

## 'Bud' Fisher



team to Cincinnati. Games have been scheduled to take place almost daily before the teams embark on the Pacific coast.

**The Tourists Are Off.**  
National League players, including members of the New York Giants, left for the first of the exhibition tour on Sunday, in connection with the White Sox squad they will officially start the round-the-world base ball tour. The eastern party will set the White Sox in Cincinnati tomorrow for the first of the exhibition games of the American schedule. Several of the players were accompanied by their wives. Newspaper base ball writers, photographers, and two others completed the party.

A civic commission was proposed for the Toronto street railway.

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Pure, Palatable, Nutritious Beverages. For sale by Wine and Spirit Merchants everywhere.

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# THE CASE-BOOK of a PRIVATE DETECTIVE

Inside History of the Methods Employed in Criminal Investigation, Embracing True Narratives of Interesting Cases by a Former Operative of the William J. Burns Detective Agency.

DAVID CORNELL

## 7—Wheels Within Wheels

### NIPPING A NEW YORK BLACKHAND CONSPIRACY IN THE BUD

(Copyright, 1912, by International Press Bureau.)

Editor's Note.—In order that no advantage may accrue through the publication of these narratives to persons involved therein, certain names and places have in many instances been substituted for the real ones.

Pasquale Leoni came near to being one of the smoothest blackhand chieftains in this country. But not quite. He failed at the very outset of what would have been, had it succeeded in getting started, one of the most successful blackmailing and robbing conspiracies that ever emanated from the evil minds of the Italian Black Hand men who live by terrorizing their fellow 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 a 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 but the strongest bankers in this strange land. Leoni was one of them, a son of their own beloved Italy. He had welcomed them upon their arrival in Ellis Island, he had brought them to the crowded quarters of the east side. Week by week he secured through him, and their steps in the new land had been generally guided by his advice. That 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 satisfaction to them, and considerable profit to himself. His power, influence, and the prosperity of the little private bank—so private that the state bank examiners had to do with it—grew until in 1911 he had on deposit in his sixth street office over \$150,000 and in his care by his trusting countrymen.

Leoni never heard of Leoni until he came to the office of the Burns Detective Agency and asked for protection. "Is the Black Hand—the Mano Nera—is it after me?" he asked. "I have been threatened. Me, Pasquale Leoni, whom all good Italians there had men have threatened. They shall take my life or I am worth \$25,000."

Leoni showed us a letter written in Italian addressed to him. Translated and read:

"My Prosperous Brother:—The money of the countrymen are out of the Times are not as rich with all they are with you. Those who are little or nothing. Brother, you are much to you, who has so much. After, you must have \$25,000 or you 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."

#### CUSTOM IS DEEPLY ROOTED

Easy to Understand Why Authorities Find It Hard to Put Down Head Hunting.

In an article in Harper's on her recent journey among the Dyaks of Borneo, Mary Hilar Becho tells the origin of the practice of head hunting—a practice which still prevails among these savage people despite our efforts to put it down.

"It was told later than a Dyak is made for days after taking a head. I realized the infinite fact and wisdom with which the two white sages of Sarawak—Sir James and Sir Charles Brooke—have striven to

"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 sort.

"To the police I would not go," said Leoni. "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."

The office manager turned to me. "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."

Leoni and I got together then. I took the letter and examined it carefully. It was in a fairly good hand, written and carefully punctuated and phrased. Apparently it was the work 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.

"How did the letter come to you?" I asked.

"It was shoved under the door at night," he said. "I found it when I open store in the morning."

I put the letter under a microscope and examined it carefully.

"Did it come just the way it was?" I asked.

"No envelope?"

"No, nothing but what you have there."

That didn't sound good to me. Under the microscope the letter failed to show any of the dust or dirt that would have adhered to it if it had been carried unenclosed and without a cover, pushed under the door of 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 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 handwriting."

"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 society has eyes everywhere. If you come to Elizabeth street with me, the spies will see and they will get suspicious. Then they will kill me as a warning for others to be careful."

"All right," I said. "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. About a year before one "Ignacio Martini" had written his name and his address, "Whitfish, Wis." in Leoni's signature book in the same fine Italian hand that had written the threat-

ening letter. There was no mistake in it. The writing was too distinctive to be confused.

I was on the point of telling Leoni what I had found, but on second thought I reasoned: "Here is an exorbitant 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?" he asked.

"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 failed on a case yet."

"Ah," he said. "But you never had a case like this."

"No," I said. "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 gone?"

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

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 you please about it."

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 the names of Italians who had applied for citizenship in this country. There I found "Ignacio Martini's" name again, and in the same handwriting as the Black Hand letter that Leoni had received. 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 clerk was in and in answer to my question he looked up his books and found that Ignacio Martini still was living in Whitfish, Wis., that he got his mail at the general delivery, and that he was a tall thin man with a thin face.

I left for Whitfish that day. Thirty hours later I was asking the postmistress of that little town if she had any mail for "Ignacio Martini." She had. Of course she knew that I wasn't a detective, so she wouldn't deliver, and the letter, but I had a glimpse of it and saw that it was from New York.

I spotted Martini next day. He was a villainous, though intelligent-looking fellow who lived in the Italian settlement of the town without any visible means of support. Now see how pure luck often makes a case for a detective with scarcely any effort of his own.

There was in Whitfish 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 years before, and one Frank Cantino, a white-headed old Calabrian, had taken upon himself the burden of king of this little Italy. He made himself political boss of his countrymen first, then he became their banker. He was much respected and liked by his countrymen and by Americans, as well. I found this out on the third day of my visit to Whitfish, because on the night of that day Cantino was murdered in the room in the rear of the little private bank.

The murder was a terrible shock to the peaceful little town. Nothing of the sort had ever happened in its history. The tragedy had occurred on Main street no later than ten o'clock, and was a crime of the bloodiest and bloodiest sort. Cantino had been stabbed seven times, and any one of the cuts would have been fatal.

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 first in the back as he was turning away from his assailant—stabbed by someone whom he did not fear—and after that the assassin had wreaked terrible vengeance on his victim. Investigation proved that the bank had not been robbed. The safe was locked and Cantino's papers and property were all in order.

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 blackmailers, and that he had been slain as promised in the threat.

With the permission of the sheriff I began to go through the old man's papers. I had not searched long before I found what I was looking for. He had received threatening letters just as I deduced. There were three of them. The last one had threatened him with death in two weeks if he did not turn over a certain sum of money to "the man who comes and asks you for it." Apparently he had not done this, and he was killed as a consequence.

I was disappointed in those letters. I had expected to see them in the handwriting of Martini. But they weren't. They were in another and quite different hand, an educated Italian hand, but not Martini's.

However, I went at once down to the home where Martini had boarded. He was not in. He had gone back to the old country the night before. He had purchased his railroad and steamship ticket of old Cantino several days earlier, and last night he had gone, leaving the house at nine o'clock.

I went from there down to the station and found that Martini had taken the midnight train for Milwaukee. He would have had plenty of time to commit the murder.

At once I wired the New York office of the Burns Agency what had happened and to have them watch the boats of the Italian line on which Martini had boarded.

I caught a train back to New York, taking with me the threatening letters received by Cantino. The whole way the return of the long journey I took these letters out to re-read. Studying them more carefully now I was struck with the impression that I had seen that handwriting somewhere before.

I was sure of it. I had a piece of Martini's writing in my possession. It was an address he had written for me in his office. I dug it up and carefully compared it with the Cantino letters. Then I got a shock. The letters were positively in Leoni's handwriting.

"It took some time for the significance of this to sink in."

Martini had written Leoni in New York a practical duplicate of what Leoni had written Cantino in Whitfish. Was Leoni the banker who had come to us with a threatening letter, had written the same kind of a letter himself to a banker in Wisconsin, and afterwards had left Whitfish the night that Cantino was murdered?

Meanwhile the New York office of our agency was watching the boats that sailed for Mediterranean ports. Every one miles or so I would get a wire advising me that such and such a boat had sailed, and nobody answering the description of my man had come aboard. Every time I opened a wire I hoped to see the news that Martini had been arrested while trying to get out of the country, but nothing of the sort occurred.

When I reached New York city I didn't go to the office. I had a taxi cab 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, mingling with the crowd in a way to make myself inconspicuous. Leoni was back of the cashier's cage. I walked in.

"Hello, Mr. Leoni," I said. "Seen anything of Martini?"

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