

## KING OF THE SLEUTHS

**M**R. WILLIAM A. PINKERTON was engaged in his private office. One of the several clerks in his outer office gave me this information with a chair. The others did not lift their eyes from their ledgers or typewriters or memoranda or whatever occupied them at the moment of my entering the room. It was a very handsome and spacious

room, one of a suite on the second floor of the Crocker building. I could read backward the gilt letters on the great arched windows which announced to the world without that this was an office of the Pinkerton Detective Agency, founded by Allan W. Pinkerton in the year 1850; that its other offices were in New York, Chicago, Boston, St. Louis, St. Paul and Kansas City, Portland, Oregon, and a few other places; that its correspondents were in all parts of the

### A STUDY OF THE MODERN DETECTIVE BY ALICE RIX.

kerton promptly, "and the owner wants his property." So the spirit of the chase is in it still, after all. "Luck's been with us a good deal," he went on reflectively, "and luck is nearly everything in this business." "And, I suppose, experience is something, and, in your case, perhaps heredity?" "Training more than heredity. Luck and training make a good detective." "How many years of training did you have?" "Well, I went into the secret service

looking for walk right into my arms and I pledge you my word if I'd had to look for them I wouldn't have known where to look for them. I've run across a man one day—some suspicious character I mean—and taken a few notes on him on general principle and had a demand for that man perhaps before the week was out. I was in the Louisville (Kentucky) Jail once, and happened to notice a couple of pretty hard cases in for some kind of bank work, and meeting these men in London, England, several years afterward I put the London authorities on to

England frauds, too." "And the big strikes, when the Pinkerton men were all disguised among the strikers, and—?" "No, thank you," replied Mr. Pinkerton. "We were too unpopular to make that an interesting recollection. There is a law now against that work, and I am not at all sorry. In Chicago during the riots over those anarchists—that was exciting enough! But it isn't the sort of thing you can go over. It was being in it that made it so stirring. We

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"We do not approve of them, you know." "You do not approve of your father's books?" "Of what I might call detective literature," he replied. "We believe it hurts the dignity of the profession. It creates an entirely false impression concerning it and exerts a bad influence on young minds." Mr. Pinkerton passed a strong hand, on which the handsome emerald glowed greenly, across his brow. "My father's name has been used," he continued, "by a number of unscrupulous men to sell books which were in every sense unreliable and pernicious. The name is, of course, widely known, and we endeavored to bring persons who were trading on it to justice, but on questioning several firms which sold the so-called Pinkerton books we found they had purchased the right to use the name Pinkerton from some obscure newspaper man in the South. He may be a Pinkerton as he claims to be, but we never heard of him." Mr. Pinkerton paused. "You see," he went on gravely, "we have extended the business greatly since my father's death and it is carried on now on principles that I am sure he would approve, but which were not possible in his time. We are now a very large concern, with offices in the principal American cities, and correspondents everywhere. We particularly dislike and avoid anything approaching sensationalism. We handle no scandals. We accept no family cases."



world; that its Principals were Robert A. Pinkerton and William A. Pinkerton—sons of that famous Pinkerton the first, whose pictured face, of the grim, strong, granger type, high-boned, keen-eyed, clean-shaven to the beard beneath the chin, hung on the west wall of the room. Opposite hung the portrait of a young and a very different looking man, and this, although I did not know it then, was William A. Pinkerton, his son.

Beneath a window stood the manager's desk, and before it stood the manager. He was running busily through some papers in his hand. There was no sound in the place except the rustling of these papers, the scratching of pens, the tap-tap-tapping of typewriters, the light footfall, the subdued tones of a clerk who left his desk to consult with his superior and returned quietly as he came.

There is an office stillness eloquent above words of the importance of vast businesses. It belongs exclusively to them. It is a quiet distinct and apart from silence imposed on employees by the starchiest of small shoppers and little professionals. It is the actual dignity of the big enterprise which communicates itself, perhaps without his consciousness, to the least who serves its needs.

You are impressed, solemnized by this atmosphere at the Pinkerton Detective Agency. It is as respectable as a bank. Somehow you do not expect this. There is no real reason why you should not. There is no real reason why you should respect the detective less than the criminal lawyer. If you are handling crime what difference does it make whether you pick it up by the head or the tail? If you are stalking the criminal what difference does it make whether you run him into jail or onto the gallows? Only it is not the real, but the imaginary differences which are of the greatest importance in this world, and half the accepted facts in life are standing without any legs under them.

Society, which is more particular than just, admits the detective to her fearful need. And so, for the matter of that, she does the hangman. But she does not concede either of them to be quite respectable. She sets the detective at the stalking of her crimes and makes it nip and tuck and trace a coin between the hunter and his quarry. It is only



handcuffs in his pocket, six-shooters under his duster, transacting such business as he might have to transact other than pursuit in the dark hallways of low lodging-houses, the skulking back chambers of little evil inns.

After this ingenuous confession it is superfluous to say that I read the elder Pinkerton faithfully in my youth—without the knowledge of fond but unromantic parents—and if the portly, dressey, prosperous, comfortable man who now opens the door of Mr. William A. Pinkerton's private office and waves me cordially to enter in is not the old sleuth of many a dear and troubled dream it is through no fault of his father. No, nor of Mr. Nick Carter's, neither.

He is of great breadth as well as height, Mr. William A. Pinkerton, a man of quite unusual size, with a rather heavy, strong-featured face, a good brow, deep-set eyes, one of which is gray-brown and the other brown-gray, so that the difference is quite noticeable as he sits facing the light, a full, dark mustache and sporty taste in clothes. His invisible check suit was cut by a good tailor, his linen is fine and his gray silk tie admirably in season. He wears a superb emerald and diamond ring on his left hand, a fine sapphire in his shirt bosom, elaborate links of cats' eyes set with diamonds in his cuffs and a gold and jeweled dagger, sheathed, which may be a pencil, or a toothpick, or a cigar cutter, or a court-plaster case, or a mere watch charm, dangling from a chain, but whatever it is it is large enough to be seen. His manner is easy, natural, dignified and modestly reserved—all agreeable characteristics of a manner, even when considered separately—altogether irresistible when taken in a lump. I decide that I shall like Mr. William A. Pinkerton very much, in spite of his jewelry, of which I am naturally a little envious, but of course I can never love him as I loved his father.

One of the old books, bound in red, pictured outwardly with the great gilt eye and the motto, "We Never Sleep," lies on the son's table. I pat it in loving recollection. "I have read them all," I said. "I think I should like to read at least one of them again."

"Yes?" replied Mr. Pinkerton, coldly.



of the United States Army under my father," said the son of the famous first, "and I was fifteen then. I served through the war, and then I went to school. Not for long, though. Then I got back into the office again and I've been there ever since and I'm still training. You are always learning something in any game you play with men. I tell my new men that. The new ones are always the sure ones, you know. We train our own men. We don't want any botching to pick out and do over, and we don't want the tramp detective who goes from office to office exchanging methods. We'd rather begin with them and teach them spotting, shadowing and roping. Those are the three Rs of this business. You know what they mean, don't you?"

"Well, spotting and shadowing, yes. But roping?" "That's getting their confidence—some offices call it worming."

"Oh! And is it hard business to learn, do you think?" "No harder than any other if you give your mind to it. You've got to have a mind though to go with it. And yet every man you meet thinks he'd make a good detective. Have you ever noticed that? We're simply besieged with suggestions from amateurs whenever we have a big case on. And women! Do you know lots of women are crazy to go into this business? You'd be surprised at the number of applications I get from women in private life. Crazy over the idea! What do you suppose it is?"

"I don't know. The roping, perhaps, appeals to the feminine nature."

"Well, it's anything but feminine work, I can tell you. Some women are smart at it, but I won't employ them on principle. I don't want to have anything to do with unsexing women. I like them just as they were made, good and womanly. If they're that they're good as detectives. And if they're successful detectives they're no good as women. There are plenty of bright men in the world who can do that work. Of course, as I said, a man has got to have brains, because the business is half management, which will come to a bright man with a little training, and half luck—more than half luck. Why? I have been wonderfully successful in the business and I can see where nearly all of it was luck. Time and again I've had men I've been



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