

# NEWS' SUPPLEMENT.

GREAT SALT LAKE CITY, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7, 1864.

## THE LONG FIRM.

"Talk about Italian brigands, sir," said a keen-looking gentleman to me, as we were sitting before the fire of a commercial room in the midland counties; "why, I tell you they are not half as dangerous as some English scoundrels I know."

"Indeed," said I, wondering what adventure he was going to relate.

"No, sir," replied he, with a shake of his head; "I know a set of scoundrels who prey upon the public, and what's more, the law can't touch 'em, sir. They are safe, sir, from all penalties; they have a patent right to rob, sir; and such a state of things is a disgrace to us."

I confess I was puzzled as to the meaning of my friend, and thinking he was uttering a parable in which hotel-keepers formed the subject, I gave a nod of dubious acquiescence.

"Did you ever hear tell of the Long Firm?" he asked, in a manner which I felt would soon lead to the solution of my doubts.

"No," said I, "who are they; what is their business—where are they located?"

"Ah, sir," said he, "I see you are not in the commercial line, else you would know something about them. Their business, sir, is to rob and plunder the public; and they do it, too, in fine style, and manage to keep out of the jurisdiction of the police."

"But why are they called the Long Firm?" said I, rather more curious to know the history of their name and of their depredations.

"Why, I think it is," replied the commercial, "because there is such a number of them in partnership; half the rogues in the kingdom belong to it; but it may be because they have long heads, or because they ought to have long purses, though, by the way, my experience shows that they are a set of the poorest devils under the sun."

"Oh, then," rejoined I, "you have some personal experience of the Firm?"

"Indeed I have," was the reply. "Though, for the matter of that, my experience did not arise from a personal loss, but from a personal investigation, and if you would really like to hear the history of it, I will tell it you with pleasure."

To this offer, so willingly made, I gladly assented, and after a preliminary puff at his cigar, my commercial friend, commenced in the manner of all storytellers by a reference to a time long past.

"About six years since," he said, "began my experience of the 'Long Firm,' and to this day I have refreshed my memory and my knowledge by adding to them every little trace of the firm's action that I could lay my hands on. Six years since, however, a friend of mine who lives a little way out of London, and had, I believe still has, setter dogs of which he is proud, advertised that he had a couple of prime-bred 'uns for sale. Their pedigree was undoubtedly good; they had been shot over and proved to be cracks; they were tip-top color and spots were first-rate; but he had no use for them at that time, and he advertised them for sale—price £20, with a guarantee. Next post after the advertisement traveled down into the provinces, came a letter from Cottonchester. The gentleman who wrote the letter didn't spell very correctly, neither was his communication written in a business style, but it looked like a country gentleman's fist—like, in fact, as if it had been written by a man who was fonder of shooting than of reading, and fonder of good dogs than either. 'Send us your dogs down,' says he, 'to such-and-such a station, and I will have my man waiting for 'em.' He went on to say that he had often been disappointed by buying dogs he never saw, otherwise he would send a cheque at once, but the moment he approved my friend's dogs, he said he would send off the money, and gladly add all expenses into the bargain."

"But," said I, "did your friend really trust a man he had never seen, when his letter itself was such a bad certificate of character? I would at once have set it down as the production of a ticket-of-leave man."

"You would have done nothing of the sort," said he, rather sharply. "My

friend was as knowing a fellow as ever breathed, and he fancied the lettersmelt of the country squire all over, and, to tell the truth, so did I, for I saw it."

"Ay, ay," said I, "one's always wise after the event; I knew what was coming, you see, I was anticipating your vexation; but go on with your story, I won't interrupt you again."

"Well, sir, the long and the short of it is, he sent his beauties by rail, and paid the carriage too. They were directed, I think, to 'John Harrison, Esq. of such and such a road, Old Hall,' and no doubt 'my man' himself was waiting for them, for my friend subsequently learned that a greasy fellow came and asked for the dogs, and took them off. Well, the next post came, but no cheque came with it, nor with the next, nor the next, nor indeed for one or two more. Then my friend looked serious, and he wrote down to the superintendent of detectives, telling him the story, and asking for information. In this instance he had not to wait for more than another post for an answer was returned immediately, and a very brief one it was. It merely said: 'If you value your dogs, come down and look after them; the writer added he would lend every assistance in his power to recover them. My friend was really as much annoyed at being imposed upon as he was at losing his dogs, and he set off the same day he received his letter. Well, sir, the detective sergeant took him to the Old Hall, which he found to be a cowhouse, with a slit in the door for letters left by the postman, but, strange to say it was known by the name of the Old Hall throughout the neighborhood. You see there was no deceit there, nor was there in the name of the man who inhabited it."

"But did your friend get his dogs, or see the fine, bluff, old country-gentleman who brought them?" said I.

"Oh yes," answered my informant, he saw them both, and got the dogs back again, after paying as much away in expenses as he offered to sell them for. My friend laughed many a time afterwards at the adventures he underwent, and he used to say to me, that he thought he nearly got back his money's worth in fun and experience of life. You may be sure it wasn't at the Old Hall where the dogs were picked up, nor was it till after a little search that the dogs could be found. The detective was a smart fellow, and a very courteous one too, and he took a great deal of trouble to set my friend's mind at ease and to find his dogs. He knew all the haunts of the Long Firm, and he led my friend to the queerest places in the world, but the country squire could not be found. At last they were turning sharply round a corner, out of a not very wholesome street, when the detective stumbled against a red-nosed man who was smoking a short pipe, and almost knocked him down. Red nose was uttering a growl, when he caught a fair view of the detective, and his savage look changed to a smile directly."

"Mr. Grabber," says he, 'you nearly knocked me down there.'

"Hallo, Tizzy," answered the detective, (I fancy Tizzy was the name my friend said, with an effort to be correct,) we have been looking for you for two days. You don't rent the Old Hall now?"

"Sometimes, Mr. Grabber, I do," replied the red-nosed man, "but I only occupy it as a country mansion."

"Just to get the fresh air sometimes, eh, Tizzy?" inquired the detective.

"Well, now, look here, continued he, I want a pair of setter dogs, and you must let us have them in five minutes or I'll lock you up."

"You're rather sharp, Mr. Grabber," said the red nose, coolly; "when you know you couldn't keep me longer than to-morrow morning, but to tell you the truth I couldn't get shut of the dogs at all, and if your friend here, who I think once belonged to them, will stand a quart, he shall have them in ten minutes."

"Well," said I, thoroughly amused with the narration, "what did your friend say to that proposal?"

"Why, he laughed heartily at it, said he would stand the quart, and at once bade the red-nose lead the way. 'You see, sir,' said the commercial, in an explanatory sort of manner, 'there was

something so ludicrous in the whole transaction, that my friend couldn't help laughing in spite of his vexation. The idea of the old country squire turning out to be a shabby, greasy, dirty loafer, was funny enough; but the idea of a thief offering, for a quart of beer, to give up to a policeman the property which had been stolen, was still funnier."

"Well, it was ludicrous enough," returned I, "but I think I should have been inclined to box the fellow's ears or give him into custody."

"You are wrong again, sir," replied my informant; "and I can see plainly enough you are not a man of the world. If you had boxed the fellow's ears he would have been discharged the next morning, because the transaction was business-like and, so far, above board; and if you had put him into the county court, you would only have 'thrown good money after bad,' as the saying is. So my friend took the easier course. He went and stood a quart of beer in a low public-house, which smelt strongly of tobacco and bad sewage, and there he found his dogs. They had been tied up in a cellar, and the poor brutes looked as if they had never tasted a bite of food since they left his hands."

"And so your friend could do nothing," said I, beginning to feel there was insuperable difficulty in the case.

"Nothing whatever," ejaculated the commercial. "He lost money as it was, and he had no wish to lose more money and time by pursuing Tizzy into a small debts court."

"Well, that is truly an interesting adventure," said I, after a moment's consideration, "and finely illustrative of the legal roguery that our law allows. But have you any other experience of the Long Firm?"

"Oh, yes," rejoined my informant, glad to have an opportunity to tell all he knew; "the next case comes within my own experience, though, as I told you before, I was only in it as an agent; I was too sharp to be done by those rascals. This was the way I got into it; I was in the north on one of my journeys and in a mixed company I chanced to relate the very story I have now told you. 'By jove,' says one gentleman in company, 'I believe these fellows have done me out of twenty-five pounds.'

"Indeed," said I, "and how have you been flat enough to trust them?"

"Oh," he said, "I suppose in the same way that your friend with the dogs did. You see, I published a series of valuable engineering plans some time ago, and of course I advertised them. About three months since I got a very well written letter from one John Peek, I think the name was, but I haven't the letter just now, requesting me to send a set of the plans, and he would send me a cheque by return of post. Never for a moment did I imagine that any rogue could make money out of my plans, and as the sale was rather slow, I was deuced glad to get rid of a set of them. After I sent them away I waited a week for my cheque, but it did not come, and since that time I have written twice every week, threatening a county court summons, but never a scrap have I received."

"Well, but," I interrupted, "that was a funny venture for a rogue to make. What could they do with a set of plans but tear them up to light their pipes with? And in these days of cheap newspapers they couldn't be hard up for spills."

"Why, you see," continued the commercial, "all is fish that goes into their net. Perhaps they wanted to keep their hands in, perhaps they had a customer for the plans; but be that as it may, the plans never saw the light of day again."

"Then you failed to trace them in any way?" I asked.

"Never found a trace of them again," replied the narrator. "I told the gentleman I was going south, and if he chose I would make some inquiry after his plans, and take some trouble to find out what became of them. He accepted my offer directly, and when I got to Cottonchester, I put myself, as they say on the Continent, in communication with the authorities. In the first place, however, I called at the house where John Peek, Esq., was supposed to live, and found it a decent

looking place in a fourth or fifth rate street. It was a quiet neighborhood, with two or three quiet public-houses dotted around at intervals. A rather dirty old woman came to the door when I knocked, and, to my question if Mr. Peek lived there, she replied by another question, asking me if I was the gentleman who came from Dublin. Oh ho, thought I, here's another plant, and after a moment's hesitation, I said yes. The moment's hesitation put her on her guard. Mr. Peek, she said, had gone from there some time since; he had a warehouse somewhere in the city, but where it was she could not tell, nor could she tell me where I could get the desired information. Well, you see, I was thrown on my beam ends. I might as well look for a needle in a bundle of hay, as for Mr. Peek in Cottonchester, and so I thought I would try another tack. I recollected I had a friend in the city who had something to do with corporation accounts, and I went off direct to him.

"How are you, Mr. Brown?" said he, the moment he saw me, and there was an air of suspicion in his face when he accosted me: 'what wind has blown you here?'

"Why, said I. 'I half suspect you know my message, because, you see,' explained the commercial, 'there was a sly twinkle in his eye, and he was a shrewd fellow was Mr. Catty.'

"Well, I am glad to see you, whether I am right or wrong in my surmises," said he; 'but let's have your story at once.'

"Why," said I, 'a friend of mine has been fool enough to trust a Mr. Peek—'

"Ah ha!" Mr. Catty laughed out heartily; 'the Long Firm, I see. Ah! I suspected as much.'

"You see, sir," exclaimed the commercial, "how readily he took me; so I told him the story as briefly as I could, and asked for his advice."

"I can give you a note to the superintendent of detectives," answered Mr. Catty, 'and I am sure he will do all in his power to help you. Perhaps you might manage to get hold of the plans again, always supposing you can find out Mr. Peek's "warehouse," but I suspect they have been sold for waste paper before this.'

"But, bless me, Mr. Catty," said I, 'how do you sharp Cottonchester fellows allow such a state of things among you?'

"Well," said he, laughingly, "if we had a little bit of despotism here, you know, we might hang them or drown them, or perhaps imprison them for life; but, unfortunately, our laws are very comprehensive, and the legal adviser of the Long Firm manages to keep himself within their limits."

"What," said I, in horror, 'have they really a legal adviser?'

"Ay," said Mr. Catty, coolly, 'a broken-down attorney, who is really the soul of the Firm. I believe,' he added, 'he was once a respectable man; but that is a long time since, and his career is one of the romances of thievery.'

"Then they are of long standing?" ejaculated I.

"So long have they carried on their practices," replied Mr. Catty, "that I am astonished their handwriting is not as familiar over the whole country as the face of a newspaper. I tell you, sir, as a fact, I believe they have stolen, or 'conveyed' as the wise call it, every mortal thing but a white elephant; a black one I believe they have had. But this is their position; they get hold of the newspapers, and con over the advertisements with the greatest care; for almost everything of which money can be made they send an order, and scarcely a day passes without one or two successful replies. You see the transaction is a business matter. They give an order with a name and address so near to the truth, that little legal subtlety is required to make the affair the most honest in the world, to all appearance; then, as you may be sure, the rascals are not worth the powder and shot which would bring them down by process of law. Publicity, sir, and greater caution on the part of the business public, are the only means of starving these fellows into honesty."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]