

# Robbing the Paymaster

True Story of the Secret Service

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I WAS on duty as special agent of the United States government at New Orleans in the summer of 1862. Maj. Gen. Benjamin F. Butler was department commander and ruling this then turbulent city with an iron hand. Everything down there including the weather was sizzling hot. Thugs and thieves were being severely dealt with. Martial law was in force and summary punishment was being meted out by the provost judge. Several house robbers had been hanged by order of General Butler and there must have been a ticklish sensation about the necks of the unruly.

It was one of those blazing hot mornings for which New Orleans is famous that Major —, a United States paymaster on duty in that city, left his office in the custom house carrying a portmanteau containing just \$20,000 in gold coin. The major was one of those economical men who thought a penny saved was as good as a penny earned. Gold at this time was at a premium, hence a saving could be made by making an exchange of gold for paper currency. Besides, he may have thought paper money more convenient for the soldiers' use. As he passed down the custom house steps he passed a moment as if to determine the course to pursue. He halted a passing cab, and entering it he instructed the driver to take him to the bank of Jacob Barker on Camp street. The cab drew up directly in front of the main entrance.

The paymaster went inside. Stopping around the end of the counter he met and shook hands with a stockily built man whose locks were long and white. This was Jacob Barker whose name at this time was familiar to every banker in the United States. Uncle Jacob blinked a welcome as the shining pieces were spread upon the table.

Two young men now came forward to make the count and pile up the treasure. The work completed, bundles of greenbacks were crowded into the portmanteau to take the place of the gold coin. Then there was a side transaction and a package that looked like money was stowed away in the paymaster's breast pocket. The major as he reentered the cab did not notice that the driver was casting longing eyes upon the bulging portmanteau.

He was then taken to the post office, which was located in the custom house. He got out of the cab and stepped inside, where he remained just long enough to unlock and remove the mail from his letter box. Returning to the street he was greatly astonished and nearly paralyzed with excitement to discover that the cab in which he had left the \$20,000 had disappeared. He looked up and down the street stupidly at first. Recovering himself he madly rushed around the corner. There was no cab in sight. He then started on foot at a lively pace for the office of the provost marshal general on St. Charles street.

I chanced to be in the provost marshal's office at this time. I listened to the paymaster's story and was the first to undertake the recovery of the money. It was one of those smooth easy robberies with little or no clue for a starting point.

I started out on what seemed to be a rather difficult case, less than an hour after the theft. I had an abiding faith that if I could meet the utility man face to face while the affair was yet warm on his mind I could pick him out from the many cab drivers in the city.

The paymaster thought the driver of the cab an Irishman, but was not quite certain. He knew that he had been separated from his money and that was about all the information he could give. The capturing of the thief and recovering the money seemed now to rest upon the telltale eyes.

It was now noon-day and feeding time. The most of the cabs were off the streets, but I chanced to secure one, and I started out to visit the utility man in the city. When I met the driver of one of these vehicles I looked him over carefully, but saw nothing in the face of any of them to arouse suspicion. My mind might have been a little romantic in those days, but I thought the thief would give a disturbance on his face by which I would be able to pick him out.

When at last I had met nearly all the cabbies in the city, and discovered nothing upon which to base suspicion, the driver with whom I was riding chanced to speak of a man who had quite recently started in the cab business. His stable was at his own home on St. Peters street. He knew the place and I told him to drive to it. Arriving there, I entered the yard and discovered wheel tracks that appeared to be freshly made. There was a small stable in the rear of the lot near which was a pile of litter. The top of this pile had recently been disturbed. With a pitchfork I overhauled some of it. I can give no explanation why I did this. I made no discovery. I then ascended the stairs leading up to the outside of the house to the portico, and entered a living room in the se-

cond story. There was a woman lying upon the bed. She appeared quite feeble and had recently given birth to a child. "Who lives here?" I inquired. She answered, "Patrick O'Rafferty." "What is his business?" "A cab driver."

"Did your husband come to his dinner?" "No, he has not been here since he left this morning."

I then said, "My good woman, I am a government officer, and am here to search your house for concealed arms." "You can search as much as you please, but you will find nothing of the kind in this house."

I cast my eyes about and saw that I was in a home that seemed destitute of the common comforts of life. I stepped into an unfurnished adjoining room and swung open the door of a small dark closet. There were only a few articles of clothing hanging upon the wall. Feeling about in the hope of discovering something, I attempted to put my hand on a pair of Attikapas pants that were damp about the waist.

My suspicion was aroused a little then, and considerably more so since I was informed by Mrs. O'Rafferty that there had not been a man in the house since early morning. She

stared at me as though trying to comprehend the situation.

Not wishing to worry her with any further explanation I excused myself as best I could and left the house. An keen and discerning as I might have been I could not for the life of the universe understand the reason why the woman should attempt to deceive me unless she had some object. The moisture about the waist of the pants was to my mind unmistakable evidence of a man in the house only a short time before. Why did the woman deny it?

I ascertained that O'Rafferty's usual stand was on the levee not far from the custom house and I directed the driver to take me there at once. On arriving at the designated spot I was fortunate in finding O'Rafferty at his usual stand.

I sprang out of the conveyance in which I was riding and stepping briskly up to him, I boldly charged him with stealing the leather bag. As my eyes met his I knew my man. Nothing short of proof to the contrary could have cleared him had I been his judge.

His statement differed materially from the one made by his wife. On questioning him he said he had been at home in the middle of the day. Had fed his horse, cooked his own dinner and waited upon himself. Talked with his wife and changed his pants. He could give no reason why he made the change, except that he did so. He stoutly denied carrying the paymaster and swore by all the saints in Christendom that he hadn't carried a passenger on that day.

I could not budge him in the least; the more I crowded him the keener was his denial. He deeply resented the charge I had made and braced up to me in a spirit of defiance. He was Irish sure enough. Being tutored considerably with the same blood myself, and with the United States government at my back, I had the advantage of him. Yet he might have downed me had it not been for the pants. This discovery as simple as it was loomed up as a matter of great importance. I arrested him and locked him up in the First district station. I was confident he was the thief, but when he was brought into the presence of the paymaster I was almost knocked off my base when the major was unable to recognize the prisoner, besides which he had the amazing stupidity to admit it in his presence. He was evidently one of the negative, wabbly sort, and may have been over-

ly conscientious. He refused to make a charge. Consequently I took the responsibility of holding the prisoner and locking him in a cell where he was not allowed to converse with any outsider.

After a few days of confinement he appeared quite down-hearted and begged to be permitted to see his wife. The meeting between the husband and wife at their home was quite affecting, yet there was no development that would suggest guilt. I now determined to give O'Rafferty a little jolt for the purpose of frightening him into a confession.

In the corridor, at a little distance from his cell, a person inquired: "What are they going to do with O'Rafferty?" In an earnest manner as I could command I answered that he was to be hung on the following morning at nine o'clock, by order of the commanding general. O'Rafferty, of course, heard the conversation that was intended for his ears.

There was at this time a prevailing fear among many that General Butler was liable to hang almost anyone. My ruse had its effect, as O'Rafferty now began to sob and groan. I stepped inside his cell and made an effort to console him, assuring him that I was very sorry, but that nothing could be done to help him unless he would give up the money.

He was a Catholic and begged that he might see a priest. I thought he wanted to make a confession, and went at once to the custom house to consult Major —, and chanced to meet the postmaster, who was General Butler's brother-in-law. When I explained the situation and the possibility of a confession, he said it would do no good to let him confess to a priest, who would divulge nothing that was told him, and suggested Major Farr, chaplain of a Connecticut regiment. "Don't try to fool a Catholic," I said, "but let us secure a real priest."

Upon my agreeing to take charge of this part of the program, it was finally concluded that a priest should be sent for and that he was to meet the prisoner in a room in the custom house. There was a number of large wardrobes, or armories as they were called in New Orleans, in the room. These were used for storing books. Some of them were removed from one, giving room for a man to enter. When the good father and O'Rafferty came and took a seat near this armory, they surely did not notice that its door was just a little ajar.

Father M— soon came out of the room. There was an expression of sadness upon his face, but he said nothing that could throw any light upon the robbery; yet it was quite apparent that something unusual had happened. Something had, and I now possessed the clue I needed.

It was dark when I arrived at the corner of White and Clio streets and knocked at the front door of a small dwelling house, which was soon opened by a middle-aged man. I informed him that I was a government officer and that I had come there to arrest both him and his wife and seize their house, which would be forfeited to the government. I told him that O'Rafferty had confessed everything. He now turned to his wife and exclaimed in an excited manner: "What did I tell you, Margaret? You see the bad business your brother has got us into?"

"Where's the money?" I demanded. "It's under the house, and I will bring it to you."

"Be lively about it," I said in a commanding tone. He now went into the kitchen where he raised a small trap in the floor. Reaching down, he pulled out a corn sack. Hastily examining its contents I found it contained about \$5,000 in paper money. I demanded the keys of his house and they were handed to me. The bigger the bluff the greater the scare, I thought. I took the man and his wife to the First district police station where they were locked up together in a comfortable room. A messenger was at once dispatched to bring Father M—.

When found he was at the house on the corner of White and Clio streets endeavoring to arouse the occupants. He came immediately to the police station, and I acquainted him with the fact that a portion of the money had been recovered, and the persons in whose possession it had been found were in custody. He was unquestionably much surprised by this arrest. It

may well be presumed that Father M—, having received O'Rafferty's confession, was in the act of reaching out for the restoration of the stolen money when accosted by the messenger. Believing himself to be the possessor of the only information that would lead to this important event, he was of course somewhat puzzled at what had taken place, but he convinced me that he was quite anxious to render any assistance in his power to recover the rest of the money. At my request he went in to talk with the man and his wife. I assured him that they would be released and not further molested if they would give up the stolen money. I went further than this and said that if he could promise me that the money would be returned within the next twenty-four hours I would at once release the two prisoners. After interviewing them, he came outside and requested me to let the man and his wife go home. He said everything would be well at 12 o'clock on the following day, and his request was complied with. The good father was greatly concerned about what was to become of O'Rafferty.

"This," said he, "is the first great sin of this young man's life. On account of the sickness of his wife he has been greatly pressed for money. In a moment of weakness he yielded to temptation." The father did not say it, but I inferred that with him a full confession and restitution meant repentance, forgiveness and a pardon from God. In this particular case, however, a law made by man stood in the way. How was it to be overcome?

I realized that affairs were very much mixed at this time, and that there were many other honest people who might find a ready excuse for a thief from the United States government. While a condition of this kind could not be pleaded as a bar to O'Rafferty's punishment, it might be found in palliation of the crime; he might have remained an honest man had not the opportunity been thrust upon him. I had made promises to the good father and might have imagined the confession of the culprit a solemn absolution of his sin; hence my deep sympathy and determination to procure his release.

The balance of the money was all returned by the priest as promised, but the difficult point in the case was yet to be accomplished. How was O'Rafferty to be let out? I might have unlocked his cell door and allowed him to walk out, but he would not be free, as he would be liable to be arrested by other officers. He had now openly told the simple story of the robbery and there was nothing further to detect.

He said he had no thought of stealing the sack when the paymaster stepped out of the house, but when left alone he reached through his brain to drive to his home with it, where he made an attempt to bury it in the litter pile. Abandoning this plan, he drove to his brother-in-law's house. On arriving there he found his sister washing clothes in the yard. He told her in a hurried manner that he had brought a big lot of money and that he would leave it with her to take care of. He put the portmanteau in a box under the shed in the yard and covered it with hay. There were two of the husband's brothers sleeping in the house at the time; they were bakers by trade, working nights and sleeping in the day time. When they got up in the afternoon the sack containing the money was pointed out to them. They cut it open and divided its contents, as near as they could guess, into three equal parts. Leaving one-third for the sister, they hid the other two-thirds for themselves. Poor O'Rafferty, who really did not know very much about the contents of the sack, was left out in the cold.

The city of New Orleans was under martial law at this time, and offenders were being handled severely in the provost court. The judge was puritanical in principle and clothed with almost unlimited power. He was considered quite unapproachable, yet I determined to visit him at his house on behalf of O'Rafferty. I found him a much more generous man than I had thought him to be. He listened attentively when I told him the story of the robbery and the part the priest had taken in recovering the money. I put up the best plea I could for the prisoner and his sick wife. I was certain that the judge was interested and his heart softened. He said he would take the case under advisement, but said nothing to indicate what his decision might be.

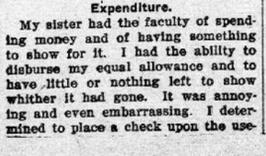
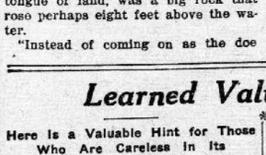
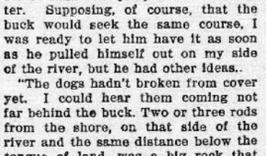
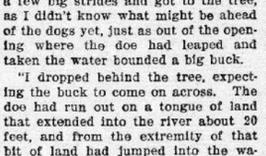
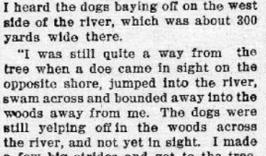
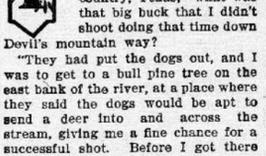
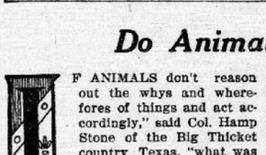
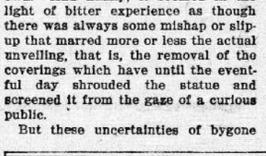
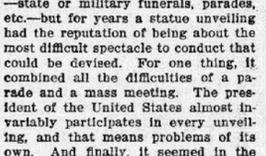
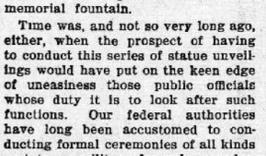
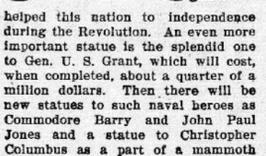
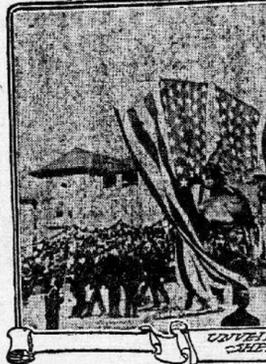
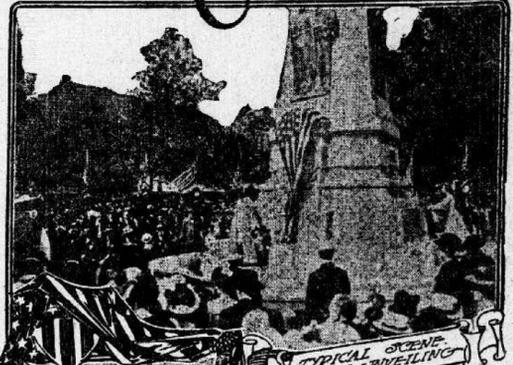
A trial in a provost court at New Orleans in that day was a rather brief affair. It consisted mostly of an accusation and a sentence. When O'Rafferty was arraigned, he pleaded guilty to the charge of stealing the \$20,000. In a few brief moments the judge made an order for his confinement at Fort Jackson for a period of years. I felt quite sore on account of this decision, but was a little surprised when he called me up and thrust the order for the prisoner's commitment in my hand. I saw that I was charged with his delivery to the commanding officer of the fort, a feature of the program that was certainly not in my line, and I jumped at the conclusion that the responsibility for his release was resting upon my shoulders.

Two days afterwards I returned the order of commitment with a report of the prisoner's escape indorsed upon its back. The judge smiled his seeming approval. O'Rafferty's release may have been a dog's but I believe it was justified by the pardon he received through the intercession of the good father.

To Clean Knives.  
To clean knives easily, get a large cork, cut one end quite even, dip in knife polish, put the knife flat down on a piece of paper that has been spread on a table, well rub first one side then the other with the cork, also rub up the back, then polish with a duster; if very much stained, rub first with a cut potato, wipe dry, then polish as directed. Stains and dirty marks may be removed from the handle by rubbing them with little ordinary salt applied with a clean rag.

# Unveiling Statues in Washington

OUR national government will, ere many months have elapsed, have to conduct the unveiling or formal dedication of several important new statues. The monuments in question are statues to national heroes, for which the congress of the United States made provision by appropriating years ago the money needed as a purchase price and which have since been in the making in the studios of eminent sculptors. One statue that was recently added to our national collection at our capital city is the memorial to Baron Steuben, the German officer who



helped this nation to independence during the Revolution. An even more important statue is the splendid one to Gen. U. S. Grant, which will cost, when completed, about a quarter of a million dollars. Then there will be new statues to such naval heroes as Commodore Barry and John Paul Jones and a statue to Christopher Columbus as a part of a mammoth memorial fountain.

Time was, and not so very long ago, either, when the prospect of having to conduct this series of statue unveilings would have put on the keen edge of uneasiness those public officials whose duty it is to look after such functions. Our federal authorities have long been accustomed to conducting formal ceremonies of all kinds—state or military funerals, parades, etc.—but for years a statue unveiling had the reputation of being about the most difficult spectacle to conduct that could be devised. For one thing, it combined all the difficulties of a parade and a mass meeting. The president of the United States almost invariably participates in every unveiling, and that means problems of its own. And finally, it seemed in the light of bitter experience as though there was always some mishap or slip-up that marred more or less the actual unveiling, that is, the removal of the coverings which have until the eventful day shrouded the statue and screened it from the gaze of a curious public.

But these uncertainties of bygone days are now, happily, a thing of the past. Government officials, spurred by the chagrin of unsuccessful unveilings, have perfected a system which enables the present-day unveiling to proceed like clockwork. There has finally been evolved a definite fixed routine just as there is a set of hard and fast rules for inaugurating a president or conducting a military or naval funeral and the federal experts who make a business of these public shows could almost conduct one with their eyes shut, so to speak.

Much of the credit for the system and routine that has been introduced in statue unveiling belongs to Col. Frederick D. Owen. On the federal payroll Col. Owen appears as one of the officials of the office of public buildings and grounds, but unofficially he is known—at least "behind the scenes" at Washington—as Uncle Sam's professional and expert master of ceremonies with statue unveilings as his specialty. Col. Owen has this whole complicated subject at his finger tips and he personally supervises the arrangements from the day they begin to build the foundation for a new statue until the lawn around the pedestal is sodded after the spectacle is all over. He knows just how many flags will be required for the decorations and where to lay hands upon them; he knows where the saluting battery must be stationed in order that the boom of their guns may sound loud enough and yet not too loud; he knows where to place the president's

own—the U. S. Marine Band and the chorus of vocalists if there is to be one. Most important of all, he knows where to seat each and every one of the hundreds of dignitaries who attend such a ceremony. It will be understood that it is not merely a question either of seating celebrities so that they will be comfortable and have an unobstructed view of the ceremonies. In addition to such considerations are the more important ones of the rank of each spectator and the honors and position to which he is entitled in consequence. The man who conducts a big unveiling ceremony in Washington must know "who is who" and "who goes first" just as accurately as the men who manage the president's receptions at the White House.

After all, however, perhaps the most important improvement that has been brought about under this new era of statue unveilings is found in the method adopted for the actual unveiling. Under the old plan, as has been noted, the draperies were almost sure to catch or tangle. Then there was a tugging followed by the rasping tear of cloth and the statue's erstwhile clothing was dragged away in decidedly dilapidated condition. Under the new system the statue to be unveiled is completely covered from head to foot with large American flags and these are so arranged with ropes and pulleys that, when a signal is given, they fall away from the sculptured figure, and, better yet, instead of littering the pedestal, are drawn above and away from the statue. This scheme enables persons on all sides of the statue to get a good view of the new monument and furthermore, a pretty touch is added to the picture by the uplifted flags waving in the breeze from overhead ropes spanning the space above the statue. Of course this system of flag unveiling is not an easy one to arrange and a special crew of expert "riggers" made up of enlisted seamen in the navy is detailed to arrange and manipulate the network of ropes that control the flags. The government is beginning to get applications from all parts of the country, whenever a statue is to be unveiled, to loan its master of ceremonies and his crew of "riggers" to handle the practical part of the event.

"Yes, we got the doe. One of our party brought her down two miles up the river as she was taking the water to cross back again, still way ahead of the dogs."

Graft in Selling Eggs.  
To one who can afford them, good eggs are cheap at any price, but investigation shows that much of the extra money that the consumer pays to avoid the risk of getting a bad egg for this breakfast is simply the dealer's charge upon the consumer's ignorance. While investigating the subject for the department of agriculture it was learned that a rooster in New York city was buying Iowa eggs for 20 cents and selling them under his private brand name for 40 cents. The grocers across the street were selling the same eggs for 25 cents. The extra 15 cents was pure graft, made possible by the merchant's gull and the customer's gullibility.

Inventive Parent.  
Woodbury—I noticed that Kneppop had electric lights put on his lawn last summer. Seaforth—Yes, and he also had a baby sling put on his lawn mower. He figured, if his baby was wakened, so he would have to walk with it, he might as well push his lawn mower and cut the grass at the same time. I have often seen him come from the house at midnight, turn on the lights, put the baby in the sling and start out on the double job.—Chicago Daily News.

Modernizing the Klondike.  
In the Klondike steam, hot air and hot water plants are displacing the old-fashioned wood stoves, especially in hotels and the bigger trading places.

Naturally.  
"So you have lost your cook?"  
"She's dead."  
"Did she die a natural death?"  
"Yes, the natural death for a person that starts a fire with kerosene."

Learned Value of Money  
less leaks which sapped my financial strength. I purchased a neat little leather covered book which would fit into my purse, and every cent expended was honestly noted down. At the end of the week I went carefully over this accumulated list of expenses, and opposite those which I decided were necessary I placed a tiny circle, opposite those that were entirely unnecessary I placed a cross,

Here is a Valuable Hint for Those Who Are Careless in Their Expenditure.  
My sister had the faculty of spending money and of having something to disburse my equal allowance and to have little or nothing left to show when it had gone. It was annoying and even embarrassing. I determined to place a check upon the use-

opposite those which were of no particular advantage and could as well have been dispensed with I placed a small rectangle.

The first week I was honest enough to acknowledge that almost every expenditure called for a cross. The next week the rectangles predominated, and after that the circles began to grow more numerous—and need less to say the items were fewer. I learned why my sister could all ways have ready money and yet be well dressed.

## Keeping Up Appearances

Eugene Higgins, at a dinner in New York, was questioned by a young lady about the bath of his yacht Yavana.

"It is a simple contrivance," said Mr. Higgins. "It lets it down into the sea, and that enables my guests and myself to bathe. It is a simple contrivance, but the newspapers of late have made me prate so much about it that, really, I seem like Mrs. Finletter."

## Keeping Up Appearances

"Mrs. Finletter and her husband had just moved into a \$15 seven-room house. The first Sunday morning there, as Mr. Finletter sat with his enormous newspaper on his little porch, and all the neighbors on both sides of the street sat with their newspapers on their little porches, Mrs. Finletter suddenly came to the front door and shouted at her husband in a loud, vexed tone:

"Hilary Finletter, will you or will you not come in to luncheon. The champagne is nearly flat, and you know how soon a dish of terrapin gets cold!"

## Keeping Up Appearances

"Finletter tossed down the comic section and hurried indoors with a fazed smile.

"What are you kidding me for?" he asked, as he looked at the rump steak and potatoes on the dining table.

## Keeping Up Appearances

"It's not you, Hilary, I'm kidding," said his wife. "It's the neighbors."—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

To Clean Knives.  
To clean knives easily, get a large cork, cut one end quite even, dip in knife polish, put the knife flat down on a piece of paper that has been spread on a table, well rub first one side then the other with the cork, also rub up the back, then polish with a duster; if very much stained, rub first with a cut potato, wipe dry, then polish as directed. Stains and dirty marks may be removed from the handle by rubbing them with little ordinary salt applied with a clean rag.