

True Detective Stories

THE MAN WHO CALLED AT NIGHT

BY A. L. DRUMMOND, FORMER CHIEF OF THE U. S. SECRET SERVICE.

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ON October 18, 1877, I was Chief of the Philadelphia District of the United States Secret Service. On the evening of that day I was reading in my home, No. 731 Wood street, when the doorbell rang. The servant who answered the bell would not let the caller in. She came back and told me a very ugly looking man was standing on the porch. I went out to investigate and found—an old friend. In his time he had been one of the worst criminals in Philadelphia. He still associated with criminals, but not for the purpose of joining them in any of their undertakings. His business was to learn the secrets of his crooked friends and sell the information to the government. And I bought what he had to sell just as the government in time of war will compensate a traitor for revealing facts regarding the plans of the enemy.

I brought the man into the parlor and asked him what he came to tell me.

"Oh, not much," he said. "Maybe you will not care anything about it—it's not in your line. But the gang are going out to-night to do a job somewhere in Jersey. I don't know exactly where. They've found a deaf old farmer, who is supposed to have quite a lot of money in his house, and they intend to rob his feet until he gives up. Who is going along? Oh, Oscar Coogan, Cooper Wiltsey, Austin Keene, Dick King and a man named Chapman—who lives over in Camden."

I think I had better stop right here and tell about that band. It was one of four that in the late seventies made their headquarters in Philadelphia. Combined, they conducted an extensive business in crime. They made more counterfeit money than was produced in any other city in the United States. They also did burglaries, hold-ups, tie-ups, assaults and an occasional murder. A tie-up consisted of taking an aged farmer unaware, lashing his hands behind his back and his feet together and putting the soles of his bare feet against a hot stove. In those days there was less confidence in banks than there is now, and the popular criminal method of bringing forth hidden treasure was to rob the feet of the owner.

The members of the bands differed as much in appearance and ability as the crimes did in character. Some of the men would pass anywhere they were not known as well-to-do citizens. Austin W. Keene and his brother Lawrence, for instance, had inherited a good deal of property. They owned a brick block in the business district of Philadelphia until gambling got it away from them, and even after they took to crime they always wore good clothes and looked prosperous.

Others were plain roughs. If they were drinking and a stranger entered who looked as if he had at least two dollars he was invited to take a drink. While his head was tipped back to drain the glass his host would knock him out with the ice pitcher and search his pockets. On nights when there was nothing else to do they amused themselves with cock fights and dog fights. Occasionally dog fighting would seem too tame and one of the outfit would yield to the importunities of his friends and the allurements of a small purse by going down into the pit to fight one of the dogs. A big bulldog once nearly killed his human antagonist. The animal was known to be so vicious that all rules were suspended and the man was permitted to kick as well as to strike, but the dog caught him by the throat and had to be beaten off with a club.

I do not know, however, that I can give any adequate idea of what may be called the "toughness" of some of this crowd without telling a story about an event in which I was concerned that occurred one evening. Dick Brunnazzi, an Italian Secret Service man, had seen a thief snatch a girl's watch and had turned the thief over to the police. The girl's father came to my office and wanted to give Dick \$25.

Brunnazzi politely declined the gift, explaining that it would be against the law to accept it and that he would have to perjure himself the next day if he did. When Brunnazzi went home the following night he found two tons of coal in his cellar, and we were on the way to the home of Dick's persistent friend to tell him to remove the coal when the event of which I shall speak took place.

Just before we reached the man's house we saw a crowd of roughs around Keese's saloon, at Eleventh and Ellsworth streets, which was the hang-out of one of the bands. The man was not at home, and we had taken up a position outside to wait for him to return, when we saw two of the ugliest of the band start toward us, one following the other. Dick and I both knew they were coming to make trouble. During the four years I was in Philadelphia I was the means of putting 126 of these fellows into the penitentiary, and at that time I had convicted so many that threats had been freely made against my life. Dick was a cool, dependable fellow, however, and I felt we were a match for any two of them.

"Stand on the outside of the sidewalk, Dick," I said, "and when they are within ten feet of us turn sharply and face them until they have passed. I will do the same."

"If they make da trouble," said Dick, "you killa da front man: I killa da back one."

"All right," said I. "Here they come."

The two roughs were swinging along as if they meant to bump into us and start a fight. One of them was the brother-in-law of Lawrence Keene, whom I had sent to the penitentiary for counterfeiting. Dick and I had our revolvers in our side pockets, our fingers on the triggers so we could shoot right through the cloth without drawing our weapons. When the front one came within ten feet of us we both turned with military precision and faced them.

I suspect this trick was all that saved our lives—or possibly theirs—as Lawrence Keene told me afterward that the two men had set out to "do me up." Our quick turn, however, evidently gave them a scare, as they walked on less menacingly, and when they returned to Keese's saloon the rest of the band gave them the laugh.

Five men of this kind started out on the night of October 18, 1877, to rob the deaf old farmer's feet. Their intended victim proved to be Joseph Potts, who lived near Mount Holly, New Jersey. They reached his house about midnight, got their tools out of the bags and began work. Somebody tried to raise the windows with a jimmy, but the old man had placed a stick over each sash which wouldn't bend or break. Then Oscar Coogan started to bore holes through the front door near the lock. By boring the holes close together he made an opening through which he could put his hand. He was reaching through the hole, trying to turn the key in the lock, when a charge of shot fired through the door that almost took off his right arm.

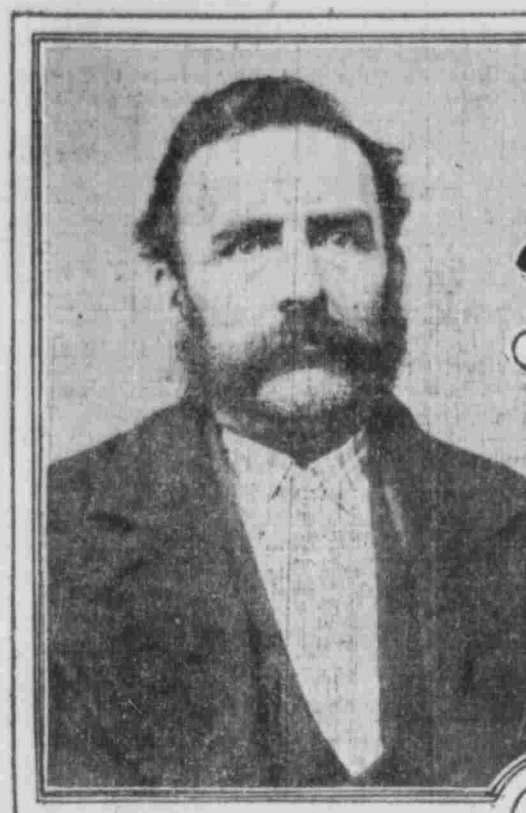
Potts was not so deaf as they had believed him to be. He had heard Coogan boring away at the door, seized his double-barrelled shotgun, hastened from his bedroom to the sitting room and fired in the dark at the noise. A moment later he opened the window and let go with the other barrel, this time putting a few shots under the skin of Austin Keene, though not seriously wounding him. The band fled in confusion. The farmer's feet were not roasted. His hoarded wealth, if he had any, was not molested.

All these facts came out in the newspapers the next afternoon. The newspaper accounts, however, contained nothing to show the identity of those who had attempted the robbery. But before the evening newspapers were off the press—in fact, early in the morning—I had gone to the office of Kennard Jones, Chief of Police of Philadelphia, and had given him the

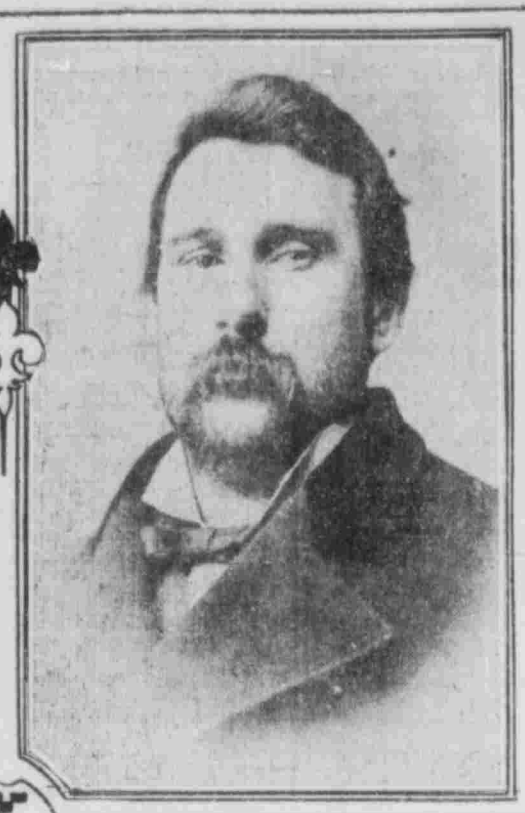
names of the five men who, my informant told me, were going out to do the job. Chief Jones put men around their accustomed haunts and within a few hours had arrested Coogan, Keene, King and Chapman. Wiltsey was not found. Coogan's arm was shattered and Keene had shot wounds on his body. All protested their innocence.

The men were indicted and placed on trial at Mount Holly. The prosecution had finished its case and the defence had begun when, one day, Chief Jones came to my office.

"Do you know William Carroll, of Wilmington, Delaware?" he asked.



Cooper Wiltsey.



Austin W. Keene.

TWO OF A FAMOUS BAND OF CRIMINALS WITH HEADQUARTERS IN PHILADELPHIA WHICH MADE MORE COUNTERFEIT MONEY THAN WAS PRODUCED IN ANY OTHER CITY IN THE UNITED STATES.

"Yes," I replied. "I know who he is. I know he is a counterfeiter and that he runs a low saloon that is the resort of counterfeiters and other criminals."

"Well, Carroll," continued the Chief, "has just sworn that on the night of the attempted robbery at Potts' house Austin Keene was in his saloon in Wilmington all the evening. They are trying to set up an alibi for him. Carroll has so intimidated two Wilmington detectives who know he is lying that they dare not testify to the truth. Will you go to Mount Holly and tell what you know about Carroll's reputation?"

"I will if my chief will permit me to. More than that, I will ask him to let me go."

I wired to Chief Brookes in Washington the same day, and before night had permission to make the trip. The next day I was put on the stand by the prosecution.

"Do you know William Carroll's reputation for truth and veracity?" I was asked.

"I do."

"What is it?"

"Very bad."

"Would you believe him under oath?"

"I would not."

"Do you know what his business is?"

Eleventh and Ellsworth streets."

"How did you happen to be in Keese's saloon?"

"I went there with a man whom I had employed to try to buy counterfeit money from Keene—and he bought some."

Deacon dropped like a hot potato. My testimony for the prosecution had hurt his client little in comparison with what he himself had brought out upon cross-examination. We often laughed about it in after years.

"Why," said he, "I had no intimation of what was coming. Keene had told me he had never seen you."

Coogan, Keene and Chapman were convicted and sentenced to ten years each in the Trenton Penitentiary. Cooper Wiltsey, another of the band that went to the Potts farm house, was still at large.

Wiltsey's time came the next year. He was a character. A big, powerful man, he had about as wicked eyes as I ever saw in any human being. Men generally hated him. Such women as he met almost invariably liked him. He was fifty years old, but the sprinkling of gray in his hair did not handicap him. Always there was some woman to be found who would swear that Cooper Wiltsey was all right.

I knew he was all wrong, but I couldn't prove it. I knew he was a counterfeiter, because men whom I had convicted of passing counterfeit had told me they

got their stuff from him. But the celebrated sea was not more elusive than he. Every time I put my hand out to grab him I found that he had just gone.

Still I kept an eye out for him, and the year after his midnight visit to the Potts farmhouse I got word that he was living in a back room of a house in the business district of Philadelphia. Chief Brookes, whose home was in Philadelphia, happened to be in town when I was ready to make the raid and he came with us.

It was a frosty winter's night. Wiltsey was supposed to be occupying a room on the second floor. I stationed one man at the foot of the stairs and two others under the windows of the suspected room. Though every other window in the vicinity was closed, these were open, as the bright light inside showed. That was a promising indication. Great heat is required to melt the metal that counterfeiters use, and when they are at work the air about them is like that of a furnace. The counterfeiters themselves, at such times, wear only undershirts, trousers and slippers.

Leaving the Chief with the man at the foot of the stairs, I went up to the room and knocked at the door. There was no response nor was there a sound inside. I knocked again, at the same time calling out, "Open this door, in the name of the law, or I will knock it down." Still there was no response. I stepped back three paces, took a running jump at the door, striking it with my shoulder, and knocked it in.

As I burst into the room my eye quickly caught two figures—that of a woman standing as if she were cast in bronze and that of Wiltsey leaping at me with a fifteen inch stiletto-like carving knife, clamped in his hand. I leveled my revolver at his head and told him to stop or I would kill him. He stopped. As I covered him with my gun, I presume twenty seconds elapsed before I spoke again. Then I called to the man I had left down stairs to come up. As I called, Wiltsey's eyes shifted from me to the head of the stairs.

And then I did what the Chief and the other men were a very foolish thing. I dropped my revolver on the floor and grabbed the wrist in which he held the knife. It was all done in a twinkling, without thought on my part, and for a few seconds we struggled, he trying to reverse the direction of the knife and cut the fingers with which I clutched his wrist. But in less time than it takes to tell it the Chief and the other men who had stood at the foot of the stairs bounded into the room. The detective who accompanied the Chief thrust a revolver in Wiltsey's face with a command to drop the knife or have his head blown off the next instant. Wiltsey released his hold on the knife and it fell to the floor. I picked it up and threw it behind a bureau.

"Why didn't you shoot him?" said Chief Brookes. "Never risk your life like that again."

The woman was Sarah Page. We bundled her and Wiltsey off to jail and then went back to clean out the room. Wiltsey's specialty was the making of trade dollars and we had caught them in the midst of their day's work. His method was to buy black tin and antimony, melt them up, run the metal into a mould and then, with an electric battery, put a light plating of silver over the composition. A silver dollar contained enough silver to plate five hundred tin dollars and, as tin was comparatively cheap, Wiltsey made a good profit even though he sold his product at twenty-five or thirty cents on the dollar.

I think we found a bushel of counterfeit dollars strewn about the room and perhaps another bushel of melting pots, moulds, metal, batteries and so forth. Wiltsey was convicted and given a long term—ten years, if I remember correctly. The woman was acquitted.

The last of the series of events that began with the ringing of my doorbell the time the servant would not let my caller in occurred a year or two later. William Carroll had never forgiven me for the testimony I gave about him the time we were trying to fix up an alibi for Austin Keene in the Potts case. I had met Carroll in the street once afterward and he had taken off his hat to me, but those who knew him better than I did advised me always to keep my eyes on him when he was around. I never saw him again, however, and my attention was next directed to him when a friend in Wilmington wrote me that he was dead. He had gone into a saloon next door to his own, fired at the bar-keeper, missed him, and the barkeeper had put a bullet through his brain. He died with his boots on.

WHAT HAPPENED TO DRAKE

A Story.

BY F. W. EDDY.

WITH ample fixed income, current affairs prosperous, a happy income and freedom from outside entanglement there was no reason why Sidney Drake should vanish. No one could imagine why he had done so.

Hence when worry began to affect not only the immediate family, but also the inner circle in which he moved, the clubs he frequented, business associates to whom he was an asset and minor circles of acquaintances who ordinarily kept in touch with him. Beyond telephone range the telegraph raked the land for tidings of him. Mrs. Drake avoided only the police in her search, for publicity would have been too humiliating, and through all her distresses she held to the faith that all would come right in the end.

Drake's office sign is non-committal as to his occupation. When he talks of business his friends understand that he refers to properties that he manages. There is enough truth in that to pass review. He might have lived quietly and moved well on a genteel inheritance, represented in properties that he does manage, but he aspired to hold his own in expensive company, to give his wife a place as a social leader and to run with the best. With that motive he accepted in his early married life the confidential agency for a product popularly known as Three C's—Choice Cumberland Club—a function which enabled him to gratify his social desires at no sacrifice of prestige.

He had the knack of obtaining orders without soliciting them—by mere suggestion or advice as an apparently disinterested party. His methods, therefore, were far superior to those of a self-confessed wine agent. It was that diplomatic manipulation of trade which rated him high with his principals, and his convivial qualities kept him in brisk demand among his clients. So, more often than not, this business of presenting the merits of Three C's called him out at night. Until now it had never interfered with his returning home.

At three o'clock that morning, when Drake came out of the café where he and some friends had been proving the superior attractions of the Three C's, he decided that he must have a fresh mackerel for breakfast. Therefore, he headed for Fulton Market to get it.

It is not often that the fish dealers there have a customer in a top hat, patent leathers and broadcloth at three in the morning while they are dressing their stands. They entered into vociferous competition for

the honor and pleasure of supplying this interesting customer with as large a fish as he could carry.

Instead of moving homeward with his prize, Drake turned into South street, sauntered up to Peck slip and crossed over to the water front. The air lured him on with just enough motion to cool him gratefully after stuffy hours upstairs. He thought the river must look pretty under the moonlight. In order the better to watch its dancing sheen he stepped on a sloop that lay at the pier. Such jeweled treasure had never before enthralled him. The mass of moving color was beautiful beyond his dreams. He felt himself transported to a realm of perfect peace and content.

"Skipper, come and see this fine catch,"

"What's that, got a haul already?"

"Yes, sure enough haul; don't look like a mermaid exactly, but I guess it's part human."

Drake caught the drift of this exchange, but it seemed to him to fit naturally into the enchanting scene until he felt himself lifted by the shoulders and a gruff but kindly voice said:—"Aloey, steady now; did you come here for a picnic, young man, or what's your business?"

Drake rubbed open his wondering eyes. The wand of magic had indeed shifted the scene. Something pushed suddenly from him the moon tipped river, the sheen of moving color, the luring night breeze, and projected in its place the glare of daylight and the grimed faces of a ship's crew; and the sky matched the gray of the sea, over which the ship was bumping with sails double reefed. The night had been real; was he now dreaming?

"You don't look like a seafaring man," the gruff voice went on; "and if you think you're a passenger, we ain't allowed to carry passengers."

Drake surveyed his questioner and then himself. He was forward of the forecastle hatch and had been lifted from a heap of seine nets on which to all appearances he had lain. His silk hat now reposed there, as did the fish bought at Fulton Market, still neatly packed. The expanse of shirt bosom showed signs of having served as a sleeping jacket and his broadcloth needed the iron. Spray had flecked with whitish spots like incipient mildew his patent leathers. The ensemble was too tangible to mistake it for a dream.

"I must have made a blunder," he said. "Where am I, please?"

"Well, you're outside the three mile limit. In fact, you're on the Lucy Ann, of Gloucester, bound for porgies off Cape May. Now, what are you going to do about it?"

"What do you want me to do about it?"

"We can't stand for a passenger or put you ashore. You had better turn to and work your way, I reckon."

"That suits me, but you must show me. I am green at this business."

"You'll learn soon enough, and some day maybe you'll be glad to have it to fall back on. Now come to the cabin and I'll rig you out."

In the outfit which the skipper gave him Drake joined the men on deck. A shift of wind enabled them to let out the reefs, and under a full spread of canvas the Lucy Ann fairly flew ahead.

Drake had crossed the ocean often enough to know it, and in craft of his own in lesser waters he had felt himself a tolerable sailor, but this was a new sensation. The Lucy Ann seemed to him as much a part of the sea as the birds on its surface or the fish beneath. The crew, who had come round from Gloucester

mandment:—"Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work, and on the seventh scrub down the rigging and holystone the deck." We let you off the watch last night, so get busy."

Drake put in the Sunday according to the gospel of the sea, and a pale of chafed legs and bruised knuckles and blistered palms convinced him that he was earning his passage. That night the Lucy Ann lay under furled sails at the fishing grounds three hundred miles off Cape May.

At four o'clock next morning all hands turned out. They lowered two yawls, lashed them with seine nets and rowed off to lay the nets, eight men at the oars in each boat. Then they came back for dories and set out their pickets to keep the nets in order. The breakfast horn blew at eight. No one had to be called twice. Then there was another stretch of picketing and net hauling until the noon meal. The same work had to be done in the afternoon. By dusk, when the last haul had been made, the day's catch was reckoned at two hundred bushels of porgies.

This did not finish the day. There remained the work of cleaning the catch and picking it down in ice. With all hands bustling to their capacity, it was eleven o'clock before they finished. Drake's face smarted with sunburn, his hands were red and swollen and the lines had dug deep into his blistered palms. He made no complaint. Everybody got the same treatment, the same hours, the same labor, and everybody took his medicine man fashion. The skipper fed his crew well. That kind of work demanded it. But fagged out as he was, when Drake got to his bunk at eleven that night he found time before he went to sleep to wonder if the folks at home were worried, and to wish himself back.

The second day passed as had the first at the fishing grounds—up at four o'clock, breakfast at eight, keeping the nets properly laid and hauling them in on occasion, and that night the catch again measured two hundred bushels. At meals Drake was carried back to the ravenous hunger of his youth in eating days, when everything tasted good, and he wanted the plate piled high and often. He could feel the return of youth also, in the surging of his blood, and, lame as they were, his muscles quickened with the just of action.

Good luck had saved him from a hoodlum crew, recruited from the city wharves, and had cast him among messmates from the far North, where sailors know only the sea and share its heartiness. He learned to address them by their first names, and from Skipper Jack down they all called him Sid and took him into fellowship from the beginning.

Captivated by the trim and businesslike behavior of the Lucy Ann when he first observed her at sea, he

had grown really fond of her with ripening acquaintance. So it was with a tinge of regret that he found the Lucy Ann, just one week after departure from port, lying up again at Peck slip. Drake sought the skipper.

"You have been mighty good to me," he said, "and I don't remember when I felt as well as I do now. I know I must have been a lot of trouble to you. How much will make it right?"

"Cut that short, Sid," came the skipper's reply. "We were all glad to have you along even if you weren't invited. You may be a gentleman, but you held your end up. I wish we had you for regular company. As to how much will make it right, I'm sorry I can't allow you wages, for the list was full when you joined us; but we had a quick trip and good catch and you are in on the division of extra profits. I figure your share is \$15.00."

As unexpectedly as the sea had swallowed him it yielded him up. Mrs. Drake had quite decided that she must ask the police to put out their drag net when Drake appeared before her. The sight made her speechless, for her astonished gaze fell, not on her well groomed husband of other days, but on his present in an oil smeared sweater and ill used boots and trousers, his countenance like a pumpkin and his hands rough and calloused and furrowed. A bit of well reined impatience curbed the evening attire in which she had last seen him. Unfolding another bundle, he exposed a mass of porgies.

"Caught them myself," he said, "and can guarantee them fresh."

"Sidney! What?"

"Some other time, my dear. I've had the experience of my life. It has made a new man of me. And I think it has taught me to quit being my own best customer."

SCHOOL CHILDREN AND SLEEP.

SCHOOL children sleep on an average about three hours less a day than they ought. This conclusion, drawn from investigation of 4,000 cases in England, has just been reported to the Child Study Society. Probably inquiry in this country would elicit similar information. In London not only do children get insufficient sleep, but what they have is unsatisfactory. Bad ventilation, noise and fire work are responsible in most instances. In certain cases where children were observed to fall asleep over their lessons it was found that they had been forced by their parents to drive milk wagons before school, starting as early as half-past five o'clock. Children need more sleep than adults, and to deprive them of it in this way is worse than starving them. Deterioration of the race will surely result.



"WHERE AM I?"