

ROBBING THE MAILS.

METHODS USUALLY ADOPTED BY CRIMINALS.

A POSTOFFICE INSPECTOR GIVES EXPERIENCES

Of Many Encounters with People Who Use the Mails for Fraudulent Purposes—Postoffice Robberies—Wiles of a Woman Postmaster.

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I am a postoffice inspector, with headquarters in a large Western city. This makes my nineteenth year in the service, and it is not strange that during that period I have accumulated some interesting knowledge as to the manner in which people will use the mails for criminal purposes. The United States mails have a peculiar fascination for criminals. It offers an extensive range of opportunities for irregularity by the public as



SEIZED THE NIGHT CLERK.

well as by its own employees. The most common abuse on the part of the public is the claiming to have sent or received articles alleged to have been mailed. This is also a favorite with professional swindlers. It is hard to catch the latter class. This abuse is also popular between friends and acquaintances. Not long ago my attention was directed to an interesting case. One of the parties resides in a large Western city. The other in a Southern city. The latter was a woman who had out quite a well as an adventuress. The Northern man had been touched by her winning ways. He sent her a railroad ticket and \$25 to go to his city. Both were sent by mail. The woman claimed never to have received them. The second day after I was notified I found that the ticket had been sold to a scalper which was prima facie evidence that the letter had been received. But the adventuress had covered up her tracks so thoroughly that I could not arrest her. This is a favorite trick with petty adventuresses.

There is a wide difference between the exposure of such transparent tricks as that and the burglary of an office, which is generally done by experts, whose plans are well laid and all evidence destroyed. The postoffice at Albuquerque, N. M., was robbed in a very methodical way. When the postal clerks had registered in from their runs and gone to bed, at about 3 o'clock in the morning, three burglars entered the rear door of the postoffice, seized the night clerk, a boy of 16, bound and gagged him and proceeded to their work very deliberately. The postoffice room had formerly been used for a national bank and had in its rear a large vault the doors of which were customarily closed and locked with a key. In the rear of this large vault was a strong safe, which contained the postoffice funds, while the sacks of registered letters awaiting outgoing trains were put in the vault.

By closing the front doors of this vault the burglars were enabled to work without noise upon the safe and at six o'clock they had opened it, abstracted its contents, taken the registered letters from the sacks by cutting the latter open and had then gone on their way.

Early in the morning the postmaster engaged the local officers, who were assisted by detectives of the express companies, but very little could be discovered. When I reached the place the only clew found was a blacksmith's sledge, which lay among the weeds in the rear of the building. The owner of this we found after a diligent search to be a blacksmith half a mile away. He remembered that the day before the robbery a stranger had been in his shop asking questions and that the next morning he found his shop door forced open and some of his tools missing.

We next learned that this stranger was the son of a ranchman living five miles away and that he had gone from Albuquerque to a small town in Kansas. There we had him promptly arrested and himself and his baggage searched on suspicion, but as he gave a straight account of his proceedings and no stamps nor money were found upon him he was released.

The adjoining officers were thoroughly advised of the details of the robbery and the kinds and quantity of the plunder, and a month afterward word came from the marshal of Western Texas that a clew had been found there. The inspector was in that way put in communication with a prisoner awaiting trial for murder in El Paso. This prisoner told a fairly straight story, to the effect that he was hiding in a house on the Rio Grande, about five miles below Albuquerque, on the night of the robbery, and in the morning his friends, who were outlaws, came in with a lot of stamps and postal supplies, which they hid in the garden a few rods from the river.

Before he would give me their names he wanted the government to pay him enough to enable him to defend himself on his trial for murder. His

figures were too steep, and before negotiations were completed with him he was tried and sentenced to be hanged. But I went with a guard to the place he described and found a deserted house which tallied accurately with his description, and we dug up soil enough in looking for the stamps, &c., to make a big garden, but did not find the valuables. Although the men had gone away, later on two of them were secured and connected with the burglary, but they were wanted also for a dozen like offenses that had prior attention of the court.

Not very far from Lebanon, N. C., about the same time, we had a case that was peculiar in some of its features and as sad as it was unusual. On a star route (that is, a route where the mails are conveyed by stage or horseback) running west from Salisbury, N. C., there had been many thefts of money from registered letters, and the department and the people thereabout were alike impatient to catch the thief. All the postmasters upon the route, about a dozen of them in all, bore excellent reputations, and all professed equal anxiety to have the guilty punished. I had been at work once on this case without success, and tried it again, taking every possible precaution the second time to conceal my proceedings. With a good assistant I put up at a farmhouse entirely off from the route, and where at our leisure we completed our plans for carefully testing the different offices.

The weather was very stormy, which favored us, as there were few people traveling upon the roads, and thus we were able to get around without the inquisitive discovering that strangers were in their neighborhood, which was very thinly settled at best. It was difficult then to decide which postmaster we should begin with, for usually the adjoining offices have to co-operate with and be in the inspector's confidence, and if the guilty one himself is one of the two so trusted of course he is put on his guard.

The last one to be suspected would naturally have been the postmistress at Bilesville. She had been a school teacher, was of good family and had not only the respect but the confidence and sympathy of the people, because her husband was a worthless fellow who was serving a term in prison for larceny. On my first trip I rode over the route as a pretended book agent. I sat on the old stage conspicuously holding in my hand a flashy bound book when we reached her office and she came to the door and looked out at me. I was watching her covertly and did not fail to note that when she turned to go into the office she threw a quick look backward at me and spoke in a low voice to the carrier, who was coming out with the mail sacks.

Half an hour later I said to the driver in a joking way, "I believe I made a good impression on that pretty postmistress at Bilesville. I wish I had showed her my book."

"Yes," he said, "and she asked me if you warn't a postoffice inspector."

"What's that?" I asked.

"Oh, one of them fellows that go



DIDN'T LOOK GUILTY.

round catchin' up with the lame ducks. There's ben a lot o' stea'in' on this road, and I wish they'd do somethin' about it. I'm gettin' blamed for it myself."

I inferred at once that unless the driver was a great deal smarter than he looked and acted he was not to be suspected, and from the quick suspicion of the postmistress that I was an officer that she herself was to be looked out for. So when I related this fact to my friend he agreed that we should first test the schoolma'am's office. The last theft reported had been about ten days before our visit, so that another was about due. We fixed our lines in the usual way, sending four registered letters through the schoolma'am's hands. We got them ten minutes afterward. The carrier made a very brief stop. Nobody else had touched the letters.

They came out to our hands so clean and neat that we thought it impossible that they could have been tampered with. We opened them at once, however, and were astonished to find that all the four letters had been rifled. Returning to the office we found the stolen bills in the young woman's purse, and her usually sad face was lighted up a little with the success of her day's work. She at once confessed. She soon afterward died of a broken heart, and upon her deathbed confessed, it is said, to having also stolen the money for which her husband was imprisoned and placed it upon him so as to get rid of him.

His Last Home of Clay.

Colonel R. A. Crawford, who died recently at Atlanta, was laid to rest in the old and tattered confederate uniform which he had worn during the war, and which, in its bullet holes, told how near he had been to death from the federal foe.

WATCHED BY THE HUNTER.

Shrewd is our bird; not easy to outwit him!

Sharp is the outlook of those pin-head eyes;

Still, he is mortal, and a shot may hit him;

One cannot always miss him if he tries.

—O. W. Holmes.

AN AERIAL CRIME.

There was a storm of cheers from a thousand breathless spectators. The balloon was going up.

Like a falcon suddenly unhooded by the hunter it escaped to the sky, darting upward in a straight line. Already one could scarcely distinguish above the rim of the basket the heads of the two aeronauts who ascended.

Leaning on the frail wicker bulwark, they saw far down below the mail terrestrial forms lessening every second and vanishing. What was that mass of white and gray things crossed every way by black lines? Was that the city? Yes, the city they had just left, a city reduced to the proportions of an ant hill. But right and left, before and behind, what a marvelous horizon! There, far away the serrated line of the mountains, and on the other side the sea, the vast, blue ocean sparkling in a flood of sunshine.

Suddenly, in the profound silence of the azure, a woman's voice resounded, clear as a tinkling of crystal.

"Oliver," said she, "give me your hand!"

"Here is my hand, Laura," replied a man's voice.

"Thank you," said the fair voyager, straightening herself and closing her eyes with a shudder.

The man raised his head and looked at his companion, who, very pale, sat down on a light bamboo seat. "What is the matter with you?" he asked.

"I was afraid," said she. "I was so dizzy. But it is over." She passed her pretty, gloved hand across her eyes.

"Do you regret your notion?"

"No; certainly not. But a first trial may surprise the nerves. Oh, I shall get used to it. Don't worry."

He remained erect, looking at her. She was charming in her tight-fitting traveling dress, which revealed the lines of a form harmonious and supple, with a little masculine hat coquishly posed on her golden hair knotted in the neck, and with the dead pallor that heightened the effect of her black eyes.

The young woman also looked at her companion, whose blond beard—heavy and closely trimmed—framed a manly, noble face. Seeing him frown, she said, in her turn, with her singing voice:

"And you, Oliver; why do you look so gloomy?"

He did not answer, but, leaning slightly over the side of the basket: "We are going up too quick," said he. And seizing a rope which hung near by he pulled on it.

Almost instantly the young man had a sensation of their movement being retarded, then of a stop and at last of descent.

"Are you going down for good?" she asked.

"No," replied Oliver. "We will go up again presently."

"When?"

"When I choose. I have only to close the valve which secures the gas. You see this rope I hold in my hand? That regulates our course."

"And if it should break?"

"It will not break—it is firm. But if by a kind of miracle it should disappear we should be lost."

"How?"

"The balloon is sufficiently inflated to carry us to regions where we could no longer breathe. We should be asphyxiated."

"Luckily it needs two miracles. That rope is double, is it not?"

"It looks to be double now, but in reality there is but one. Lean out a little. Do you see that ring high up there? The rope passes through that and these are its two ends which I hold in my hand. They are tied, besides. But it needs only a blow with a knife to separate them. See, now, here are the two ends free. I have only to pull one. The rope glides through the ring and falls at my feet, and behold! we have started on the grand voyage!"

He had joined the action to the word. The rope had fallen to his feet. He called it with a turn of his arm and hastily flung it into the void beneath them.

The young woman started to her feet, trembling and horrified. "Oliver, what are you about? Are you mad?"

The young man looked her full in the face and said very calmly: "I am not mad."

"Then what are you doing that for?"

"I have planned it all. I intend that we shall die together, here in mid-air, far from that earth which I intensely hate since it is there you have proved to me what you are, since the mire of which it is made has splashed the idol that my superstition adored in you."

The stupefied girl made a gesture as if appalled.

"Oh! do not protest," cried Oliver. "All feint is useless. I will convince you in one sentence that you are lost to me—that you intended to marry another. Yes, that fool, that insipid Moreno, who has followed us from Venice, whom we have found everywhere—Milan, Florence, Rome, London, New York, Chicago. You made me treat him as a companion. I have shaken hands with him daily—imbecile that I am! Have I not been constantly the slave of your will, of your caprices? You said you wanted to wait till the time of your widowhood was past. You made the disdainful charity of this concession to the usages of the world. When the two years had rolled by you would engage yourself to me—you would marry me. Touching scruple, truly! I was in earnest—you were not. It was a piquant role for you to play and you

have shown yourself a consummate comedienne. You, for whom love was nothing but poetic aspirations, ethereal dreams, flights into blue distance; you, whose siren voice, with its vibrant melodies, sang to me the delights of an infinite ecstasy, of an ideal journey into the blue heaven like the winging of birds!

"Very well, behold your dream! Here it is realized and you are going to live in it until it kills you! See, now, you are caught in a trap of your own invention. For it was you, last night, who had the idea of buying this balloon from the aeronaut, who was going up in it, and of traveling through air with me. A caprice of the season, was it not, to fitly finish our New Year's festivities? It was my vengeance that you offered me. I have seized it. And now I deliver you to another vengeance, that of the azure mocked at by your poetical lies, to that of heaven scoffed at by your sacrilegious irony!"

"Ah, they will cruelly avenge themselves, those impassable judges! Do you know what punishment they will inflict on you?"

"One day two adventurers of the air—too hardy—made the trial. They were found in their basket, rigid and frozen, their faces swollen and blood running from their ears, eyes and mouths."

"Behold the end that awaits you! Soon, my charmer, a red foam will heighten the carmine of your lips, red drops will simulate coral pendants from your fine ears and your beautiful eyes will weep tears of blood!"

The young woman stood erect, convulsively shuddering. "You would not do that, Oliver! It is too horrible! I cannot die that frightful death!"

Oliver folded his arms across his chest. "I would like to prevent it now," said he, "but I have no longer the power."

She sprang upon him and tore from him the knife he still held in his hand.

"But with that," she cried, "one ought to be able to cut that accursed canvas. She looked up at the globe of gas above them."

"Try it," said Oliver, coldly. Clinging to the cordage she put one foot on the edge of the basket and tried to raise herself by her slender wrists. But she turned giddy and fell back panting. The knife, escaped from her hands, tumbled over and over through the air. She paused a moment—collapsed—crushed.

"See," said Oliver, mockingly, "the moon sun heats the balloon and hurries us along. We shall soon arrive now."

He threw back his head, looking at the sky as if hallucinated.

Suddenly, while he was speaking, the young woman made a gesture of delight, despair brightened her face. Slowly, softly she carried her hand to her pocket and drew out an object which she held from his possible view. Then she quickly raised her arm and two detonations resounded.

"You reckon without your host, my dear Oliver!" she cried with a laugh of triumph. "A good Californian never travels without her revolver, and she is right!"

Pierced through and through by the two balls the balloon began to fall.

Oliver leaned over the basket-rim. "So be it!" said he. "We are over mid-ocean. Blue for blue, we shall still die in the azure."

The balloon was visibly losing gas. The swiftness of its downward course was startling. Oliver, himself suffocated, closed his eyes. And in the silence of the empty sky the balloon pursued its dizzy descent.

MY DEAR OLIVER—I have just heard about you. They tell me you are better. I am glad. I am recovering also. Certainly you will learn this with pleasure.

I have rewarded the fisherman who picked us up in a dead faint, both of us, and brought us in his boat to shore. Here is a poor devil who can say without metaphor that his good luck fell from the skies!

Traveling, my friend, is decidedly too dangerous in your company. I begin to believe that some day or other you will bring me misfortune. Excuse this superstition—you know I have lived where they believe in the evil eye, and allow me, henceforth, to pursue alone my voyage into blue distance.

Believe me, my dear assassin, without too much bitterness.

Yours, LAURA.

A Czar Hotelkeeper.

The most autocratic hotelkeeper in the world is in Orlando, Colusa Co. I was preparing to go out one night, when he said to me:

"Be back by 9 o'clock."

"Why?" I asked.

"Because, I go to bed at that time, and if you are not back you won't get in, that's all."

"Give me my key," I said, "I won't stop in such a hotel."

"Oh, ho! you won't, won't you? Where else are you going? There is no other hotel in this here town, no other stable and no other store. You can't buck agin me. You be back, now, by 8:30 p. m."

I looked at the old brute, and concluded I had better stay. I sat down and he came around and affably questioned me. "Look here," I said, "I have to stay in your hotel, but I don't want to be bothered with you. So keep your questions to yourself."

"I've half a mind to tell you to leave. Can't I speak to a man in my own house?"—Globe-Democrat.

Some Hope Still.

An editor at Sandusky has promised to pray. Gentlemen who have considered the profession without hope will please revise their estimates.—Columbus Dispatch.

A Sharp Cut.

A little girl, in order to prove that it is wrong to cut off the tails of horses and dogs, quoted the scriptural injunction, "What God has joined together let no man put asunder."—Table Talk.

FARM AND HOUSEHOLD.

A PLEA FOR PURE WATER AND PLENTY OF IT.

Farm Animals Suffer for Lack of it—The Orchard—How to Dress Calves—Pork Pointers and Household Helps.

Pure Water.

Pure water ought to be where the stock can get at it at all times, particularly during warm weather, as it very often makes the difference between gain or loss. A half-dozen times a day is not too often to offer water to stock any time of the year. During the hot weather of summer farm animals suffer more from lack of proper care in watering than they could from neglect in the matter of food. In truth, the best pastures and most approved systems of feeding cannot give good results when there is lack of attention or inadequate facilities in watering. Keep water constantly before them, advises the Ohio Farmer.

The best posted farmers take a barrel of water to the field when plowing, fitting land, cultivating, haying or harvesting, or any work where it is necessary to be away from water a half day, and offer the horses some every hour or two, also bathing the head and nostrils with a sponge. The jug containing water for the men can be kept cool by setting in the barrel of water. A barrel with one head out, set in the wagon, then filled with pure well water and covered with old, clean blankets or gunny sacks, will keep cool a long time. By watering often, horses will do very much more work without fatigue or overheating. Having practiced it for years, I know this to be true; besides the consciousness of having used "man's best friend" right, ought to be worth something. What a guilty feeling one ought to possess who has given horses long drives, or obliged them to work five or six hours until they are so beside themselves with thirst as to drink large quantities of water at a draught. Besides, it upsets the whole animal organization because of the forced draft on the water already stored in the system, and the best care in other respects proves futile. Horses will not drink to excess at any time if it is offered to them often. Another thing—no matter how warm a horse may be, it is always safe, in fact very desirable, to give some water, say six or ten swallows, and more if the exercise is to be continued.

As regards watering before and after feeding, Prof. Sanborn reports, after two carefully conducted experiments, that there is very little if anything in the theory that watering immediately after feeding causes the food to be washed or forced out of the stomach into the intestines, where it will not receive the benefits from the gastric juices of the stomach to aid digestion. Prof. Sanborn concludes that it "seems advisable to water both before and after feeding," which logically means—give water whenever needed.

The use of abundance of pure, cold water in the dairy is plainly important. Cows giving milk not only need water in large quantities, but often, and should always, particularly in hot weather, be where they can help themselves. About 85 per cent of milk is water, and the process of secreting the lactical fluid is ever going on; then there is the waste of water by perspiration, and the needs of the many functions of the system to be supplied, at all times, if paying results are desired. If the water supply is deficient the cows become restless, feverish and fretful. One day will often show a marked decrease in quantity, and a flow of milk once lost not easily regained. A dairy cow will show a falling off under circumstances where an animal not in milk may take or flesh. On the most arid lands found in sections of Texas, domestic cows do not give hardly any milk, while steers not infrequently do fairly well taking on flesh during dry weather. This shows that cows perhaps above all other animals require more particular attention as to water supply. In winter the water should be slightly warmer for cows, though where water is taken from deep wells it is never cold enough to do any harm. But water that is down near the freezing point must have the "cold edge taken off" if cows are expected to make the best use of their milk-producing powers.

Hogs require a great deal of water, and it would be better wisdom to give them pure, cool water than to stuff them with foul "swill" as so many farmers do. Pure water, clean quarters and food make the best pork. Sheep are neglected in the way of insufficient water more than any other of the domestic animals. Formerly it was quite a common belief that sheep could get along without water when on pastures and "eat snow" in winter; but no one now who makes sheep raising a profitable business lets them go without good water and plenty of it. Proper watering is certainly more economical and humane than losing the benefits from feeding because of neglect in this line.

How to Dress Calves.

Calves from three to six weeks old, and weighing about one hundred pounds, or say from eighty to one hundred and twenty pounds, are the most desirable weights for shipment. The head should be cut out so as to leave the side of the head on the skin. The legs should be cut off at the knee joint. The entrails should be removed, excepting the kidneys; the liver, lights and heart should be taken out. Cut the carcass open from the neck through the entire length—from head to bumgut. If this is done they are not so apt to sour and spoil during hot weather. Don't wash the carcass out with water, but wipe out with a dry cloth. Don't ship until

the animal heat is entirely out of the body, and never tie the carcass up in a bag, as this keeps the air from circulating, and makes the meat more liable to become tainted.

Mark for shipment by fastening a shipping tag to the hind leg. Calves under fifty pounds should not be shipped, and are liable to be seized by the health officers as being unfit for food. Merchants, too, are liable to be fined if found selling these slunks for violation of the law. Very heavy calves, such as have been fed upon buttermilk, never sell well in our market—they are neither veal nor beef.—Farmers Voice.

In the Orchard.

The value of advice for fruit trees is generally proportioned to the amount of territory which it is intended to apply to. When it becomes so general that it includes all sections of the country, it is of little real value to the professional, although it may do inestimable good to the beginner. A great deal of the advertised accounts of wonderful trees and success with them are from sections of the country entirely different from where the purchaser lives, and if buying from the far-away nurseryman we must take the trees as we get them. They have been accustomed, probably, to a rich, heavy soil, and they are now to be transferred to a light, poor soil. In the process of digging the roots have very likely been mutilated and cut, and in the shipment to us they have been injured in other ways. It is more than one can expect of the best grown trees to respond quickly and satisfactorily under such conditions. If the trees are properly dug and shipped, and the soil and climate to which they are transplanted are the same, we may expect success from the trees. But these risks are generally at the bottom of the widely diverse reports from orchardists concerning the success and failure of some of the finest varieties of fruit trees.

The propagation of a fruit tree is the simplest thing in the world if one will study it for a year or two, and when one considers this it seems a wonder that there is not a small nursery attached to every orchard. One can buy a few trees to start with, but after that his own nursery ought to supply him with all the young seedlings needed. It may be occasionally that he will want to add some new variety to the orchard, and a young seedling will have to be shipped from a distance; but as a general rule he can depend upon his own nursery to supply the orchard with new trees.

In this nursery the starting work is the most difficult, and it takes so long to raise the trees from the seed; but this may be obviated by buying the stocks in bud, or his root grafts from the nurseryman. Along with these, however, the seeds of new trees should be planted. In this way the old orchard will be replenished with new trees constantly, and new orchards be planted whenever needed.

A home-managed nursery affords many good things. It accustoms the owner to the needs and knowledge of the trees from their youth up, so that he will know how to manage them later. He can prune the trees with his pen-knife when they need it every year, and no heavy pruning then will ever be needed. The very best trees then can be selected for planting and the old ones discarded. The transplanting can also be done carefully and without injuring the roots or stock of the trees, and they will get a better start in the orchard. In many other respects the home nursery is of importance, and so valuable is it that many of the orchards now exhibiting dead and dying trees in them would take on a better and healthier appearance if the owners grew their own trees. When we buy trees from commercial nurserymen we have to cut them back at planting so that no growth at all is expected the first season. This is obviated, however, when the trees are taken direct from the home nursery, for they put on a good growth immediately, and from the date of their transplanting they increase in size.—American Cultivator.

Pork Pointers.

Soaked corn is good feed for young pigs. A well-fed and cared for pig is not hard to restrain. Pure, fresh water from the well is better than running. When fed in any one place a feeding floor becomes a necessity. Young hogs will not make the most profitable growth in a dry lot. When hogs once get behind it is hard to get them started again. The boar should have abundant exercise and a good variety of food. A freshly farrowed sow should not be fed too much rich food for a few days.

A race of hogs on the farm will improve or degenerate according to the owner.

Household Helps.

It is best to save all egg shells to settle coffee. Keeping a pan of water in the oven will prevent fowl from scorching. To freshen salt fish, lay it skin side up, and always in an earthen vessel.

A holder attached to a long double tape that may be looped around the apron band saves steps and burned fingers.

Finger marks may be removed from varnished furniture by rubbing well with a very little sweet oil upon a soft rag.

Norfolk jackets, changed a little, but still Norfolk jackets, are made with the pleats in the back stitched down, but the three on either side of the front allowed to hang looser from the shoulder.

A good way to ventilate a cellar is to extend from it a pipe to the kitchen chimney. The draught in the chimney will carry away the gases which would otherwise find their way into the rooms above.