

Uncle Sam: Detective

By WILLIAM ATHERTON DU PUY

The Elusive Fugitive

True stories of the Great Federal Detective Agency, the Bureau of Information, U. S. Dept. of Justice.

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When one individual in a great world goes forth secretly to hide himself and a second man starts forth to find him, it would appear that all the advantage was with the fugitive. Particularly would this seem to be the case when the man in flight is of a high degree of intelligence and is thoroughly informed as to the methods that will be employed in the pursuit.

Yet the detective who knows his business and who sticks to the trail month after month nearly always turns up his man. He may do this by following out, one after another, the probabilities in the case. There is almost no man who will refrain from performing some one of those everyday actions that it is but natural he should take. There is almost no man who will flee without leaving a trail behind him. If he is the criminal genius who succeeds in doing all these things, there is the element of chance that will turn up some bit of information that will put the vigilant sleuth on his track. For there are many pulses upon which the detective finger may rest long after the criminal gets to feel so secure as to become careless. Particularly is this true of the sleuths of the federal government, whose instructions are never to abandon the pursuit of an escaped criminal.

There is the case of Alexander Berliner, for instance. He was a prince of frauds, a man of exceptional ability, a cosmopolitan, one who knew detective methods, a man with money. He had a month the start of Billy Gard of the federal department of justice. He knew that the special agent was after him. He appreciated the danger of a long term in prison if he were caught.

Would you think, under the circumstances, that the detective in the case could make sufficient splash among the tides of humanity that surge around a great world to disturb the tranquillity of Berliner? Let us see how the case developed.

Gard had the advantage of having got a "spot on" Berliner. That is to say, he had seen him. Berliner was a customs broker. His business was to act as agent for American purchasers and European dealers. He knew his Europe and he knew New York. The details of customs regulations and duties to be paid were an open book to him. He spoke many languages and had customers among the wealthiest people in America.

It was when a mere suspicion arose as to the fidelity with which he was paying his duties that Billy Gard, on some pretext, went to see him. A large, upstanding, white-haired man he was—unusually handsome and dominant.

"May I ask," said Gard, "if you think table linens of good quality could be procured from Ireland within six weeks? My sister is opening an establishment at that time and is not satisfied with the offerings here."

"Who is your sister?" asked Berliner, rather more directly than a customer would expect to be questioned by a broker.

"Mrs. Jonathan Moulton," said the special agent glibly, giving the name of a woman friend. "She lives in Seventy-second street."

"Do you mind if I call her for a confirmation of your inquiry?" said the broker, still noncommittal.

"Such a request is not usually addressed to a prospective customer," said Gard, appearing a bit nettled, "but I have no objection whatever."

As a matter of fact the special agent was very much disconcerted. He had foreseen the possibility of having to use the name of some individual who might afterward be called upon to verify the genuineness of his interest in linens. Mrs. Moulton was a good friend who would be entirely willing to help him in a little deception of this sort, but he had not as yet coached her as to the part she might be called upon to play. He had thought there would be plenty of time later if it became necessary to identify the supposed customer. But Berliner was evidently suspicious of bright young men who called upon him. He evidently knew that he was under investigation. Gard's particular hope, if the broker insisted on calling his alleged sister, was that he would find that she was not at home.

But luck was not with him. Mrs. Moulton herself answered the telephone.

"May I ask," said the broker, "if you will give me the name of the young man whom you have commissioned to buy linens for you?"

The manner in which the question was put, Gard realized, gave Mrs. Moulton no intimation of the situation. He knew she was sufficiently clever to be entirely noncommittal if the broker had mentioned his name. But Berliner was too shrewd for this.

"You have authorized no one to buy for you?" the broker was saying. "You are not in the market for linens at all? I see. There must have been some mistake."

Berliner turned to his caller. "Young Mr. Detective," he said, urbanely, "your work is a bit amateurish. May I present you with your hat? I trust there will be no occasion for our acquaintance to develop further."

The case against Berliner did not come to a crisis immediately. It was two months later that the customs agents reported that he was gone and that they had evidence that he had long resorted to undervaluing the imports of his clients. By getting an article through the customhouse at less than its value, he would defraud the government of just the difference between the amount paid and the amount that should have been paid. But this money was not saved for his customer. That individual was charged the full amount due and the broker pocketed the difference. There was evidence that the government had lost \$100,000 through these operations.

Because Gard had seen the customs broker he was assigned to the capture of the fugitive. He set about the task methodically.

The special agent diligently searched out every one of Berliner's intimates. There was a wife and brother to begin with. It is the A, B, C of fugitive catching that every man will communicate with some one of his relatives or intimates. It is not human nature to break off every tie. Against the possibility of this fugitive writing Gard established a close watch over the mail of each of the fugitive's relatives and close friends. The postman who delivered mail to each was given samples of Berliner's handwriting, was instructed to report the arrival of any letter that might be suspected of coming from him, to have tracings made of its envelope, to note its postmark, before it was delivered.

But a month passed and no suspicious letter arrived.

In the meantime every possibility of getting directly on the trail was exhausted. Even in a great city like New York it is difficult for anybody to take a train without having fixed the attention of somebody else. An expressman must be called to get a trunk to the station. A taxicab may be used. Servants are aware of a departure. Tickets must be bought. Conductors on trains must take up those tickets.

It is a tedious task to interview innumerable expressmen and ask each if he had had a summons from a certain apartment. The taxicab records of calls are equally confusing, but each may be traced to a driver and that individual may be questioned. Every ticket seller in a city may be seen in a day or two, the photograph of the man wanted may be shown and a recollection of him developed. If the fugitive is of striking appearance, as was Berliner, the chances of his being remembered are increased. If the trail is once crossed the going is easier.

Yet all these and many other devices failed in this case, and chance first pointed the way. The goddess of coincidence made her appearance in a modest motion picture theater where Gard and a friend were killing a bit of time. Among the reels shown was one which portrayed a visit of the president to New York. It began with the arrival at the station, among throngs of people.

"By the Lord Harry!" suddenly exclaimed the special agent. "Would you pipe that gray-haired gent in the foreground. I have been looking for him for a month."

It was Berliner. He had chosen the moment when the station was most crowded, to make his getaway. Oblivious to the presence of the motion picture operator, he had stopped for a moment to say good-by to another man, his brother, as Gard thought. The two had spoken a few words and parted.

"I wonder," soliloquized Gard, "what those two men said to each other?"

Then he thought of Jane Gates, the Lily Maid, the deaf cypist at headquarters, the cameo-faced girl, best loved of the special agents.

"The Lily Maid might read the lips of those unconscious motion picture actors," he thought. "They are right out in front."

So it happened that the deaf typist got a half-holiday and she and Gard spent it at the picture show, where her lack of the sense of hearing in no way detracted from her enjoyment.

The scene at the station came on. Gard pointed out the two men in the foreground, who, fortunately, were facing the machine. The deaf girl picked their words from their lips and

repeated them in the hollow tones of those who have learned to talk without hearing.

"Send Margaret to London in three months," the customs broker was saying. "I shall not write."

"But how shall we know of your whereabouts?" the brother asked. "You will not know. I take no chances," was the answer.

"But where are you going?" "First to Montreal, eventually to Europe. There I will hide and live in peace."

This much of the talk of the brothers was definitely made out. A return for three performances thoroughly confirmed the conversation.

"You are the best detective on the force," Gard told the deaf girl with his lips, thereby making her very happy, for she was full of the enthusiasm of the service.

"But more remarkable than this," he continued, watching for the flush of pink which cheeks always drew to her cheeks, "is that the best detective in the great city should, at the same time, be its very prettiest girl."

The next day the special agent was on the cold trail in Montreal. The fact that a fugitive must eat and sleep is a great help to a detective. All the hotels in a city may be canvassed and are likely to yield results. It was at a little family hostelry in the suburbs that a gray-haired man of distinction had passed a week. He had been gone nine days. Yes, he had a trunk. The porter knew that it had gone to a certain station. The ticket agent thought he remembered selling the man whose picture was shown him a ticket to Chicago. Dave White was the conductor on the train to that point on the day in question and remembered the gray-haired man.

In Chicago the trail grew warmer. The fugitive had been at the Auditorium but four days earlier, but the porters were unable to recall any of the details of his going away. The special agent asked to see the room Berliner had occupied. It was occupied by another guest, but Gard was allowed to explain himself to the successor of the fugitive and was given permission to search the room. A close examination of it developed but one clue. Sticking inside a waste basket were three fragments of a letterhead that had been torn into small pieces. One of these fragments showed part of the picture of another



"YOUNG MR. DETECTIVE, YOUR WORK IS A BIT AMATEURISH."

hotel. An arrow, drawn in ink, pointed to a certain window.

Gard took the fragments of the picture of the hotel to a traveler's guide and searched for the house that would compare with it. Eventually he found the duplicate, and it was a Chicago hostelry. He hurried to it. After showing his credentials to the house detective, information was freely supplied. The room in question was occupied by a woman and had been so occupied for two weeks. She was a handsome and stylish red-haired woman of thirty-five. She had been carefully watched for a reason that presently developed.

"Has she received any callers?" asked the special agent.

"But one person, a man, has visited her," answered the house detective.

"What sort of a man?" asked Gard.

"A large man with gray hair," said the house detective. "He is in her room now."

"Will you go up with me immediately?" ejaculated the special agent. "I must not fail to see this man."

"Assuredly," was the response, and they caught the next elevator.

The car they took was an express and was not to stop until it reached the eleventh floor. The next to it was a local, stopping at all floors. The express, going up with the detectives aboard, slackened its speed at the eighth floor while its operator gave some message to the boy on the local which had stopped there to take on a passenger. The cars were of an open-work structure and the passengers in one could see quite plainly those on

the other, as they passed. As the express passed Gard looked through at those riding on the other car. Imagine his consternation when, not two feet from him, he saw the man for whom he had been searching for months. As he gazed through the checked steel slats of the car side he was close enough to have put out his hand and laid it on his man had nothing intervened. Berliner faced him and, as the car paused, he and the special agent gazed directly into the eyes of each other. This was for but an instant and both cars were in motion again. The detective was being borne rapidly toward the top of the building and the fugitive less rapidly toward the ground.

"There is my man on the other elevator," Gard whispered hurriedly to the house detective. "Have the boy reverse and run down again."

The message was given to the operator, who obeyed instantly and some excuse was made to the passengers on the car. The local had been stopping at each floor and the express passed it and barely reached the ground floor first. There the two detectives stepped out and waited for the coming of the other car.

A moment later it arrived, much crowded, and began to disgorge itself. The two officers waited in instant readiness to capture the man whom they had seen at the eighth floor. But the car was emptied and he was not among the passengers.

"Where did the big gray-haired man get off?" the boy was asked.

"Third floor, sir," he replied.

"You bar the exits," Gard said to the house detective, "and I will get back to the third."

On that floor the hallman said that the white-haired gentleman had run down the steps to the second. Gard followed, but was able to find no one on that floor who had seen the fugitive. He ran hastily about looking for possible exits, and then instituted a thorough search. He investigated every possible avenue of escape and hastened downstairs to his ally to help cut off the line of retreat. Every possible barrier was put up and the house was well gone over. The gray-haired fugitive had, however, eluded pursuit.

Gard immediately called upon the Chicago police to throw out a dragnet and a general alarm, and this was done. All railway stations were watched with particular care. None of which was of any avail, as Berliner

day and remained not more than four hours, no living creature entered the house. In all that two weeks the postman left no mail. Billy Gard seemed to be up against a blank wall. He held, however, that if a man kept awake on the most hopeless job for a sufficient length of time some clue was sure to develop or some idea present itself that would lead toward results.

Gard investigated the maid who worked the daily short shift in the quarters of the red-haired woman from America. He found her a placid and stupid creature who knew nothing nor had intelligence sufficient for his purpose. Incidentally he found that she had secured her place through an employment agency located at a considerable distance. He immediately made use of this information.

The special agent, through the Paris police force, secured the co-operation of the employment bureau. A position that paid much better was offered to the servant of Mrs. Berliner. It was, quite naturally, accepted. That lady, finding herself without a servant, returned to the agency that had formerly provided her with one who was entirely satisfactory. She asked for a second maid.

The employment bureau immediately supplied her demand. The woman who was sent was, in secret, more than she seemed to be. She was connected with the Paris police department and was a detective of some cleverness. Almost immediately she took up her new activities.

Three days later she reported to Agent Gard from America. She had found in her red-haired mistress a woman who led a quiet life that seemed in no way irregular, who followed a normal routine of housekeeping, walking, shopping. She seemed to have no acquaintances. But one thing irregular appeared in the whole establishment. There was one room in the rear of the suite which remained locked. The mistress had stated that it was a storage room. This seemed somewhat strange, as it must look out upon the interior court and therefore be the most attractive room of them all. It seemed peculiar that such a room should be used for storage and, even so, that it should be locked up.

Gard put together the two facts—the locked room and the short hours of the servant—and drew a conclusion. It was as the result of this conclusion that he asked the woman detective to install a dictagraph beneath the table in the sunny little dining room just off the apartment of the locked door. This was easy of accomplishment during the hour of the afternoon stroll of the mistress of the house. The wires of the dictagraph were run across the street and into the watch tower rooms of the special agent.

When the dinner hour approached that evening Billy Gard sat patiently with the headpiece of the dictagraph securely in place. The first sound that he caught from across the street was that of feet, supposedly those of the woman of the Titian hair, passing back and forth about the room, then an occasional snatch of a song while she worked. He gathered that she was arranging for the evening meal, the servant having gone home hours before.

Ten minutes passed and then there came over the wire a sound that might have been a bit surprising to the observer of this ultra quiet household, the watcher at the entrance through which none had passed unseen since the day it was rented, had not the listener already developed a theory.

"Well, Margaret," said a full-throated man's voice, as transmitted by the dictagraph, "this is not so bad. I never dreamed that you had the housewifely instincts that would make it possible for you to arrange with your own hands the dainty dinners we are having. I am beginning to think that the man is lucky who cannot afford servants."

"And don't you know," said a woman's voice, "I never enjoyed anything more in my life. For almost the only time I can remember I have a definite occupation. I have to provide our creature comforts. I haven't been so happy in years. I really don't care how long they keep us cooped up."

"I will confess," said the man, "that the novelty has worn off of the view into the courtyard. But it might be worse. For a while they had me thinking quite regularly of striped suits and the lockstep which are part of a life even more confining than this. And here I have you. I am quite content to wait for the atmosphere to clear."

"But I am very sure we are still being watched," said the woman. "I always feel that I am being followed when I go out."

"Very likely," said the man. "But no detective will pursue fruitless quests indefinitely. Even though they know you are here, they will ultimately lose interest in a surveillance that yields nothing. We can afford to wait. The time will come when we can steal away in safety."

"When it is all over," she responded, "I do wish that we could find a way to let those detectives know that you were here under their very noses all the time."

Billy Gard, it may here be set down, was most anxious to learn how this had been possible. He had followed Margaret Berliner to the house when she had first come to see it. He had been notified immediately when she had rented it. From that moment he had watched every detail of her taking possession; had, with the aid of his men, seen everything that had gone into the house. Yet Berliner had installed himself without his knowledge and had been living there all the time.

"It would have been impossible without Archie," Berliner was saying. "A man in a position like mine needs, upon occasion, someone he can trust to do little things for him. We may quarrel with blood relatives all our lives, but they have the advantage of being safe to trust in time of trouble. It is a very small thing to send a man to a rent agent for a key to inspect lodgings and to send him back with the key after they are inspected. But had I not been able to trust Archie absolutely I would not have been able to get in here a day ahead of you and this snug little arrangement would not have been possible."

It was because of what he here overheard that Special Agent Gard, assisted by Coleman of the Paris office and the police of that city, considerably waited until Mrs. Berliner went shopping the following day and were admitted by the woman detective, who was at the time washing the accumulated dishes of the household. They so surrounded the locked door as to make escape impossible and then announced their presence. Gard told Berliner, through the locked door, of the situation that existed on the outside. He suggested that the easiest way was to unbolt the entrance, thereby saving the necessity of breaking it down. Whereupon the customs broker walked out and surrendered, and a very tedious fugitive case was brought to a successful conclusion.

JEWELERS USED GOLD COINS

How Government Stopped Practice of Converting Money Into Articles of Adornment.

New York.—There are few things more interesting to the average student of business matters than the odds and ends that often crop up in conversation with veterans of the manufacturing or wholesaling trades when found in a reminiscent mood. It was in such a mood that a reporter found Julius Wodiska the other afternoon. Mr. Wodiska, who is a manufacturer of jewelry, is widely known in the trade.

It may have been the recent rise in iridium or it may have been the recent heavy shipment of gold to this country, or both, that caused Mr. Wodiska to tell how the United States government stopped some forty-odd years ago the melting up of \$20 gold pieces in order to use the metal in the manufacture of gold jewelry. In those days it was the custom of many of the jewelry makers to use these coins instead of buying fine gold, as a matter of convenience. So they went to a bank and got \$20 gold pieces enough, or \$10 ones, for that matter, to supply the sufficient metal for the work in hand. The gold pieces being 22 karats fine, 24 karats being absolutely pure gold, it was not difficult for the jewelers to melt them up and add the necessary alloys to produce the degree of fineness desired for the jewelry they were going to make.

"However," related Mr. Wodiska, "it was not long after this practice became more or less general that the government authorities began to wonder what was becoming of the \$20 gold coins. They began missing the \$10 ones, too, but the disappearance of the former was by far the more rapid. The officials did not think that the people of the country were hoarding the gold, because most of the smaller coins remained in circulation. So a quiet investigation was begun, and it was not long before it was discovered that the makers of gold jewelry were melting them up for trade purposes.

"Having found the cause, it was not difficult for the officials to effect a cure. They did it by 'peppering' the \$20 coins with iridium. Now iridium, which is not altogether unlike black emery in the crude state, requires a heat of 3,542 degrees Fahrenheit to melt it. In the degree of heat required for this purpose it is only second to rhodium, which needs a temperature of 3,632 degrees Fahrenheit to reduce it to a liquid state. Gold, on the other hand, can be melted at 1,913 degrees Fahrenheit. From this it is easy to see that the unsuspecting manufacturer, melting up gold pieces at the temperature required, got a number of unmelted specks of iridium in his metal when he let it cool. This made trouble when the metal was worked up.

"At the time this was being done there was a great vogue of fine Etruscan work in solid gold, which required a perfectly smooth surface in order to be produced properly. Imagine the dismay of the jewelers, therefore, when they found the much-needed smooth surface dotted here and there with little pepperlike specks of iridium. To leave them in meant that the decorative work could not be done properly, and to take them out meant leaving the piece pockmarked with tiny holes. It was not long before the gold pieces, whether they contained iridium or not, were eyed with suspicion by the manufacturers, who then secured their metal from other sources."

Livery of Toil.

"I suppose your boy Josh is too proud to put on overalls?"

"No, he ain't," replied Farmer Corn-tossel. "He put on overalls the other evening an' went to a masquerade disguised as a farmhand."

A Demand for the Genuine.

"Do you think the public enjoys being humbugged?"

"Possibly," replied Senator Sorghum. "But the people who are smart enough to accomplish the feat are getting scarcer every year."