

A PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

In Obtaining a Plan For a Detective Story

By NATHAN JERNEGAN

I am a literary man—that is, if detective stories may be called literature. Of course my work involves the inventive faculty, and invention involves mental labor. I often thought that if I could obtain real cases, such as the sharp detective works out, I would be able to dispense with the hardest part of my work. I applied to the police for such cases, but all I got was the tracking of a thief, a burglar or a murderer by some slip made by the perpetrator or some one else. There was not enough in it to keep a reader in anxious expectation through several hundred closely printed pages.

One morning I had a real case come to me without any inquiry. I was sitting in my study racking my brain for material when a maid entered and told me there was an expressman at the door with a package for me. I went downstairs, receipted for it and, taking it to my den, removed the cover, opened the box and saw some jewels. Removing a tray, there lay twenty or thirty stones apparently of great value. I examined the address on the wrapper, thinking that I had receipted for something intended for another, but there were my name and address correctly written in every particular.

What did it mean? Instead of spending the rest of the morning trying to invent a detective story, I was occupied in endeavoring to explain why and from whom these jewels had been sent me. I found the job more difficult than producing a plot. At last I made up my mind that I must go about it methodically, just as a detective begins work in a criminal case.

First I went to the express office to see if I could learn there who sent the package, but no one knew anything about it. The expressmen don't keep records of the senders of miscellaneous packages. The next question was, "Are the jewels real or imitation?" This I might learn by submitting them to an expert. But until the mystery was explained I did not care to have any one but myself know that they were in my possession. They might be stolen property, and I had no mind to go to jail as the thief. However, I selected one of a few small stones I found in the tray and took it to a dealer in gems for inspection. He pronounced it genuine.

I returned to my study, threw myself into an easy chair and began to ponder. The jewelry had been sent me by some one whom I did not know, for I had never before seen the handwriting. There could have been no mistake as to the intention. But what was back of the intention?

Suddenly an explanation flashed on my brain like the flame of a gun at night. The jewels had been stolen, and whoever had stolen them, fearing to be caught with them in his possession, had sent them away. After all, was not that a good scheme? Infernal machines and poisoned food had been sent by express and the shipper was never discovered. The thief would doubtless open communication with me after the danger their possession would bring him had passed.

Then there was another flash in my brain, and another idea was born. I had a detective case before me that I might work out myself and make it the theme of a thrilling tale. How should I begin? Attempt to discover the owner of the gems? No; it would be better to my purpose that I should make that a separate problem. Should I take the police into my confidence? By no means—at least till the denouement, when the guilty party had been traced through the labyrinth of circumstance and the hero detective, patting his finger at him, cries, "Then art the man?" My plan would be to show up the ingenuity of my hero in contrast with the stupidity of the police.

Should I advertise the jewels in such a way that the thief would recognize that they were the property in which he was interested? Not till he had time to feel assured that those hunting the jewels were not on his track. But this would involve delay, and I was anxious to pull the thread of my investigations at once. So I advertised that if the party who had misdirected some property sent by express would address me at the office of the newspaper containing the ad, he would learn something to his advantage.

I received no reply to this, but very soon a note came through the mail stating that certain property had been addressed to me by mistake and if I would return it, asking no questions, half the value would be deducted. It was plain from this that my theory was correct. The jewels had been stolen, and the thief was inclined to bribe me to return them to him without giving him away. To ease my conscience he said the matter rested on a family affair that he was not at liberty to reveal.

I replied that it was true I had received by express a package that was unexpected, and I pretended to be deceived by the "family affair," writing that I was not in the habit of poking into other persons' business and could readily understand why it should be kept from me. I was ready to accept the terms offered. A reply came to this stating that if I were disposed to play fair and not attempt any "shenanigans" I would be paid \$5,000 in

currency for the jewels, but if I attempted to lead my correspondent into a trap I would fall into one myself.

My plot was rapidly working to a head, and I saw possibilities of expanding it into a novel that would send my name up among the great writers of detective stories. But I resolved to wait till the denouement before beginning, for experience had taught me that the easiest way to write a detective story is to begin at the end instead of the beginning.

After a lengthy correspondence it was arranged between me and the party attempting to recover the jewels that I should meet him in a house which was one of a row of stone fronts. At a certain hour on a certain day I was to ring the bell of an apartment on the third floor of the building. If I were alone it would be known; if I were followed it would be known. Indeed, unless I came by myself there would be no use of my coming at all. Should I throw up the agreement I would be denounced as having stolen the property.

I began to realize that I was getting into the business of practical detective story writing with a vengeance. It was time I should take some precautions against arrest for having stolen property in my possession. My letters to my correspondent alone would incriminate me. I determined to consult the police. Indeed, they were now necessary to me. I must devise some plan with them by which I should be protected and they should make the arrest. But, desiring to keep the matter in my own hands, I told them only that I was tracking a criminal and wished them to be on hand when the trap was sprung. The inspector was not well satisfied to take up a matter under some one else's lead, but when he found that I was obdurate he consented, and I was turned over to a sergeant to make the necessary arrangements.

Upon showing him the building where I was to meet my party he noticed that the roofs of all the houses in the block were of the same height. Thinking that if any one should wish to get away he would mount to the roof and go down through the scuttle of another house, the sergeant concluded to put men on the roofs to watch that means of egress. This would obviate the necessity of keeping on my trail in the street, which would be known to the criminal.

On the day and hour appointed I repaired with the jewels to the building, rang the bell of the third flat in the vestibule, the latch was drawn, and I went upstairs. A door stood ajar, and I passed through it into a room. A man advanced to meet me. He did not look at all like a jailbird or, indeed, a criminal of any kind.

"Ah," he said cordially, "I see you have brought the box. Permit me to explain verbally that these jewels are a legacy to my daughter. The will by which she inherited them was not properly drawn, and in law, though not in equity, they belong to another. To save them I captured them, though if what I have done were known it would subject me to a criminal prosecution. That is the reason I sent them to you and why I am willing to secure your silence by paying you so large an amount."

Here was a subcomplication for my work. I was very much interested and listened eagerly to the man's story of how he had saved his daughter's inheritance. I declined to accept any reward for the return of the jewels, but he declared that a bargain was a bargain and we must both stand by the one we had made. Since the police were behind me I thought it perfectly safe to accept temporarily anything he might offer.

He counted out fifty \$100 bills, which I rolled in a wad and put in my pocket. It had been agreed between me and my supports that when on my return I reached the street door several policemen who had come after I had made my entrance should go upstairs, while those on the roof were stopping egress in that direction. I therefore said goodbye to the man who had saved his daughter's fortune, resolving that I would attempt to persuade the policemen below to let the case drop. But they refused to be persuaded and went up. They rang the doorbell of the third floor flat, but not receiving a response, were obliged to force an entrance. This took some time, as every door and window was barred. When it was effected the flat was found to be empty. A door had been cut into the adjoining building, through which any one might have passed out and away. At any rate, the man who had saved his daughter's fortune I never saw again. Nor did the police.

I went to the station and turned the bills I had received over to the sergeant. He sent them to a bank for inspection, and they were pronounced counterfeit.

I asked the inspector for a theory as to the meaning of the whole business. After some thought he said: "There was a robbery of jewels recently of which we were notified and were hot on the robber's tracks. That the gems might not be found on him he sent them away by express. How he came to select you for the recipient I don't know. When he wanted the jewels he opened correspondence with you, though it is also possible that some one seeing your ad did so. The result you know. Whoever he is, he has the jewels and you have \$5,000 in worthless money. Next time you meet with such a case you'd better report it to us at once."

I had written detective stories based on the stupidity of the police and the ingenuity of my hero. I now felt that the former were revenged.

I went to my scribbling den and instead of writing a long detective story, wrote a short one. The above tale is all I got out of my practical experience.

SUNDAY SCHOOL.

Lesson VII.—Fourth Quarter, For Nov. 17, 1912.

THE INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

Text of the Lesson, Mark viii, 27, to ix, 1.—Memory Verse, 36, 37.—Golden Text, Matt. xvi, 16.—Commentary Prepared by Rev. D. M. Stearns.

This lesson is recorded also in Matt. xvi and Luke ix, and we will consider it with the harmony of the gospels before us. Miracles in his harmony says that this is the first particular prediction concerning the rejection, the death and the resurrection of the Christ and was probably apart from the multitude and is the first key opposed to the leaven of the Pharisees. Matthew and Mark say that He had come into the coasts or towns of Caesarea Philippi, and Luke adds that He was alone praying. His disciples being with Him. We shall see in the next lesson that He was praying also at the time of His transfiguration (Luke ix, 18, 29). Luke records other instances of His praying in chapters iii, 21; vi, 12; xi, 1; xxii, 41; xxiii, 34. He ever talked with His Father in heaven with the same realization of His presence as that of the people about Him.

People talked about Him and had their opinions as they have today. The Pharisees who believed in a resurrection thought that He might be John the Baptist or Elijah or Jeremiah or one of the prophets, at which, no doubt, the Sadducees scoffed, for they did not believe in resurrection or spirit, but the Pharisees confessed both (Acts xxiii, 6). His next question is the one that should lay hold of our hearts. "Whom say ye that I am?" or as He put it to the Pharisees at another time, "What think ye of Christ?" (Matt. xxii, 42).

It should not so much concern me what others say, but what does my heart say, what is He to me personally? Simon Peter, generally the spokesman, answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (verse 29; Matt. xvi, 16). See his similar testimony in John vi, 69, and that of Martha in John xi, 27. Can I look upon Him with His eyes as a flame of fire searching me through and through and say, O Lord, thou art to me the risen living Christ, my personal Saviour. If so, then blessed am I, for our Father in heaven has taught me by His spirit (Matt. xvi, 17). The words translated Peter and rock in Matt. xvi, 18, are not quite the same, the first signifying a piece of rock easily moved and the other a solid rock immovable. The rock foundation is the great truth that Jesus is God, and other foundation can no man lay (I Cor. iii, 11; Acts iv, 12).

The church built on this and on His great atonement, as God can never be moved. The company of all true believers in Him constitutes this church, and all else must come to naught. Peter was given the keys of the kingdom, not the church, and the church is not the kingdom, but the heavenly center of it. From that time and repeatedly He began to tell them that at the hands of the elders, chief priests and scribes He must suffer many things, be rejected and killed and after three days rise again (verses 31; ix, 31; x, 33, 34; but, although to us seemingly so plain, His disciples did not receive these sayings; not even Peter and John, and it is written concerning them that up to the time of His actual resurrection from the dead they knew not the Scriptures that He must rise again from the dead (John xi, 9). They had not received the message of the prophets that the Messiah must suffer, die, be buried and rise again, though we can see it plainly in such passages as Ps. xlii; Isa. liii; Dan. ix, 26; Zech. xiii, 10; xiii, 6. Peter therefore said that He should not speak of suffering; "Be it far from Thee. Lord. This shall not be unto Thee." ("Pity thyself" (Matt. xvi, 22, and margin). Mark our Lord's reply and note that what is not of God is of the devil and is an offense to God.

Believers are either a sweet savor of Christ or salt that has lost its savor. There is no room for self in a disciple of Christ. It must be always a denial of self, taking up the cross daily and following Him; always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus may be manifest in us; reckoning ourselves dead unto sin and alive unto God (II Cor. iv, 10; Rom. vi, 11). There is no cross of gold or jet or jewels or flowers seen in Scripture, but only a cruel cross of death.

It means crucified to the world and the world to us, seeing Jesus only. To one life means business, to another his profession, to another pleasure, to another this or that great scheme, philanthropic perhaps, or just to make money, but one who is right with God says, "To me to live is Christ." He does not ask us to suffer with Him without setting before us the glory of the kingdom to which He has called (I Thess. ii, 12; II Thess. ii, 14; I Pet. v, 10), and to which He refers in verses 28 of our lesson, and which we shall see more clearly in next week's study of the transfiguration, and to which the last verse of this lesson (Mark ix, 1) clearly belongs. It was the God of glory who appeared to Abraham (Acts vii, 2), and we can only be sustained in the patient waiting, as He and others were. But the church as a whole is as blind to the glory of His kingdom as the disciples were to His death and resurrection, not because it is not plainly revealed, but because other thoughts and ways leave no room for His.

The Only Way.
An elder while baptizing converts at a revival meeting advanced with a wiry, sharp eyed old chap into the water. He asked the usual question, whether there was any reason why the ordinance of baptism should not be administered. After a pause a tall, powerful looking man who was looking quietly on remarked, "Elder, I don't want to interfere in yer business, but I want to say that this is an old sinner you have got bold of and that one dip won't do him any good; you'll have to anchor him out in deep water overnight."—Life.

Happy Days.
Oh, happy was the childhood hour
When father paid the bills
And left us free to grasp the flower
That blossomed on the hills!
Those were the days in which we took
No thought of taxes high
Nor feared the grater or the brook
Who might be drawing nigh.
Three meals per day were always there
So was the dwelling place.
We thought that father's greatest care
Was simply to say grace.
And so we wandered light and free,
Without a trace of woe.
Each had no thoughts save those of glee
Unless he stubbed his toe.
Now greater wisdom bids us pause,
And grateful memory thrills.
We were so happy then because
Dear father paid the bills.
—Washington Star.

Too Much Said.
It was a beautiful evening, and Ole, who had screwed up courage to take Mary for a ride, was carried away by the magic of the night.
"Mary," he asked, "will you marry me?"
"Yes, Ole," she answered softly.
Ole lapsed into silence that at last became painful to his fiancée.
"Ole," she said desperately, "why don't you say something?"
"Ay tank," Ole replied, "they bane too much said already."—Everybody's Magazine.

The Oyster.
Who's traveled from his distant shore,
Arriving in our midst once more?
The same old friend we knew of yore—
The oyster.

Who's served in all the swell cafes,
Cooked in a multitude of ways,
For which old U Consumer pays?
The oyster.

Who has the patience of a saint?
Who never speaks or makes complaint
Or utters protest mild or faint?
The oyster.

Who plays the star part in the stew
At socials all the season through
Alone, with no comrade in view?
The oyster.
—Richmond Times-Dispatch.

Short and to the Point.
A certain man was invited to speak at a political meeting and was placed last on the list of speakers. Moreover, the chairman introduced several speakers whose names were not on the program, and the audience was tired out when he eventually introduced the last speaker: "Mr. Bones will now give us his address."
"My address," said Mr. Bones, rising, "is 553 Park villa, and I wish you all good night."—Lippincott's Magazine.

What He Got Out of It.
He never took a day of rest;
He couldn't afford it.
He never had his trousers pressed;
He couldn't afford it.
He never went away care free
To visit distant lands, to see
How fair a piece this world might be;
He couldn't afford it.

He never went to see a play;
He couldn't afford it.
His love for art he put away;
He couldn't afford it.
He died and left his heirs a lot,
But so tall shaft proclaims the spot
In which he lies. His children thought
They couldn't afford it.
—Chicago Record-Herald.

Their Move.
"Stiff at Billson's lodging house, are you not?"
"No, at the Cholmondeley apartments."
"When did you move?"
"Didn't move. They just changed the name and put up the rent."—Boston Transcript.

The Man Who Carries the Mail.
The postman's package is a thing
He carries carefully;
What joy or woe he may bestow
He doesn't know—not he!
Some postcards for the lovers,
And for the rest some bills—
And very scads of foolish aids
Of soap and sugar and pills.
But in the mail man's grip-pack
Well hid from vulgar eyes,
Beneath the heap, and buried deep,
A mighty message lies.
Bring it a waiting maiden
Her lover's message: Ah,
Better than that! it brings a fat
Check from her dear papa!
—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

One on Father.
Father—Tom, go and fetch the old horse.
Tom—Why the old one, father?
Father—Wear out the old one first, that's my motto.
Tom—Well, father, then you fetch the horse.—Punch.

Stage Storms.
The sandstorm on the stage
Is very, very good.
I understand they don't use sand,
But breakfast food.

The snowstorm on the stage
Oft makes the nit of hits.
I understand the dramatists
Tear plays to bits.
—Louisville Courier-Journal.

He Had a Cinch.
"Solomon, you know, was considered the wisest man on earth."
"Yes. His wives probably kept him informed concerning all that was going on."—Chicago Record-Herald.

You Know Him.
The man who makes me weary
And whom I view with scorn
Has a hundred dollar auto
And a hundred dollar barn.
—Cincinnati Enquirer.



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