

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

3 — The Hollister Jewel Robbery THE STORY OF A MYSTERIOUS THEFT

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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.)

One Monday morning in August, 1912, the Independent Burglary Insurance Company called up the office of the Burns Detective Agency and requested that an operative be sent to their offices at once.

"Cornell," said the manager to me, "you haven't had any experience in the burglary insurance line, but I guess you can handle the work. Go over and see what's up. And, say, Cornell, remember this: This agency is retained by the year by this insurance company. Treat their work accordingly."

I found the offices of the Independent Company in a Forty-second street building not far from Fifth avenue. On presenting my card I was ushered at once into the private office of the vice president, Mr. Blaney.

"Ah! The man from the Burns Agency?" said Mr. Blaney. "Cornell is the name? Ah, yes; glad they sent you, Mr. Cornell. We've heard something of your work. You've never handled any of our cases, have you?"

"Not any," I said.

"Well, fortunately this isn't a complicated case, or at least we don't think it is. It's merely a case of investigation to assure ourselves of the propriety of a policy holder's claim. A mere matter of fact, almost. We always investigate all claims for payments, you know. Sometimes we are convinced that something is wrong; then we instruct your agency to find something for us to start a fight on. In this case, it isn't anything like that. In brief, Col. Malcolm P. Hollister's home up on Long Island sound was entered by burglars Saturday night and Mrs. Hollister's diamonds and pearls, valued at \$75,000, and insured with us for \$50,000, were stolen. There is scarcely the slightest possibility that there is anything wrong in the case. Col. Hollister is a fine, high-minded man, a gentleman of the old school. He has paid this company thousands of dollars in premiums for the last ten years and never presented a claim before this. We are all of the opinion that he will pay his claim in full, in due time. But—as a matter of form, you understand—we're sending you down to look the thing over. Be careful, Mr. Cornell, but be careful of our interests as well as the feelings of Col. Hollister and his family. Assure yourself that the burglary was committed, that Mrs. Hollister's jewels were stolen, and report. That is the case."

That was enough, for before I had got through with it the Hollister case had developed into a case so sensational, so full of strange features that the Independent Burglary Insurance Company never dreamed of that even today it is spoken of in the office of the agency as "The Hollister Job."

Being new to the work of investigating burglaries for the insurance company I went about the task in a way considerably different from that employed by the experienced investigator. I did not go to the scene of the robbery. The Hollister home lay up among the hills of Long Island on the Sound. I had heard of it as a good example of what taste and moderate wealth—moderate for New York—could do in making complete a home. I had heard of Col. Hollister, too, in the same indirect way. He was a retired bond broker, approximately 65 years old. His first wife had died many years before. Five years ago he had married again, this time taking for his bride Margaret Winderly, the Margaret Winderly who for a brief space had won such distinction in Bernard Shaw's plays. There had been some opposition to the match at the time on the part of Mr. Hollister's two grown sons by his first marriage. After the wedding this opposition was said to have simmered down until now report had it that Colonel and Mrs. Hollister were happily at peace with all the world, especially including Hollister's two grown sons. I had seen pictures of both the Colonel and his young wife in the society sections of the papers. The Colonel was an ardent member of the Nassau Hunt Club, and Mrs. Hollister was credited with having developed a great interest in aviation. This served to keep them in the public print often enough to make them comparatively well known.

Instead of repairing at once to this reputed ideal home of wealth and culture, I went down town. At the end of three hours' work I entered the offices of the broker with whom Col. Hollister had been associated in business, and who now handled the old gentleman's investments. I was equipped with letters of introduction,

The news of the burglary had not been made public so, after introducing myself as a real estate man whom Col. Hollister had approached with a view of making extensive investments, I found no trouble in furthering my avowed mission—that of obtaining a confidential opinion on the state of Col. Hollister's finances. The broker, Glavis by name, pulled his mustache and smiled easily.

"O the Colonel! all right," said he with a twinkling of his eye. "He isn't rich, you know, not New York rich, but he's comfortably fixed, very comfortably fixed now, since he took my advice and handles the family pocket-book himself."

He laughed reminiscently, and I chuckled with him.

"Yes," he went on, "the old man had to be advised a little bit some time ago. I advised him. Mrs. Hollister's fine woman, lovely lady, but inexperienced in handling large sums of money, you know—had been given a free swing at the colonel's bank account. By jove! I tell you she tore a hole into it for two or three years. Yes sir! Nearly had the 'lommel off his feet," I said to him, "Colonel, only one thing for you to do. Shut down on Mrs. Hollister. Don't let her handle a dollar. Otherwise you'll be selling that happy home of yours up on the Sound."

"Was she shut down?" I asked.

"Yes, yes. Closed down on her tight. For about a year she's had to go to the colonel for every cent she got, and, believe me, sir, the colonel has been careful, very careful, indeed. Yes, yes, the colonel is set up financially. Anything up to a million I should say."

I thanked my new found friend for his friendliness and confidence, and went further on my way, rummaging around Wall street to find all I could about the state of Hollister's finances. There was little enough to find. Apparently the colonel was sound so far as money was concerned, and Glavis was the only man who knew that there ever had been any financial difficulty between him and his wife. Everywhere that I investigated I found Hollister spoken of in the highest terms. He was a fine, honorable gentleman, Mrs. Hollister wasn't so well known among the colonel's friends as to order to make my investigation thorough I got on a Broadway car and rode up to the theatrical district, to the office of a friend of mine who conducted a booking agency.

There I gathered that Mrs. Hollister, formerly Margaret Winderly, was not so happy with her rich husband as she had expected to be. It seemed that Mrs. Hollister had expensive tastes. The colonel did not approve of them. At one time, so the gossip of the Kialto had it, Mrs. Hollister had gone so far as to threaten to go back to the stage to earn money to gratify her whims.

All these minute investigations may seem to the layman to be superfluous in a case like this. What could the Hollister's family affairs have to do with the advent of a burglar in their home? I could not answer this question any better than the reader at the beginning of my search, but successful detective work is largely a matter of watching the small things. It is the small things that the wrong doer fails to cover, not the large; and it is among these small things that the careful detective will often find the tiny item that puts him on the trail of something big. I had no definite plan in so carefully looking up the Hollister family circumstances. I only knew that it was my duty as an investigator of this case to find all about them that I could.

I ran down all the information I could scare up in New York; then next morning, I bought a ticket to the station on the Long Island Road, where the Hollister home was located.

I arrived at the station, Sound-hurst, near noon and registered at the little hotel in the village. The clerk at the hotel dined at my table and I led him to talk about the Hollister family. I was surprised to find that even there the news of the burglary had not become known, and the clerk did not hesitate in discussing the people who lived in the big house on the Sound.

"I've got a cousin who takes care of the launches and boats," said he, "and I know about all that's going on up there. And I tell you, mister, those rich folks don't have so much smoother sailing than us poor ones. No sir, they have 'beir rows juv' like we do. Why, here two months ago this spring, Mrs. Hollister had some of her old theatrical friends out for a visit, and they were raising Ned out in one of the big launches, and Old Hollister came running out in a smaller launch and ordered the 'hole lot of 'em back to shore. They had a merry old row that night, him and her, and she was going to leave him,

and then he cooled down, and at last she agreed to stay. I guess he must have given in to her because she's had that bunch of show people out every Saturday since. And believe me, they have some times, then. One of them is her brother. A young fellow, great sport. After the rest of 'em have gone to bed at night he comes down here and has a few drinks with the 'unch in the bar here. Great little 'fellow."

After dinner I went out and strolled down to the nearest telephone office and called up my friend in the booking office in New York.

"Do you know anything about Mrs. Hollister's brother, a little fellow with sporting tendencies?" I asked.

"Yes, I know of him," came the slow answer. "He's a little no-good. Tries to be an actor sometimes, and a press agent occasionally, and falls down on both jobs."

"What does he live on?"

"Search me. He always has money, though. I've heard that old Hollister sort of takes care of him. Don't believe it, though. The boy is a cheap, bright-light sport."

I went back to the hotel and sat around and smoked for awhile until the clerk again fell into conversation with me. I led the talk back to the Hollisters.

"Was that bunch of theatrical people up there last Saturday night?" I asked.

"Sure thing," was the reply.

"Was the brother with them?"

"O, yes. But I didn't see him drinking around here that time."

I bought the clerk a cigar and strolled away toward the Hollister home.

Instead of going at once to the place I walked twice around the house sizing it up as if I were a burglar looking for a place to enter. One could hardly imagine a better prospect from the burglar's point of view. The house was upon a bluff overlooking the Sound. All around it ran a red brick wall 12 feet high. On top of the wall were long iron spikes. On the side fronting toward the Sound was the kitchen, the dining room, the living room, the office and a small living house, evidently the home of the gardener, while in another corner were the stables and garage, with living quarters for coachman and chauffeur. To enter that house a burglar would have to scale the wall, risk detection from one of the three outlying houses, cross a long open space, and break into the house which obviously was well protected by safeguards. The more I looked at the house the more I became interested. If a burglar had entered and stolen those jewels he must be a man whom it would be an interesting task to run down. But had a burglar entered? Were there any burglars out of prison just then, who would venture such a task?

I ran over the list of two-story men whom I knew to be at liberty then. None of them seemed of a class to perform a job like this. There was one man whom the job fitted—Peters, the gentleman burglar—but Peters was in the Federal prison at Leavenworth and long was eliminated.

I spent a long hour studying the house in this fashion; then I went back to the hotel and called up the agency to report for the day. Chief Burns himself answered my call.

"Say, Cornell," he said, "Hollister has been phoning the insurance company asking why they don't send out an investigator to look up his claim. What's the matter?"

As briefly and succinctly as I could I related all that I have here told.

"The thing doesn't look right from his outside," said I. "That's why I'm not reporting at the Hollister house."

"The chief was silent for a moment. 'Are you sure her brother was out there Saturday?' he asked.

"That's the information I got here," I replied.

"Well," said he, "you go up to the house and report, and make your investigation. Come back to your 'stavel for the evening. And for heaven's sake, don't do anything to make them think you may not believe things are all right."

He rang off.

At the Hollister house I was ushered at once in to Col. Hollister on informing the butler of my mission.

"Rather late in getting here," said the colonel. He was an old man, and he was not happy, judging by his expression. He called Mrs. Hollister. She was a young, charming woman. She was somehow I could not get rid of the impression that she was still—there in her own home—playing a part. Together they took over the scene of the robbery. Mrs. Hollister had been accustomed to keeping her jewel in her dressing table in her room. The room was on the second floor. Saturday night, while they were having an informal little dinner down

stairs, the window of the room had been opened, the jewel drawer had been forced and the jewels taken.

"A plain case of robbery by someone who had studied the premises for a long time," said the colonel.

I asked a score of questions to throw them off the scent, and in the meantime I took a careful look at that window. It was 30 feet from the ground, in a flat wall. I looked at the marks on the frame, and then I nearly whistled in surprise. The marks were made by some clumsy round instrument not at all resembling the efficient jimmy of the experienced burglar.

"An amateur's job," said I to myself. I looked more closely, and saw that the window never had been forced open at all. It had been left un-locked! The marks had been put in for a blind, or I was no judge. The force open such windows as were in the Hollister house requires considerable leverage; and the marks of the tool used are sure to sink deep into the wood. In this case, the surface of the frame was only bruised—scarcely dentured at all. The windows were not locked when the burglar came to do his work! Whoever had done the job had done it from the inside. The window had no part in it.

I thanked the Hollisters for their courtesy, excused myself because it was getting late, and said it would be necessary for me to pay another short visit to the house in the morning.

"I see that the man who did this job is an old experienced hand," I said as I took my departure. "The signs of an old-timer's work are all over the job. I'm afraid we'll have a hard time recovering your jewels, Mrs. Hollister, if we ever do."

As I said this I watched her closely and I thought that a slight look of relief seemed to flicker in her eyes; but instantly she began to lament.

"O, I hope you do, recover them. I never, never will be able to find such perfect stones in another set."

But all the time the impression was with me that the woman still was playing a part, still was acting.

At the hotel I entered my room and stopped short in surprise to see Mr. Burns sitting in my chair.

"Shut the door," he said. "Well, what did you find at the house?"

I told him. I was rather proud of my work. He smiled.

"Cornell," said he, "I picked you out for this case, because I understand you've got patience for digging up details, and you're certainly made good. I want to tell you, however, that when this case came in I had a hunch that we'd find something queer about it."

"Why?" I asked.

"Because," said he, "Mrs. Hollister's brother, as you said, is no secret to me. And Mrs. Hollister's affection for him is known to be almost like a mother's."

We sat still and looked at each other for several long, silent seconds. The chief waited for me to speak.

"Chief," I said, "I'd better finish this brother right away."

He burst out into a hearty laugh.

"Well, Cornell," he said, "but don't worry. I've had the whole office combing Manhattan Island for him ever since he got Mrs. Hollister's jewels, and if he does I'm afraid he wouldn't be disposed to stay on this side of the water any longer than he could help."

"Why?" I asked again.

"The Hollister jewels are too well known in this line to be sold here. And the brother, if he is in on this, will want to be in at the sale. Fortunately, you saw the light in a hurry, and reported at once. I immediately got into communication with every ocean steamship line and told them to keep an eye open. Hollister hardly can get out of this country unless he's already left the city to take boat at some other port."

"While we were sitting thus a telephone call came for the chief. It was from Slavin, one of our men in this city.

"Hollister is under shadow," was Slavin's report. "He's just reserved a berth on the Franconia, to sail tomorrow morning. He's sticking close to his room in the Delmont Hotel in the meantime."

"Don't lose sight of him on your way, Slavin," said the chief, and rang off.

"That about settles it," he said, turning to me. "Cornell, call up Mrs. Hollister, get her on the wire, and ask her if she will see you alone. If she asks why, tell her it's about her brother."

"But why?" I asked in bewilderment.

The chief smiled quizzically. "Why, because I happen to have a heart and a wife-Cornell," he said. "I see now how this thing is going to work out, and—just I want to spare Mrs. Hollister. Darn it, man—women are made queer. We'll give Mrs. Hollister a chance to save her brother."



"I called up Mrs. Hollister and asked if she would consent to see me alone without her husband's knowledge."

"Why?" she demanded.

"I cannot say over the phone, Mrs. Hollister," I replied. "But—it is about your brother."

"There was a silence of several seconds. Then came the answer: "Come to the house at once."

"Good," said the chief, "I'll go with you."

It was night now, and at the Hollister home we were ushered into the library by a maid. Presently Mrs. Hollister came in alone and closed the door behind her.

"What is it?" she cried. "What has happened to my brother?"

"Don't be alarmed, Mrs. Hollister," I said. "Nothing has happened to him, and nothing will—unless you wish it. It is all up to you."

"What is it?" she whispered. "O, what is it? Tell me."

"Mrs. Hollister," said the chief, "hasn't your brother been pressing you to give him large sums of money lately?"

Her eyes ran from one to the other of us, seeking to read what we knew. She wasn't acting now, and I felt sorry for her.

"How do you know that?" she asked.

"Isn't it a fact," continued the chief, "that Colonel Hollister refused to give you any more money to give your brother?"

She sank into a chair and sat staring at us in terror.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Mrs. Hollister," said I as gently as I could, "when you saw me looking at that window didn't you see that I knew just as well as you did that no burglar ever had forced his way in there?"

She was dumb with terror; she strove to speak but the words would not come.

"And don't you know that my suspicions naturally pointed to your brother? And just now we've learned that he's booked to sail on the Franconia in the morning."

"And Mrs. Hollister," said the chief with a gentleness I never had suspected him of, "we'd have to arrest your brother on suspicion if he attempts to sail—knowing what we do."

"What do you want me to do?" she cried suddenly, flinging out her arms. "Don't hurt the poor boy! What do you want me to do?"

I looked at the chief.

"Mrs. Hollister," said he, "we are only engaged to investigate this case for the Independent Burglary Insurance Company. Our duty at present merely is to report that we do not advise the payment of your claim without further investigation. Then we will be instructed to continue our investigation at once. Which means that our duty would force us to take your brother into custody."

She thought it over for a few minutes. Then she went into the hall and called for her wraps and the big touring car.

"Where are you going madame?" asked the maid.

"I've got to run in to the Delmont Hotel," said Mrs. Hollister calmly. "I have an appointment there for this evening."

Late that night Col. Hollister called up Mr. Blaney of the Independent Burglary Insurance Company.

"I say, Blaney," said he, "drop that claim I presented for Mrs. Hollister's jewels. Luckiest thing in the world just happened. Mrs. Hollister's brother just came out to the house and took a walk down by the beach and found the jewel case with the stones all in it lying under a bunch of sand grass. Yes, yes; found them—all of them—yes; the burglars must have dropped them in making their escape—yes; probably escaped in a motor boat up the sound—yes. Smart boy, that Mrs. Hollister's brother, Blaney. I'm going to do something handsome for him—yes—drop the claim completely. The jewels are back here safe in the house, and that's all we care for. Good night, Blaney, good night."

A few days later the news of the attempted burglary of the Hollister home leaked out, and the newspapers made a great ado over the finding of the stolen jewels. But I wonder what they would have done had they known at the time that what I have told here is the real story of how the Hollister jewels did not disappear.

CENTRAL IS SURE TO KNOW

Telephone Operator Infallible Authority on Pronunciation of Difficult Proper Names.

Three men argued over the pronunciation of a fourth man's name. The fourth man was not present. He was prominent, but unknown to the disputants.

"We'll settle this thing right now," said one.

He called a telephone operator on the fourth man's exchange.

"Say, Central, how do you pronounce this name?" he asked.

He spelled it out. She told him. Her pronunciation differed from anything previously suggested.

"But it is all right, an sure," said the man who had telephoned. "Those girls always know. They are an authority on the pronunciation of proper names. A man with a funny name can't bear to hear it called wrong, even over the phone, and the first thing he does when he acquires the use of a new telephone is to drill the operator on the correct pronunciation."

Tactful Request

Dobbleigh has a confirmed borrower, and what was worse, he seldom returned the borrowed articles. He had held on to Whibbey's umbrella, for instance, for nearly a year.

"And I'm blest if I know how I am ever going to get it back," said Whibbey.

"Easy," said Hickenlooper. "Call a messenger and send Dobbleigh this note."

And he scribbled off the following: "Dear Dobbleigh: If you can spare it I'd like to borrow that umbrella of mine for a couple of days. Can you oblige me?"—Harper's Weekly.

Not so Bad as He Feared.

"I will be your Nemesis!" she hissed.

"All right," he answered. "I was afraid you might take advantage of the fact that this is leap year and insist on being something else."

Their Comparative Bulk.

The best Russian dancer to arrive for an American tour is Mlle. Plaskoveltzskajakale. She will carry her wardrobe in a handbag and her name on three flatcars fastened together.

His Life Work

Is this an artist? Yes, that is what he calls himself.

Is his studio beautiful? It is.

Where did he get the money with which to buy beautiful things? From a rich uncle who died.

Does the artist hold lovely afternoon receptions? He does.

What is he painting? A picture.

How long has he been painting the picture? About seven years.

Will he ever finish it? NO!—Puck.

Dress for an Earthquake

An old lady was staying at a hotel at Nice at the time of the earthquake. "My dear," she was wont to say, "I was simply tumbled out of bed and the ceiling cracked. I threw on a fur cloak and unconsciously pulled on my long black suede gloves, and when I got down to the hall and found all the other guests—my dear, I was the best dressed woman there!"

When Eyes Are Blacked

Benham—It is said that only one out of fifteen persons has both eyes in good condition.

Mrs. Benham—I think the average is still smaller late Saturday night.

WILLIAM FORMER BOY,

Three Killed in London Sufferns and In

(Canadian Press Despatch.)

LONDON, Nov. 11.—Death most horrible form, cremation in wreckage of their coaches, finding a rear-end freight collision the intensity of one of the severe blizzards that has swept part of the country in many came to three Grand Trunk trains between Waukesha and Wyoming miles west of London, on the branch, at 5 o'clock yesterday morning.

News of the calamity, beyond the paralyzing of the telegraph line by the storm, did not reach London until after 1 o'clock yesterday afternoon, when express No. 131 to hours overtaken by a freight train and reports of having been on the west side of the blockading siding from the collision.

Terrible Stories Told by Those The stories of the three London trainmen are of the ghastly character, the accounts, deaths of the three victims, and of the rescue of Engineer H. the flames licked up the splinters about 11 o'clock yesterday morning. A crowd headed by Conductor fat, one of the men burned to death, and Engineer Hall, was called London at midnight to relieve coming from the east on a passenger train. They left London at 6 o'clock, and according to members of the crew the locomotive was then in condition for the run at

A Brantford Boy

William Moffat, who met with a terrible death in the wreck of a train at Brantford yesterday, is the son of Mr. David Moffat, Duane street, and a former well-known Brantford boy. He left here years ago to work on the railway, and had resided in Brantford for some time. He was survived by a wife, his brothers Ernest and Jack, and his father. The sympathy of many Brantford friends will be extended the sorrowing relatives.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING

Two By-Laws Were Mission and One F Various Other Mat

Two by-laws were submitted City Council meeting last night for the election of a Hydro-Electric Board and another for the City of Westport for Bell Memorial purposes. The session was rather less, but there was at that some patch to the proceedings. Various items of interest to ratepayers touched upon all of which are itemized below for Courier readers.

Board of Works

The Board of Works reported follows.

"That the claim of Michael Laughlin for jury fee, auto overhauling, tree he paid, has been found that tree was on Railway street."

"That the following communication be referred to the City Solicitor: M. S. Howitt of Oct. 23rd (Lawyer Street); Brewster & Heyd of Oct. 14th (re Mrs. Luckner)."

"That the following communication be filed: Joseph P. McHugh of 10th; Brewster & Heyd of Oct. (re Whayman); L. M. Metcalf Oct. 25th."

Mr. A. C. Lyons appeared before the council in regard to Law street. By narrowing the street, rate property would be damaged. Mr. Lyons, it was, in its way, a street. He protested against having narrowed. A few years ago, property owners received the worst of that section when St. Paul's was closed.

Ald. Suddaby said that in 1905 city council introduced a by-law making Lawrence street 55 feet inches in width. The by-law was not put into effect. The original