

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.

BY DAVID CORNELL

9—THE MAN HIGHER UP How a Blackmailer Was Foiled and a Family Restored

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"Go over and see this fellow," said the office manager of the Burns agency to me one day in June, 1910; and he handed me a card on which was written on the most prominent and powerful names in New York financial circles, and therefore one of the most powerful in all the country. For the purposes of this story the name shall be Handsykes.

"Go over and see Mr. Handsykes," said the manager. "You know who he is?"

"It's Handsykes who sprung the big bank merger, isn't it?" I replied.

"Yes, that's the Handsykes," said the manager. "Remember all the time you're dealing with him that he is the Handsykes. This agency is a pretty powerful proposition in its way, Cornell, but compared to Handsykes we're infants. Don't forget that. You'd better dress accordingly, too. I've picked you for the job because you don't look like a detective when you try to look like a business man. This is a big case, Cornell. It doesn't make any difference what it is, if Handsykes is in it at all it's big."

"What is it?"

"Oh, Handsykes doesn't tell things outside of his private office," was the answer. "He just sends for people, and they come. He sent over for a man. You're the man. And whatever you do, don't forget who the man is."

I went home and put on an outfit of clothing that made me look like a quiet, prosperous business man, and went down to Handsykes' office on Wall street within sight of Trinity church. It is about as easy for the average caller to get past the secretaries in this office, as it is for the proverbial camel to pass through the needle's eye, but my card opened the way right through into the great man's sanctum.

I had never seen Handsykes before, and my knowledge of his appearance had been gained from pictures I had seen of him. Now I saw that the pictures which had been printed labeled "Handsykes" were the pictures of another and totally different man. The pictorial Handsykes was lean and austere; Handsykes in real life was round and merry. Afterwards I learned that there never had been a single photograph of the great man, and that the pictures handed out as his were in reality the likeness of an old private secretary.

"Sit down," said Mr. Handsykes. "Have a cigar. Got a match?"

These were the first words that the power that made brokers tremble uttered to me.

"When we had got our cigars going well he said:

"Blackmail, my boy, is a dirty, low-down trick."

He smoked comfortably for several minutes.

"I don't mind giving up money," he continued. "I've been doing it all my life. I'm accustomed to it. If anything happens that I want to pay money for, I pay it. If anybody has anything he ought to get money from me for—or can get it from me—he gets it. Otherwise—no."

"Still more smoking."

"But blackmail—common, low-down, coarse, hold-up work—that I do not like. How do you feel about it, Mr. Cornell?"

I said, of course, that I thought blackmail was one of the lowest crimes in the calendar.

"Ever get any blackmailers?" asked Handsykes.

I had not.

"Neither have I," said he. "But this time—we'll get 'em!"

He tossed a letter across the desk to me.

"Read that," he said, genially. "I won't pay."

The letter was a gem. It ran: "Dear Sir: Allow me to assure you, sir, that this little incident is as distasteful to me as to yourself. Strange as it may seem to you, I am not a person who approaches an act of this kind with anything but a feeling of the greatest compunction. But as you know yourself, Mr. Handsykes, life is made up largely of compromises with our conscience and principles. Circumstances largely dictate our actions. Circumstances at present force me to raise a certain sum of money. Without this sum I am lost socially—aye, even morally. The sum is a large one—\$100,000. No assets of mine of a tangible sort possibly could raise this amount. In fact, I have only one asset in this world on which I can hope to raise it. That asset simply consists of the possession of a secret. The secret concerns your son. Do you happen to

know, Mr. Handsykes, that for three years, since the failure of the Battery Trust company, your son Clarence has lived under the shadow of a cloud which, should it fall, would cover him instantly with shame and ruin? Yes, even place him in a federal prison? I presume that you do not know this. But I do. I can prove it to you, Mr. Handsykes. And, because circumstances dictate it, the cloud shall fall unless you furnish me this sum of \$100,000 necessary to save me from complete ruin.

"I sign my full name and address, knowing well that you dare not make it public, and that you cannot harm me in any way. Awaiting your reply, I am, sir,

"Respectfully yours,
"Walter Mandeville,
"Hotel LaGros, Fifth Ave."

"Whew!" I said when I had read through it. "He's the prince of 'em, whoever he is."

"Can't he?" said Handsykes, appreciatively. "I suggested."

"Possibly," corrected Handsykes. "And—possibly not."

He sat silent, smoking carefully and looking at the ceiling.

"I—I remember the Battery Trust failure," I said. "There was no mention of any of your family in connection with it. The men involved were—"

"Figureheads," said Handsykes, bluntly. "Clarence was the man behind it. I gave it to him as a Christmas present."

"But—"

"His name did not appear even in the list of directors? I know. The directors were dummies. The officers were embezzlers—Clarence's employees. One of them went to jail for a year. We took care of them all. I don't understand how the facts got out—the facts that this man is hinting at, I mean. We paid enough to keep silence, heaven knows."

"Then it is possible that this man is—"

"Not crazy? Certainly. He's probably got the goods on Clarence. How in heaven's name ever knew of his connection with the Battery bank more than I can see, though. But apparently he does know it. And if he knows that he probably knows the whole story."

"What is the story, Mr. Handsykes?" I asked boldly.

"Oh, Clarence used his little bank in a careless sort of way," he replied frankly. "It's a long story, but I can make it short. Clarence wrecked it to help me put through my merger, Loyal son, Clarence; but careless, very careless."

"Then there is such a cloud as this man speaks of?"

"Certainly. And it isn't too late for it to fall, either. Especially now when the federal attorneys are so active."

I sat back in amazement. I knew something of the crooked ins and outs of Wall street, but that Handsykes would sit and openly admit that his son, the justly celebrated society lion, Clarence Handsykes was walking with potential disgrace always on his shoulders, was a shock. Handsykes continued to smoke, not in the least disturbed by the thoughts that must have been running through his mind.

"I would pay this man without a murmur," said he, "but if you pay once, you've got to keep on paying. I sent for you to help me shut him up without paying."

I picked up the letter and looked at it.

"Do you happen to know anything about the man?" I asked.

"Oh, certainly," said Handsykes. "He's a good friend of Clarence's. They were in Yale together."

"What?" I cried. "It isn't the rich young Mandeville, is it?"

"Of course," was the calm answer. "Who did you think it was? There's his name, as plain as can be. Walter Mandeville. I believe the boy is telling the truth; he needs \$100,000, and this is the only way in the world that he knows how to get it. I suppose he has become involved in some way and is desperate."

"I should think he would have gone to Clarence," I suggested.

"No," corrected Handsykes. "I should think he would have gone to Clarence."

Then he smiled and bowed me out.

Here was as delicate a task as ever I had faced. The name of Handsykes must be protected beyond all else. As it stood now, it was a power in New York finance because of its reputation for absolute integrity. Let the Battery Trust scandal become known, and that power would be gone, or greatly diminished. And Mr. Walter Mandeville had the power to make this known, and was apparently determined to use it. And my job was to make this impossible. Delicate! If Mandeville even so much as got a suspicion that he was being shadowed he would as likely as not spill the eggs.

My first move was to discover all that I could concerning the young man in question. I found that he was one of a type quite common in New York, but rare in other parts of the country—the young man who has squandered every cent of his fortune, but who manages to keep up appearances, no one knows how. Mandeville had run through several hundred thousands of dollars—all the way through. It was common knowledge that he was dead broke, yet he was living in a suite at the Le Gros hotel in a manner that no small income could have supported. He went around in his accustomed circle among his old acquaintances apparently the same as ever. His fortune was gone, and everybody knew it, but he certainly did manage to keep up his end in great fashion. He must be getting money in some way. I reasoned that it might be a good thing first of all to find out how he was getting it.

I went up to the LeGros hotel and engaged a suite of rooms as near to Mandeville's as I could and began to make myself part of the hotel's barroom and club life. I reasoned that Mandeville would be the sort of a young man who would be found wasting his time in the way so popular among certain hotel dwellers of Manhattan, and I was not mistaken. He spent little time in his rooms. When he wasn't in the barroom he was playing poker in one of the many high-staked games that always run in this hotel, or was dining and winning somebody in one of the restaurants, or in some other fashion spending money and time in a perfectly useless fashion. I began to ape his ways and soon Mr. Mandeville and myself were on fairly good terms. That is, we offered one another drinks whenever we met, and he invited me upstairs to be trimmed by the same gang of poker sharps that had been getting his money for the last month. In spite of the man's absolute uselessness it was impossible not to like him. The more I studied him the less could I fancy him cold-bloodedly proposing to ruin a bosom friend in order to get even so large a sum as \$100,000.

"Mandeville isn't the evil genius in this proposition," was my decision after associating with him for a week. "There is somebody else who is driving him to it."

There was nothing about the young fellow that made any other theory possible. He was too careless, and too honorable, in an easy-going sort of way, to rob a friend to satisfy his own needs. I could picture him becoming a hobo and a bum through careless habits; and I believe he would have done that before he would go to the length of blackmail.

I began to look for another party to the job. This made the task all the more delicate, because the more people to know of Clarence Handsykes' secret connection with the Battery Trust the more danger was there that the secret would become public property.

I went down to Handsykes' office at the end of ten days' association with Mandeville.

"Mr. Handsykes," I said, "will you give me a list of the names of the men who knew of Clarence's little affair with the Battery Trust?"

"Certainly," said he. "Here they are: Dawson, the president; James, the first vice-president; and old Davis, the cashier. Davis served a year in jail; he's an old retainer of the family, as you might put it. The other two have had their mouths stopped with a wave of bills large enough to keep even Wall street financiers silent."

"Is there any one else who might by any chance know of this affair?"

"None," said he. "I don't know of any one else who might."

"Then one of these gentlemen is

behind young Mandeville's artistic letter," said I. "Mandeville hasn't the heart to hurt a flea. He would rather starve than steal a cent—for himself. Are these other men friends of yours, Mr. Handsykes?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because it's probably one of them that we will have to put the screws on."

"They are all friends of mine," said he. "The best friends in the world. And the tighter you put the screws on, Cornell, the better I'll be pleased—no matter how dear the friend. Is that quite clear?"

"Thank you," I said.

"And I don't care how you get the screws on, either," said he, as he bowed me out.

A few days' work on the part of other men of the agency showed me that of the trio in question Dawson was in England, James in a sanitarium in South Carolina, and Dawson living in retirement in his country home on the Hudson. So I began to watch Walter Mandeville again. By watching him, I don't mean that I watched only his person; I watched everything that might concern him or his affairs, including everybody that called on him, every letter or note that he received, every telephone call that he answered. Naturally I didn't do all this myself, but from the minute this espionage was established I knew what Mandeville was doing about as well as he knew himself. He didn't move without my knowing where or why. Therefore when he made a hurried trip to Dawson's place up the river it wasn't remarkable that I knew he did it in answer to a presumptuous call from Dawson. And Dawson's telephone call didn't surprise me, either; for I had been looking up Mr. Dawson.

Mandeville went up on the New York Central to New Rochelle, where an automobile was waiting for him. Dawson wasn't in the automobile in the street, he stopped it and got in when the car had gone out of town about five miles. You see, Cluffer, my partner, had taken the place of Dawson's regular chauffeur, who had been taken suddenly ill two days previous—after Cluffer had shown him a roll of bills. So Cluffer got all that passed between Dawson and Mandeville on the road up to the Dawson house. And that was enough to give me the lead I sought to work on.

"Well," Dawson said as he climbed in, "have you heard from the old goat?"

"No," said Mandeville. "Not a word."

"Well," continued Dawson, angrily, "you write him another letter tonight, give him just another week to come across, and he doesn't give you the story to the public."

"But, Dawson," protested Mandeville; at which Dawson said: "Either that or—you know what happens. You will never, never know where your wife is living."

Mandeville almost choked at this. "Great heavens, Dawson," he pleaded, "don't give a human being such a stone for a heart as you have! You know that there is just one thing in this world that makes me want to live: that's to see my wife and son just once more—just once. And you happen to have found where they are living."

"And hidden so that you never will find them," sneered Dawson. "She left you because of your drinking at college. Mandeville. She thinks you're still the half-crazy boozefighter you were then. She's bringing the boy up to forget you. She's afraid you'll turn up—as you used to be."

"And you know that I'm decent now; that I'd be a man if I could find them and work for them, and you won't tell me," said Mandeville. "I ought to kill you, Dawson."

"Then you never would find them, would you, Manville?" laughed the old man. "No; you know the only way to get in touch with them is to get this \$100,000 for me that I need to keep myself from disgrace. And that's to be got through Handsykes—the old brute. Well, you'll get it for me, don't fear my boy. I know old Handsykes; he'll give it to you."

"But he wouldn't give it to you, would he?" asked Mandeville. "He'd be deaf for you killed first, wouldn't he, Dawson?"

Dawson paled a little at this. Cluffer told me later. He was watching them in the mirror in front of him.

"Well," said Dawson, "you'll get me that money—or you'll never see your wife."

That was the story that I got from Cluffer that evening. By piecing it out with what I learned from Mandeville's friends I found that the young fellow had married a poor girl while he was at college, that she had left him because of his habits, that he had been deaf for five years, trying to find the wife and boy, and then had got careless through losing hope. Dawson's hold on him was the strongest in the world; it was the only thing that would have made him do what he was doing. It was the only hold on him: it was life itself to him, this



His head hung down on his chest.

hope that some day he would see his family.

I thought the thing over for a long time. I knew it would be next to an impossible task to find the woman. Dawson wouldn't have left any loose threads by which she might be traced. I knew of no way in which Dawson might be scared off the job. I thought of Handsykes. It was best to go before him and tell him all that I knew. I did. He listened, and as he heard of Dawson's perfidy his face changed as I never had seen a face change before. All the gentility—almost all the civilization—left it. I wouldn't have liked to meet him as an enemy at that moment.

"All right, Cornell," he said. "You've done a good job. Now you come with me and we'll go up the river and meet Mr. Dawson."

I shall never forget that ride up to Dawson's home. We went in Handsykes' big touring car with the curtains pulled down and the electric lights turned on. He never spoke a word during the whole trip. He just sat and looked straight ahead of him with that ugly, set expression on his face, and no movement about him that a graven image. When we got into the open country past New Rochelle he ordered the curtains pulled

up and the lights turned off. We were near Dawson's home then. When we rolled up the driveway and stopped Handsykes said gruffly: "Follow me," and entered the house.

He seemed perfectly at home.

"Send for Dawson," he said to the butler. We went into a reception room and waited, standing. Dawson came in and found himself face to face with Handsykes, whose expression had not changed. For several seconds, long ugly seconds, they faced one another, and Dawson wilted like a boy before an angry parent.

"You cur!" said Handsykes in a whisper. "So it is you, is it? It's you who made the Mandeville boy write that letter?"

Dawson never spoke a word. His head hung down on his chest and his under lip was trembling.

"Dawson," came Handsykes' voice, more like a rasp from some mechanical instrument than a human voice.

"Yes, sir," said Dawson, coming to life. "Yes, sir."

"Go abroad, Dawson," hissed Handsykes. "Hide yourself away where you can't be found. If you're within finding distance in another week, Dawson, I'll—"

"Yes, sir," whimpered Dawson, trembling. "I'll go, Mr. Handsykes; I'll go."

Cheap Way to a Title.
Through the death of the duke of Fife two and perhaps three of his titles of nobility pass out of his immediate family to the nearest male kin, who is supposed to be Jekyl Chalmers Duff. This apparent new lord lives in St. Kilda, Melbourne, Australia, and was formerly a member of the Indian police.

Frenchman's Little Parliament.
M. Chaumet, under secretary for posts and telegraphs of France, has set up a substantial human buffer between himself and the general "kickers." He has appointed an advisory committee, 65 strong, and its members include senators, deputies, officials of all ranks down to a woman postal employee and a letter sorter, representatives of shipping and commercial houses and journalists. This committee, which M. Chaumet calls "a little parliament," will deal with the enormous mass of complaints and suggestions sent in daily to the postal administration by the public, and submit such as seem suitable as proposals to the administration.

Martian Canal Doubles in Size.
Observations show that the Martian canal Titan has doubled within a few weeks. The canal runs nearly straight north from the equator and far into the northern hemisphere of the planet. A perfectly parallel line has now appeared to the east of it, the distance separating the twins being somewhat more than a hundred miles. This doubling of certain Martian canals at certain seasons is one of the puzzles being to support the theory that the equator are of artificial construction.

Half a Million Animals.
There are 565,000 known species of animals, according to a paper read at the session of the American Society of Naturalists, held at Princeton, N. J.—The Argonaut.

you'll never hear of me again as long as I live."

"Or after," said Handsykes.

"Or after," repeated Dawson, quite humbly.

And that was all I had to do with the Handsykes blackmail case. I never found out what Handsykes would say to Dawson—what he would have done if he saw him again.

"Don't worry about it," said the office manager. "I told you Handsykes was a name to remember. And Dawson knew it better than I did."

"But how could Handsykes place such a secret in my hands so carelessly?" I asked. "How did he know I might not use it some time?"

"Try it," grinned the manager. "You saw what happened to Dawson."

Later on I happened to do another small job for Handsykes. I met Mr. Mandeville in the office. He was one of Handsykes' trusted men. And he had his family back in New York with him.

"How in the world can that man Handsykes do these things?" I asked the manager after this visit.

"I do not know," said he. "Nobody does, I guess. That's what makes him Handsykes."

"I was rather proud of my work."

Noisy Rest.
Mrs. Isaac L. Rice, who has done so much to diminish New York's noises, said in a recent anti-noise address: "I congratulate those New York hotels that have substituted lights for bells. A light, you know, flashes up beneath a room number. In summing-up servants that is quite as efficacious while it is ever so much less noisy than the ting-a-ling-a-ling of an electric bell."

No Difficulty.
George W. Wilson was rehearsing with Edwin Booth at the Boston museum. Wilson, in one scene, asked the star where he should stand. "Where do you usually stand?" Booth. "Mr. Barrett had me over there," answered Wilson. "Yes," mused Barrett. "I usually have him there," indicating the other side of the stage. "But Barrett—did you wherever you are," said Booth.

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