# 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

## 4 — The Popham Center Murder

### The Clearing Up of a Puzzling Case

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

If you have been reading the daily papers at all in the last two years you already know something of the Popham Center murder case. You know—for the reporters spent oceans of words in telling you—that Herman Bauder, the twelve year old son of a millionaire florist at Popham Center, Pennsylvania, was found dead on his father's lawn one July evening with his toy air rifle by his side, and absolutely no trace of why or how he met his death or who was responsible for the dastardly deed. Later it was discovered that the boy had died from suffocation, which further complicated the mystery; for how he could have succumbed in this fashion out there on the open lawn on a summer evening was inexplicable. More investigation showed that he had been choked. You know also how his father, frantic with grief, had raged, placed his fortune at the disposal of anyone who could clear up the mystery, and how for weeks the press rang with stories of one of the most sensational man hunts in the history of detective annals in this country.

All this and more you know if you were reading the papers at the time. What you do not know, and what I propose to tell, is how the mystery was cleared up in almost as startling a manner as that in which the crime had been committed. Startling to the layman, that is, for to Cluffer and myself, as operatives in the Burns Detective Agency, it came merely as part of the day's work, and to us in no way differed from scores of cases which we were assigned to clear up in order to earn our weekly salaries.

The Popham Center murder occurred on a Monday evening, and Tuesday morning the papers were playing up "The Popham Center Mystery." By this name the case became known. On the Thursday following the office manager of our agency sent word for me to go in and see the Chief. Cluffer, another operative, a short, bowlegged and good humored little Englishman, already was in conference with Burns. Cluffer was an old man in the office; I had been a detective only a few months.

"Cornell," said the Chief, "we've been retained to clear up that Popham Center case over in Pennsylvania. The sheriff and the police and the county detectives over there are all up in the air. They've already arrested three negroes for doing the job. It isn't likely that they've got the right man. There is a reward of five thousand dollars offered by the boy's father. In addition to that, the father's lawyer has retained us by wire. Now, you and Cluffer go over to Popham Center and clear that thing up."

I have been reading the newspaper accounts of the murder and had been impressed by the apparently insurmountable difficulties that lay in a solution of the case. It seemed mighty cool of the Chief to order us to run over and clear it up, but that is the way the modern high class detective agency works. Crime and the discovery of its perpetrators are only matters of business, and the high class agency handles them exactly as another kind of busines. office handles an order for goods.

"Have you any theory you want us to work on?" I asked.

"Yes," said the Chief. "It's a robbery crime, sure. The kid must have got hold of some money or valuables, and somebody must have put him out of the way to get them. That's the way these crimes most always shape up. I've listed two hundred of them, and petty robbery has been the motive in 190 cases. I don't know the situation over there, but that's the idea I want you to base your work on—until you find that I'm wrong, if I am wrong. If the thing looks very involved after you've been there three or four days, let me know by wire."

That was all. Cluffer and I cashed an order for expense money, packed our grips, and within two hours were whirling over New Jersey toward Pennsylvania bound for what afterwards proved to be one of the most exciting experiences of our lives.

We reached Popham Center late at night. It was a small, but exceedingly prosperous town in the foothills of the mountains, and Cluffer and I repaired to its single hotel. Naturally the place was buzzing with talk of the crime that for the moment had made it a place of national importance. The rooms at the hotel were all taken by reporters, photographers and artists from Philadelphia and New York, and Cluffer and I were lucky to find two cots available in one end of the hall. That night we met the sheriff of the county and were amazed to find that he considered the case already settled. He had given up work on it.

"I've got the right man," he said boastfully, "got him the first crack. We don't need you wise guys from the Big City to come over here and show us how to catch crooks—not over here. I knew these three niggers had been hanging around town for a couple of days, and just as soon as I heard that Herman Bauder's kid had been murdered I knew who'd done the job, and threw these fellers into jail. Oh, we don't need you over here."

"Have these negroes confessed?" I asked.

"No, but they will after a few days of what we're giving 'em," laughed the sheriff. "Oh, we'll get 'em all right."

He readily agreed to let us talk with the prisoners. To us they told the same story they had told at the time of their arrest: at the time the murder must have been committed they were busily engaged in shooting craps in a colored poolroom in the poorer part of the town.

"Where did you get the money to shoot with?" asked Cluffer, suddenly.

"We'd been wuhkin' for Mr. Brooks who runs the brickyard, wheelin' bricks all day," was the instant answer. "He done paid us off and we goes over to dis place and shoots a little craps all evenin'. We got folks can swear to dat."

"Where were you between the time you quit work and the time you were arrested?" I shot at them.

"We went straight to dis poolroom," they answered. "We wuz dere all deh time."

Next morning we investigated their story quietly. We found Brooks at his brickyard, and he substantiated the negroes' story about being paid off. They had left the brickyard at five minutes after five, and at the poolroom it was said they had arrived at 6:15, and had remained until late at night when they were arrested.

"Cross off the coons," said Cluffer. "They never had a finger in this pie. I knew it the minute I saw 'em; coons always try to look foxy when they're lying. Those coons were just plain scared. Let's go look at the situation."

The Bauder home we found to be exceptionally striking even in that town of prosperous homes. Bauder was a florist who had become a millionaire by investments in oil, but he still conducted, in the fields, immediately back of his house, the florist establishment that had given him his start. In front of the house was the great, well kept lawn upon which the 12 year old son had been foully done to death.

"Mr. Bauder," I said, "did your little boy have any possessions on his person or elsewhere that might tempt a robber?"

"Him? That little fellow?" burst out the old man. "No, he didn't have a thing—not a thing. O, hold on." He stopped as if something had come forcibly to his mind "Well, now," he said, "I never thought of that. He had a savings bank with $50 in it, and I haven't seen it since he—since we found him on the lawn."

A hurried and thorough search of the house was made for the bank. It could not be found. It was not in its accustomed place in the child's room, or elsewhere. It could not be found.

"There," said Cluffer as we left the place, "is your motive. Let's get away and smoke and think it over."

We went back to the hotel, and proceeded to lay out our theory. Having established the fact that the child's bank with $50 in it had disappeared on the same night as his murder it was apparent that the two were connected: the boy had been killed for the bank, slain by some miscreant who valued that paltry sum beyond a child's life. But how was this connection to be established in a way to further our work? The boy had been put to death out on the lawn. The bank usually was in his room. There had been no burglary of the house. No one had entered it to take the bank. How could the person or persons, who killed the boy, get the bank? Did they get it before they committed their savage crime, or afterwards? Was the murder the main crime, or merely an incident to a robbery? Or was the robbery a mere incident to the murder?

The chief had said that we probably would find robbery to be the motive. If this was so, then the person or persons who killed the boy did so because he stood between them and the bank. They had to get him out of the way to get that fifty dollars. They wouldn't have killed him otherwise. But the bank was—or usually was—up in the boy's room in the house, where no intruder had entered. Why should they kill a boy out on the lawn to get fifty dollars in one of the upper rooms of the house?

"Either," said I, "the boy had caught them taking the bank—or he had the bank with him."

Cluffer sat up rigidly.

"Wow!" he said. "That's some hunch. Either someone had taken the bank, and he knew who it was and was going to tell on them, and they killed him to keep him quiet—or he had it with him. I believe we are beginning to see toward the light."

Being in charge of the case I said: "Cluffer, I suggest that you go to work in the Bauder home and get acquainted with the servants. I will get a job in the flower houses. I've got a hunch that points that way."

Next day the Bauder home had a new man around the house to do odd jobs, and there were a new hand in the flower houses, learning the florist's trade. Bauder put us both to work upon our request, and we had the run of both house and flower houses and intercourse with the servants and employes without being under suspicion as detectives. Then, having decided whither our theory pointed, Cluffer and I began our task of clearing up the Popham Center mystery.

All the circumstances attendant on the case suggested to my mind that the guilty party was someone who was extremely familiar with the Bauder household, and with the Bauder boy. The more I dwelt on the odd feature of the case—the slaying of the boy on the lawn and the disappearing of the bank in the house—the more I became convinced that no outsider had done this crime. It looked more and more like the work of someone who had been friendly with the boy. I told Cluffer to work in the house with a view to finding the servant or servants who were most intimate with the child, and in the Bauder florist establishment I bent my efforts along the same line.

Three days of this work and we saw that our task was to be more complicated even than we had feared. Practically every one of the five servants in the house, and all the six employes in the flower houses, had been chummy with the little fellow. He was a strange child and had sought his playmates, not among other children of his own years in the village, but among the men and women employed in various capacities by his father. Seldom if ever did he stray away from the florists or servants. If he was not to be found in the home, a search of the flower houses would reveal him busily engaged in conversation with one of the florists, and if he was not with the florists he was sure to be found with the servants. Thus there were eleven people, 8 men and 3 women, who were his chums. To eliminate the innocent ones, and fasten upon the guilty one—if indeed the guilty one were among them—was the task that lay before Cluffer and myself.

At the end of two weeks' work we were exactly where we had started. Not one of the eleven people on the Bauer payroll had shown a sign whereby we might suspect their connection with the crime; not one of them but seemed heart-broken and enraged over the fate of their erstwhile playmate.

"I'm afraid you had the wrong hunch," said Cluffer at the end of the two weeks.

"It begins to look that way," I said. "But I'm not willing to believe so. The more I go over the ground the more I am convinced that our quarry is one of the eleven right on this place. Cluffer, did you ever take much stock in the theory that a murderer is inclined to revisit the scene of his crime?"

"Not much," said Cluffer. "But they have been known to do it."

"Then to take no chances of missing anything, from now on we are going to keep a watch on the lawn where the boy's body was found. We've got to play all chances, because this looks like a hard, long chase."

Cluffer didn't have much faith in this theory, but he good naturedly agreed to watch the lawn with me at night.

It was four days later that we had our first reward. It was about eleven at night—a dark, moonless night—when Cluffer and I were lying hidden in a hedge, that a man, clothed in a long mackintosh and wearing a cap well down over his eyes, came sneaking out on the lawn, looking hurriedly around the spot where the boy had been found, and hurried away into the darkness before Cluffer or I could make a move.

I looked at Cluffer and Cluffer looked at me. Without a word my partner began to roll a cigarette.

"Well," he said, at last, "I guess you win. Now the problem is to find who that guy was who just inspected the scene of the murder."

Luck favored us the next morning, for in the soft walks of the lawn we found the imprint of a peculiar, square-toed shoe. By night I had that pair of shoes spotted and they were on the feet of a young German, named Hunemann, employed with me in Bauder's flower houses!

It was a shock. Hunemann had been the little Bauder boy's best friend. Among all the employes he had been the one to whom the little fellow had taken the biggest liking, and it was with Hunemann that he was most often to be found. And Hunemann had grieved constantly over the little fellow's fate. Was it possible—or had the poor fellow only gone to the scene of murder to grieve in silence, as one might go to a beloved one's grave?

A few days later it rained.

"Hunemann," I said to my workfellow, "I've got to go down town. Do you happen to have a mackintosh you could let me wear for an hour or so?"

Hunemann started and looked at me in a way I had not seen him look before.

"Why did you ask me that?" he demanded.

"Because I don't want to get wet," I said, laughing. "Have you got a mackintosh?"

"Who told you I had a mackintosh?" he persisted.

"Nobody," I replied. "But have you got one?"

"No," he said, "I haven't. I never had one."

"Well, that's all right, then," I said. "I just asked you. You needn't get sore."

But it was obvious that Hunemann was sore. After that he began to treat me with suspicion. He refused to be drawn into conversation with me; refused to be with me at all.

"Cluffer," I said that night when we met to confer. "I want you to keep an eye on Hunemann. He's getting restless and I'm afraid he's going to duck out. If he does, you follow him and wire me where you go. He hasn't seen you around here, so you can get in right with him."

My fears were justified and my directions to Cluffer were just in time. Next morning Hunemann had disappeared. So had Cluffer. I went on with my work in the flower houses as if nothing had happened, impatiently waiting word from my partner.

I had to wait ten days. Then came this message from Jersey City: "The bird and I are living in the same cage. Got in with him in Philadelphia and beat it up here with him. We are pals. Made him believe I was a crook. Come to Grogan's saloon near the Scandinavia-American piers at 6 any evening. I'll make connections with you. "Cluffer."

I blessed Cluffer for his ability to make people trust him, and took the first train for Jersey City.

Grogan's saloon was a typical water front place for the entertainment of sailors and longshoremen. I strolled in promptly at six, and called for a glass of beer. Looking in the mirror I saw Cluffer enter, and without more than a look at me pass behind me into a back room. I drank my beer slowly and followed him.

"I've got him trusting me to the limit," he said, when we were alone; "but I'll be darned if I believe he's our man. I've played the crook and bragged about the jobs I've done and so on, but he hasn't said a word about the Bauder kid."

"Well," said I, "we'll find out soon enough if he's guilty. Are you strong with him?"

"Strong?" laughed Cluffer. "Say, he thinks I'm the only friend he's got in the world. He's broke, you know—"

"Then he must have hidden the bank," I interrupted.

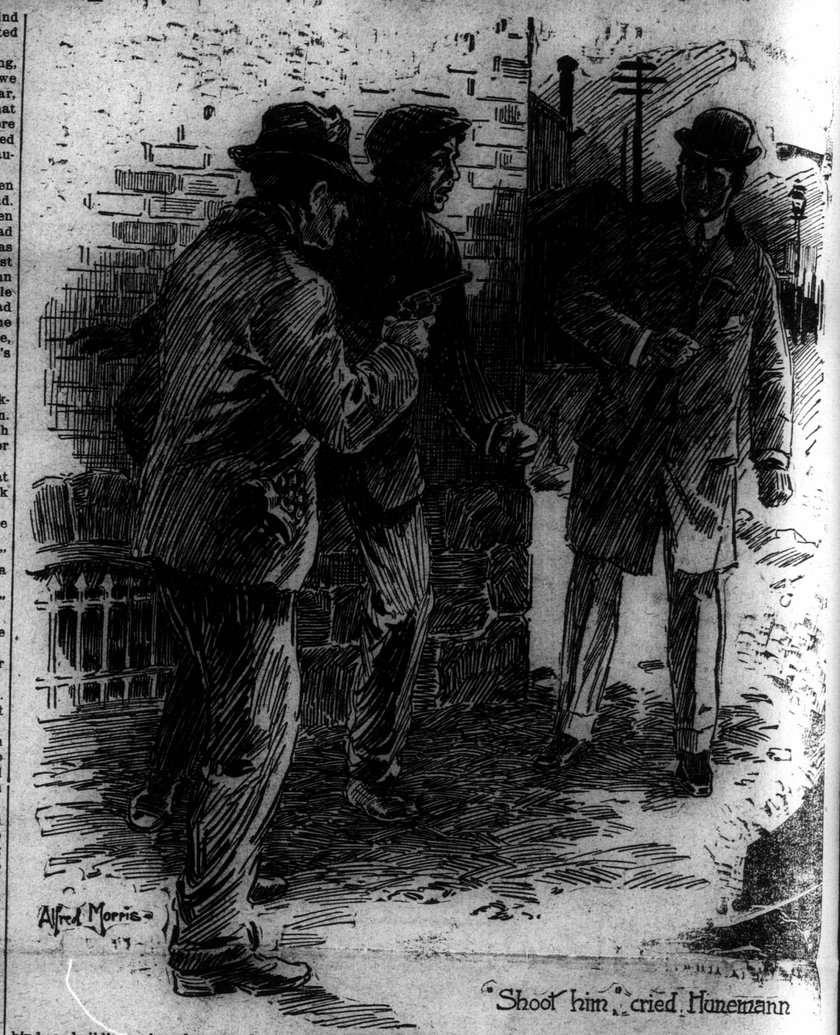
"He's broke," continued Cluffer, "and I'm his meal ticket. He wouldn't leave me for a farm."

"Good! We've got to fake a murder by you. Here it is: You fix it to hold me up. You have to shoot me, because I resist. Then you hurry away. After that you get afraid of Hunemann. You tell him that you're afraid to stay with him because he knows you're guilty of this crime and may give you away. Then, if you are strong with him, and he wants to stay with you, he'll—"

"Tell me he's as bad as I am," said Cluffer. "Right-O. Meet me here tomorrow night at the same time."

The next night we met in the same back room and Cluffer said: "We will hold you up at ten o'clock tonight up by the Jersey Boat Club's slips. It's for a hold-up. I've told Hunemann I'd a dark, lonesome place, an ideal place laid for victims there before, and he agreed to go along and help. He'd do anything for me."

That night was one of the shivery times of my life. I kept my appointment promptly. Cluffer had described the locality properly; it was an ideal spot for a hold-up. I was strolling along, apparently at ease, when suddenly Cluffer, with a handkerchief over his eyes, stepped out from behind a building, shoved a revolver into my face, and hissed: "Hands up!" Hunemann was behind him. I had a good look at the latter's face, and now I saw that the apparently soft-hearted German was in reality of a vicious criminal type. Engaged, as he thought, in an actual crime, his face had taken on a malevolent expression. He was ready to kill, and I felt sure at last that my theory was right.




"Shoot him," cried Hunemann

"Hands up nothing," I cried, and struck at Cluffer.

"Cut that out or I'll plug you," he said. I followed him.

"Shoot him!" cried Hunemann, his face contorted in a frenzy. "Shoot him like a dog."

Bang! went Cluffer's revolver. He was so close that I felt the wad of the blank cartridge whizz past my head. I staggered, but kept after him. Bang! went the second shot. I stopped, stood up stiff, and collapsed. Cluffer said afterwards that I did it so well that for a second he was frightened.

He stepped forward, took a hurried look at me and, grabbing Hunemann by the arm, dragged him away, saying: "Killed him dead. Right between the eyes. Let's get away from this before the coppers come."

They ran away into the dark. I lay still for five minutes. Then I picked myself up, brushed my clothes and went back to my hotel.

Cluffer and Hunemann ran straight down to the Jersey Central freight yards and caught a through freight for Philadelphia. It was three days later that I heard from my partner. His communication was by telegram, and it read: "I've got the bird caged. Rutger's lodging house, corner Penn and Biddle streets. Get stenographers with dictagraph from office. "Cluffer."

One fine morning a few days later found myself with two stenographers from the office in Rutger's cheap lodging house in Philadelphia, occupying rooms in each side of the one occupied by Cluffer and Hunemann. Our dictagraphs enabled us to hear every word that was being said by the pair. Here is the salient part of the dictagraph testimony as it now appears in the records of our agency:

Cluffer—"Yes, I've got to quit you. I'm afraid to stay with you any longer. You've got too much on me. You've got me. You might squeal about that job up in Jersey City. I'm going to quit you."

Hunemann—"Don't. I'm a good pal, ain't I?"

Cluffer—"You're no pal at all. You let me do the job—and you could turn me over to the police any time you want to and go clear yourself, because there isn't anything against you."

Hunemann—"How do you know?"

Cluffer—"You've got a hold on me, and I've got no hold on you. Good bye."

Hunemann—"Wait a minute, pal. I done a job once, too. You know that Bauder case? I bumped that kid off. Honest, I did. I asked him to let me see his bank. He showed me the fifty dollars in it. I needed fifty to give a girl I was stuck on. I put my hand on his mouth so he couldn't holler, and then I grabbed him by the throat, and pretty soon he was dead. Honest."

Cluffer (Laughing)—"Oh, you dub! D'you think you can bunk me? You haven't got nerve enough to kill a flea."

Hunemann—"I'll show you. Here; I'll take you and show you where I hid the bank. Now will you believe I'm in as deep as you are? Now am I a good pal? Will you stick with me now?"

Cluffer—"You show me the bank and we'll see about it."

I arrested both Cluffer and Hunemann a few evenings later when Hunemann was proudly showing his "pal" where he had hidden the Bauder boy's bank in the soft black dirt behind Bauder's flower houses.

Cluffer was, of course, released just as soon as Hunemann was in jail. You have read, if you read the papers how Hunemann broke down and confessed of his own volition to the district attorney, how he was sent to the electric chair, and how the autopsy showed his brain to belong to the lowest criminal type of degenerates. Cluffer and I were back in New York working on another case long before the trial came to an end.

"I'm glad we didn't have to go on the witness stand," said Cluffer. "He was a dog all right, but—he certainly did believe that I was his friend."

And I said, "Next time you shoot at me, don't you aim so blame close to my head. I can hear those wads whizzing past my head in my sleep."

## SHIP GETS STRANGE ORDER

### Obeys Mysterious Message on Slate and Rescues People From Sinking Vessel.

Robert Dale Owen is our authority for the following story:

"The mate of a bark which was sailing southwards across the banks of Newfoundland was in the cabin working out the vessel's course when he noticed a man sitting at the other end of the table busy writing on a slate. Thinking it was the captain, he paid no further attention, but presently, looking up from his calculation, he saw the man suddenly disappear.

"Startled, he went across, picked up the slate, and found written on it, 'Steer to the northwest.'

"He called the captain. The writing was certainly not that of any of the crew, and eventually it was decided to obey the strange order. The vessel was put in a nor-westerly course and a man stationed at the masthead to keep a sharp lookout.

"In a few hours they sighted ice, and amongst it, in an almost sinking condition, a big ship. They reached her just in time to save her people. Among them was a passenger whom the mate recognized as the stranger who had written on the slate.

According to the other passengers, this man had been in a deep sleep or trance at the hour at which the incident had taken place."

### Epigram From the Bench.

"Dat wasn't a bad epigram of de judge's?" said Plodding Pete.

"What did he say?"

"Thirty days."

"Dat ain't no epigram, is it?"

"Sure it is. I asked a fellow what an epigram is, an' he says it's a short sentence dat sounds light, but gives you considerable to think about."

### Even If It Isn't Leap Year.

"Where is the Isle of Man, pa?"

"I'm not sure, my son, but I know that the aisle of woman is the one by which she drags a man up to the altar."

### Congressional Library.

The Congressional library at Washington contains 1,831,729 books. There are in the great building 118,165 maps and charts and 336,960 prints and engravings. The library building is said to be the finest in the United States, and from the architectural standpoint it is pronounced by many to be very near perfection. In addition to the mighty array of books, maps, charts and designs, the library contains files of most of the important daily newspapers in the country.

### Decidedly Unpleasant.

Mrs. Hoyle—Do you believe in the Darwinian theory?

Mrs. Doyle—No; I don't like to think that my ancestral halls were monkey houses.

### Metallurgical.

Doctor (after examination)—Madame, you have a constitution of iron.

Obese Patient—I have often wondered what made me so heavy.—Judge.