The Case Book of a Private Detective

True Narratives of Interesting Cases by a Former Operative of the William J. Burns Detective Agency

By DAVID CORNELL

asked.

WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS

Nipping a New York Blackhand Conspiracy in the Bud

Pasquale Leoni came near to being one of the smoothest blackhand chieftains in this country. But not quite. He falled at the very outset of what would have been, had it succeeded in getting started, one of the most successful blackmailing and robbing conspiracles that ever emanated from the evil minds of the Italian Black Hand men who live by terrorizing their fel-

low countrymen in American cities. Leoni ran a little private bank for the accommodation of his own countrymen in Elizabeth street, in the lower Italian quarter of New York City. He made no pretense of doing a big business, nor of securing his depositors and patrons against loss by any great capital of his own. He had started in as a steamship agent, selling tickets for a couple of the lines that make a specialty of carrying the cheaper class of passenger trade between New York and the Mediterranean ports. That was ten years before the events here to be related ever began.

From a seller of steamship tickets Leoni began to branch out, and soon he was running a little Italian employment agency in conjunction with his original business. He satisfied everybody concerned with his dealings in this, and soon the Italian emigrants who had found work through his office began to entrust to him the task of conveying safely to the loved ones back in Italy part of the funds earned by the newcomers in America.

The private bank was the next step. The newly arrived Italians were loathe to trust their hard-earned money with any of the strange bankers in this strange land. Leoni was one of them, a son of their own beloved Italy. He had welcomed them upon their arrival at Ellis Island, he had brought them up the bay and found them rooms in the crowded quarters of the east side. Work they had secured through him, and their steps in the new land had been generally guided by his advice. What more natural than that they should turn to him when they began to accumulate little sums of money which they wished to save?

Leoni took care of their money with great satisfaction to them and considerable profit to himself. His power and influence, and the prosperity of his little private bank—so private that the state bank examiners had nothing to do with it-grew until in March, 1911, he had on deposit in his Elizabeth street office over \$150,000 placed in his care by his trusting countrymen.

I had never heard of Leoni until he came to the office of the Burns Detective Agency and asked for protec-

"It is the Black Hand-the Mano Nera-that is after me," he said. "They have threaten me. Me. Pasquale Leoni, whom all good Italians trust—these bad men have threatened that they shall take my life or I am I reasoned: "Here is an excitable to give them \$25,000."

He dove into his pocket as he spoke and showed us a letter written in Italian and addressed to him. Translated

it read: Dear Prosperous Brother:

"Many of the countrymen are out of work. Times are not as rich with all as they are with you. Those who have much should help those who have little or nothing. Brother, you have much; we have nothing. should be glad to help. There are many of us. That we all should get a little you must give much. But it is not much to you, who has so much. Brother, you must have \$25,000 to give us in two weeks when we ask for it, or we will remove you as a traitor to your poor countrymen.

"The Beautiful Society." It was a typical Black Hand letter, except that the amount was away beyond the usual demand.

"How did you have the nerve to come here about this?" asked the office manager. You know Italians usually are afraid to speak even to their wives about communications of this

"To the police I would not go," said "But you I think I can trust. Anyhow, I will die before I give up this money. I want you to protect me by finding the writer of this letter and putting him in jail. I have heard that you do such things very well."

Want to take the case, Cornell?" he asked "We don't usually touch anything of this sort." "Certainly," I said. "It's all part

of the game to me." al and I got together then. took the letter and examined it carefully. It was in a fairly good handwriting and carefully punctuated and phrased. Apparently it was the work of an educated man.

of an educated man.

I reasoned that this letter probably was the work of one of the men whom Leoni had had dealings with in one way or another. Probably somebody who had deposited money with him and who knew how prosperous the private banker was becoming.

POLICE RECORDS SHOW PAST

night," he said. "I found it when open store in the morning."

"It was shoved under the door a I put the letter under a mic

"How did the letter come to you?"

I left for Whitefish that day. Thirty |

hours later I was asking the postmis-

tress of that little town if she had

any mail for "Ignacio Martina." She

had. Of course she knew that I wasn't

Martina so she wouldn't hand over

the letter, but I had a glimpse of it

I spotted Martina next day. He was a villainous, though intelligent

looking fellow who lived in the Ital-

ian settlement of the town without

any visible means of support. Now see

how pure luck often makes a case for

his own.

a detective with scarcely any effort of

There was in Whitefish a private

Italian banker operating much after

the manner of Leoni in New York.

The Italians who lived in the town

were mostly men who worked on the

railroad, and their families. They had

begun to settle in the town a few

a white-headed old Calabrian, had ta-

of this Little Italy. He made himself

political boss of his countrymen first;

well. I found this out on the third

day of my visit to Whitefish because

murdered in the room in the rear of

The murder was a terrible shock to

the peaceful little town. Nothing of

the sort had ever happened in its his-

tory. The tragedy had occurred on

Main street, no later than ten o'clock,

and was a crime of the boldest and

bloodiest sort. Cantino had been

stabbed seven times, and any one of

I reached Cantino's office a few

minutes after the alarm had been

spread. There were no signs of a

struggle and no disorder of any kind.

Cantino apparently had been stabbed

away from his assailant-stabbed by

the cuts would have been fatal.

on the night of that day Cantino was ing!

and saw that it was from New York.

However, I went at once down to !

the house where Martina had boarded.

He was not in. He had gone back to

the old country the night before. He

had purchased his railroad and steam-

ship ticket of old Cantino several days

earlier, and last night he had gone,

I went from there down to the sta-

tion and found that Martina had taken

the midnight train for Milwaukee. He

would have had plenty of time to com-

At once I wired the New York of

fice of the Burns Agency what had

happened and to have them watch the

boats of the Italian line on which Mar-

tina had bought tickets. After this

I caught a train back to New York,

taking with me the threatening letters

received by Cantino. To while away

the tedium of the long journey I took

these letters out to re-read. Studying

with the impression that I had seen

I was sure of it. I had a piece of

Leoni's writing in my possession. It

ters. Then I got a shock. The letters

were positively in Leoni's hand-writ-

It took some time for the signifi-

Martina had written Leoni in New

York a practical duplicate of what

Leoni had written Cantino in White-

fish. Wis. Leoni, the banker, who had

come to us with a threatening letter,

had written the same kind of a let-ter himself to a banker in Wisconsin.

night that Cantino was murdered.

And Martina had left Whitefish the

Meanwhile the New York office of

our agency was watching the boats

that sailed for Mediterranean ports.

Every 200 miles or so I would get a

wire advising me that such and such

first in the neck as he was turning a boat had sailed and nobody answer- front rooms on the third floor. I was

cance of this to sink in.

leaving the house at nine o'clock.

mit the murder.

years before, and one Frank Cautino, them more carefully now I as struck

ken upon himself the burdens of king that hand-writing somewhere before.

then he became their banker. He was was an address he had written for me

much respected and liked by his in his office. I dug it up and careless-

countrymen and by Americans as ly compared it with the Cantino let-

I said to myself: "You big -

ord of my doings since Leoni had ap-

plied at the office for a man, I couldn't

see where in the world I had fallen

down. If I was any good at all then I

had worked up a case that pointed

straight to the end I had worked to-

ward. If it didn't point that way-

falled so completely.

two months.

tendent.

alone.

But I hated to believe that I had

But I had my own private hunch, in

spite of the innocent expression on

Leonl's face. I made myself a mental

country, and that I knew just where

It took some time. To make a long

story short, I went to the tenement

firectly opposite Leoni's office in

Elizabeth street and rented the two

to find him-in time.

wrong."

and examined it carefully. "Did it come just the way it was?" "Yes."

"No envelope?" "No, nothing but what you have there."

That didn't sound good to me. Un der the microscope the letter failed to show any of the dust or dirt that would have adhered to it if it had been carried uninclosed and, without a cover, pushed under the door of his little private bank. an Elizabeth street store. The letter was crisp and clean; as if it had been taken from an envelope that had sheltered it in its travels until very recently.

"Is this the only letter of this sort you have?" I asked.

"No, no," he laughed. "There were others. I tore them up. I paid no attention to them until this one came. It names a time when I must have the money ready. That is why I came here.'

"Were the letters all in this handwriting?" I asked.

He was a little slow in answering 'Yes," he said, finally. "Yes, all the same hand-writing."

"All right," I said; "let's go down to your office."

He grumbled at this, "It would not do for me to be seen with you," he protested. "The soclety has eyes everywhere. If you come to Elizabeth street with me its spies will see and they will get suspicious. Then they will kill me as a warning for others to be careful."

"All right," said I. "When can I come to see you?"

"You want to see me in the office? "Yes, in your office." "That is absolutely necessary?"

"Yes," I said, "it's necessary." "All right, all right," he said. "Come tonight then, at ten. The street will be crowded so that you can slip in without being noticed."

I put on some old clothes that night and slouched through the crowds in Elizabeth street until I reached Leoni's store. I went in pretending to have some business at the banking window, and when no one was looking I slipped back into the office. "I want to take a look at your books

first of all." I said. He was puzzled, but he turned over to me his books. He had kept the signatures of his depositors in a single big book, and this was what I looked over most carefully.

I found what I had hoped to find. bout a year before one "Ignacio Martina" had written his name and his address, "Whitefish, Wis.," in Leoni's signature book in the same fine Italian hand that had written the threatening letter. There was no mistak ing it. The writing was too distinc tive to be confused.

I was on the point of telling Leoni what I had found, but on second flash Italian, half crazed with fear, and if I tell him what I think I have found he'll go up in the air, and if he doesn't plot to take his private vengeance he's almost sure to let someone know what he's been told." So I said nothing, but looked through the book without comment. After a short time I left Leoni, telling him I'd call him up in a day or two.

"Do you think you can catch them?"

"I don't know," I said. "It's pretty hard for an American to get onto the crooked ways of these fellows, but we've never falled on a case yet." "Ah," he said. "But you never had

case like this?" "No," said I; "that's true, too." When I got back to the office the manager said: "Well, how do you like Black Handing as far as you've

"That's a funny looking case to me," I said. "It looks too easy to be

I told him what I had found, and what my theory shaped up like. "Oh, drop it if you want to," he said. "I don't think we care to be mixed up in that sort of a mess. Do just as

I had already made a start on the case and had discovered what I was inclined to believe was a striking clue. The attraction of the man-hunt had me, and I said:

"I'll go on with it for a while at

least, if you don't mind." Next day I went down to the Federal building and looked over ames of Italians who had applied for citizenship in this country. There I had received threatening letters just found "Ignacio Martina's" name again, as I deduced. There were three of and in the same hand-writing as the them. The last one had threaten Black Hand letter that Leoni had re- him with death in two weeks if he did ceived. I called up Leoni's bank on the phone. Leoni didn't happen to be in. If he had been this story probably would never have been told. His this, and he was killed as a conseclerk was in and in answer to my question he looked up his books and found that Ignacio Martina still was living in Whitefish, Wis., that he got his mail at the general delivery, and that he was a tall thin man with a quite different hand, an educated Italian hand, but not Martina's.

ction of the matter was very dif- They are pawned now for \$800. They have been over. I bought silver at have been there one month and no the same place—it might have been don't remember anything more." rent; they dug down into the de-riment's records and found, under the of June 24, 1878, a confession by len Peck, of which the following is

"The biggest part of the rest is i "I used \$4,000 of the money to pay off a mortgage on the house; mortgage was paid to the Phoenix Insurance company. I paid out \$3,500 for diamonds. I took them out of pawnahop for Mrs. Laselie; she resided then at No. 2 East Fourth street. I paid \$3,500 to get them out of pawnal \$3,500 to get the

vestigation proved that the bank had

not been robbed. The safe was locked

and Cantino's papers and property

The local authorities began to seek

for the motive for such a strange

crime, but I put it down as Black

Hand work at once. I reasoned that

Cantino had been threatened even as

my friend Leoni in New York, that he

had refused to yield to the blackmail-

ers, and that he had been slain as

With the permission of the sheriff I

began to go through the old man's pa-

I found what I was looking for. He

nised in the threats.

pers. I had not searched long be

were all in order.

He did it so well that he fooled me.

terrible vengeance on his victim. In- | Martina had been arrested while try- | of gold rings in my ears helped out

When I reached New York city I

icab and had myself driven to within

a couple of squares of Leoni's bank in

Elizabeth street. Discharging the taxi

man I walked down to the place, min-

gling with the crowd in a way to make

myself inconspicuous, Leoni was back

"Hello, Mr. Leoni," I said. "Seen

Leoni was a good actor but not good

"You haven't seen him, have you?"

"Oh, yes." I said. "I saw him out

in Whitefish. He killed a fellow by

the name of Cantino out there the

I never watched anybody closer in

all my life than I did Leoni while I

was telling him this. No Anglo-Saxon

could have hidden what was going or

in his mind the way that little Italian

did. His expression was one of sur-prise, only surprise, that I should

of the cashier's cage. I walked in.

anything of Martina?"

day before yesterday."

he said.

nothing of the sort occurred.

"I bought the gas fixtures for the house—they were \$260. I have the bill of them. I bought what clothing five of us have had. I have bills of all of them in items. They amount

with a gun in his hand.

Leons jumped up with a gun in his hand

ing to get out of the country, but the deception. I explained to the

didn't go to the office. I halled a tax- would be at home a lot during the

The Mother's Touch.

A faint odor of chloreform per-fumed the crowded street car and the passengers watched in sympathy a pair seated near the door. He was an overgrown boy of 12, neatly but poor-ly dressed. His eyes were bandaged and his head rested on his mother's knee. She was thin and faded and tired looking, and the moist handker-

many as 20 tickets—at \$40 each. I chief clasped in her cotton gloved

woman who rented the rooms that I

I was. Both daytime and night.

There wasn't an hour in the twenty-

four that I, or Cluffer, who came over

to help me, didn't have an eye glued

to the window that covered Leoni's

front door. He had no back door or

somebody would have covered that

It took just ten days to clear the

thing up. It was about 3 in the morn-

ing. I was watching, and the street

was empty. Along came a man in a mackintosh and knocked at Leoni's

door. The door opened instantly and

the man went inside. In about half

an hour he came out, looked up and down the street, and hurried in the

direction of Broadway, toward the

his tracks, but I rode up to Harlem in

ticket seller's window I saw his face.

the subway with him just the same.

was out of work and that I probably

- | had him covered. I called an officer fool! You guessed wrong, absolutely and turned Martina over to him. Then as fast as a taxi could carry me I I went back to the office and began went downtown to detective headquarto write up my reports, trying to find ters, and from there to Leoni's in Elizabeth street.

a flaw in the theory I had worked out. We broke in the door, and Leoni Since I had been up against Leoni and had played my big card and hadn't jumped up with a gun in his hand. brought anything out I felt that my One of the plain clothes men twisted theory must be wrong. His expresit away from him and dragged him sion absolutely had convinced me. But as I wrote and rewrote the rec

out to where I was waiting.
"Good morning, Leoni," I said. "I just pinched your pal, Martina, and he confessed.

We had hard work keeping him from killing himself. "That dog," he screamed. "That dog!"

Had Martina confessed? Oh, no; but before morning we had the whole Cantino had sold Martina tickets story. Martina told on Leoni, and over the old Italia-Mediterranean line. Leoni on Martina. They had framed Our men had been watching the up a Black Hand conspiracy that was docks and boats of that company closa study in cunning. Leoni was to er than any other. Nobody approach- find out when any Italian banker had ing Martina's description had sailed any money, and Martina was to go out on it. The second day that I was in and scare him. Leoni had made Mar-New York the report came that the tina write him the Black Hand letter line wouldn't have another boat for so that he, Leoni, could appear as a two weeks, and that no reservations victim of that society, thus lessening on that boat had been made from the possibility of suspicion that he Whitefish, Wisconsin. There had been was a member of it. But for that no reservation from Whitefish for they might have been operating yet. As it was, they hadn't pulled off a "Stung!" said the agency superinsingle job. Martina had killed Can-"Your man got away on tino as a warning to other bankers. some other line. I told you that you'd And I had caught the pair of them bebetter let that Black Hand stuff cause Leoni foolishly had let me see a sample of Martina's handwriting.

The Federal authorities took Leoni off our hands. He is doing twenty years. The Wisconsin people gave bet that Martina hadn't left this Martina life in prison.

PLANS RELIGION FOR JAPAN

Mr. Izawa Would Have It Center About the Divine Right of the Emperor.

ing the description of my man had dressed in the clothes of the average someone whom he did not fear-and come aboard. Every time I opened a Italian laborer, and while I was a lit-Mr. Izawa, ex-vice-minister of eduafter that the assassin had wreaked wire I hoped to see the news that the too tall for a fair specimen, a pair cation, is the originator of a plan to provide Japan with an entirely new religion. The new religious body, according to the Japan Advertiser, is to be called "The State Religious Community of Japan," and Mr. Izawa explains his proposal as follows:

"The Japanese Empire having been governed by one imperial family since the very beginning, the emperor possesses divine right. Such a policy can hardly be found in any other country. In China it has happened that the emperor abdicates his throne to be sucseeded by one of his former subjects Then, too, when the German emperor spoke once of his divine right, he was strongly criticised. But in Japan the emperor is the descendant of Amenominakanuchi-no-Kami, the creator of the world. Hence the imperial family being a divine race is entirely different from the race of Japanese.

"This Amenominakanuchi-no-Kami is the only creator of the world, and he has existed since the beginning and still exists. He is called emperor of Heaven in China, Buddha in India, and God in Western countries. My plan is to gather a religious community around our emperor for the purpose of cultivating among its members loyalty toward the emperor and of ele-

vating their moral ideas. "As to the citizens of other counries, they are all living under the graclous protection of the Creator of the world, so that they can become members of this religious community if they become subjects of the Japanese

Mental Processes in the Brain.

We have no facts which at present us to locate the mental they were located fifty years ago. to cerebral activities we may believe. joy of the Lord is your strength." but with what anatomical elements be connected we do not know. Notwithstanding our ignorance, it would phrenological systems, however sciensurface. mind is a function or an attribute of the brain as a whole, or is a concomihistological localizationists on the ground of a special mental process for special cerebral areas or for special cerebral cell groups.—Shepherd Ivory Franz, in Science.

Unavailing Hero Worship.

Herman Perlet, the musical director and composer, was recruiting a philharmonic orchestra and had enlisted the services of an Italian acquaintance. Among the instrumentalists he procured was a very old man with an antiquated flute from which he was able to get a wheezy tone now and then. "Take him away!" ordered Perlet after the first rehearsal. "He can't play the flute. What! Thata man can't playa da flute!" gasped the sponsor. "Not in this orchestra. Take him away!" "Maledetta!" He rolled his eyes heavenward. "Thata man can't playa da flute!" And he beat his breast in indignation. man he fighta with Garibaldi!

Cucumber 40 Years Old. A dispatch from Findlay, O., to the New York American says: :"Mrs. subway. He thought he had hidden John F. Moore of Arcadia has a cucumber 40 years old. When she was He got off at 125th street. I fol- she pulled a small cucumber with a owed him, and under the light of the portion of vine attached to it and stuck it in a bottle. When it grew "Martina," I said, and he turned- large the cucumber was placed in a bottle and sealed, and to this day has I hadn't taken any chances, and I retained its color and freshness.

> hands told a mother's heart had been bleeding. Suddenly the boy draw a long, quivering breath, as if waking long, quivering breath, as if waking up to the cruel scalization of pain. Everybody gased at him now. His bead rolled uneasily, his hand groped restlessly until it was clasped in his mother's, then he was quiet again. Such a little, simple gesture, but it made every man and woman in the car akin. Sometime in an hour. car akin. Sometime in an hour of pain they, too, had sought mother's

An Old-Time Thanksgiving Day

By REV. JAMES M. GRAY, D. D., Dean of the Moody Bible Institute, Chicago

TEXT—"And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them."—Nehemlah



Our rorefathers before all else were religious. Religion separated them from the fatherland and all that it means, to face these "bleak New England The voyshores." age of the Mayflower was as sacred as Israel's crossing the Red sea. The clearing of the forests, the building of the huts, the treatles with the Indians,

the civil compacts with one another, were all, in a way, acts of worship. Thanksgiving day in its conception, and its inception, and its observance 300 years ago was only less holy than the Sabbath. A ball game on Thanksgiving day! As soon turn away from Jehovah and bow down to Baal and Ashtaroth!

Ye Olden Times. Read the sermons preached on Thanksgiving day in "ye olden times," and compare them with the political harangues of today. Shades of Increase and Cotton Mather! They believed in God then. They believed he gave seed time and harvest, and they had a godly fear of that judgment upon sin which might withhold the

once, just once-and then? It will not do to say that the former days were better than these. They were not in some things. They burned tallow candles then, and wore poke bonnets; now we have the Merry Widow hat and the are light. They walked on earth then, and sailed on the sea; now we navigate the air, and know the mysteries of the submarine. But the presence of God was potent to our fathers, and now-well, we're not so

sure about it. Let us go back to Bethel. Why should not Thanksgiving day be made a revival day? Not a day of gloom, not the sourness of the Puritan, but his gladness, for he had gladness, a real gladness, the gladness that comes from an enlightened recognition of his bounty who is the author and giver of every good and perfect gift, the gladness that comes from a willing dedication of ourselves to his holy service.

Post-Babylonian Judah affords a good type of the observance of Thanksgiving day. You will find the story in the eighth of Nehemiah.

Laughter for Tears. The people were gathered in a great open air meeting, and Ezra read the Word of God to them, while their other religious teachers and civil governors explained its sense. At first they were afraid, and were moved to tears, for conviction of sin had gripped them; but they were exhorted to laugh instead of weep, for it was a

holy day unto the Lord their God. "Go your way," said Nehemiah, "eat processes in the brain any better than portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy unto That the mental processes may be due our Lord; neither be ye sorry, for the

This teaches us that there is such the individual mental processes may a thing as holy mirth, a joyous festivity unto the Lord. Indeed, this was the prevailing idea of all the Mosaic appear best and most scientific that feasts, which were social as well as we should not adhere to any of the religious occasions of the highest joy. It teaches us again that holy mirth tific they may appear to be on the is accompanied by benevolence and We should be willing to love. What constant provision is made stand with Brodmann, believing that for the poor in all the Old Testament legislation? Nehemiah was teaching nothing new when he said: "Send portant of cerebral operations, but I at tions unto them for whom nothing is least am unwilling to stand with the prepared." God's idea of repentance, is, among other things, "to judge the fatherless, to relieve the oppressed, and to plead for the widow."

It teaches us in the third place that the mirth which breeds benevolence is inspired not by material prosperity, but by the knowledge of the word of the Lord. There was material pros perity in post-Edenic times, but it led not to mirthfulness, and love, but to jealousy and murder. Cain was prosperous, but he killed his brother There was material prosperity in the days before the flood, for men were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, but God saw that "every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually (Genesis 6:5). There was material prosperity after the flood, for men built cities and erected empires, but they forgot God until he scattered them to the four corners of the earth. Oh, what good news God has to pour into our sad and heavy hearts out of his precious word, if we will listen to Let us gather around that word the place which other things have usurped of late. Closed eyes will be opened by it, darkness will give place to light, and the garment of praise will be donned instead of the spirit of beaviness.

The Great Secret.

Loving God is the secret which reconciles all. This is the secret of being occupied, with interest, in the the things of heaven. But ye divided

the things of heaven. But ye divided hearts, who have dreamed of a compromise between heaven and earth, and have appeared tormented with fears and scruples, now know the cause of your condition: Ye fear God, but ye do not love him.

Love had speedily cut the difficulty; everything for God, nothing for self, is its motto. Everything for God, provided God is mine. Then let him entich or impovarish my life, let him strend or limit my activity, let him gratify or oppose my tastes; if I have my God, I have all things at oncar-alexandre R. Vinet.