

THE SLEUTH

Neil entered the courtroom feeling like an actor called upon to play the leading part in a play unknown to him. A fresh doubt of the story he was going to tell attacked him—and it was too late to think up another now.

The great room was brightly lighted. It was paneled to the ceiling with a light yellow wood. As long as he lived that color affected Neil with a slight sickness. Hartigan was at his side, rosy and self-conscious. The back benches were half full, mostly with anxious-eyed men and women who had a stake in the cases to come. Some there were who slept in painfully upright attitudes, calculated not to attract a court officer's attention. There was a cloud of policemen, all looking oddly defenseless without their visors.

On a bench inside the gate Neil saw the Old Codger watching and waiting, bursting with vindictiveness. His heart sank. He had a vagrant hope that apoplexy might intervene. Neil looked eagerly toward the magistrate's bench. Upon it he saw a youngish man with a tall head, solemn and rather disgusted looking, like one who is performing an unpleasant duty self-righteously. Meeting him outside, Neil would have passed over him indifferently. "Commonplace" would have been his verdict. But there he sat, enthroned above, charged with a power over the body.

"I'll never be able to do anything with this owl," thought Neil. A subtle antagonism crept into his breast which didn't help his case any.

The Old Codger needed no prompting to tell his tale. It poured out of him with embellishments. Neil stared indignantly. "What does he want to do for?" he thought. "It's bad enough!" Officer Hartigan followed the complainant on the stand. The other tenants of No. 21 were not present.

While the testimony was being given another policeman touched Neil on the arm, and to his astonishment, offered him coat and hat.

"The striker guy that was acquitted left these for you," he said. "Said you'd need 'em if you had to take an other ride. Said his card was in the pocket if you wanted to return 'em."

Neil thankfully accepted the gifts. The coat fitted him. Though he was not borne down by any feeling of guilt, still with the coat he put on an increased self-respect. So dependent are men on their habiliments.

"Well, have you anything to say for yourself?" the magistrate finally asked, turning a lack-lustre eye on the prisoner.

"Only this," said Neil. "I ask you as a reasonable man if I had intended to rob this man's room would I have announced myself by jumping through the skylight?"

The court attendants looked a little scandalized at the familiar tone.

"I don't know," said the magistrate, solemnly, "never having been a thief. What were you doing on the roof?"

"I am an artist," said Neil. "I was studying the effect of rain at night."

"H'm!" said his honor. "You have given your address as No. 13, while the complainant says he lives at 21. Why didn't you stay on your own roof?"

"The composition was better over there," explained Neil. "The magistrate looked blank, but would not confess his ignorance of the term. Neil perceived that he was making an impression.

"I mean the arrangements of objects and shadows," he explained.

"Have you any witnesses?"

"I was alone."

"I mean character witnesses. Some one to inform the court that you are what you claim to be."

"No," said Neil, assuming an air of indignation. "I don't want to drag any of my friends into this ridiculous business."

"H'm!" said his honor again. After considering a moment or two an expedient worthy of Solomon occurred to him. He looked gravely pleased at his own perspicacity. "You say you are an artist. Clerk, give him pencil and paper. Now, make a quick sketch of me." He assumed a before-the-camera expression of judicial dignity.

This was child's play to Neil. His heart looked up. He was doing better than he had expected. But prudence held his hand. The tall-headed, solemn young man lent himself feebly to caricature. Neil doubted his ability to flatter him.

"I couldn't do your honor justice in a short space of time," he said, respectfully. "I will do this policeman instead."

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The magistrate looked disappointed, but signed to him to proceed. Officer Hartigan blushed to his ears and looked wildly around. But he was trapped. The quick pencil was already at work. The other policemen grinned behind their hands. In a few moments Neil handed the paper up to the bench. There was the plump officer, rosy gills, Irish upper lip, and honest disgruntled eyes to the life. And all in twenty lines.

"Not bad! Not bad!" murmured his honor, looking at Neil with a tinge of respect. He has graciously pleased to pass the sketch around. A discreet titter travelled in its train. All the policemen were delighted except the subject of the sketch, who sniffed contemptuously. The tide ran strong in the prisoner's favor. Feeling it, Neil cast down his eyes to hide any untoward exultation.

"He didn't take anything, did he?" the magistrate asked the Old Codger.

"He didn't have a chance," was the ill-natured reply.

"How about the broken glass?"

"I'll pay for that, of course," said Neil, quickly.

"You have the money with you?" asked the magistrate.

"Yes," said Neil. "That is, a dollar or two."

"Well," said his honor, "men don't customarily undertake small thefts with money in their pockets. I think a mistake has been made. I will—"

"Wait a minute! Wait a minute!" cried an excited soprano voice from the back of the room. "I know something about this case!"

It was the large blonde milliner lady. Neil's soaring heart came down with a broken wing. Apparently it had taken her all this time to make ready for a courtroom appearance. Elaborately coiffured, hatted and harnessed, she sailed down the aisle with a gracious bent in her back. She was carrying daintily at arm's length a bunch of rusty door-keys.

She took the stand. "I am also a tenant in No. 21," she explained in choice phraseology and melodiously.

"I am Madame de la Warr, of the De la Warr Millinery Academy. My card. Awakened by the crash overhead, I flung up my window and summoned the police. Subsequently, after partially dressing myself, I assisted in the capture of the prisoner. After they had haled him off to the police station, I sent one of the boys—one of the gentleman tenants—up to the roof to see if he could discover any evidence. He brought back these keys. I came to court as quick as I could."

"H'm!" said the court, looking grave.

Madame de la Warr was staring strangely at the prisoner. "Why—why—she gasped. "I know him! I never got a good look at him before. She forgot the mellifluous accents. "If it ain't the sculptor fellow on the top floor! Why, his room is right next to the old party's there. His name is Neil Ottaway."

His honor turned to the Old Codger. "Do you identify the prisoner as your neighbor?" he demanded.

The complainant blinked. "It—it may be," he stammered. "I've only passed him a couple of times in the dark hall. My eyesight is not what it used to be. It may be."

The magistrate turned a portentous frown on the prisoner. "What have you to say to this? If you are what you claim, why did you conceal this fact?"

Neil played his last desperate card. "The lady is mistaken," he said, indignantly. "I never saw her before to-night."

"Ohh!" she cried in virtuous horror. "Did you ever! Many's the time he stopped and passed the time of day. But I never gave him no encouragement. A lone woman has got to be careful!"

This was a lie. There had been overtures of friendship—but from the other side. Neil glared at her helplessly.

"I will look into this matter," said his honor. Officer Wilkinson, you are instructed to go to the house where this affair occurred and learn if there is a person named Neil Ottaway living there. You are to find out if he is at home. If there is no answer to your summons at the door, you are instructed to force it, and to report to the court on any evidence you may find inside."

Neil turned a little sick. The game was up now for sure—and when he had seemed so near freedom! Truly, it seemed as if a maliciously inspired fate were pursuing him in the person of the horrible milliner.

"Take him back," the magistrate said to Hartigan. "And wait until I send for you again."

Neil turned blindly toward the door back to the pen. As he was about to pass through the clerk of the court spoke to Hartigan. It seemed that he wanted to verify something in the evidence. Hartigan turned to his desk, and thus it happened that Neil passed through the door alone. Neatly coated as he now was and carrying a good hat, the officer who kept the record on the other side of the door, did not immediately recognize him.

"Well, what do you want?" he demanded, gruffly.

Neil clutched at the chance like a drowning man at his straw. "I want to consult with my client," he said, glibly.

"Don't you know enough to apply at the consultation room?" stormed the policeman. "This is the prisoners' door!"

"I've never practised in this court before," ventured Neil, humbly. He did not expect to get away with this; still, it was a chance. He was fervently praying that Hartigan might still be delayed.

"Huh! you must be a new one!" sneered the bluecoat. "Who is your client, anyhow?"

"Adolph Zins," he said beneficently.

The policeman, still grumbling, consulted his big book, while Neil waited in mid-air, so to speak.

"Discharged," he said. "He don't need you."

"Oh!—much obliged," said Neil. "Sorry to have troubled you. If you can ever put anything my way—"

This was accompanied by a significant look, which was not lost on the policeman. He relaxed, and rose.

"If you go back that way you'll be arraigned," he said. "You must go out by the consultation room. I'll pass you. What did you say your name was?"

"Michael Goldstone," said Neil. "West Tenth street, opposite Jefferson market."

"Well, I can put anything your way, I will," said the policeman, quite affable all at once.

At the door of the consultation room he gave Neil an opportunity to slip him a dollar out of sight of the waiting prisoners in the corridor. If any of these recognized Neil they remained loyally silent. His conductor vouched for him to the guards in the outer room.

And so, scarcely daring to believe his senses, Neil found himself in the court room again, by means of a door toward the back. Another case was now in progress, and no one noticed him. All this had happened in the space of a minute, and Hartigan was still at the clerk's desk.

Neil crossed the room nonchalantly and went down the front stairs, faster and faster as he sniffed the blessed free air of the street.

He issued out of the building soberly enough. There was a taxi-cab at the door. He still had a little money. If he could beat the policeman to Fourteenth street and drag the body into the vacant front room, it would give him a little time to turn around, all might not yet be lost. He jumped in the cab and gave the driver the number.

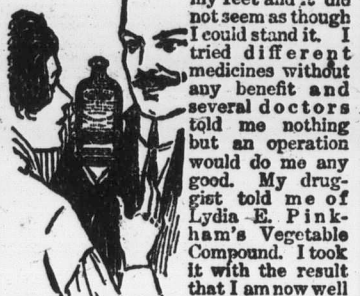
Alas for his hopes! At Thirty-fourth street they had a blow-out. He lost precious moments in finding another cab. He was then afraid to go direct home, and had himself put down around the corner.

It was well that he did so. Springing cautiously from across the way, he saw Officer Wilkinson come running out of the doorway at 21 with agitated mien. With his night-stick he rapped smartly on the sidewalk for assistance. Neil did not linger.

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CHAPTER V.

The fugitive instinctively sought the lower east side of the city, where even in the small hours of morning there is light and life. A solitary figure in a dark street is fatally conspicuous.

Neil felt a grim amusement in the consternation his escape would raise in that decorous court when news of the gruesome find in his room was brought back. He pictured the rosy Hartigan turning pale, and the surly doorkeeper singing very small.

It was funny, but it was ominous, too. Heaven help a fugitive when the amour propre of the police force is wounded! Within an hour, Neil knew, every one of the thousands of blue-coats patrolling the streets would have a minute description of the person, and every breast among them would be fired with determination to bring in one who had so grievously belittled the force.

Off against this imposing organization he had only his unaided wits to play. His assets otherwise consisted of a dollar and some cents in money and the clothes he stood in.

But liberty after his brief incarceration was ineffably sweet. To keep it he was prepared to fight to the last ditch.

In Park Row, Beekman and Seneca streets, he found a reassuring bustle around the newspaper offices. The morning papers were being loaded on automobile trucks with a deal of noise and excitement. In the doorways and alleys around hovered a crowd of homeless idlers drawn like Neil to the only spot in town where there was something going on at that hour. Neil list himself comfortably among them. The frantic haste of the workers and the apathy of the lookers-on offered a sharp comment on modern social economy.

It began to grow light. He dreaded the daylight, but all the wishing in the world would not put it off for a minute. The next best thing was to find a safe hiding-place. In New York the current of life flows north and south, and therefore on the eastern and western edges of the island are to be found many quaint little backwaters forgotten of the city.

Neil, instinctively guessing this, turned east up Cherry Hill to Corlears Hook, then north, always clinging to the water-side.

The neighborhood in which he found himself had nothing in common with modern New York. The humble streets the names of which New Yorkers themselves never hear, with their little tenements half empty and their out-of-date factories half ruinous, were as quaint and undisturbed as those of a mid-state town that was prosperous half a century ago. The solitude of these streets revealed Neil in startling focus, but fortunately the district did not seem to be worth policing. He made haste to find refuge.

A lumber yard promised well. There was a high board fence on the street with a gate padlocked on the outside. Therefore there could be no one within. The piles of lumber stuck up over the top of the fence, and much of it was weather-beaten, showing that it had been there a long time. Some empty barrels beside the fence offered an easy way over.

With a hasty survey up and down, Neil climbed on a barrel, and, swinging over the fence, dropped to the ground on the other side.

The alleys surrounding the tall piles of lumber made an admirable maze for one who wished to hide. Neil penetrated it to the farthest side of the yard, where the undisturbed look of everything suggested that the employes rarely came. Here the piles towered thirty and forty feet in the air, and the deep pits between were like miniature canons.

Rounding the last corner, Neil found himself in a little cul-de-sac formed by two piles of lumber and a blank brick wall. At the end of it was a little sloping shelter of boards, evidently left by some previous occupant.

A sound from beneath it startled and warned Neil. He ducked his head to look. A man was sleeping there.

Neil hesitated whether to retreat, or to provoke an encounter. His greatest need in the world was of a disguise, and here was a good one. The man was unquestionably down on his luck, as he was himself, and he thought he could safely trust to the freemasonry of the unfortunate. In any

case the man was no bigger than he. He felt able to handle him.

So he stayed.

The sleeper becoming conscious in his sleep of a gaze upon him, stirred and awoke. Seeing Neil he bristled defiantly.

"Well, wot abait it?" he said in the accents of Whitechapel. "Cawn't a bloke ave a free sleep in your blighted free country?"

"Keep your shirt on," said Neil. "I'm no better off than yourself. I'm looking for a place to stow away, like you are."

The awakened one changed his tone. "Oh!" he grumbled. "Thought you was a watchman. Welcome to our 'appy 'ome. In this country they have the sweepings watched. That's freedom!"

He was somewhere near Neil's age and build, the latter fact a matter of satisfaction to the fugitive. There could be no mistake as to his occupation; ragged coat and trousers, thick woolen undershirt, woolen neckcloth and cloth cap all greasy with coal dust. Even the pale, shiny-scrubbed face betrayed the coal-passenger on a liner.

"How did you find yourself in this corner?" Neil asked.

"Blimy if I know where I am," was answer. "Never been off West street before I wore me feet to the ankles walkin'. I was lookin' far a plice to lie low till the Catalonia sailed to-day. Wot's 'er go for you after the stoke-hole. It's a dog's life! A dog's life? Why, a dog lives like Barney Barnato alongside a stoker! They sweat your guts off in five years, and throw you in the dustbin. Not for me no more. I'm lookin' for a little bit of your freedom. They tell me the sun shines all summer in America, and peaches grows free by the road. I'm goin' to 'oot it out to the peraries."

(To be continued.)

cleats should extend about an inch from. An extra weight may be added, if necessary, but it is seldom needed. To use a drag, attach a chain to the left cross piece which is behind the front slab, running the other end of the chain through the hole in the front slab near the right end. It is a mistake to hook this end of the chain over the front slab as in the case of the other end, for when the drag strikes a stone or snag there is great danger of toppling forward. With the right end of the chain drawn through the hole in the slab as suggested, this danger is entirely obviated. The operation of the drag is very simple, though there are many fine points that may be learned by experience. For ordinary smoothing purposes, the drag may be drawn up and down the road one or two rounds, commencing at the edge and working towards the centre. Usually it is drawn of an angle of about 45 degrees. For the last stroke or two, the drag may be drawn backward with the round side of the slab to the front, and with comparatively little angle.

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ROAD MAKING

(Experimental Farms Note.)

There are many miles of road which must be maintained by some means, more or less inexpensively. On the Dominion Experimental Farms, the split-log drag is found to be one of the most useful implements for this purpose. It is now in use in many localities, and an increasing mileage of the rural highways of this country is being kept in repair economically by the use of this simple implement.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE SPLIT-LOG DRAG.

A dry, sound red cedar log is the best material for a drag, the hard woods being usually too heavy for this purpose. The log should be from seven to eight feet long and from ten to twelve inches in diameter, and carefully sawn down the middle. The heaviest and best slab should be selected for the centre, both flat sides to the front and set on edges thirty inches apart, giving the back half a set-back of sixteen to eighteen inches at the right and so that when the drag is drawn along at an angle parallel to the ditch on the right side of the road the end of the back half will be directly behind the front half, as otherwise the ditch end of the rear slab would stick out past the ditch end of the front slab, crowding into the bank and interfering with the proper working of the drag.

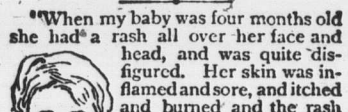
Two cross pieces are wedged in two-inch auger holes bored through the slabs, and on the right-hand side a piece of scantling is inserted between the ends of the slabs. This is of great value in strengthening and stiffening the end of the front slab.

In working a clay or gumbo road it is advisable to put iron on the lower edge of both flat sides. Handles may be attached to a piece of iron similar to a piece of wagon tire. The irons to be hinged to the back of each end of the front slab. By pressing the handles the drag could be raised, thus depositing a load of dirt which is desired to fill a hollow or increase the crown at some particular spot.

A platform of inch boards held together by three cleats should be placed on the stakes between the slabs. These boards should be spaced at least an inch apart to allow any earth that may heap up and fall over the front slab to sift through upon the road again. The end cleats should be placed so that they will not rest upon the cross stakes, but drop inside them. These

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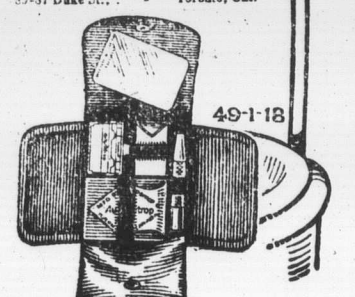
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