

The Case of the Psychic Investigator

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ALTHOUGH I'm not superstitious I have an inward uneasiness on days that are void of phone calls and complaints. Those days are rare, but on one of them not long ago the only thing of interest was a bulletin over the police broadcasts instructing detachments to be on the look-out for a Ford automobile bearing an Alberta licence and believed to be in the possession of three suspicious-looking characters.

The announcement caused me no undue concern, for nearly all roads in the district had been snowbound the last few days and another blizzard was brewing. However, shortly after midnight the phone jangled and the lull was broken.

The call came from a small village 14 miles distant and, before the hour hand of the clock completed its round, resulted in: (1) stolen car; (2) stolen licence plate; (3) breaking, entering and theft from a store; (4) stolen truck; (5) road accident; (6) breaking, entering and theft from garage; (7) attempted theft of car; (8) hold-up; (9) a shooting; (10) a corpse, and (11) a prisoner.

Reporting that his store had been forcibly entered the complainant said he had seen two strangers nearby in a car with an Alberta licence.

We set out at once to investigate. As we hit the country we met the full force of the storm, and were convinced that reaching our destination wasn't going to be easy. About a mile out the transmitter in the police car failed, though we managed to get a partial message through to headquarters before it happened.

The main routes were in hopeless condition, so we tackled the side roads. Plowing and shovelling through the snow-drifts was a seemingly endless job. Time and again we retraced our steps

after studying drifts that fairly made us sick to look at. This occurred so often it seemed we kept getting further and further away from where we wanted to go. Eventually perseverance won, and some three hours from our starting time and 80 miles on our speedometer we came upon a chap digging a car out of a snowbank on the outskirts of the village we were heading for. When we saw a pile of obviously stolen goods in his car, we arrested him and assisted him into ours. In the next hour we flitted from one crime to another, all of them eventually combining to produce a co-ordinated series of events which were really unique.

Our prisoner and a companion of his, it turned out, had by dubious means acquired a car (1) and a licence plate (2) in Alberta and motored to Winnipeg, Man., making the odd profitable stop enroute. The previous evening they decided to visit the rural part of the province south of the Manitoba capital but a solid wall of snow compelled them to abandon the tour soon after it started.

Philosophically the enterprising pair decided to look over a village not far away and a few minutes later parked in front of a well-lit store. As no one was around they forced open the door of the store and helped themselves to parkas, socks, ties, overshoes, travelling bags, and the money in the cash register (3). Out on the sidewalk, after stowing these things in the car, they met the store-keeper and asked him to make them some coffee and sandwiches. Not liking their looks he refused.

They thereupon drove off, but taking a wrong turn got stuck in a snowbank 40 feet from the road that led to escape. One of them stayed to shovel the car out while the other returned to the village in search of something to haul