

Trivial Incidents of Daily Life Make Spy Catching Easier

A Telephone Call, the Cashing of a Check, or a Book Slip May Leave a Clew

By Fred C. Kelly

EACH year it becomes a little easier for secret service operatives or police agencies to detect crime or catch criminals than it ever was before.

This is because, as life becomes more complex and interrelated, human beings come to have more and more points of contact with one another. It is extremely difficult at the present time for a man to make many moves without leaving a subtle trail behind him.

In the old tribal days, when people lived in caves or in rude shelters in the forest, one could hit his neighbor a wallop over the head with an ax and then quietly disappear. He could fish or trap for his dinner and sleep at night under a tree. Nobody could know anything about his movements, for it was not necessary for him to have any relations with anybody.

Must Meet Many Persons

But to-day it is wellnigh impossible for anybody to avoid having frequent contact with others. Even those whose scheme of life is the simplest imaginable will perhaps be surprised if they pause to think

to blow up a munition plant, or send a wireless message to an enemy accomplice, he was quite likely to go to the public library to obtain books dealing with the subject of explosives or radio-telegraphy.

Libraries, more especially those in the larger cities, were requested to keep careful records of the names of all persons whose line of reading looked suspicious. The majority of all persons reading about explosives, firearms, radio instruments and the like were easily eliminated as students. For instance, many young boys like to read about wireless telegraphy and no suspicion was attached to them.

But whenever a man with a queer look in his eye, or with a German name, seemed intent on knowing all about explosives he and his movements were thoroughly investigated—especially if handling explosives was not his regular line of work.

Several men were interned in consequence of showing too keen an interest in reading books which attempted to prove the righteousness of the German cause. Of course, they were not interned solely because of the books read, but the kind of reading furnished the first tip.

Betrayed by Book Slip

The public libraries also served to provide the government with addresses of many missing men who

feel free to move about much on the street that is the very time he is most likely to take books out of the public library; because, unless he gets interested in reading, or whittling, or something, he will go distracted, or, at the very least, become weary of his own company to the point of downright boredom.

In this same connection it may be remarked that many men with families who succeeded in living so quietly that they were completely lost sight of were traced through the records of the public schools. When a child in the family was transferred from one school to another it was necessary to have the child furnish a correct home address.

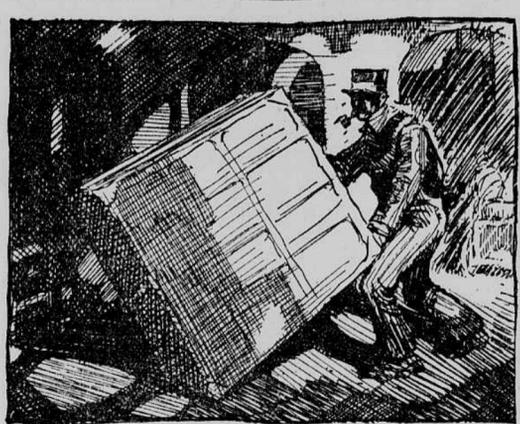
Another family was traced through the simple expedient of locating an old colored woman who for many years had been their pet laundress.

Here is a case of a different sort: An automobile stopped late one night at an outlying spot near the edge of an Eastern city and tarried there for about three hours. Two men got out and moved off mysteriously into the distance. A good American citizen, who was up battling with a case of asthma, chanced to look out of his window to see what was going to happen.

Described the Car

Then the observer wondered if the men might not have been secreting some explosives, for the place was not far from a munitions plant. The next day he reported what he had seen to government officials. He had been unable in the semi-darkness to make out the number on the license tag, but he had taken close note of the general design of the car and the way it was painted.

The color scheme tallied with that



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been stopped along the roadside at least three hours, the investigator looked for a report card that would indicate certain telltale items. He found that several of the company's cars had made trips lasting more than three hours late at night, but the mileage record indicated that no long stop could have been made.

He continued his search until he found a card which showed three hours and ten minutes and only about twenty miles. From this he felt safe in assuming that the car must have made a long stop. He got in touch with the chauffeur and learned that it was indeed his car which had carried the two mysterious men. The chauffeur remembered the name of the hotel and where the men went at the end of their jaunt, and he also furnished a good description of them. Later the men were found. The point of the story is simply that they would not have been found if they had not adopted the modern custom of riding in taxicabs and if taxicab companies did not follow modern efficiency methods by keeping cryptic looking records.

Incomes Furnish a Clew

Money is so vital an item of modern life that one of the commonest and quickest ways to ascertain a man's status is to learn in some way how much he is making and then compare this with how much he is spending. If he is able to spend considerably more than the amount of his salary it is sometimes well to force him to explain where all the money is coming from.

Even if his expenditures are very modest, but he is accumulating a lot of money from an unimportant and low-salaried job, it may be equally desirable to have him disclose just how he became so well off. When a man receives money from a questionable source it is often extremely difficult for him to concoct a suitable explanation.

If you have ever gone to a strange city and tried to get a check cashed without having somebody identify you, you will appreciate the difficulties of the fugitive who must not only get money, but must get it secretly. Banks keep fairly ample records of the checks they cash. Furthermore, banks are usually willing to cooperate with the officials who are investigating anybody seriously suspected of crime. If a man goes from Chicago to Rochester, and there quietly drops out of sight by living in an obscure boarding house he may make the mistake of having a friend there cash checks for him—

checks drawn against a bank back in Chicago. The friend indorses the check and presents it at a bank in Rochester. From there it is returned to the bank in Chicago.

The investigator may easily learn what bank the fugitive dealt with before he left home. There are a score of ways for him to find this out. An easy way might be to go to the owner of the apartment house where the man formerly lived and inquire what bank the man's checks were against when he paid his rent. In these modern times rent is nearly always paid by check rather than in cash.

Having learned which bank the fugitive dealt with, the investigator can go to that bank and find out the name of the town where the depositor's checks are now being cashed. If these checks bear the indorsement of a private individual in the other town, who has cashed them as a matter of accommodation, it is perhaps not difficult to locate him. By secretly watching him, one may be able to trace the man who is sought.

Risk Discovery for Letters

Curiosity is an important element of human nature, and this crops out in the desire to hear from one's friends at a distance. In other words, few men can long remain content without receiving letters. A man seeking seclusion will take a chance on discovery in order to get mail from home. By quietly ascertaining who is most likely to write to him and contriving to get a glimpse at the address on such correspondence one soon gets a line on the man's movements.

I imagine that more criminals have been apprehended at postoffice general delivery windows than anywhere else. It is learned that a certain individual is in the habit of receiving his mail in care of the general delivery. An officer loiters nonchalantly in the postoffice and watches for a signal from the clerk at the window. The signal may be a wink, it may be the flicking on of an electric light, or it may be something else. When it appears, the officer walks over to the window and pleasantly introduces himself to his prisoner.

A man may go to a hotel and register under an assumed name, but the point is that he must register. His handwriting may be the unmistakable evidence that he was there, regardless of the name that he used.

Telltale Handwriting

Certain characteristics of his sig-

nature are likely to show. That is, they will show clearly enough to catch the attention of a thoroughly trained observer. If a man writes a jerky signature and has a tendency to put a backward curl to the tails of his letters, or to shade his capitals in a peculiar way, he probably will do so wherever and in whatever he writes. And all this helps to provide a clew.

Imagine a man being flushed from his hiding place by so trifling a circumstance as a liking for violin records on the phonograph! A much sought German had moved from his former apartment in New York and succeeded in sinking his identity without a trace.

It was believed, however, that he was still in New York. If so, he was at home most of the time and would be obliged to seek diversion indoors. What diversion would he be most likely to seek? A little guarded inquiry among his former associates brought out the fact that his hobby was phonograph music—particularly high class violin records.

Department of Justice agents then made a canvass of various New York music stores most likely to have the largest line of the newer records. Within twelve hours they had their man. Because he was afraid of being seen on the streets and recognized, he had never gone to the music store, but was in the habit of having the new records sent to his home and charged to him.

Similarly, another man, whose photograph was in the possession of Federal authorities, was captured as he came out of a moving picture

Apparently Insignificant Actions Leave Trails That Are Plain to the Detectives

no indication of the man's size. Among his effects was a receipted tailor's bill. Federal agents went to that tailor, who was able to give them the exact dimensions of the last suit the man had bought, and from this they were able to construct a fairly accurate mental picture of how large a man they should look for.

Moral: Always Tip

A man believed to be a German agent was caught in consequence of having neglected to tip the baggageman who helped move his trunk. The trunk was large and the day was hot and the baggageman was disgruntled over receiving no tip. For that reason the appearance of both the trunk and the trunk's proprietor made an exceptionally deep impression on his memory. Later he was able to identify both.

When a man sets out to cover his tracks, whether for the purpose of hiding what he has been doing or what he is going to do, he is so occupied thinking of the major item that he is altogether likely to overlook some seemingly trivial little detail which may lead to his undoing.

A particularly obnoxious German agent in the United States desired to get rid of about a trunkload of valuable papers and documents then in his possession. So he packed them in an ordinary trunk, took them to an obscure storage warehouse and

later, the German agent was arrested, the trunk was promptly found and searched.

You see, the man had been careful enough about putting the trunk where nobody would think to look for it, but he failed to be equally careful about disposing of the telltale warehouse receipt! Without that receipt he could not recover the trunk, and so he had kept it among his immediate personal effects.

It is surprising how frequently a criminal fails to destroy the record against himself when he has ample opportunity to do so and when there is nothing to be gained by saving the record. Just why this is so nobody seems to know. A plausible theory, however, is this:

Self-Extenuation

Scarcely any criminal is a criminal in his own estimation. He will try to convince himself that he has some kind of right to do whatever illegal thing he is doing. If he destroys evidence against himself that is a tacit admission to himself that it is evidence against him. Rather than bring himself to face the truth, he prefers to dillydally along, all the while trying to fool himself into thinking he has done no wrong, that he has nothing to fear and that there is no reason why he



what a variety of people they are obliged to deal with from day to day.

As a routine part of our everyday life we go to restaurants, ride on trains, sign hotel registers and cash checks. We use the telephone, send and receive telegrams, send and receive mail. We check baggage and hire moving vans. We hire taxicabs and the taxicabs carry license numbers. The drivers of the taxicabs also are numbered. A meter registers the distance traveled. The trains we ride on move according to a definite schedule. If we travel very far we must engage Pullman accommodations. Every Pullman car has a name and every berth or seat a number.

No matter how much money a man may have, he can't carry much of it in cash in his pocket because of the objection of bulk. He must, therefore, cash checks or receive money orders in one form or another. In traveling one must make purchases and have clothes laundered. Oh, there is an almost endless variety of ways in which people each day leave a trail of their movements—a trail much more definitely and more permanently marked than if it were one merely of footprints.

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whom it was thought desirable to keep in close touch.

One German succeeded in keeping out of sight for many weeks, but he made the mistake of taking books from the public library, where he first filled out a little card giving his correct name and address. When a man is in hiding and doesn't

used by a certain taxicab company on all its cars. So the government investigator went and asked permission of this company to see its reports covering the previous day. Now, taxicab chauffeurs are not ordinarily required to tell in their reports just where they travel with each passenger, but they do jot down on a little card the clock reading and meter reading at the beginning and end of each trip. Recalling that the taxicab had

HERE are ten ways by which a person endeavoring to cover his tracks may leave a trail very easy for the police to follow



A Nation's History Is Embalmed in Its Common Names

Plotters Used Libraries

For example, there is in every large city a public library. Now, a public library is a prosaic enough place and at first thought we would not associate it with detective work. But scores and scores of seditious hyphenates and dangerous alien enemies came to the attention of the Federal authorities because the Bureau of Investigation of the Department of Justice realized that the big libraries were a great potential source of valuable information. When a German sympathizer wished

name of a town or hamlet being formed by adding "ton" or "ham" to the name of some early landholder.

Quite often a bit of even half humorous description will survive in such a name, as when a stony, starved and weedy district is called Starvaere.

The English race carries with it the ancient names of an older people into every continent, and titles given to places in the British Isles may be found in America, Australia, Africa and the islands of the furthest seas.

Touching personal names, we find that among most uncivilized races a name, commonly derived from some incident or natural object, is given at the time of birth by the parents to each child.

In some cases names of the earliest races denote some phenomenon of nature. No names are more common among North American Indians

than those derived from sun, moon, stars, clouds and wind.

Our English ancestors had for personal names compound words, as, "Noble Wolf," "Wolf of War" and so forth, the names testifying to a somewhat primitive and fierce stage of society.

Later came vulgar nicknames, as "Long," "Black," "White," "Brown," etc. Other names were derived from the occupation of the person to whom they were given, as "Smith," "Fowler," "Saddler," etc.

Yet other names are derived from places, the noble and landowner was called "of" such and such a place, equivalent to the German "von" and the French "de." The humbler man was called "of," but "at" such a place, as in the name "Attewell" (at well), or merely by the local name without the "at," as "Wells."

Following are the origins of the

names of some countries and of states in the United States:

Europe signifies a country of white people, given because the inhabitants were of a lighter color than those of Africa and Asia.

Asia means "between," given because geographers placed it between Europe and Africa.

Africa, which formerly was celebrated for its abundance of grain, was given this name, meaning "the land of corn."

Siberia signifies "thirsty" or "dry."

Italy signifies a country of pitch, because it once yielded great quantities of black pitch.

Britain means "the country of tin."

Sicily denotes the "country of grapes."

Hibernia means "utmost" or "last habitation," for beyond this, west-

ward, the Phoenicians never ventured.

Gaul, modern France, signifies "yellow-haired," from the light hair of the Gauls.

Maine was so called from the province of Maine, in France.

New Hampshire was named by Mason, in 1739, from Hampshire, in England.

Vermont comes from the French "vertmont," or green mountain.

Massachusetts is an Indian name, signifying the country about the great hills, the Blue Hills.

Rhode Island was named after the Island of Rhodes, in the Mediterranean, because of its fancied resemblance to that island.

Connecticut is derived from the Indian word "Quinni-tukut," which signifies "upon the long river," the Connecticut River.

New York was named by the Duke of York, a title given

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left them there under an assumed name. Yet when, a few months

It had been learned that he found it practically impossible to resist the lure of the films. One difficulty about his capture had been that an exact description of him was lacking. There was a photograph, but it was an old one, and it gave

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should destroy the papers in the case.

This may not be the true explanation, but it is the only one I know.

Regardless of whether the criminal sets about destroying everything that looks like evidence or not, he leaves a trail anyhow. The trail is, perhaps, so thin or so subtle that it may be detected only by an exceptionally keen and well trained observer, but it is there.

The Weather's Part

Why, then, one might ask, do so many criminals get away or escape detection? Usually, it is because of laxness on the part of officials or else because the case does not seem important enough to justify the effort to run it down. Many a criminal has had the good fortune to escape justice simply because other cases of greater importance were taking up the time of the police officials.

People seeking to avoid detection are frequently caught in lies by the modest little fact that the government keeps records of the weather. If you say that you made an automobile trip over a certain road on the last Fourth of July, and the weather records show that a heavy rainstorm occurred on that day, so that the road, a mud road, would have been impassable, you have a lot of explaining to do. So many different kinds of facts exist and so many things are constantly happening in connection with our present somewhat complicated scheme of life that no human intellect is keen enough to think up a lie that will quite cover every possible contingency.

I repeat that the trail is always there. The fact that nobody seems to have powers of observation sufficiently keen to perceive that trail is by no means proof that it does not exist.

THE tailor was able to give the detectives the dimensions of the last suit the man had bought

him by the English crown in 1664. New Jersey was so called in honor of Sir George Carteret, who was governor of the island of Jersey, in the British Channel.

Pennsylvania comes from the Admiral Penn, the father of the founder of the colony, meaning "Penn's Woods."

Maryland was named after Henrietta Maria, queen of Charles I of England.

Virginia was named in honor of the "virgin queen," Elizabeth.

North and South Carolina were named after Charles IX of France, Charles being "Carolus" in Latin.

Georgia was so called in honor of George II of England, who established a colony there in 1733.

Florida was named by Ponce de Leon, who discovered it, in commemoration of the day of his landing, the "Feast of Flowers," or Easter Sunday.