

TRUE DETECTIVE STORIES

Two Women and a Red Trunk

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

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EARLY in August, 1872, the Third National Bank of Baltimore was robbed. The vault was blown at dead of night and between \$200,000 and \$300,000 taken. A large part of this sum was in coin and currency. The rest was in registered bonds and coupon bonds. The robbers escaped without leaving a clue to their identity.

Coupon bonds can be cashed at any bank as readily as one government note can be exchanged for another. Registered bonds cannot. Ordinary thieves therefore do not take bonds the numbers and the names of the owners of which are matters of record. Forgers are the exception. With their secret chemicals for removing printing and writing inks without leaving a stain that even a magnifying glass will show, they can make use of registered bonds. The fact that a large number of blank drafts and checks had been stolen also indicated that one of the robbers was an expert forger.

From these bare facts it soon developed that the robbers were Joe Elliott, Joe Chapman, Charlie Becker and a Russian. Becker was the forger—one of the best that the word ever produced. Careful search revealed their movements for several days preceding the robbery. It was even found that men answering their descriptions were seen near the bank on the day it was rifled. But when all these facts became known the earth seemed to have swallowed the men who were wanted.

More than a month passed and nothing was heard of them. On September 17 the Chief of the secret service called me to his office. Beside him sat a man with a long white beard. The chief introduced him to me as Clement Herring, father of Charlie Becker's wife.

"This man runs a saloon on Stanton street," said the Chief. "He expects his daughter and Mrs. Chapman to call on him to-morrow morning. Be on watch outside, and if they come he will signal to you. He says they are going to leave for Europe in the afternoon, and that among their baggage will be a small red trunk containing the registered bonds stolen from the Third National. Mr. Herring thinks they will get the trunk either on Lexington avenue near Twenty-second street or on Eighth avenue near Forty-eighth street."

"Here's what I want you to do. Once you get sight of these women, follow them wherever they go. If they get the red trunk, follow them on to the ship and learn the number of their stateroom and the names under which they depart—they are not going to use their own names. When you get these facts put them in this letter that I have written to the Chief of Police of Southampton, and give it to the purser on the ship, who will deliver it to an officer waiting at the pier on the other side. He will be notified that you are coming and will know what to do. Don't arrest the women; don't seize the trunk."

At eight o'clock the next morning I took up the watch in front of Herring's saloon. I waited more than an hour before anything happened. Then a stylish carriage drove up. Two women alighted, and in the moment that elapsed before they descended the three steps that led to Herring's basement saloon I took careful note of their appearance.

Each woman was apparently thirty years old and strikingly handsome. Both were gowned in the height of fashion. The blonde woman, who I afterward learned was Mrs. Becker, was a trifle shorter than her companion, Mrs. Chapman, who was a statuesque brunette of perhaps five feet eight or nine. Both women were wreathed in smiles and apparently radiantly happy. They were going to Europe to meet their husbands, and evidently the prospect pleased them.

Two or three times while they were inside I walked past the place and caught glimpses of them through the window. The two women seemed to be sipping at glasses of Rhine wine, while they talked to the gray whiskered man who sat on the other side of the table. Mrs. Becker did most of the talking. The light-heartedness that marked her manner in the street had departed. She spoke earnestly and seriously. The man listened, almost sadly.

While I was waiting I sent a newsboy to call a hack driver who had often driven me on business trips, and when, about eleven o'clock, the women left the saloon, I was ready to follow them. But I had not taken into account the possibility that the driver might not come with the accustomed cab. He didn't. He came with what was the most fashionable turn-out of the time—a Clarence coach, drawn by two horses. This fact is of importance only because the semi-circular front of the coach was glass and I was dressed like a stevedore—slouch hat, blue shirt, rough trousers and no coat or waistcoat. I had contemplated the possibility that my work that day might take me along the docks, and had dressed accordingly.

However, there was nothing to do but to jump into the coach and tell the driver to follow the women wherever they went. They cut in and out through side streets and finally turned into Lexington avenue. I remember with what amazement I was stared at by others who drove fashionable carriages like my own. Behind the semi-circle of glass I sat like the modern "demonstrator" in a show window—apparently a stevedore seeing the sights at \$8 a day!

Near the corner of Twenty-second street—at the number at which the aged man said they might get the red trunk—the carriage containing the women halted. As they alighted and went up the steps to the house I saw that they were again the happy, frolicsome women who were overjoyed at the prospect of seeing their husbands. All of the earnestness and the seriousness with which they talked to Mrs. Becker's sad-eyed father had been swept away in a swirl of smiles.

Ten minutes after the door closed upon them a servant came out with some hand baggage. He placed it on the carriage at the driver's feet and went back after some more. I watched carefully for the red trunk, but it did not come. In a few minutes the women appeared, still smiling. They entered their carriage and were driven up Lexington avenue to Twenty-eighth street, then over to and up Broadway.

I followed along in my Clarence coach, keeping half a block behind them. They went straight up Broadway to Eighth avenue, and from there to the Forty-eighth street house that Herring had told me about. About an hour after they entered the premises the red trunk was brought out. A few minutes later the women followed.



I GRABBED TWO OF THEM AND MADE FOR THE GANG PLANK.

Telling my driver to be sure not to lose them, I resumed my pursuit. They drove straight to Cortlandt street and, still secluded in their carriage, went on the ferry. I let a few teams get in after them and then drove on the boat.

I knew they were headed for the Cunard pier at Jersey City, which at that time were just below the present slips of the Pennsylvania Railroad. I also knew they had taken passage on the old sidewheel steamboat Cuba. So while we were crossing the river I left my carriage to look for the ship. To my amazement I saw that it was not at the pier. The next instant I saw it lying in the middle of the river. The tide had gone out at noon and, the dock not having been dredged as deeply as docks are now, the ship had gone out into the stream. Late passengers would be compelled to go out on a tender.

This was a possibility that I had not contemplated. It is comparatively easy to board a ship lying at her pier and almost impossible to get aboard a tender. While I was wondering what I should do the ferryboat nosed her way into the slip and I was compelled to do something quickly. This is what I did:—

I had worked my way among the teams up to a point perhaps fifty feet behind the vehicle in which were the two women. When their carriage drove off I followed it. When they alighted I was almost beside them, and when their handbags were put off the carriage I grabbed two of them and made for the gangplank leading to the tender.

Fortunately the crew of the tender thought I was a stevedore, and the stevedores thought I belonged to the tender. So nobody molested me and I got aboard. As soon as I could I looked for the women and was rejoiced to find that they had taken seats at the opposite end of the boat. I kept away from them all the way over and preceded them up the ladder to the ship. Once on board the Cuba, I contrived to get behind them in order to let them lead the way to the stateroom. They walked down the starboard side of the cabin to a point halfway between the middle of the ship and the stern and then turned in to a little hall. I knew their stateroom could be only a few feet away, so I asked them if the baggage I carried belonged to them. They looked at it and replied that it did. I asked where I should put it and they led me to their stateroom, the number of which I noted. Then I held up a handbag which bore the name of "Mrs. Bruce Cutting," and asked to which of the women it belonged. Mrs. Chapman replied that she was Mrs. Cutting. The other bag was marked "Mrs. Steward," which Mrs. Becker told me was her name. Mrs. Chapman was evidently impressed with my desire to make no mistake in delivering their baggage, as she gave me a twenty-five cent tip.

This part of the work over, I went to the writing room and in the letter written by the chief of the Secret Service to the Chief of Police of Southampton filled in the names under which Mrs. Becker and Mrs. Chapman had departed, together with the number of their stateroom. Then I sought the purser and presented my letter of introduction.

"Did you get track of them?" he asked. I replied that I had and gave him their names. He consulted his passenger list and ran his forefinger down the column of names.

"You're right," said he. "Here they are, and the number of their stateroom is the same that you gave to me."

I handed him the chief's letter to the Southampton chief, urged him to deliver it before the women could leave the ship, and went aboard the tender just as the Cuba was preparing to get under way.

The rest of this narrative has to do with events that took place in Europe. And it should be borne in mind that in following the women and the red trunk the purpose was twofold—first, to learn the whereabouts of the band that robbed the Third National Bank of Baltimore, and, second, to nab Becker if he should attempt to alter and sell any of the registered bonds. The women had committed no crime—we could not prove guilty knowledge on their part concerning the contents of the trunk—therefore we had no occasion to arrest them. And there was nothing to be gained by seizing the trunk, since payment on all of the stolen bonds had been stopped. We wanted only Becker and his band.

When the Cuba reached Southampton an officer representing the Chief of Police was at the pier. He read the letter that was handed to him by the purser and followed the two women when they left the ship. Half an hour later he was on the same train with them, bound for London, where they remained a night. The next morning they went to Paris. And the red trunk was among the baggage that followed them to the hotel at which they stopped in the French capital.

The Southampton detective engaged accommodations at the same place and for a week nothing of importance developed. The women, who seemed to be plentifully supplied with money, went out every morning, evidently intent upon replenishing their already large stocks of finery. In the evenings they went to the theatres.

One morning the Southampton detective waited in vain to see them go out for their accustomed shopping tour. An hour after the time when they usually entered the carriage he began to be nervous. Finally he went to the clerk and, after having led up to the subject gradually, made some reference to the "beautiful English women" whose beauty had been the subject of considerable comment. The clerk didn't know whom he meant. The detective had purposely misstated their nationality in order not to display a knowledge of them that they might regard as suspicious if it should come to their ears. But in a moment the clerk realized the detective's mistake and said:—

"Oh, you mean Mrs. Cutting and Mrs. Steward. But they are not English women; they are Americans. They left the city this morning."

The closing sentence jarred the detective to his boot heels, but he controlled his emotions.

"Where had they gone?" Oh, the clerk did not know. They left after midnight and another clerk was on watch. But he might be able to find out.

In a little while the clerk imparted the information that to the best of his knowledge and belief the ladies had gone to Berlin. Strangely enough the detective was to depart for the German capital the same evening. Perhaps he would be fortunate enough to go again to the same hotel with them.

At five o'clock in the afternoon the detective, on his way to the train, stopped a moment at the clerk's desk to bid him goodby. Pleasantries were exchanged, the two men had shaken hands, when the clerk buried a parting bid of badinage:—

"Too bad you will not meet the American ladies in

Berlin," he said. "They have gone to Genoa."

The detective made enough inquiries to convince him that the information was undoubtedly correct and changed his own plans accordingly. On the way down to the Italian city he indulged his mind to determine how he should go about it to get track of his lost immigrants. They would reach Genoa sev-

eral hours ahead of him and might even have sped on to another city before his arrival. There was only one chance by means of which he might get trace of them—the red trunk.

So when he reached Genoa he made anxious inquiries of the man who had charge of the baggage concerning two ladies whose present address he wished to learn. Speaking no Italian he had difficulty in making himself understood, but at last sought to identify his friends by explaining that among their baggage was a red trunk. The baggage hands were questioned, and at last a man was found who had sent the box that was covered with the hide of a brindle cow.

It had been transferred to the wharf of a steamship company that operated a line of boats between Genoa and Constantinople.

Again the detective resumed his travels, only to find when he reached the city of the Sultan that he had lost all track of the women. Nobody had seen the red trunk—nobody at any of the hotels had seen the women. And he was on the point of returning to Southampton to report his failure when something happened.

Becker and Chapman were arrested by the Turkish authorities for selling forged bonds! Their trial brought their wives in public to their sides, and by shadowing them their new habitation was learned.

Becker and Chapman were quickly found guilty and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment in Smyrna. The jail was a flimsy affair and in a few weeks they escaped. Simultaneously with their departure Mrs. Becker and Mrs. Chapman went to London, the detective following and tracking them to a boarding house in an obscure part of the city. Within a week their husbands joined them, together with the other two men who robbed the Third National Bank of Baltimore, and within another week Mrs. Chapman was dead.

The cause of her death will perhaps never be known. The end came suddenly. It has always been supposed that she was poisoned by some member of the band.

After Mrs. Chapman's death the party separated. Chapman came to the United States, robbed another bank, was caught, convicted and sentenced to twelve years' imprisonment. Becker came to Brooklyn, where a policeman arrested him in the act of making the plates for a 1,000-franc note. The red trunk was never found.

Others may wonder, as I did at first, why Mrs. Becker's father betrayed her husband to the secret service. I put the question to the man flatly.

"Charlie didn't treat me right," he said. "He and I were in on a counterfeiting deal one time and he got all the best of it. I never could bear a dishonest man. And, besides, I didn't want my daughter to go to Europe to meet him."

IN THE GULCH.

By George Hyde Preston.

THE hunted man turned away from his prostrate horse with a shudder of repulsion, and, kneeling down, cleaned his long knife by repeatedly thrusting it into the soft ground.

"It had to be done," he muttered. "The boss' leg was broke. He was sufferin', and I couldn't dare risk the noise of a shot with them fellers so close in on me."

He took a quick glance down the gulch, and his eyes narrowed dangerously.

"So the reward reads for Lem Darrow dead or alive this trip, does it?" he said through his shut teeth. "I guess I'm up against a hard play. There wasn't no sense in that Bob boss breaking his leg," he grumbled. "I might a got safe across the line by ridin' hard, and now I ain't got no boss. Well, I'll play the hand for the stakes they has named," he went on grimly.

He took another look down the trail toward the mouth of the gulch and started to his feet.

"The game's beginning already," he ejaculated. "That's the Sheriff down there now!"

The mounted man had halted and was looking up the gulch.

Darrow dropped to his knees behind the body of his horse and watched his pursuer intently.

"Say, Sheriff," he murmured, "there's three or four ways that I might get out of the country, and you had better guess wrong on which one of them I've took, for if you come meandering up here I'll drop you sure."

"By God, he's guessed right!" ejaculated Darrow. "He's coming up here!"

The Sheriff advanced warily.

Darrow raised his head a little and a shiny barrel slid forward over the body of the dead Bob horse.

"That's a fine animal the Sheriff is ridin'," muttered the outlaw. "I'll have a new boss and a new chance in a minute if he don't stampee when!"

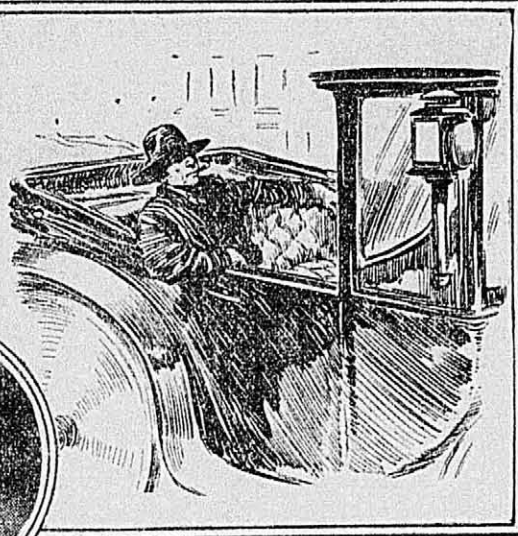
The sharp crack of Darrow's rifle echoed through the gulch. The Sheriff swayed from his saddle and fell limply to the ground. His horse gave a frightened leap to one side and then stood trembling.

Darrow ran swiftly down the trail, the fear that the horse would escape him clutching at his heart. The animal snorted as he approached and backed away, but Darrow dexterously caught the loose bridle and steadied the frightened beast with his voice. His foot was in the stirrup and his leg across the saddle when he heard a groan.

Darrow had not even glanced at the Sheriff. Now he looked down at him in surprise. "What is he groaning for?" he muttered. "He is dead. He has got to be dead. I plugged him in the heart."

The man on the ground moved a little.

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He hunted a limb, walked over to the Sheriff and opened his shirt.

Then the outlaw stood up with a look of profound disgust on his face. "I ain't come within a foot of killing him!" he exclaimed. "I just hardly winged him! I wouldn't like to have the boys know how near I was to him when I took that shot. I wouldn't have no reputation left."

The Sheriff turned again and moaned.

The outlaw looked down at him in perplexity and then he looked at the horse.

"It's a new combination. I don't know how to play it," he murmured. "Why ain't you dead?" he went on complainingly to the unconscious Sheriff. "You ought to be. You are putting me out considerable. I can't leave you here the way you are, and I can't see my way clear to fixing you out the way I did the Bob boss back up there. What will I do?"

As if in response to the question, the Sheriff opened his eyes and looked up.

"Hello, Lem," he said, "was it you shot at me?"

"Yes, but the sun was in my eyes and!"

"Oh, don't apologize," put in the Sheriff with a grin; "I'm satisfied to be alive. Where am I hit? My shoulder feels some stiff, and!"

"Yes, the sun, I told you, was!"

The Sheriff laughed weakly. "How was it you let me come up on you, Lem? I thought you had the best horse in the country."

"So I did have. He broke his leg. He's dead."

The Sheriff's eyes roamed to his own horse.

"Well, I see you've got mine there," he said. "What are you hanging around here for, losing valuable time?"

"I dunno," answered Darrow, shortly. "I guess it is because I am a damn fool."

The Sheriff looked curiously at the outlaw, and then said, "Well, seeing as you are here, I wish you would give me a drink. No, not that; water is what I want this trip."

Darrow brought it, and then sat down awkwardly beside the wounded man.

"What are you going to do, Lem?" asked the Sheriff.

"I dunno," answered Darrow. "You are putting me out considerable," he added, looking uneasily down the gulch.

"There is your posse, Sheriff, down at the mouth of the gulch now!" he exclaimed. "I guess they heard the shot. I'm going to notify them that you are up here and incidentally get back my reputation. It's a considerable long shot, but!"

The crack of Darrow's rifle finished his sentence. He gazed for a swift moment down the gulch and then sprang for the Sheriff's horse.

"You are all right now, Sheriff," he cried. "They are coming fast! All except one!" he added with a quick laugh of triumph as he leaped to the saddle. "He's dead! Plugged in the heart! You'll see!" And as the horse, urged by the sharp scurry of his rider's spur, dashed up the steep trail the outlaw called back over his shoulder. "Say, Sheriff, be sure you tell the boys that when I shot at you the sun was in my eyes!"