

# THE ADVENTURES OF AN AMERICAN SPECIAL.

(From Chambers's Journal.)

'Condense, young man, condense. If you want to get on in life, condense.' These words were addressed to a young reporter by the venerable Horace Greeley, in the writer's hearing; and indeed the journal he established and conducted with honor and profit for so many years, was a happy illustration of his maxim. Nothing high or low was considered too unimportant to find admission; but the severe pencils of the night-editors assigned the item its proper space. Sometimes it happens that the ubiquitous special may ferret out something on his own account, by a strict promise of giving incident, but suppressing names or addresses. This is called 'sensational local' work, and is received with great caution by the editors. It is generally done by reporters who are on the extra staff of a journal, or who sell their locals wherever they can find a purchaser. Often as not, they are the result of a full brain and a needy pocket. Of this class was the vivid description of a Fenian plot to burn Mr. Ashbury's yacht the *Cambria* as she lay off Gowanus Bay; or the still more startling one entitled 'Barnacle Bill,' which appeared simultaneously in the *New York Sun* and the *Boston Post*, if the writer's memory serves him. In this thrilling and minutely circumstantial narrative, it was roundly asserted that the loss of so many steamships near Cape Race was due to the presence of wreckers, who decoyed vessels with false lights.

So great a furor did this create at the time, that telegraphic communications were exchanged between the governments of Washington and Newfoundland, with the result that a British man-of-war was despatched to the bleak promontory of Cape Race on a fool's errand.

But far more serious for the people of New York was the one which the *Herald* wantonly inflicted on a credulous public. A special edition of the *Herald* one summer morning informed its readers that all the wild animals in Central Park had broken loose, and were tearing about the streets. This was followed by a graphic description of a fight between Commodore Vanderbilt, armed with a revolver, and a rhinoceros; while other local celebrities had desperate encounters with lions, tigers, and infuriated elephants. At the end of four columns of minutely described horrors, it was announced that of course the article was a hoax, but that in consequence of the carelessness of the park officials, such a thing might happen at any time!

The American's restless, impetuous disposition is proverbial. Scarcely any of the *Herald's* readers took the trouble to wade through those four columns, but rushing into street and café, informed their neighbors of the terrible tidings. Women who had husbands in the city were in agony for hours, and in many cases the most appalling and disastrous results came from this cruel hoax. Some idea of the widespread dismay and panic occasioned may be gathered from the fact that the writer's mother, living in Bergen Point, twenty miles from the scene of the alleged outbreak, with the majestic Hudson between, had occasion to visit a neighbor. A large greyhound came bounding along the street as she reached her friend's house. One glance was enough. With a shriek of terror, she fled, tripped, and fainted.

Occasionally, 'sensational locals' are true in substance and fact, though names and dates may not be given. A case of the kind came under the writer's notice. 'Mr. Blank,' said a well-known Bohemian one evening, 'would you like to know a burglar?'

'Rather an odd addition to one's stock of acquaintances, isn't it?' returned the writer. 'However, one may get something out of it.'

'More, perhaps, than you think,' returned his friend, as they walked towards Harry Hill's, a sort of concert hall, within a stone's-throw of police headquarters, and the well-known resort of sporting-men, thieves, and abandoned characters. The place, however, was well conducted; and indeed, the secret of its success lay in the fact that its proprietor pandered to that morbid craving which some respectable people have of seeing vice without becoming a victim.

'If half what this man says be true, it will create a breeze,' said the writer's friend as they entered the hall. 'There he is at yonder table,' pointing to a short, squarely-built man of about forty, with a clean shaven face, good clothes, and a profusion of jewellery. A quiet, respectable-looking man in the main, and not at all a person that one would associate with midnight crime.

'How are you, Mr. Kelly?' cried the writer's companion, addressing him carelessly. 'This is my friend, Mr. Blank of the—'

Mr. Kelly expressed his gratification at meeting the writer, and invited him to drink at his expense.

The reader may wonder at this frankness of manner towards one who was avowedly an exposé of crime. But the fact of the matter is that your criminal is as greedy of appearing in the public print as any third or fourth rate exponent of the dramatic art. Their appetite for notoriety is insatiable. They long to pose as heroes, even though it may get their necks into a noose. It is this bombast and garrulous vanity which enable the police to pounce upon them so readily, and then surprise the public with accounts of their own sagacity in following up a clue. Every trade has its tricks, and the police force is no exception to the rule. At that time, Mr. Kelly was not wanted for any particular 'job,' and he was consequently free and affable with everybody.

'Police!' said Mr. Kelly—'police! what are they good for?' and he emptied his glass with an air of profound

contempt. It need scarcely be said that some very carefully prepared remarks had been spoken in order to induce Mr. Kelly to launch forth.

'Why, gentlemen,' he continued, 'what's the police good for? Some poor "gonoff," as hasn't enough money to square 'em, gets "lagged" for maybe five or six "stretches;" and the big uns don't get touched. Police!' he repeated again. 'There's that job at—' mentioning the name of a jeweller on Broadway—'why don't they find out who done that? They say he must have stole the things himself. Rubbish! There's that job on Long Island last week, and Staten Island the week before.'

'In fact,' said the writer, 'there are so many burglaries committed now, that one would think it was done by a regularly organised gang, as I believe has been hinted at in some of the papers.'

'What would you think of the Burglars' Company, Limited?' he said with a merry twinkle in his eye—'comic idear, ain't it?—with a paid-up capital of ten thousand dollars, and burglars' tools that would open any safe in the United States!'

'Splendid idea!' said the writer, laughing. 'I've a notion I'd write it up.'

'Do!' said Mr. Kelly; 'and send it to old Kelso (the chief of police); you could make good reading out of it. You might say there was one man as planned the whole thing, and that the gang was so well organised, they set the police force at defiance. Pitch into old Kelso, and tell him he ain't worth his salary. That'll make him as mad as a hatter, I reckon.—I could put you up to a wrinkle or two, if I had a mind to; for I've known a heap of queer characters, and they've given me away points that would make your hair stand on end.'

The writer expressed himself deeply obliged to Mr. Kelly; and a conversation ensued, which resulted in his inviting us to his house to see his 'old woman.'

His old woman turned out to be a very handsome blonde of some eight-and-twenty, who immediately sent out for fried oysters and laid the table for supper. The house was well, if not elaborately furnished. Mr. Kelly announced that he would move the first of May, as he intended to take a 'public' in the Ninth Ward.

After a most pleasant evening, during which our host related many thrilling adventures, as done by some acquaintances of his in the cracksman line, we took our departure.

A month passed away. Burglaries and house-breaking still continued in Long Island and Brooklyn to an alarming extent, baffling all attempts of the police at detection.

One Sunday afternoon, a policeman walking past either the Third or the Sixth Avenue Savings-bank—the writer has forgotten which—heard a peculiar throbbing. He summoned assistance; and found on investigation, that the sounds came, not from the bank itself, but from the cellar of a house next door. Breaking in, they descended to the back basement, which they found completely undermined and tunnelled towards the bank vaults. The cause of the strange noise was a small steam-engine working at a pressure which threatened every moment to burst the boiler. By the side of the engine lay one of the gang of burglars, intoxicated. The engine worked a drill which would in four hours more have penetrated to the vaults; and the robbers might have carried off with ease nearly a million of dollars. Had the man who was left in charge attended to his duty, and not allowed the boiler to get superheated, the success of the burglarious operations was assured.

Mere chance—that fatal *bête noire* of the criminal—led to the detection and exposure of Mr. Kelly's Burglars' Company, Limited. They had hired the house next to the bank for a year, paying the rent in advance, and announced that it would soon be opened as a first-class bakery and confection shop!

The result of the trial proved that there actually did exist an elaborate association of criminals, with a capital of six thousand dollars, represented by costly burglars' tools of every description. Mr. Kelly had told very nearly the truth, having two objects in view—the airing of his own vanity, and the indulgence of what is known in America as the game of Bluff at the expense of the police force. It is more than probable that Mr. Kelly found himself watched by the police more than was agreeable, as, knowing his antecedents, and associates, they would not give him credit for remaining idle. It is a notorious fact that by telling the truth, he hoodwinked them completely, and had chance not thwarted his plans, they must have been completely successful.

Mr. Kelly is now, to the best of the writer's knowledge and belief, concentrating his genius on the severance of oakum strands or stone-breaking at Sing-Sing.

ANOTHER RUSSIAN LOAN.—Russia is about to enter the markets of the world with another loan, which may once more prove attractive, for the simple reason that Russia has never failed to pay interest in coin. The debt of Russia amounts to about four thousand million rubles equal to \$2,632,000,000, of which \$658,000,000 consists of paper money not secured by a metallic reserve. The other \$1,974,000,000 draws a higher rate of interest; but the bonds are almost as cheap as those of Austria, where the gold rentes bearing four per cent. rule below 96, while the gold rentes bearing six per cent. rule below 120. The trouble about the Russian finances, however, is this, that most departments are in the habit of expending what they please. Thus, during the last fiscal year, the Russian war department expended 56.2 million rubles, and the navy department 57.2 millions beyond the estimates of the budget. It is believed that the credit of Russia would be excellent if the expenses could be cut down to rational and honest limits.

## LAKE SHORE.

This is the Line of Vanderbilt.

These are the shares,  
Rather subject to scares,  
And reduction of fares,  
By Vanderbilt.

These are the traffics, all blooming and gay,  
Which are wired across on an opportune day,  
And concocted (at least so the pessimists say),  
By Vanderbilt.

This is the public, all forlorn,  
Who will buy anything, from coal to corn,  
And from time to time are shaven and shorn,  
By Vanderbilt.

These are the brokers, sleek and fat,  
Who advise the purchase of this and that,  
And throw all the blame when markets go flat,  
On Vanderbilt.

These are the jobbers so wary and sly,  
So remarkably quick and uncommonly spry,  
But who now and then get one bang in the eye,  
From Vanderbilt.

These are the arbitragists, first chop,  
Who get in at the bottom, and out at the top,  
And are used to insert now a peg, now a prop,  
By Vanderbilt.

And lastly, the prices they wire across,  
Would land even the d—l himself in a loss,  
And disgust us with playing at pitch and toss  
With Vanderbilt.

—The Graphic.

CHICAGO REPUDIATORS.—The Chicago Board of Trade has been interesting itself more or less in regard to speculators retaining their membership who repudiate their contracts on futures, when the markets go against them. Heretofore the Board has allowed the repudiating "shorts" to settle at the current average price on the last day of the month in which the grain should have been delivered. Several of the leading operators who have always paid their losses have become weary of being compelled to go through this constant wrangling before the "Settling Committee," and a proposition is now under consideration for united action whereby they will in the future decline to make contracts for the delivery of grain or provisions unless commission merchants who have figured as repudiators disclose the names of the parties for whom they sell, and the latter give satisfactory evidence that they will protect their contracts at maturity.

THE RIGHT TO ISSUE CIRCULATION.—A "Bank Reformer," hailing from the city of Toronto, has entered upon a crusade against the privilege enjoyed by Canadian banks of issuing bank-notes for circulation. The best answer to his arguments lies in the fact that whatever be the stringency of the money market, there has never been in the history of Canadian banking any period in which there was a scarcity of currency for all legitimate purposes. At the present moment when the circulation is higher than it has ever yet been the banks could, without exceeding their legal limits, nearly double that circulation, a fact that speaks volumes for the Canadian bank-currency system.—*Rhode's Journal*.

AERIAL NAVIGATION.—M. De Comberousse, in a discourse pronounced at the funeral of the late Henri Giffard, made this significant admission:—"An intimate friend of Giffard told me yesterday that he carried to the tomb the secret which he had long sought for, and which had revealed itself to his eyes during his last years. He added that our colleague shrank back from his own discovery, and, filled with horror, put an end to his existence." In other words, he saw that aerial navigation must prove the suicide of civilization.

## SOFTENED BY TIME.

Less than a month ago a woman about fifty years of age walked into the headquarters of a Georgia railroad, announced her name, and said she had come to make a settlement.

"Settlement of what?" asked the superintendent.

"For killing my old man."

"When?"

"Nine years ago yesterday."

"Where?"

"About fourteen miles from Macon."

And so it proved. When the circumstances were hunted out it was found that she was the wife of a dead man who had been killed while walking on the track, and no one had been able to identify him.

"Why didn't you come here sooner?" he asked.

"Just heard of it the other day," she replied. "I supposed the old man was parading around somewhere and would come home when his knees wanted new patches."

"And what damage do you ask?"

"Well, it was a long-time ago, and my greif has been softened up a good deal, and I reckon that \$25 and a pass to Atlanta will be about right."

Settlement was made on the spot, and she took the next train for the capital.—*Wall Street News*.

DR WITT CLINTON.—Dr Witt Clinton's bust on the grain floor has been draped with the national colors, and decked with the free canal badges of the different canal clubs, while the base of the bust is surrounded and imbedded in a mass of yellow, white and red roses, intertwined with smilax, while the head is crowned with a wreath of the same. This expression of grateful remembrance to the father of the Erie Canal is indeed appropriate at this particular time and all honor is due the Free Canal Union for their remembrance of his great services.