stated. It was charged that the burglars got no further than Jersey City, where, seeing a prison at the end of their journey, they made a virtue of necessity, and successfully negotiated with their custodian for their release in consideration of the surrender of the remainder of the purloined property. However that may be, it is certain that the bank recovered all its securities, less the costs and rewards of the detectives, and the burglars secured not only immunity but encouragement to repeat the operation.

This case was a most flagrant sacrifice of the rights of society to the interests of individuals; but it is not without rivals to be hereafter narrated. For the sake of diversity, however, it must now be told how private detectives manufacture business, and are by no means reduced to the extremity of waiting for a crime to be committed or meditated, before they reap a substantial harvest by its investigation or prevention.

A firm doing a heavy business in American watches were startled one morning by receiving a letter from a private detective giving his name and agency, in which he stated that he had picked up the enclosure in the street, and upon perusal finding it to be of great importance to the firm, had forwarded it. The firm, coming to the enclosure, read something like this, dated at Elgin, Illinois:

OLD PAL: I suppose that you have wondered how I got away and where I am things was so hot I had no time to let you know Before. I have one or two small things out this way and have now the best job I have ever been in. There is a big watch movement factory here and I have made everything with the watchman I have beat it already for a little but I[']m waiting for some good pal to help me clean it out come on and we[']ll make a good haul.

SNOOZER BILL

No thief ever wrote such a letter as this; but no imposture is too clumsy to answer its purpose when crime is dealing with honesty, and it is not surprising that the firm, seeing ruin coming upon a great enterprise in which they were largely interested, because of these hypothetical burglars, acted precisely as the detective presumed they would, by sending for him and giving the case in sole charge of one who had shown such disinterested devotion to their interests. Having thus received the inch he was swift to take the proverbial ell, and plied the firm with other intercepted letters of Snoozer Bill, until those nervous gentlemen beheld in fancy the enterprising marauders only prevented from carrying off watches, movements, factory and all, by the adroitness, persistence, and courage of their private detective, who all this time did not neglect to make them pay heavily for services they rated as invaluable. After a time, but not until he believed the trick had been exhausted, the detective announced that the burglars were finally foiled, and he was dismissed with plaudits and profit. It is scarcely necessary to add that the burglars existed only in his imagination, that the letters were clumsy creations of his own, and the whole affair from beginning to end a device to obtain money.

The device is a common one with the craft, who rarely fail to frighten merchants out of their senses and money by warnings of thieves at their doors, or intending to be there in the middle watches of some certain night named. The swindle was eminently successful in the case of a large silk house in Philadelphia, which was managed with great skill by the private detective. One of them went to the house with the story of a conversation he had overheard in a "crib," during which "Stutter Jack," "Glimmer George," and sundry others with similar improbable names, had arranged the preliminaries for "cracking" the house on a night then some time in the future. Soon afterward another private detective called and clinched the nail thus entered, by a story of how he had crept unseen into the pawnshop of a notorious "fence," to receive the "swag" they were to get from the silk house. He was even prepared to descend into details, and recounted the exact number and style of pieces of silk which were to be stolen and delivered, and the precise proportion of the proceeds which thieves and receiver were to get. The precision and

fulness of the information thus obtained, apparently from separate sources, was convincing, and the merchants, in a tremor of fear, fulfilled the expectations of the informers by calling upon them to devise ways and means to thwart the burglarious schemes, not omitting of course to pay handsomely for services rendered and expected. It is to the credit of these skillful operators that they did not rest from their labors with the receipt of all they expected to make out of the transaction, but laid the foundation for similar operations in the future by actually planning a bogus burglary and attempting to commit it by confederates at the appointed time, who were of course frightened away by the preparations made to receive them.

There is one other case to be related where the effort of the private detective to put money in his pocket at the expense of society was lamentably successful. A gentleman who had the misfortune to lose \$5,000 in United States bonds by means of a sneak robbery, next encountered the greater mishap of being directed to a detective agency for the recovery of his property. It is but just to his common sense to explain that this new disaster sought him, not he the disaster; for his loss being proclaimed in the newspapers, the private detectives pursued him with ravenous celerity, and by ingenious reasoning soon convinced him that the chances of his ever seeing any of his bonds again were remarkably slight in every way, except through the exertions of the detective, who had no doubt that he could secure the return of the property at a sacrifice of half its value. He did not state in so many words that he knew who had stolen the bonds and then had them in possession, but he strongly implied that such was the case, as a proof of his ability to perform as he had promised. At the first interview nothing was concluded, but the persistent detective returned again and again to the charge, and his terms were finally allowed. His league with the thieves was immediately made manifest by his prompt appearance with the stolen property, which was returned to the owner upon the payment of the stipulated price.

It would be pleasant to know the exact number of these harpies who are feeding upon the community, so that each of us might approximate his chances of escaping the surreptitious consumption of his substance; but there are, unfortunately, no data for making more than a rough estimate. In the city of New York there are a dozen of these "agencies," some of which are of limited capacity, and the several partners comprise the entire working force; but others are of colossal proportions, employing large numbers of "shadows," either casually or permanently. Other cities are equally well furnished; but such centres of commercial activity as New York and Chicago seem to be the chosen resorts of this particular species of birds of prey. In addition to these regulars, there are numerous guerillas, who are by far the most dangerous, because the most unscrupulous and needy. The regular "shadow" has generally a stated salary to depend on, and, appearing as he does in the name of his employer, has some little check upon his actions. Appearances must at least be saved, and the agency which seeks publicity as the basis of a prosperous business, cannot afford those more flagrant operations which have made the term of private detective a synonym for rogue. On the other hand, the guerilla is always penniless and has nothing in the way of character to lose, so that he is constantly pushed by his necessities to

all sorts of desperate devices, and is unrestrained in his pursuit and plucking of his prey by any moral considerations. But for his dread of the penalties of the law, he would be a thief outright.

It must not be supposed from the general tenor of this article, or from the incidents related, that private detectives are all utterly base. There are probably some of them who endeavor to pursue their calling with all possible honesty; but it is difficult to deny that as an institution they are wholly unnecessary and evil in their influence. The little legitimate detective duty they do, would be much more likely to be justly and well done by the regular officers of the law. The tracking of a criminal for gain by a person unauthorized to arrest him when found, breeds indifference to the demands and forms of law, which is calculated to breed contempt for the law itself, and thus lead to the serious demoralization of the community which permits it. In all other branches of their business the private detectives cannot help working evil, for they lead directly and despite them to false witness and all kinds of abominations.

The interests of society plainly demand the suppression of this peculiar industry, and it can be suppressed by nothing but lack of patronage. Every one, therefore, who feels an impulse to pander to his greed by means of this appliance, owes it to the general good to think twice before employing a private detective.

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