

# The Clew of the Liquor Bottles

Edited by William J. Bacon

A True Story of the Secret Service, as Told by Capt. Dickson

**S**OME years ago, before I became connected with the United States secret service in the east, I was engaged by a member of the western express companies to do some special work for them," began Capt. Dickson. "My headquarters were in Denver and my work, on the whole, was decidedly interesting. One adventure in particular made me proud of my service for our company, although it was largely a matter of luck that brought about my success in that instance. I am a firm believer in luck, for it plays an important part in every man's life, and it has figured to a large extent in my own affairs, I am free to confess.

"A daring express robbery had been committed in the western part of the state, near the Utah line, by three men. The messenger had been murdered and the passengers throughout the train robbed of all their money. The hold-up men secured something more than \$15,000 from the express company's safe and fully \$5,000 from the passengers. They took nothing but money, however, leaving valuable jewelry, diamonds and watches with their owners, and ignoring the parcels in the express car. This circumstance showed that the gang was composed of experienced thieves, for money is the hardest thing in the world to trace.

"I was notified of the robbery on the afternoon of the second day after it occurred, and although I hastened to the spot with all dispatch and made my arrangement by wire, it was noon of the third day before I alighted at the nearest station. Here I had arranged for two horses and a prospector's outfit, deeming it best to follow the bandits in the disguise of a miner, as the robbery had been made at a point near the mining region of southwestern Colorado, and I expected to find the criminals at some of the numerous mining camps.

"I have never been a believer in disguises except as to clothing. All efforts to change the face with grease paints and wigs and the like only tend to attract attention and direct suspicion to the man thus togged out. The casual observer might not notice the deception, but the criminal, and especially the hunted criminal, is no casual observer. He has formed the habit of noticing everything, and he will detect the least false point in a man's appearance and shun him as if he were afflicted with the plague.

"A change of dress will work wonders in a man's appearance. If a man can wear other clothes than those he is accustomed to, and wear them easily and naturally, he can more effectively disguise himself by this means than he can with all the wigs and paints and whiskers in existence.

"Coming across the continental divide, I had suffered a slight attack of indigestion. I sent the porter after a flask of whisky, asking for a certain brand. He returned in a few minutes with one of the diminutive little bottles customarily sold on sleeping cars at a quarter a bottle. It was not the kind I had ordered, but the porter explained that this was the only brand of liquor the company sold, and I had to be content with it. The label of the bottle stated that it was put up expressly for the company.

"On reaching my destination, I immediately assumed the character of a miner and set about my inquiry. There was little information to be gathered beyond what was contained in the express company's report of the robbery, of which I had a carbon-copy. Satisfied that time spent here would be wasted, I set out for the scene of the robbery, riding a wiry little pony and leading another on which was packed my outfit of grub and cooking implements and miner's tools.

"The place was a desolate spot. The road ran through a broad alkali valley which had not, at that time, been brought under cultivation by irrigation. It was easy to pick up the trail of bandits and follow it across the valley in a westerly direction to the foot-hills of the Rockies, where the trail disappeared, the rocky ground leaving no trace of hoof-prints.

"From this point on it was to be a matter of luck and guesswork. I believed my men had made for Telluride, Ouray, Silverton or some other mining camp, but I was not rash enough to venture a guess as to which it might be at that stage of the game. These camps, with their rough, shifting population, offered capital retreats for criminals, and from past experiences I knew that my three rogues would, in all probability, remain in one of these camps until the excitement from the robbery had subsided, and then make for civilization to spend their money.

"Late the third afternoon I stumbled on the ashes of a campfire, and close beside it, among the firs and cedars, I found where horses had been tied. This was what I had searched for, and I felt sure that I would here find something of value. I camped a short distance from the place so I would not disturb it, leaving my examination until the next morning, when I would have a good light, it then being too dark to attempt such a thing.

"That night, by the light of my campfire, I read again the report of the robbery as given by the train hands. Near the last of it was the account of the sleeping car porter who related, with evident grief, that he had been relieved of \$6.15 in silver, and that the bandits had rifled the liquor cabinet of the buffet, taking with them all of the whisky and a few bottles of the rarer and stronger wines.

"Early next morning I examined the deserted camp of the highwaymen. There was nothing but a burned-out pile of ashes and charred sticks and a few empty bottles. The bottles gave the clew for which I searched. The highwaymen had certainly made their



ONE OF THE MINERS  
THREW THE DOOR WIDE OPEN

camp here. Each bottle bore the label of the sleeping car company, and some of them were the diminutive flasks of which I had drunk one on the trip from Denver. There was not a scrap of paper anywhere else to be found.

"Elated with my success, I made a survey of the country and discovered a half-obscure trail leading farther into the mountains. I took up this trail and followed it as best I could until nightfall. Often I lost it, and sometimes I spent an hour or more casting about to pick it up again, as I have seen hounds baffled on the trail of a fox. About three o'clock that afternoon I found something that made my eyes sparkle. Shattered into a thousand pieces was the remains of one of the small whisky bottles on a large flat rock beside the trail where it had doubtless been cast in a playful mood induced by its contents. Among the fragments I found the label of the car company.

"It was the dry season, and this was in my favor, for no rains came to obliterate the trail. For five days I followed the bandits across the hills and through the valleys, verifying my route from time to time by fragments of broken whisky bottles along the way, and at the places where they had camped for a night. The buffet-car must have been well stocked, for I found many bottles in this journey.

"The trail eventually came to a well beaten road, which, from my map, I learned was the stage and mail route from Montrose, the nearest railroad point to Ouray, then a rather insignificant mining settlement. I lost no time in getting to Ouray, for it was impossible to trail my men along this road and I was sure they had headed for the mining camp.

"Two days were spent at Ouray without finding a trace of the three

men. They had not stopped there certainly, so I took the trail to Telluride, a mining camp farther on in the mountains. Telluride was then a camp of 800 or 1,000 souls, and there was a bit of a mining boom on which daily brought new prospectors to swell its citizenship, fatuous souls brought there by the greed of gold—a lure that never fails to attract victims in swarms. For three days I searched in vain through the saloons and dance halls and other places where the rough miners congregated without finding a trace of my three rogues. That infallible sixth sense of mine was doing its best to keep me longer in Telluride, although my judgment told me to move on to Silverton; but in the end my intuition won the fight and I remained.

"One evening I was drinking with a raw-boned miner. The whisky where it was made would never have recognized its product in its present form. I complained of the poor quality of whisky and asked my acquaintance if there were not some better stuff to be found in the camp. He said there was not, at any of the bars, but that he had been given an amazingly good drink by a miner, whose name he mentioned. He said it had been in a little bottle which held just enough to tease one, but it was the best liquor he had drunk since he left Kentucky many years before. He licked his lips in pleasant memory of the drink.

"I almost gave myself away, so keen was my pleasure at this chance remark. I inquired about the gen-

"It would have been the rankest folly to have attempted their arrest without assistance—although I did tackle such a job once in my salad days, as this scar will testify," and he pointed to an ugly wound at the back of his neck, partially covered by his flowing gray locks. "But that is another story. I decided to call on the United States deputy marshal, a man of tigerish bravery, for assistance. There was no chink or crack in the door through which I could gain a peek at the interior of the cabin, so I dropped down on my hands and knees and crawled around to the back of the cabin where I thought there might be a window. There was a window, but it was closed with a heavy shutter, and I could not find any point to peep through; but I did find something on the way around. My hand touched something round and smooth, and I clutched it involuntarily. It was one of the little whisky flasks. After I had left the cabin I struck a match and examined it. The label of the car company was still on it.

"The deputy marshal was found at one of the dance halls and he soon summoned a reliable posse. We surrounded the cabin, from which still issued the sounds of revelry. The men were stationed at every point about it. Then the marshal and I rapped on the door. In response to our summons one of the miners staggered across the floor and threw the door wide open. We tripped him up and rushed over him into the cabin. The men were too drunk to make any resistance, and we captured them without

## BOY'S GRATITUDE WAS REAL.

Has Long Cared for Grave of Man Who Had Been Kind to Him Many Years Ago.

Rev. John Henri Sattig, pastor of St. Phillip's church, Dyker Heights, Brooklyn, tells this beautiful story: "In Milford, Pa., there is an old graveyard, neglected, weed-grown and unkept. Of all the mounds in that village of the dead only one is cared for. On that the grass is neatly trimmed, flowers bloom and never a weed appears. The visitor who looks upon this evidence of love and devotion amid so many examples of forgetfulness usually asks whose grave it is, and the sexton answers: 'The man whose body rests there had never chick nor child. Nearly every day for the six years since the man died a boy comes here to tend to the grave. Winter and summer he comes. The lad is the butcher boy. The man was the only human being who ever was kind to the boy.'

## BILL'S AFFLICTION.



"Why, uncle, how are all the folks?" "They're all well, thanks, 'cept Bill. He's got the baseball fever!"

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**To Check Spread of Trachoma.** It has been reported that the disease known as trachoma, or granular eyelids, has been spreading rapidly among the Indians. To check this trouble congress appropriated \$12,000, placing it in the hands of the commissioner of Indian affairs, for the immediate investigation and treatment of the disease and to check its spread.

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## Facts About the Texas Gulf Coast From One Who Knows

In a recent letter to the President of the St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico R. R., Robert H. Kern, Esq., 922 Missouri Trust Building, St. Louis, writes:

"Mr. Randolph has shown me your letter in which reference is made to my farming in Missouri. Presuming that you would like to know a little of my success in that line, I will say that I have been actively farming under my own supervision for seven years 2,000 acres of fine farming land in Macon County, Mo. You may judge of the quality of this land when I tell you that I have in favorable seasons raised 75 bushels of corn to the acre, 30 bushels of wheat and 2 tons of hay. I have also studied farming conditions in the high priced lands of Illinois and Iowa. My own experience and this observation leads me to believe that if the best farms in any of these States for any five years average 50 bushels of corn to the acre, and that the farmer realizes therefrom \$20 or \$25 an acre, he is doing the best possible, and out of this, expense, etc., of raising crops must be deducted. "A year ago I went to the lower Rio Grande Valley in the Gulf Coast Country of Texas and spent some time studying farming conditions there; I found my 20 years' experience on a farm in Bourbon Co., Ky., and my long experience in Missouri of great service. So much impressed was I with the vast superiority of farming in the Brownsville, Texas, region, that I bought 160 acres of land near Santa Maria, Texas, and put my son (a college boy) in charge. The result of practically a year is far better than I anticipated. He has cut alfalfa sown in January, 1908, 9 times, and realized therefrom 8 tons to the acre, worth \$21.50 a ton at Mercedes, Texas, in February. He is now shipping cabbage planted in December, realizing between \$200 and \$300 an acre, and writes me that from the cabbage, cucumber, melon and bean crop of 40 acres, he will realize over \$7,000. He has a fine fig orchard of over 7,000 trees set out in February, 1907, which raised from 10 acres in July and August, 1908, over \$100 worth of figs to the acre and the entire crop this year should realize over \$150 per acre. Orange trees set out two years ago, then two years old, are bearing now. One old lemon tree has borne over 2,000 fine lemons since July, and bananas are growing all the time. In my roamings in Europe and America I have never seen a country nor a climate that compares with it."

Many others are making similar successes. Building fortunes.

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## Pittsburg Man Is "Loaded"

Perfect Fiend to Quote Statistics, According to Writer in Harper's.

The Pittsburg man can carry more figures of large denomination on his person without your suspecting their existence than any other citizen of the United States. He is a reservoir of decimals and statistics. He must have ample justification, however, before he turns the spigot, but when he does there is a torrent no man can stem.

If provoked and inclined to extend himself, in a five-minute talk he can know so full of miscellaneous indis-

tries—natural gas, steel rails, tin-plate, petroleum, steel pipes and sheet metal, fire bricks, tumblers, tableware, coke, pickles, and all that sort of thing—that you will begin to feel like a combination delicatessen and hardware store.

I have not begun to enumerate the different data I have collected on this subject, as I have no desire to make the reader feel small or to lose confidence in himself. As I have pointed out before, the Pittsburg, or the man who is under the influence of Pittsburg, must be provoked before he unburdens.—C. H. White, in Harper's.

**Ignorance Aids Appetite.** Merrill E. Gates, secretary of the board of Indian commissioners, was describing the splendid work that his board is doing to wipe out the tuberculosis scourge which at one time threatened to make the American Indian extinct. "But the Indian," said Mr. Gates, "needs to be educated in sanitation. He is shockingly ignorant there. In fact, he is as ignorant as an old farmer I used to know in Warsaw. "A friend dropped in on this old farmer as he was frying a bit of bacon. "Grand bacon, that," said the friend, sniffing affably. "Grand bacon! Well, I guess it is grand bacon," said the old man, turning the slices in the pan. "And it's none o' yer murdered stuff, neither. That pig died a natural death."—Washington Post.

**The Bright Side.** "Does Mr. Stormington Barnes try to look on the bright side of things?" asked one actor. "I should say so," answered the other. "He's never content unless he is staring the spotlight right in the face."—Washington Star.

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