

TRUE DETECTIVE STORIES

The Suffering Woman Who Became Desperate

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NTO this short story I shall pack the great emotion of a woman's whole career. In doing so I shall relate certain events in the lives of the men she knew—her husband among others. This is necessary. Women do not live for themselves in the sense that men do, and their histories are but patchwork made up from bits of the records of those who know them well.

Early in October, 1871, David Kirkbride was arrested at the old Hudson River station at Thirtieth street and Ninth avenue, New York city. In his pockets was \$2,000 in counterfeit \$10 notes. In chasing counterfeiters what is wanted is not so much their led money as the plates from which the bills were printed. So Kirkbride was promised immunity if he would tell the source of his supply. He named David Keene, a wholesale liquor dealer who lived in Fifth street, near Second avenue.

A few nights later secret service operatives, of whom I was one, started out with Kirkbride to trap Keene. Kirkbride was given \$1,500 in marked money with which to buy \$5,000 in counterfeit. He was to go to Keene's house, ring the bell, enter, make the deal, pay out his good money for the bad, leave the house and then go back in half a minute and ring the bell, as if he had forgotten something. The ringing the door bell the second time was to be his signal that he had the counterfeit and Keene had the \$1,500 in genuine notes. Then, as Keene opened the door, we were to rush in, overpower him and arrest him.

A man named Newcomb and I were assigned to lie flat on our stomachs in the back yard to prevent Keene from escaping when the other officers came in the front way. After climbing five alley fences we reached our positions—not a moment too soon. The back door opened and a lamp that was on the kitchen table sent out a triangular shaft of light into the darkness. Keene came out, passing within a few feet of me, lifted up a large flat stone and took out a tin cashier's box. Returning to the house, he closed the door after him and we knew negotiations had begun.

In half an hour I heard the front door close and a moment later came the second ring at the door bell. When Keene came to the door Kirkbride had time only to say, "Oh, Dave, I wanted to"—and the officers rushed past him and made the arrest.

Keene knew instantly he had been betrayed, but he did not flinch and he did not talk, except to answer questions. In the house was found a large amount of excellent counterfeit—the celebrated old Poughkeepsie "tens" and St. Nicholas "twos"—but only \$1,450 of the good money Kirkbride had paid. We looked high and low for the odd fifty dollar bill, but couldn't find it. Keene insisted that he didn't have any more and finally explained that Kirkbride had paid him only \$1,400. Then we stood Kirkbride up and finally found the missing fifty tucked into the folds of his old fashioned "made up" necktie.

Again we promised immunity to get the "man higher up." And that brings us to the woman whose life is the thread upon which the events in this narrative are strung. Keene said he got his counterfeit from Harry Cole.

Harry Cole was one of the remarkable men of his day. Keen, shrewd, resourceful and secretive, he had all the qualities that go to make up a successful man of his type. In middle life he had married a widow with six children—"Dutch Eva" she was called merely because she was German—and for years they both peddled counterfeit along the Erie Canal. So far as I know she would have been a good woman if she had married the right kind of man, but, idolizing Harry as she did, she evidently thought whatever he did was right and helped him. They were clever and prospered. The Erie Canal soon became too thin a field for them. They felt their power and wanted an opportunity to extend themselves. So they came to New York.

In New York Cole bore the same relationship to the counterfeiting business that a great merchant does to the manufacturers who make the things he sells. He didn't make any counterfeit, but he distributed it on a big scale. He was a jobber selling to retailers, and his deals were with men who could afford to take from \$1,000 to \$20,000 at a time. And while he traded in big bills, Eva, his wife, was a distributor of counterfeit fractional currency. Their home was in Eighty-fourth street.

When we got ready to take Cole we put up the same kind of a job on him that we had put up on Keene. Keene, who had been betrayed by Kirkbride, came along to buy his own liberty by turning traitor to Cole. With \$1,500 of marked money that had been given him he bought \$7,000 of counterfeit, and Cole and his wife were both arrested before they could realize what was happening.

Cole took his arrest calmly. Eva was panic stricken. Her Harry was in jail! He might soon be in the penitentiary! She might be with him, for that matter, but she did not seem to think of herself. Her whole anxiety was to get him out of the toils. And straightaway she began to bargain. In her forgetfulness of self it appeared to her that information was most desired pertained to the identity of the maker of her counterfeit fractional currency. And the words came tumbling out of her mouth so fast that we could hardly have stopped them had we desired. "Tom Condon's the man. Let Harry off, and I'll help you get Condon and his plates." Little did she realize how small were her fractional currency affairs as compared with the famed "Poughkeepsie tens" and their maker.

The next day Cole, quailing before a prison sentence, confessed that his source of supplies was Joshua D. Miner. When we heard Miner's name we realized that we were getting very close to the plates. Miner was a big New York contractor—the first, I believe, to use steam drills in rock work. He was wealthy for his day and lived in the north side of Sixty-seventh street, between Ninth avenue and a street that used to be called the Western Boulevard.

Cole said that when he wanted to replenish his supply of counterfeit, Miner always met him by appointment at night in the middle of the Boulevard near Fifty-ninth street. The meetings were always momentary—a mere exchange of a roll of good money for a roll of bad—and they went their different ways into the shadows. He did not know whether Miner owned the plates himself, but suspected that if he did not he dealt directly with the owner.



"IT'S ALL A LIE—IT'S ALL A LIE," SHE SAID.

A few days later Cole was sent to Miner to negotiate for the purchase of the plates. He quickly learned that Miner knew who possessed them, and that Miner was, in fact, their owner. Moreover, the forged notes having had a great run, Miner was not reluctant to sell the plates, evidently believing it would be advisable to set his engraver to counterfeiting a new note. At any rate, Miner agreed to sell the plates for \$1,500 and to turn them over to Cole the next night. Cole was to go to his house and together they were to walk down the Boulevard. They would meet another man, who would hand the plates to Miner.

The next day six detectives besides myself were instructed to follow Cole to Miner's house, trail them to the meeting place on the Boulevard, and, after the completion of the transaction, arrest Miner and the man who was to give him the plates. One man was to stand here, another there and do certain things. I was the only exception. I was to keep my eyes open and do whatever circumstances might seem to require.

It was a rainy night. Dressed like a working man and carrying a dinner pail, I trotted back and forth along the street in front of Miner's house. In a little while I saw Cole go in. In a few moments both Cole and Miner came out. I passed them, and my clothes touched Cole's as I went by. I kept on toward Ninth avenue, and, after I had gone half a block, turned on my heel like an upright shaft and began following the pair. I kept far enough behind so that they would not be likely to notice me, and then jogged along a little faster, until at Fifty-ninth street I had nearly caught up with them.

At this point a man stepped from the strip of green in the middle of the boulevard into the centre of the street. Miner went to meet him, while Cole stood on the sidewalk. Miner and the third man remained screened for a moment under an umbrella. Then the third man resumed his journey down the boulevard.

All the while I kept on my little dog trot, contriving, however, sometimes to let the third man overtake me—he was also trotting, evidently in fear—and sometimes overtaking him. We had gone a few blocks when I heard a great commotion back where I had left Miner and Cole. I knew Miner was being arrested. He was yelling, "Murder!" "Police!" and "Help!" I knew the time had therefore come to nab the man I was trailing, and as I preferred to get him, if possible, without either of us doing any shooting, I reached for an inspiration and got one.

"I saw you grab my friend's pocketbook," said I as I ran up to him and caught him by the arm. "You've got to go back to the saloon with me and give it up." "I didn't grab it," said he; "it was the other fellow." "Oh, yes you did," said I. "He had just paid for a drink and turned around to speak to some one when you took it. Come along; you've got to go."

He muttered a little, but came. On the way back I met another secret service man. "Isn't this the fellow that stole Bill's pocketbook?" said I, apparently seeking confirmation of my charge. The other detective gave an affirmative reply, and the three of us continued our journey on the boulevard. When we reached the place where I had left Miner and Cole we found Miner under arrest. Detective Kenneth had taken him into custody after a force

fight. Miner had knocked out three of Kenneth's teeth, and Kenneth had given some hard blows in return. Cole stood on the sidewalk while the fight was proceeding, though he said he would have jumped in if Miner had seemed likely to get away.

The moment we saw the mud-becovered man the man I had brought back spoke up:—

"What does this mean?" said he. "It means," said I, "that you are under arrest for counterfeiting. You will have to go with me to the Bleeker street station of the secret service."

On the way down he begged that he might go over to his house in Fifty-third street. He said his wife, who was ill, would worry about him. He had just gone over to get a pail of coal; when the thought occurred to him to do another errand, during the course of which he had been arrested. His wife would wonder at his prolonged absence. But I couldn't let him go.

Before we reached the secret service headquarters he told me his name was Thomas Avey. His true name, however, was Thomas Ballard, and he was one of the most expert engravers of counterfeit plates that ever lived. He even surpassed the efforts of all other counterfeiters of his day in making bank note paper with silk threads in it. This he did so well that the government was compelled to abandon the particular type of paper in use at that time. Ballard's achievement at paper making is the more remarkable when the fact is considered that he did the work at home, using a common washtub, boiler and screen in place of the expensive machinery used in mills.

As the time drew near for the opening of Miner's trial public interest in the case became intense. Ballard was confined in the Ludlow street jail, but Miner had found bail. Many of his business associates rallied to his defence, though the general opinion was that he was guilty. At the height of the excitement Ballard broke out of jail and escaped.

Miner's trial opened in the middle of December, and the day before Christmas a verdict was brought in. It was an acquittal. Perjured testimony had freed him. Nine other indictments stood against him, but he was never tried on any of them. He never, however, recovered his good name. Others understood. In fact it was generally believed that Miner, through the use of money, enabled Ballard to break jail. Ballard was captured three years later in Pittsburgh, tried, found guilty and sentenced to thirty years' imprisonment. He served his full time and, I think, is still living.

Miner, of course, felt very bitter toward Cole, who had betrayed him, and not long afterward an event took place that may or may not—I think it does—illustrate the depths to which he permitted his desire for revenge to descend. I had taken charge of the Philadelphia branch of the Secret Service when Mrs. Cole came to me one day with trouble pictured all over her face. Harry had been arrested in New York charged with the forgery of certain school bonds that purported to have been issued by the authorities of Allentown, Pa. He was not guilty, of course, and Eva wanted me to save him from the penitentiary.

I suspected that her confidence in him was again

misplaced, but nevertheless took the trouble to get the facts and look into them. I found that the accusation against him consisted of the statement of a New York broker, who swore that on a certain day Cole had sold him the fraudulent bonds. And, by looking up my records, I found that on the day named Cole was in jail.

I told Eva of my discovery and she was overjoyed. Would I go to New York and testify in his favor? She would pay my expenses. She would never forget it. She would help me catch other counterfeiters, and so on. I told her I would go as a simple act of justice—of course declining her offer of expenses—and I did. Cole was acquitted.

But in 1877 his trail again ran across mine and I saw that he was headed for the penitentiary. The country had been deluged with counterfeit fifty-dollar notes that purported to have been issued by the Third National Bank of Buffalo, the Broadway National and the Central National of New York. I learned that a man named Joe Gordon was circulating these notes in Philadelphia, and I shadowed Gordon to Cole's home, Cole having removed from New York after his arrest in the Miner case. I also learned that Charles F. Ulrich, perhaps the most noted of all counterfeiters, engraved the plates and that Jacob Ott printed the notes.

I sent for Eva and had a long talk with her. I reminded her of the time when I saved her husband from the penitentiary by going to New York and testifying in his behalf, and then told her I felt sure he was circulating the counterfeits made by Ulrich. In conclusion I urged her to help me get Ulrich.

She looked at me in blank amazement. Positively and on her sacred word of honor Harry had not sold a bad bill for years.

"But I have shadowed Gordon to your house," said I. "And I know he is passing counterfeit. And I know Ott is doing the printing."

But she stuck to her story. It was true that Gordon had come to their house, but he had come only to try to induce Harry to help him circulate the spurious fifty dollar notes—a proposition that, according to her story, Harry spurned.

A few days later I met Harry and told him the same story I had told Eva. He denied the accusation in the most positive terms. Then I said to him:—

"Harry, I know you are helping to pass these counterfeit notes, and unless you put me in the way of catching Ulrich I will put you in the penitentiary within six months, just as surely as your name is Cole and my name is Drummond. Now don't think I am bluffing. I am not. I mean what I say. And don't make the mistake of going home and telling Eva of what I have said, and adding:—'Drummond is lying to me. If he had the evidence against me that he says he has he would prosecute me. He would not overlook such an opportunity to add to his reputation.' Don't tell her this, I say, and don't think it yourself, because it is not true. Now tell me where I can get Ulrich."

Not a word. He didn't know. He had not seen Ulrich for years. I had accused him wrongfully.

I continued my investigation and soon found that the counterfeits were undoubtedly being printed near Sharon Hill, a suburb five miles out from Philadelphia.

A day or two later the man who was shadowing Cole trailed him to Sharon Hill. Cole walked two miles beyond the station, then returned and took the train back to Philadelphia. He had not entered a place during the entire trip and his journey was apparently purposeless. As a matter of fact he was afraid to go where he wanted to because he saw my man behind him.

In the meantime I had placed a man as an employee in a paper warehouse where I knew Ulrich had gone to buy paper. For weeks he watched each customer. Finally Cole came in and bought a sheet of tracing paper, which was rolled up in scroll like form, Cole carrying it away in his hand. From the paper warehouse he went home.

This was on a Saturday. I stationed six men around the house. I knew the tracing paper was for Ulrich and I felt that Ulrich would either call for it or else Cole would take it to him. In either event there would be an opportunity to learn where Ulrich lived.

The watch on the house was kept up until after dark Sunday night, when Cole came out, with the roll of tracing paper in his hand. One of my men followed him until Cole turned sharply around a corner and passed the outlet of an alley. Cole walked on a few steps, then returned and went back to his house. When he turned around he no longer had the roll of tracing paper. He had given it to Ulrich when he passed the alley, as I afterward learned.

By this time Eva was becoming greatly alarmed for the safety of her husband. She went to Mrs. Ott one day and told her that Ott, who had the plates, must give them up. She and Mrs. Ott had a hand to hand fight, as the result of which Eva got hold of the plates. Ulrich found it out and took the plates away from Eva. All of these things I found out afterward. Ulrich then took the plates and buried them.

To make a long story short, we finally found Ulrich, found his plates, arrested him and arrested Cole and Ott and one of Mrs. Cole's sons, who, we understood, worked the press on which the notes were printed. Eva's worst fears seemed about to be realized. Her husband and her son were in the shadow of the penitentiary. She was desperate, and in her desperation this is what she did:—

She went to District Attorney Valentine and said she felt it to be her duty to tell him what kind of man I was.

"When I first knew Drummond," she said, "he had just been released from the penitentiary, where he served a ten years' sentence. He had hardly a coat to his back and was hungry. I bought him a new suit of clothes and gave him food. And now he is about to repay my kindness by trying to send my husband and my son to prison on perjured testimony."

Mr. Valentine at once advised her to tell her story to Mr. Brookes, chief of the secret service, which she promised to do. And before she had got out of the building Valentine called me to his office and advised me to get ready for what was coming.

Eva was as good as her word. She wrote to Chief Brookes and told him the same story about me that she had told to Valentine. Mr. Brookes wrote her to come to his home in Philadelphia on a certain day and lay all the facts before him. He also wrote me to be there.

I reached the house a little before the time set for her arrival. The meeting was to take place in the parlor—a room that was separated from the sitting room by sliding doors. Mr. Brookes told me to go into the sitting room, that he would close the doors, and that after he had said some things to Eva which he intended to say I should suddenly open the doors and appear before them.

Eva came on time and, after a little preliminary conversation Mr. Brookes began to address her on the importance of the matter that brought her to his home. When he ceased speaking I opened the doors and walked into the room. Mr. Brookes arose, pointed to me and began:—

"Here stands the man," said he to Eva, "who is the cause of all your misfortunes. More than any other man in the world you may well consider him to be your enemy. He has put your husband in jail; he has put your son in jail; it is his intention to put both of them in the penitentiary. You have every reason to regard him with horror."

"Now, if there is anything truthful that you can say against him it is your duty to say it. If you know anything that is in the slightest way derogatory to his character tell it to me. There he stands. Destroy him if you can. Tell me your story."

In the days when I used to seek my recreation with a gun in a forest I have seen wild animals at bay shot through the heart. I have seen them fall in their tracks, their bodies shaking with their last vibrations, and I have seen the light go out of their eyes. When Mr. Brookes finished his statement I was reminded of these scenes. Eva, who had been standing, as we were, gave a quick look about the room as if in search of a friend who was not there. All that a tortured soul can tell through the eyes was told in hers. And she sank on her knees before me as if I had been friend instead of foe.

"It's all a lie—It's all a lie," she said amid her sobs. "I know nothing against this man. I said I did only because I thought it would save my husband and my son."

Eva never saw her husband free again. The trials came on and Ulrich was given what we now know as an "immunity bath." The jury that was sitting in the case of Eva's son resented the idea that a mere boy should be convicted of an act of minor importance while a great criminal like Ulrich went free and acquitted the son. Ott was convicted and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. Cole was convicted and given twelve years. He died in Trenton prison in 1885, after having served only six years of his sentence.

Shortly after Cole was sent in the penitentiary he wrote to me and asked me to come and see him. I went.

"Do you know," said he, "that after I had that talk with you in Philadelphia I went home and told Eva exactly what you had told me not to tell her? I told her I believed you were bluffing; that you had no evidence upon which to send me to the penitentiary. I reasoned out just exactly as you said I might. But I was wrong. You told the truth. I see it now, when it is too late."

Eva is dead, too, and of the seven detectives who went with Cole to arrest Miner that rainy night I am the only one who is alive to tell the tale.