

Uncle Sam: Detective

By WILLIAM ATHERTON DU PUY

The Psychological Sleuth

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True stories of the Greatest Detective Agency, the Bureau of Information, U. S. Dep't of Justice.

Billy Gard was jogging comfortably from the station to the Commercial hotel in the carryall which, in Royerton, still afforded the only link between those two points, when pandemonium broke out in the slumberous streets. He met its forerunner head on not two blocks from the station. This bolt that had launched itself from the clear skies took the form of a normally dignified family carriage drawn by two lean bays. But the sedate respectability which surrounded this equipage when it was driven by its proper owner, President Sisons of the Royerton National bank, had been lost in the madness of the present exploit.

For the lean bays were now extending themselves in what appeared to be an attempt to break all speed records that the community had ever known. The dignified carriage was careening from side to side in a way that threatened its overthrow at any moment. Gard's first impression was of a team that had broken loose from a hitching rack and dashed away uncontrolled. But as it flashed past him there was an instant in which the actual situation was photographed upon his brain.

For this team was not without a driver. He had seen the form of a slim young man which leaned far out over the dashboard—pale, refined features that fitted illy into a scene of such vigorous action. But what was more surprising was that this driver, instead of attempting to restrain his horses, was every moment lashing them into new exertions.

"Homer Kester, as I live!" ejaculated the driver of the carryall in consternation.

"Who is Homer Kester?" asked Gard.

"The cashier of the bank," was the reply.

Whereupon the young special agent of the department of justice acquired an even greater interest in the situation than he had experienced before, for he had come to Royerton for the purpose of making inquiries into the condition of its national bank, which was under suspicion.

Behind the fleeing carriage came the town constable, who had evidently appropriated, for purposes of giving chase, the first horse he had found by the side of the street. Others had joined in the pursuit and a rabble of small boys and curious townsmen crowded the street. From these the stranger was soon able to gather the story of what had happened in the immediate past.

It had suddenly developed that the cashier was short in his accounts. The directors had awakened of a sudden to a realization that the institution over which they presided was but a financial shell. There was no delay in the interest of expediency. An immediate call was sent forth for the constable. The young cashier went into a panic. In desperation he rushed from the back door of the bank, cut loose the team of the institution's president which stood near, leaped in and made a dash for it.

It would have appeared that such a procedure would have been entirely futile, that there would have been no question of the apprehension of this criminal. Yet such was not the case, and Homer Kester was a thorn in the flesh of the authorities and particularly of Special Agent Billy Gard for many a day. For he ran his team two miles into the country, abandoned it, but sent it still adrift, caught a cross-country trolley, and with the exception of a single fleeting moment, was not again seen by the authorities for a year and a half.

Gard, in the meantime, was faced with the immediate problem of determining the nature of the crime and representing the United States, that justice might be meted out. In the course of which work he developed the detail of what had happened to the lone financial institution of this country town and revealed a method by which a single depositor had filched it of its funds in a way that almost amounted to the knowledge and consent of the directors.

The trouble was all caused by a young man by the name of George D. Caviness who was born with a peculiar gift of inducing his associates to perform for him such favors as were better not granted. It would seem that he had taken for his model in life the monkey (if it was a monkey) that had first induced the cat to pull those historical chestnuts out of the fire. But so alluring were his blandishments, so attractive his personality, so popular was he socially, that the town had become accustomed to forgiving his transgressions and allowing him to have his way.

The father of George D. had been a director of the Royerton National bank and at a great time a man of means. It was a shock to the town

when, three years earlier, the elder Caviness had blown out his brains. It was a surprise to his associates to find that his estate had so dwindled that there was almost nothing left. The bank was directly embarrassed, because of the fact that the younger Caviness had borrowed, upon his father's endorsement, \$3,000 from that institution. Knowing the youngster as these directors did, they called him on the carpet and asked him what he intended to do toward making good.

"I am going to pay these notes almost immediately," he said confidently. "You know that I am now the local representative of a New York insurance company. I am doing a great business. In fact, I can promise a payment tomorrow."

"But," urged a director, "your personal account is also overdrawn."

"That will not be necessary any more," said Caviness. "I am now on a firm financial basis. I am now in a position to throw new business to the bank instead of being a burden to it."

With these assurances the directors parted with young Caviness on the friendliest of terms. They wanted to believe in what he said, as this would save the bank money and themselves embarrassment. Further than this there seemed nothing that could be done, and the boundless optimism of the young man created confidence.

The next day the insurance agent deposited for discount a sixty-day note for \$300, given him by a man for whom he had written a policy. He drew \$50 in cash, and allowed the balance to be placed to his credit. The directors were encouraged. The insurance man continued such operations, much of his paper being perfectly good. It would appear that he was on the way toward clearing up his affairs, but Caviness spent much money, some of it going toward the entertainment of sons and daughters of the directors. If they stopped him at any time it would have meant the absolute loss of the amount he already owed. As illogical as it might seem, more and more credit was extended.

In addition to the liberties that Caviness thus took with the directors of the bank, he had also established a sort of dominance over Homer Kester, its young cashier. The dominant insurance man had been a leader among their mutual associates from youth, was the social lion of the town, and always patronized the cashier. That timid youth had allowed his friend to overdraw his account when his father was a director, and it therefore seemed safe. This fact made it easier afterward when it was unsafe.

Finally the directors awoke to the fact that George Caviness owed the bank \$10,000. Homer Kester, the cashier, so reported. The directors were appalled. This was the end.

Caviness was contrite. He made new notes for the whole amount. These would at least appear in the assets of the bank when the examiner came around. He promised he would in future deposit only cash and certified checks. The hope of recovering some of the money led the directors to keep the account open. There seemed no other way.

But Kester, the cashier, had not reported all the facts with relation to the Caviness accounts. The checking account of the latter was at this time overdrawn to the amount of \$3,500. The cashier realized that he had been personally at fault in allowing this. He had confessed his embarrassment to Caviness. The latter had advised that the cashier juggle the accounts in such a way that the shortage would not show, and that he fail to report it to the directors.

Arranging the accounts was easy. As a matter of fact, these overdrafts were already being hid by being carried on the books as cash. The arrangement had become necessary upon the occasion of a recent visit of a national bank examiner. As the examiner had been deceived, so might be the directors. So it happened that Caviness was \$3,500 deeper in debt than the directors knew.

Billy Gard was fascinated in developing the psychology of the case—the manner in which this prodigal played upon the cashier and the directors to his advantage. But here the miscreant had come to the end of his string with the directors. He was to be allowed only to pay in money. But with the cashier the situation was different. Caviness now had Kester in his control. That youngster had made a false report to the examiner and the directors. He had violated the law. His position, even his freedom, depended on helping Caviness to make good.

"If I had but a few hundred dollars," Caviness told Kester when they

met surreptitiously to talk the matter over, "I could clean up the whole amount. I have a most unusual business opportunity in Philadelphia. You must let me overdraw just once more."

"Not a cent," insisted Kester. "I have already let you ruin me and the bank. I will go no further."

"If you don't," brutally stated the insurance man, "you are ruined by what you have already done, I am ruined, the bank is ruined. This is the one chance."

In the end he went to Philadelphia to grasp this one chance. Billy Gard acknowledged that it was logical that the cashier should allow him to do so. The draft that Caviness drew was for twice the amount he had named but the harassed cashier could not bring himself to refuse to honor it. Caviness had proven himself a psychologist again. Two days later a smaller draft came but with no line of explanation. The chance to recoup might depend upon this money, the cashier felt. He appreciated the greater chances on the other side but, having honored the larger check, he could not turn down the smaller one. It was not logic that he should do so. As the days passed there came other drafts for always smaller amounts. There was still no report from Caviness. Yet what excuse could the cashier offer himself for refusing these small drafts when he had honored the big ones. Finally the prodigal drew, in a single day, forty small checks ranging from one to five dollars.

Despairingly the cashier cashed everyone.

It was during the week that followed that the directors had precipitated the flight of the cashier. Billy Gard found the whole case easy to clear up with the exception of the apprehension of the two men who had been the instruments in wrecking the bank.

The special agent had little doubt of his ability to catch Homer Kester, the cashier. There was the almost infallible theory that such a fugitive would write home. There was but the necessity to wait until he should do so and the point of hiding would be indicated by the post mark. There

was no need of haste in the case of Kester, it seemed, but Caviness was harder to figure out.

Yet just the reverse proved to be true. Gard's theory for catching a man of the Caviness type held good, while on the fugitive cashier he absolutely failed.

In Royerton it was easy to find many intimates of the insurance man. From these it was learned that the spendthrift often visited Philadelphia and that while there he kept fast company. Some of the young men of the village knew of the places he frequented, the people who were his friends.

"Such a man," soliloquized Billy Gard, "always hides with a woman." Whereupon the special agent returned to Philadelphia and began investigating, one after another, the resorts and the sporting friends of the missing insurance agent. One thread after another was followed to its end until, in tracing a certain woman to Germantown, the special agent met with a result and a surprise that was beyond his expectation.

A drayman who had hauled the goods and chattels of the woman he was tracing had given Gard the Germantown address. It was eleven o'clock on a sunny morning when the special agent reached the address. It was a narrow house in a closely built row and evidently was rented, each floor as a flat. Gard had reconnoitered front and back, had gossiped

with the grocer at the corner, with some children in the street. He was looking for an opportunity to approach the janitor of the house to question him informally, wanted to talk to the postman. Then he met the policeman on this beat. He had asked this guardian of the law about the occupants of the flat in question and the two men were drifting idly past when pandemonium broke loose.

Shriek after shriek tore its way through the drawn curtains of the ground-floor flat. There was the crash of broken furniture, the whack of heavy blows, the thud of falling bodies. The policeman and the special agent ran to the door of the house to which the former put his shoulder with good effect. They were thus let into a narrow hall. Off of this were the doors to the flat through which the noise of a vast disturbance continued to come. It required the strength of the two men to break through the barrier, and some delay was occasioned. But when the door was finally forced it was a wild scene that was revealed.

They had broken into the sitting room. Sprawled across its floor was the form of a disheveled woman, frowsily blonde, shapely, clad in a dressing sacque and evidently unconscious. Chairs were upset, tables overturned.

The intruders gave but a hurried glance to this apartment, however, for the action of the play was still going forward and might be seen through the torn portieres that led into the adjoining dining room. As they looked the form of a strong young man fell heavily across the dining room table, felled by a blow from the stout stick of a slim antagonist. The wielder of the attack shifted his position and Billy Gard got a view of his face, lividly white, delicately chiseled and refined in appearance. It seemed illy to fit into this chaotic scene. Yet the special agent knew he had seen it before and instantly the photographic flash of such a face bending over the dashboard of a madly plunging carriage returned to his consciousness. It was the face of Homer Kester.

Billy Gard had often had occasion to be vastly surprised by the unexpected

ber of its Germantown staff. The prowess of the federal agents, represented by William H. Gard, one of its best men, was also ineffective in tracing the fugitive further than to a railway station where he took a west-bound train.

It was more than a year after this and George D. Caviness was serving time in the federal penitentiary at Atlanta. Billy Gard had been working hard on many other cases that had intervened and the tracing of Homer Kester had been allowed to rest. It is the motto of the federal detectives, however, that a case is never abandoned, and now Gard was back upon the old task of catching the fugitive cashier. His decks were otherwise clear and his instructions were to get his man.

Gard locked himself up with the Kester case for three days. He read the records of it, reviewed his personal knowledge, got together every scrap of information that had any bearing upon the character of the fugitive. He wanted to know exactly what sort of youngster Kester was, he wanted to place himself in that youngster's place and attempt to determine what he would have done under the circumstances. It is a method that has been used by a few detectives with very great success. But it is only the occasional man who is so human that he may discard his own personality and appreciate the course that would be taken by another who may thus get results.

In Kester he had a youth of twenty-four who had been born and reared in Royerton, had rarely been away from that town, had no interests out of it. He was a young man of good character, had demonstrated certain strokes of boldness and action. He had a mother and father and two sisters living in Royerton.

It appeared that Kester had fled and that he had cut all ties behind him—that he had left town and had never communicated with his relatives or friends. While Gard had been off the case a vigilant watch had none-the-less been kept upon all letters arriving in Royerton that might possibly be from the fugitive. No letters had come.

"Now Gard," said the detective to himself, "were you a youngster of this training, living thus in Royerton, surrounded by a family to which you were devoted, with no interests in the world outside, with a certain element of boldness in your nature; if under these circumstances you got into trouble, would you run clear away and never communicate with them?"

"No," answered Gard, transported back the few years that separated him from the inexperience of twenty-four. "I could not break so easily from my dependence upon my family and the only world I had ever known."

"And if you were thus thrown upon your own resources in the big outside world and had no money, and if you had the additional handicap of having to keep in hiding—would you be able to face a proposition like this and still not call for help from your people?"

"No," again answered the imaginary youngster. "I would hide and find a way to get money and news from home."

So the detective reached the conclusion that Kester was, in all probability, communicating with his relatives. It was evident that he was not writing home. Too close a watch could be kept on letters coming to a small town for any of his people or their confidential friends for them to be received without the knowledge of the special agents who, through the postmaster and letter carriers, had been steadily watching this means of communication.

So the conclusion was reached that Kester was getting messages to his people through some other means than the mails, in all probability through a confidential messenger. To do this he must be near by. He could hide to best advantage in a city. Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Baltimore were in a convenient radius. The detective drew the conclusion that, were he in the boots of the fugitive, he would have taken refuge in one of these cities; that, had he not been willing to risk the mails, which Kester evidently was not, he would have used some trusty go-between and through that agency would have learned the news from home and received from his relatives the money upon which to live.

Upon the basis of this theory Billy Gard asked himself more questions.

"Were I hiding under such conditions whom would I use as a messenger?"

A faithful former servant who might be living there, a distant relative, some individual hired for the task. There were not so many possibilities. They might be exhausted in a few weeks' investigation. Was there not, however, a shorter road to results?

"If I were in this lad's place," the detective again queried introspectively, "what would make me write home?"

"Obviously nothing would," came the answer, "so long as I could communicate through the safer medium of a trusted messenger."

"But if the messenger were an impossibility, would I write?"

This query the detective had some difficulty in answering. He brought himself to experience the loneliness and homesickness of the fugitive, the lad whose whole life interest was wrapped up in the little circle in which he had moved. At the same time he appreciated the fugitive's proven fear of the mails and his avoidance of them so far.

But for the sake of laying down a basis for action Detective Billy Gard granted that he would write if he could not communicate otherwise. If

this were admitted what was to be done? Obviously the former methods of communication should be cut off.

How could this be done? The messenger method of communication was possible only because the fugitive was near home. If he were far away it could not be used. If he were far away he would also feel an added degree of security. A worldly fugitive would not, but Kester would. With a continent between him and his crime the man who had always lived in this narrow sphere would not appreciate the possibilities of his capture. He would write.

Special Agent Billy Gard was quite sure of this. He would have done it himself at twenty-four. The runaway cashier should be captured by being caused to flee thousands of miles further away.

Having reached this conclusion the special agent called Police Sergeant Flaherty on the telephone. Would Flaherty come to see him? Flaherty would be there in fifteen minutes.

Now Gard knew that Flaherty had grown up in the little town of Royerton. His folks lived there and Flaherty occasionally went back for a visit. The Irishman was a trustworthy guardian of the law and might be depended upon to carry out orders.

"Flaherty," said the special agent, "would you like to take a bit of a trip to Royerton over Sunday and see your folks, with all expenses paid?"

"Would I eat a Dago's apples when I was hungry?" said the policeman.

"Well, here is the lay of the land," Gard explained. "I am after that fugitive cashier, Kester, and I am going to get him. He is not far from home and his folks are in communication with him. I want them to know that I am after him. They will tell him, will supply him with a bundle of money and he will not stop running until he reaches Arizona. Then I will get him." "Them are not police methods," said Flaherty. "I am not catching this dip, but when I do pinch them it is usually by getting close to them."

"I like to catch them on the wing," said Gard. "Anyway you have merely a speaking part. Your talk is to the home folks, to the effect that I am hot on the trail of Homer Kester and likely to nab him at any moment. Go talk your head off."

Whereupon the policeman from Royerton spent the week end at that village, had a good time and passed the word of warning.

Billy Gard waited ten days. At the end of that time he was called on the telephone by the postmaster at Royerton. A letter had come to a sister of Homer Kester and in that young man's handwriting. It was postmarked "Spokane, Washington."

Gard dispatched a long telegram in code to the special agent of the department of justice nearest Spokane, he being located in Seattle. He asked that officer to run over to Spokane and pick up his man. It was merely the task of locating a well-described stranger in a comparatively small city. Two days later the department was informed of the arrest.

"Psychology," said Billy Gard ruminatively, "is a great help to a detective—when it works."

Changes in Human Teeth.

That our teeth are becoming progressively smaller and fewer is made manifest by a study of human jaws running back through the centuries to the earliest historic times, 6,000 years ago, and even to those of prehistoric people whose bones have been dug up. That they are growing less durable is shown by their extreme liability to decay.

The tendency to a reduction in the number of teeth is shown by the departure of the third molars. These "wisdom teeth," as they are called, four in number, are in many individuals missing or undersized and irregular; or they may, in other instances, fail to "erupt." Evidently they are destined to disappear entirely. And because they are no longer required for use nature is making them of such poor material that commonly they start to decay as soon as they appear. Already there are signs that other teeth, such as the lateral incisors, will follow the same route. Our teeth are merely tools. They are not equivalent to limbs, but are only natural implements and were developed originally to meet certain needs. If the needs diminish the teeth must do likewise.

Buddha's Poor Guess.

At the entrance of the lamasery are eight large monuments, which contain the ashes of eight Buddhas. Long years ago, at the beginning of the Ming dynasty, after hard fighting, the Tibetans were driven back from Chinese territory, which they had overrun for hundreds of miles. When the victorious Chinese general reached Kumbum, says the Christian Herald, he sent for these eight Buddhas and said to them: "You can read the future; can you tell me when you are going to die?" One of them, shrewd enough to understand the general's mind, said: "Tomorrow." "No," said the general, "it will be today." And it was.

Clever Youth.

Employer—Huh! Got off yesterday to go to your grandmother's funeral! Show up this morning with a black eye!

Office Boy—Yes, sir; we got fighting over the property!—Pittsburgh Chronicle-Telegraph.

Courtesy.

"The people of your town applauded me with fine enthusiasm." "That isn't altogether enthusiasm," said a member of the reception committee. "Some of it's hospitality."



FELLED BY A BLOW FROM THE STOUT STICK OF A SLIM ANTAGONIST.