

The Big Cotton Swindle

Stories of the Greatest Cases in the Career of Thomas Furlong, the Famous Railroad Detective, Told by Himself

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Early in the month of January, 1884, I was suddenly called to the office of Capt. C. G. Warner, who was then general auditor for the Gould railway system, whose chief special agent I then was.

"Furlong," said Captain Warner, "I have just received a long telegraphic dispatch from one of my traveling auditors in Sherman, Tex. He states that a large amount of cotton, which had been shipped from that station, has undoubtedly been diverted in transit, as it has not reached its proper destination. I want you to go to Sherman at once, find the traveling auditor, Mr. Finby, and make a thorough investigation."

Sherman was a point from which a very large amount of cotton was shipped annually. It was the outlet for one of the largest cotton producing districts of the state. For this reason the eastern cotton buyers and cotton mill owners were represented by agents here. These agents were really brokers. It was their practice, as soon as they had purchased cotton, to have it delivered at once to the railway company for shipment, when they would receive from the railway company's agent a bill of lading, setting forth the number and weight of each bale. This bill of lading, when signed by the railway agent, was negotiable at any bank in the cotton producing district. The bank would take the bill of lading, allowing the depositor 90 per cent cash on the face value, and would hold 10 per cent back until the exact value of the cotton had been ascertained.

I left for Sherman on the first train, and found Mr. Finby at that point. He informed me that the company's agent in charge at Sherman had left there on the preceding Saturday night, saying that he was going to take a run down to Galveston on personal business and expected to return on the following Monday. It then being Wednesday, and the man not having returned, Mr. Finby had become suspicious and had wired to headquarters, with the result indicated above.

I spent several days at Sherman, making inquiries about the missing agent. Meanwhile telegraphic messages of inquiry were pouring in from New York, Philadelphia, Fall River and Providence, from persons who had purchased and paid for large quantities of cotton, the total value aggregating \$121,000, and they wanted to know why they had not received it. If the cotton had been diverted from its destination and stolen, the railway company would be responsible for the loss.

After ten days' investigation at Sherman, I became convinced that three other men were connected in the swindle with the missing agent. These may be known as No. 1, No. 2, No. 3, No. 4 standing for the agent. The swindle had been perpetrated in this way: The bills of lading had been signed by the agent in blank and turned over to a confederate in blocks. This confederate had then filled out each blank for various numbers of bales of cotton, setting forth the number of bales and the weight of each bale in the regular way. He then turned the bills of lading thus prepared by him over to a second confederate, a cotton buyer, who placed these bills in various banks at Sherman, Dallas and other Texas towns, drawing cash for the face value, less 10 per cent.

I succeeded in locating the family and friends of the missing agent (No. 4), and also learned that No. 1 had a brother living in New Orleans. I determined to go to that city and quietly investigate this brother, in the hope of discovering where No. 1 was staying. I telegraphed to my office in St. Louis for George W. Herbert, one of my assistants, directing him to meet me in New Orleans, which he did.

The brother of No. 1 was found in New Orleans without any difficulty, and there was reason to believe that No. 1's wife might be staying with the brother and his family in the rather pretentious mansion which they occupied. For some three weeks the house was assiduously watched. Herbert and I taking turns of eight hours each. This was one of the most difficult tasks that I have ever undertaken. I was well known to the New Orleans police, who would, no doubt, have rendered me valuable aid, but if I had been recognized I would have had to explain to them my presence in that city, and, owing to the influential position which the brother of No. 1 held, the news of my presence might have leaked out and given the man whom I sought the alarm.

Many amusing incidents occurred during this vigil. One morning, after we had been on watch for several days, I hit upon a plan to find whether there were any women in the house, hoping to discover the wife of No. 1 among them. A few blocks down the street a couple of good-looking young Italian girls were playing a fine new hand-organ of extremely loud tone. I bargained for their services and arranged that they should take up their station in front of the house which we were watching and play there as long as the police permitted them. The music and the performance of the monkeys brought several women from the house to the veranda, but the woman who was wanted was not among them. The same performance, repeated on several mornings, produced a similar result.

The brother of No. 1, who was a gentleman of leisure, was in the hab-

it of strolling each morning from his house to the post office, where he usually mailed several letters. He always dropped these into the general receptacle, which had an opening in the main corridor at least a foot in length and three inches wide, and led to a large box in the basement below the main floor. This box contained about a wagon-load of letters and packages, and when a letter had been dropped in this mass it was almost impossible to find it again.

The brother was a middle-aged man, rather slow in his movements, and very deliberate in everything that he did. He would approach the general mail box, placing his cane under his left arm and carefully removing the glove from his right hand; then he would take the letters, generally three or more in number, and in an exasperatingly slow and deliberate manner would deposit them in the box, watching them till they had disappeared down the chute. This operation was repeated by him each week day during about three weeks, being witnessed each time by one of us.

I prepared two letters, directing them to myself and my associate, stamped them, and then covered the back of each envelope with a thick coating of muckilage. I myself took one letter and Herbert the other. Each of us posted himself on one side of the chute, being some little distance from the receptacle.



FOUND HIMSELF COVERED BY TWO DOUBLE-BARRELED SHOT-GUNS.

Knowing the hour at which No. 1's brother was in the habit of visiting the post office, we were not kept waiting more than a few minutes before he put in an appearance. After he had gone through his customary maneuvers, but before he had time to drop the three letters which he held, Herbert and I rushed forward, one on each side, both reaching out the letters which we held simultaneously, in such a way that the five were forced into the chute together. No. 1's brother became very indignant, and muttered something about rudeness and awkwardness. After attempting a hasty apology, I disappeared around the corner to the office of the assistant postmaster, whose acquaintance I had previously formed. I told him that I had just deposited two letters in the chute, and, having discovered that I had put each in the wrong envelope, wished to get them back in order to rectify the mistake. The assistant postmaster at once conducted me to the main mail box below, where, among a half wagon load of letters and general postal matter the five letters were speedily discovered, all stuck together. One of these was addressed to a relative of No. 1's wife at her home in Tennessee, and a second to another brother of No. 1, who resided at Atlanta, Ga. The third letter was addressed to No. 1 himself, whose name was Dillard, at Ocean Springs, Miss.

I went at once to Ocean Springs, which was then a small winter resort located on the Louisville & Nashville railroad, between Montgomery and New Orleans. I arrived there the same midnight, and found that the post office of the town was kept in a small grocery store, which was part of the principal hotel of the town. I showed the landlord photographs of Dillard and his wife, and he at once identified them by name. He stated that Dillard had represented himself as being a rich iron manufacturer from Chattanooga, that his wife was in ill health, and that they had been there for the past month, having rented a beautiful residence known as Montgomery Cottage, situated about

two miles away. I gave the postmaster to understand that Dillard (No. 1, he it remembered) had fallen heir to a sum of money and property, and that I was desirous of acquainting him of his good fortune by surprise, after having established his identity. This, I told him, would require about ten days, and I cautioned the landlord to say nothing to Dillard or his wife, a request which elicited a ready promise.

It was necessary to obtain requisition papers from the governors of Mississippi and Texas, a process which would require eight or ten days, as complaint had to be lodged at Sherman, Tex., a request for the requisition had to be sent from Sherman to Austin, and the request of the governor of Texas to the governor of Mississippi had to go to Jackson, Miss., where the agent for the state of Texas had to appear in person to receive the papers.

I had myself appointed as the agent for the state of Texas. Taking a night train to New Orleans, in due course I obtained the papers, and then proceeded to Canton, Miss., which was the county seat for Ocean Springs. I there found Sheriff Clark, who, in the requisition papers, was instructed to render me, as agent for Texas, all the assistance which I needed. Accompanied by the sheriff and a deputy, I returned to Ocean Springs, stepping off the train at a station about five miles distant, because I had been informed that No. 1's brother-in-law visited the depot at Ocean Springs every night to see who had arrived. We three, taking a roundabout route, met Herbert at a point agreed upon, near the cottage.

Before leaving upon my mission I had instructed Herbert to go to Ocean Springs in the guise of an invalid, and there to make No. 1's acquaintance. Herbert represented himself as a sufferer from chronic rheumatism, and soon met No. 1, who invited him to visit the cottage and to take a sail on the bay in a yacht which he kept anchored in front of the property. Herbert accepted the invitation, and was introduced to the wife of Dillard, and a good-looking young woman who passed under an assumed name, but was subsequently discovered to be the wife of the missing agent (No. 4).

The yacht, which the party boarded for a short sail, was of about twenty

the door open, where I found No. 4 partly dressed. He and his wife were arrested, and the whole party marched to the hotel at Ocean Springs, where the landlord was greatly surprised to learn the true nature of the detective's mission.

The prisoners were taken to Dallas, Texas, by a roundabout route, and so quietly that that city was reached before the story of the arrest had become public. The cause for this secrecy was that Nos. 2 and 3 had been located in Dallas, and it was essential to arrest these before the story of the capture became known to them and put them on guard. Dallas was reached at night, and on the following morning Jim Arnold, the chief of police for that city, together with myself, arrested the other two accomplices.

After his arrest No. 3 was taken ill, and he died about a month later. Nos. 1 and 2 fled the country almost immediately they were released on bonds, No. 1 going to Mexico and No. 2 to London, Ontario, Canada. When the cases were called for trial, therefore, only No. 4, the agent, appeared, having remained the whole time in jail. The trial was accordingly postponed pending the arrest of Nos. 1 and 2, and my work had largely to be done over again.

Upon receipt of instructions to this effect from the Missouri-Pacific railway I detailed Herbert and Bailey, another of my assistants, to locate and arrest No. 1 in Mexico, which they succeeded in doing after much hard work.

I myself assumed the task of arresting No. 2. I discovered his location in London after some effort, and visited the place, seeing the fugitive without being seen by him. No. 2 had surrounded himself with a number of sympathizing friends, many of whom were, like himself, fugitives from justice, and among them he felt safe.

The extradition treaty then in force between Great Britain and the United States, known as the Ashburton and Webster treaty, had been passed about the middle of the century. It permitted the extradition of fugitives charged with the following offenses: Murder, felonious assault with intent to murder, arson, rape, forgery, uttering of forged paper and perjury.

After I had seen No. 2 in London, I telegraphed by wire code to ex-Gov. John C. Brown, the general solicitor for the Gould railroads, through Vice-President Hoxie, who had commissioned me to procure the fugitive's arrest. Ex-Governor Brown had a national reputation as a lawyer, and being convinced that No. 2 could not be extradited under the treaty, he wired back by code, instructing me to induce the exile to accompany me across the border, either into Michigan or into New York state, where he could be held for extradition to Texas.

Needless to say, this would have been an impossible feat, the fugitive being well acquainted with the man who had aided in his arrest. Furthermore, I soon discovered that, if I attempted to induce No. 2 to accompany me across the border, for the purpose of arresting him without legal authority, I would be liable to prosecution for kidnaping, and might be sent to prison for a term of from two to seven years. Seeing the impossibility of carrying out his instructions, I took counsel's opinion upon the subject from a young barrister named McBride. After detailing the case to the young man, I asked him what crime the men had committed under the United States and were found in Canada, could they be arrested and extradited back to the United States for trial? I asked.

"Undoubtedly, under the provisions of the Ashburton and Webster treaty," answered the other.

"But," I said, "the judge who presided over the criminal court at Dallas, Texas, was of opinion that the fraudulent bills of lading signed by the agent were not forgeries, as the agent was in the employ of the company."

"The agent signed the bills of lading for fraudulent purposes," answered McBride, "and therefore his signature was unauthorized by the company which employed him. Under the Canadian law he is a forger, while the other conspirators would be guilty of uttering and publishing forged paper."

I at once filed the necessary complaint, and procured a warrant for the arrest of No. 2, who was taken to Chatham and lodged in jail. I then telegraphed to ex-Governor Brown, explaining what I had done. The latter wired back:



THE MUSIC BROUGHT SEVERAL WOMEN TO THE VERANDA.

When you knew that I had instructed you as to what the Texas judge had decided, and therefore the fugitive could not be extradited from Canada under the existing treaty nor in accordance with the act of congress, which provides for said treaty? Answer: John C. Brown.

"I disregarded your instructions, finding them erroneous, and that you did not understand the law pertaining to this case. Have also learned that a Texas judge's ruling is not considered in Canada and I find that I can legally extradite the fugitive from Canada under the present law."

With a copy of the revised statutes of Canada in my suitcase, I at once returned to St. Louis, where I reported to Vice-President Hoxie. "Tom, Governor Brown showed me a message which he had received from you yesterday. He appeared to be quite angry."

"I am here to explain my actions fully," I answered, "and I wish you would kindly request Governor Brown to come to your office at his convenience, as I think my explanation should be made to him in your presence, so that one explanation may serve for both. My time is limited, as I must go to Texas and procure certain witnesses and return with them to Chatham, Ontario, within two weeks, the time set for the hearing."

In a short time ex-Governor Brown appeared, and I repeated the instructions which I had received from him. I then stated that I had found it would be impossible to carry them out without subjecting myself to prosecution and a possible jail sentence, and that I had therefore done the next best thing, which was to consult a competent attorney. I then produced his copy of the statutes, and directed the ex-governor's attention to the marked sections, which the latter carefully read. After he had finished his perusal I read the telegram which he had received, and my own answer.

"Well, governor, what do you think of this matter?" asked Mr. Hoxie, when he had read the dispatches.

"For answer, the ex-governor walked round the table to where I was seated and extended his hand, which I took.

"Furlong was right all the way through," he said to me.

No. 2 put up a strong fight for freedom. The appeal upon the extradition was argued, and the extradition papers were sustained. A higher court upheld the action of the lower one, and the case was at once taken up by the privy court at Toronto, which likewise affirmed the action of the lower courts. As this was the highest tribunal in Canada, its decision was final, and No. 2 was committed for extradition.

I immediately left Toronto for Washington and presented the necessary papers from the state of Texas at the department of justice there. They were promptly approved and sent to President Cleveland for signature. President Cleveland had then been in office just four days, and these were the first papers of the kind that he signed. With the signature of the president affixed to them, I left for Chatham, with the purpose of bringing No. 2 back to Dallas for trial.

When the train stopped at Canandaigua, New York, a messenger called my name at the dining room door. He handed me a telegram from the high sheriff of Chatham, which read as follows:

"When my jailer went to the cell occupied by No. 2 at twelve o'clock today he found him dead. Had apparently been dead an hour. Cause of death yet unknown. Probably heart failure."

The autopsy showed that the man had killed himself by swallowing laudanum, but how he had obtained the drug was never discovered.

Thus only two of the swindlers remained for trial, and these, rather remarkably, were No. 1 and No. 4, both of whom I had arrested at Ocean Springs.

The case now came on for trial, and I turned the duplicate bills of lading over to Capt. Tom Brown of Sherman, Texas, who was the railroad company's attorney in that district. These, with other documentary evidence, the captain placed in his overcoat pocket, and he left that garment, together with his coat and hat, on a rack in the corridor of a hotel while he was eating breakfast. When he returned for his overcoat the papers had been stolen. In consequence of the loss of these documents, when the case was called the prosecuting attorney asked that a nolle prosequi be entered in the case, thus letting the two men go free.

This was an unfortunate ending to so much enterprise, but no stigma ever attached itself to Captain Brown, who was afterward elected a judge of the supreme bench of Texas.

Wisconsin Professor Has Tried to Estimate Uxorial Value in Dollars and Cents.

A Wisconsin professor of home economics has made an exact estimate of what a wife is worth to her husband in dollars and cents, says the Indianapolis Star. It is asserted that she should be credited with earning the difference between the cost of raw material and the finished product that she turns out.

Just what this is he can learn by estimating food items; for example, by noting the difference between the cost of a barrel of flour and the cost of bakers' loaves made from the contents of such a barrel. A more direct method, however, is by hiring a housekeeper to do the cooking and dress-making and other labors performed by the wife. Unfortunately this is seldom done until the wife has gone to heaven, so that she fails to benefit by the husband's discovery.

There is reason to believe, however, that no wife who holds herself in due respect will accept this so-called scientific estimate of her value to the family. She knows very well that she is worth more in actual money than the difference between the raw materials and the finished products and that if she were paid what she really earns, her compensation would include that of teacher, nurse, seamstress, laundress, cook, housemaid and general utility person.

Of course, few husbands can afford to put the services of their wives on this purely commercial basis, and unfortunately, few wives have any thought of demanding it. The most of them, there is reason to believe, are entirely satisfied when they are sure that their husbands like him of whom Solomon wrote, value them far above rubies—so far that no thought of gross commercialism is involved.

IT WAS REVERSE COMPLIMENT

But the Stolid Young Lawyer Got an Acquittal for His Client Held on Murder Charge.

A young lawyer, not noted for intelligence, succeeded in getting a client acquitted of murder. Meeting a friend a few days afterward, the lawyer was greeted with warm congratulations.

"Yes," he said, mopping his brow, "I got him off, but it was a narrow escape."

"A narrow escape! How?"

"Ah, the tightest squeeze you ever saw. You know I examined the witnesses and made the argument myself, the plea being self-defense. The jury was out two whole days. Finally the judge called them before him and asked what the trouble was."

"Only one thing, my lord," replied the foreman. "Was the prisoner's counsel retained by him or appointed by the court?"

"No, gentlemen, the prisoner is a man of means," said the judge, "and engaged his own counsel."

"I could not see what bearing the question had on the evidence," continued the lawyer, "but ten minutes later in filed the jury, and what do you think the verdict was?"

"What?" asked his friend.

"Why, not guilty, on the ground of insanity."

Nicaraguan Statesman.

Gen. Emiliano Chamorro, who seems likely to be a candidate for the presidency of Nicaragua, is now minister to the United States. He has been a conspicuous and popular figure in Nicaraguan affairs ever since the Bluefields revolution which overthrew Zelaya and subsequently brought about the present regime. He led the victorious military forces in those struggles. He was a candidate for the presidency for a time before the last election. Adolfo Diaz, however, was nominated by the conservatives, and General Chamorro withdrew in the interests of harmony, pledging himself to support Senator Diaz. He lived up to his pledge.

Women Are Barred.

Women are barred from entering the business of swordmakers in Japan. Not only is prayer offered up before the work begins, but various religious rites peculiar to the Japanese are performed in order that the swords, when finally completed, may be said to have been well and truly made. Even the final processes of polishing and sharpening are characterized by certain religious ceremonies, and finally the weapons are offered, one by one, to the sword god to be blessed. The ceremony consists in placing the swords in front of the goddess of the Shintoes on the wall, with an offering of sake, rice and sweetsmeats, after which prayer scrolls are read and blessing upon the work is invoked.

Dollar Saved His Life.

Thomas Dunbar, a realty agent, attributes to a silver dollar the saving of his life when Conrad Leo, a former restaurant keeper, fired point blank at his breast. Dunbar was stunned by the blow of the bullet striking the silver coin in a vest pocket. Apparently under the impression that Dunbar at least had been wounded, Leo shot himself and died soon afterward.—Seattle Post-Intelligencer.

Waste Product of Sawmills.

The waste product of sawmills in this country, including that fed to the furnaces as fuel, is estimated to be 36,000,000 cords per year. About half of it has no use whatever, but is usually burned to get rid of it.

Quite So.

"No woman likes to be roped in," said the independent bachelor girl.

"That depends," said the essentially feminine sister.

"On what?"

"On whether or not the man who does the roping uses pearls."

Handicapped.

Officer—Why do you think he wouldn't make a good corporal?

Sergeant (indicating sentry)—Im a corporal! Lor lumme! Why, 'is name's Clarence!—London Punch.

WHAT IS YOUR WIFE WORTH?

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BEAUTIFY HOME WITH VINES

Wise Builder Well Knows the Value of This Cheap and Pretty Ornamentation.

The costliest and least satisfactory way to make your home look "different" is to load the house with ornamentation. The next poorest bargain is to scatter all over your lawn flashy trees and shrubs, especially the cut-leaved, weeping and variegated kinds, for this will make your place look just like every beginner's in every city the world over. The best way to put personality and brilliancy and color into home grounds is to have a different set of vines for every house. One place will have Virginia creepers, trumpet honeysuckle, and bittersweet. The next place will have wild grape, wild clematis, and rose. Both will be beautiful the year round, and neither need cost a cent, because you can dig the plants from the open.



Ready for the Vines.

While you are waiting for the permanent vines to grow, you can cover your porch the first year, without spending a cent, by sowing seeds of wild cucumber vine or collecting seeds of morning glory in regions where it runs wild. In the garden cities of England, such as Bourneville and Letchworth, which are the most beautiful of their kind in the world, many thousands of dollars have been saved by building very plain houses, and providing different sets of vines for every house.

PUBLIC PARKS A NECESSITY

Few Cities Today Fail to Recognize the Importance of Providing Proper Breathing Spaces.

A park commissioner of Louisville makes the following statement regarding the purpose and value of parks: "The use of public parks is to promote the wellbeing and happiness of the people, to alleviate the hard conditions of crowded humanity, to encourage outdoor recreations and intimacy with nature, to fill the lungs of tired workers from city factories and shops with pure and wholesome air, whenever they will or can afford to spend a day in shady groves, under spreading trees or on the jeweled meadows. They are havens of sweetness and rest for mothers and wives and sweethearts; above all, they are for the children, for the people, high and low, rich and poor, without distinction, with equal rights and privileges for every class. A city that does not acknowledge the necessity for public parks as a means for promoting the welfare and happiness of its people, and recognize the substantial advantages that follow the making of a city attractive and comfortable as a place of residence, is not progressing, but is already on the wane."

Perhaps.

"Many property owners are preparing to trim their shade trees, and the beautification of the city will be the result," says an optimistic paragrapher in the State Journal of Frankfort. Possibly, but not necessarily.

When shade trees are trimmed the proverb that fools rush in where angels fear to tread is, too often, illustrated.

Many owners of trees have not the slightest appreciation of the beauty of the structure, and proceed upon the theory that an elm or a maple will be all the better for the severe treatment under which the box hedge prospers. And many itinerant pruners work by the day and prove their value by the litter of lopped branches they bring to the ground under the tree. Sad havoc is worked when the combination of ignorant owner and vandal pruner exposes to saw and shears the growth of years and the dignity that belongs to all unutilized trees. And the judicious often grieve without a hope of affecting the course of vandalism.—Louisville Courier-Journal.

One Decade's Development.

Eighty-five cities of more than 30,000 inhabitants have adopted the commission form of government, according to a recent census bulletin. The cities vary in population from Boise, Idaho, with 33,000, to Buffalo, with 465,000, and are scattered through 27 states.

Nearly half the population in cities of 20,000 to 500,000, including 7,700,000 persons, lives under commission government. This represents the development in a little more than a decade.