

ADVENTURES of the WORLD'S GREAT DETECTIVES

By George Barton

The Great Bullion Robbery

An Episode in the Life of Inspector Sweeney of Scotland Yard.

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ONE September morning several decades ago, when the express officials lifted out the bullion which had been brought to Boulogne by way of the Southeastern railway, they noticed that the bags were not quite as heavy as usual. They were opened and found to contain nothing but shot. Thus, hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of gold had mysteriously disappeared in the journey between London and Boulogne.

The amazing part of it was that almost superhuman means had been taken to protect the precious dust. The gold was sent in the guards' van, packed in iron boxes, each of which was deposited in a safe with a Chubb lock. The safes each had two locks, and naturally there was a separate key for each one. These keys were in triplicate and were in the possession of the trusted officers of the company. One set was kept by the traffic superintendent in London, another by the head of the Folkestone railway office, and the third by the captain of the Folkestone-Boulogne boat.

Each of these men was beyond suspicion. They were all willing to swear that the bags had been sealed in the usual form, duly fastened and locked. How had the shot been substituted for the gold? And where? No one could answer these questions. It seemed like black magic.

James Sweeney of Scotland Yard was put on the case, and associated with him were a number of the best detectives in England. The investigators first visited the railway office at Folkestone and made a careful examination of the premises. That brought no results. After that there was a second and more careful scrutiny of the railway car. One of the finds here was an old carpet bag.

That was a beginning. The Scotland Yard men took the bag and began one of those systematic searches in which they are excelled only by the secret police of Paris. Many shopkeepers had sold many bags within the period of time under investigation. Some were sold to citizens with whom they were acquainted, while others were disposed of to strangers whose features they could describe only with difficulty. However, the work of "running out" these vague clues was start-

in place of the real ones. Agar told his pal that he would have to get a wax impression of the real keys in order to make the duplicates. "That's too bad," was the response; "the keys are kept in the office of the company."

"Then we'll have to get an accomplice in the office," was the cool retort. And so the conspiracy, which had been deep enough, now became deeper. Another employe of the company succumbed to temptation. His name was Tester and he was in a position to lay his hands on the keys of the safes.

This fellow was employed in the Traffic department at London Bridge. He entered into the scheme with avidity. He reported to his pals that there were times when the safes were sent to Chubbs for repairs, and that, on these occasions, one of the keys was sent with the safes. Such an occasion arose very soon, and then Tester cleverly managed to abstract one of the keys; but there was still an impediment to the complete success of the conspiracy. As each of the safes had two locks, and the key to but one was sent to Chubbs, it was the second key that baffled Tester's best and worst efforts.

But what they failed to get by shrewdness came singularly enough by chance. One of the second keys was always kept in the Folkestone office hanging in a little closet. Pierce ascertained this fact, and he hung about the office in the hope of getting his clutch on it. His opportunity came. One morning the cupboard was empty, and Pierce, stepping into the office, which was vacant, grabbed the key and passed it to Agar, who had a handful of warm wax. He immediately took the impression of the key, returned it to Pierce, who put it back in its place, and the two of them left the office together without being detected.

The next thing to learn was when the large consignment of bullion would be dispatched. Tester obtained this information. In the meantime the conspirators arranged their part of the scheme. Carpet bags were purchased and filled with shot which was intended to replace exactly the amount of gold taken from the bags. Agar more than once traveled up and down the line for the purpose of testing the false keys that he had manufactured with Pierce's assistance. Burgess admitted them to the guard's van, where they fitted and filed the keys until both worked easily in the lock of the safe.

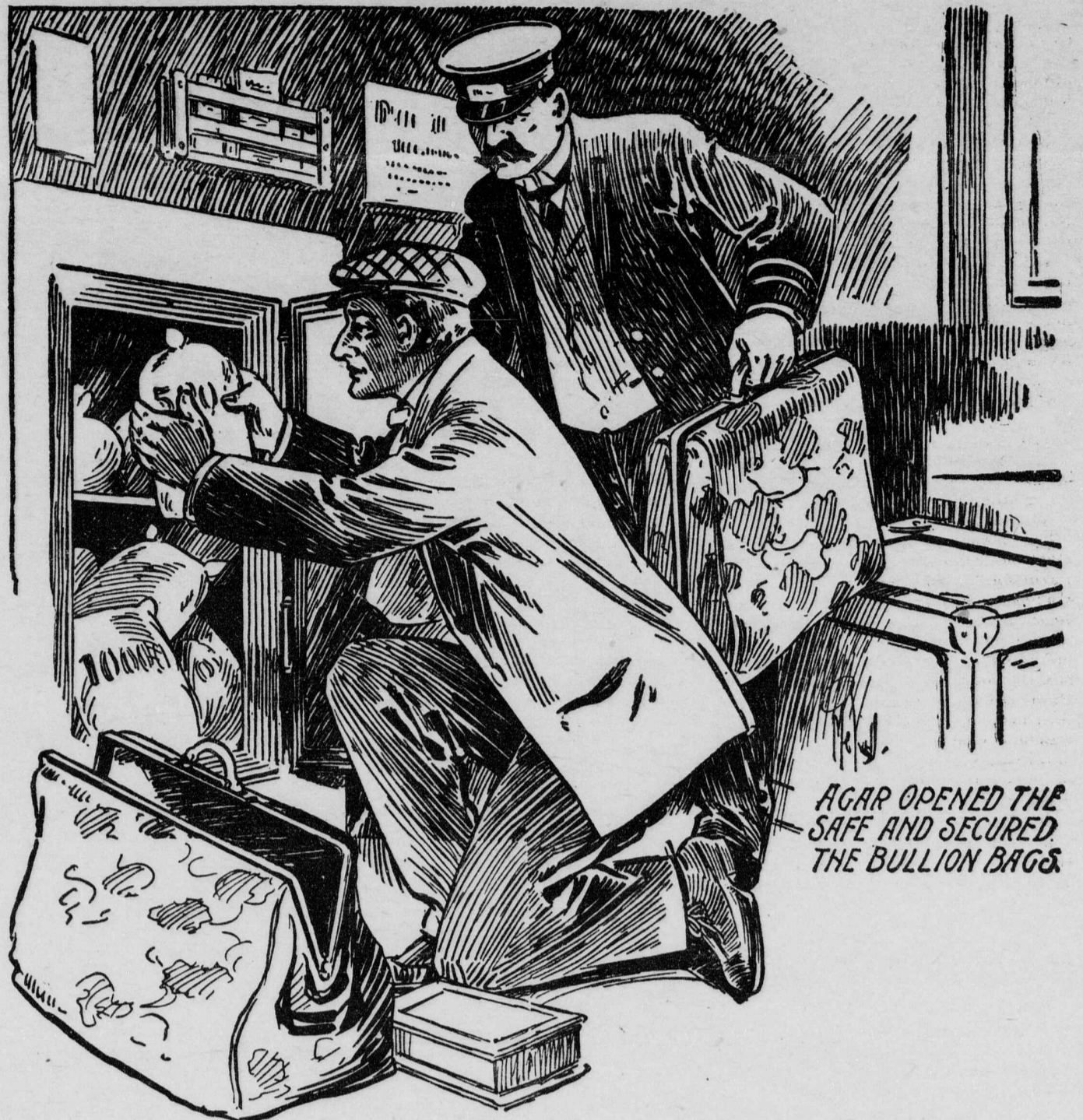
Finally the great night of the enterprise arrived. The conspirators purchased tickets on the Southeastern train, boarded it and handed their bags, filled with shot, to the porters, who placed them in the guard's van. As the train was starting, Agar managed to get into the van with Burgess, while Pierce secured a seat in the first-class carriage. The industrious Agar began work at once. He opened the safe, secured the bullion bags, removed the gold, substituted the shot from the carpet bag, refastened and resealed the bullion bags and replaced them in the safe. The trick was partially turned. At Redhill Tester met the train and was handed a portion of the gold. The two other safes were robbed in the same manner as the first. When the train reached Folkestone the unsuspecting officials removed the safes, which were filled with shot, and not gold. The rascals went on to Dover, having previously obtained tickets to Ostend. Later on they returned to London unobserved, and little by little disposed of the stolen gold.

The burglary, as already stated, was first discovered at Boulogne. Mrs. Kay said that when Agar was sentenced to transportation for life and knew that he could not escape, he handed to Pierce forty-five thousand dollars which he requested to be set off on Mrs. Kay for the support of herself and her child. Pierce paid her a few small sums and then calmly confiscated the remainder of this fortune. She came to the police in great rage and disclosed the story of the robbery as it has been here related.

Agar, who was in Newgate, heard how Pierce had mistreated Mrs. Kay and he eagerly turned state's evidence. As a consequence of this, Pierce, Burgess, Tester and several others were arrested, convicted and sentenced to life terms in prison. The company only recovered a very small portion of the stolen money.

This true story points a moral that will not be overlooked by the discriminating reader. It is that crime, even viewed from a sordid, worldly standpoint, does not pay. Pierce and Agar had already spent many years in jail and their final crime meant that the remainder of their existence should be lived out behind prison bars. Every one associated with the robbery of the Southeastern railway suffered life-long scars—scars that might have healed, but that nevertheless left their mark on the victim.

Students of criminology are unanimous in the belief that crime is the least profitable of all human undertakings. "Easy money" seems to carry its own punishment. Even though



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ed and carried to a conclusion. It involved weeks of patient labor.

In the meantime it became increasingly evident that the robbery was the work of skilled professionals. Little items of information picked up here and there proved that the scheme had been carried out by a gang of thieves. Finally, enough was learned to convince the detectives that the thieves had secured a wax impression of a set of the real keys, which enabled the thieves to manufacture a set of false ones. But even with this, it was necessary to secure the assistance of someone employed by the railway company.

At this stage of the game one of the carpet bags was traced to a man named Peter Agar. That, in itself, sounds commonplace. But the importance of it becomes evident when it is stated that the portrait of Mr. Agar occupied a place of honor in the Rogues' gallery at Scotland Yard. Copies of the picture were made and sent all along the line. The guards and the ticket collectors immediately recognized it as that of one of the men who had traveled in the train on the day the gold had disappeared.

Two things could be done. One was to arrest Agar at once and depend-

ing we may come to a better understanding."

"Very well," was the response, "I can start by saying that the plan for the robbery was conceived by John Pierce."

It seems that Agar and Mrs. Kay lived together as husband and wife and that he had given her all of the details of the robbery. Pierce, at the time, was a clerk in a bucket shop. He had been concerned in several shady transactions and the possibilities of the gold train appealed to him very strongly. But it was too big a job for him to undertake alone. So he sought the professional advice and assistance of Agar. That gentleman seized the suggestion with avidity.

The first step necessary was to win over one of the employes of the company. So they approached one of the guards named Burgess, who was usually in charge of the trains carrying the gold. He fell in with the scheme and explained the methods of transportation.

As the gold was carried in the guard's van it was plain that the robbery would be easy when Burgess was on guard. The question was how to open the safes. The answer to that was plain enough—to get false keys

the crook makes what he calls a "get away," he suffers constantly from the fear of detection. That comes sooner or later and then comes the misery of arrest and the haunting fear that mother or wife may be in want or suffering. Attempts to care for them with tainted money usually ends as did the Pierce-Agar compact. Honesty, therefore, is not only the best, but the most comfortable policy.

PRETTY POLLY PAPERS

Dear Girls: Isn't it heavenly weather? Too beautifully, light-heartedly June to ever be anything else, it would seem. We know better, but we don't feel so, and sometimes "feels" are better than "thinks." I wonder how many girls know the secret of keeping bureau drawers in order? It is simply this: Have a box for everything and everything in its box. The covers of the boxes may be discarded or not, just as you like, but ribbons folded in a box do not overlap glove territory, and belts do not have to put up a sign "no handkerchiefs allowed on this property." Two long boxes (corset boxes, perhaps) are good for gloves and belts, and another box for purses and other trifles and all the dear feminine "nothings," that are "everything" really, for we couldn't live without them!

A girl's club I know of had promised to make a large number of paper roses of different colors to decorate a church fair booth. This seemed like a big undertaking, but one of the girls had a brilliant inspiration and made the task into a pleasure for all concerned. She invited the club members to her house for a "Progressive Rose Party." One table had a red cloth, one a pink cloth, one a yellow cover and one was white. Thus the tables were designated where flowers of a like hue were to be made. The white rose table was the head table. When a bell rang after a certain time had elapsed, the two at the red table who had made the most red roses progressed to the pink table, and so on. Tally cards cut in the shape of a white rose were used, with small pink rose pasters. When the work was done the goodies were served in pink and white cases on pink and white dishes, and didn't those pink and white maidens have an appetite? The best worker received as a reward a little silver rose pin—and it won't fade unless she loses it!

Now that hats are such an expensive part of one's wardrobe, one girl has told me her way, and really she is too clever for words. She makes one hat do for several occasions. She has a medium-sized black straw hat and a large white hat with "adjustable trimmings." Wreaths of flowers have firm inner bands sewed to them with little patent "snaps" (used to fasten dresses) on these, the under parts of the snap being sewed to the hat itself. A long plume offers the same possibility, while bows of several kinds and different shapes and hues can do duty when required. Presto!

Hats trimmed while you wait. In the same way in winter her foundation hat may be a turban of black velvet with a black velvet crown and bow on one side. This whole crown can be doubled to fasten over the buckram crown which can be substituted when one wears gray furs for an afternoon of calling; also a violet silk crown with knots of artificial violets and leaves peeping from the folds, which can be worn to a reception with a lavender dress. Let's learn to be adaptable these days, when purses won't stretch.

You can make fascinating curtains and bedspreads for your rooms, girls, by using the white crepe material often used for shirt waists, which requires no ironing. A pretty white fringe that is washable can be stitched along the edges of both curtains and spreads.

Here's a beautiful way to save time in placing ribbons in under garments before and after laundering. Have some flat white tape (linen) the width of one's ribbon and of equal length. Tie one end of the ribbon to a piece of tape and pull out the ribbon, drawing the tape into its place. Untie the ribbon and send the garment to the laundry with the tape "where the ribbon ought to be." After the garment is washed and ironed, reverse the process—tie the ribbon to the tape's end once more, pull on the tape and draw the ribbon back into place. Just as easy as A. B. C. That stands for Any—Body—Can!

At a girls' luncheon where many tapers were used this ingenious substitute for candlesticks was used: Potatoes of uniform size were selected, and a hole cut in the center of each to admit the candle. Artificial paper daffodils were then pinned over the entire surface of the rest of the potato, except on the under side, making a perfect flower ball of each one. The effect could be varied by using any preferred flower, for of course every girl has her favorite posy!

Here's an idea for the good, studious girl: Use a card system for chance opportunities for studying. On square cards which will fit into your card case, write lists which you wish to memorize, poems which must be learned for college exams, verbs which must be declined, etc. You can help your mother iron, and one of the cards can be laid by the ironing stand, where your eyes can rest upon it while working. As the trolley car speeds to and fro on your way to a friend's house or to the city, you can conquer the contents of one or more of your cards, and many an odd minute can be saved, and while other girls have to study you will be that much ahead.

Girls with straight hair! Attention! Wash the hair frequently with lukewarm water and a good pure soap, rinsing a number of times, and in one of the rinsing waters, add a little borax. Comb out the hair, fluff it about the face loosely, forming a pompadour, and insert a cheap round comb to hold it thus while drying. Make a second puff of hair back of the first

and insert a second round comb (such as children used to wear. When the hair is dried it will have a pretty wave that looks more natural than that produced by most hair-curling devices.

Now that initials on one's note paper are no longer the "smartest thing," the girl who likes her possessions stamped with an individual touch is rather at a loss. One clever girl has solved the problem by having a personal emblem on everything she owns, where it is possible to do so. Her handkerchiefs, her note paper, her jabots, her lingerie, all bear one or more dainty little butterflies. Her umbrella's top, her seal for personal letters, her shopping bag, and in fact every possession that can be marked, all bear the same fairy-like emblem. Is it any wonder that her friends will learn to think of her as a sweet, fitting, elusive personality?

To come down to earth and something to eat, do you know how to make such a good cake that is dirt cheap and is of that color, too? (But pardon me, goodly chocolate cake, for such you are.) Only one egg, frosting and all, and everyone likes it, men as well as women.

Into a little saucepan put two tablespoonfuls of cocoa, blend with a bit of hot water, add one-half cup of milk and cook over the stove with the yolk of one egg. When thick like custard, add one cup of sugar and a teaspoonful of butter until melted. Take from the stove, add one more half cupful of milk in which is dissolved a level teaspoonful of soda, add gradually one and one-half cups of flour and lastly a teaspoonful of vanilla. Bake in one loaf or in small cakes as desired. With the white of the egg make either plain or boiled frosting.

Do some of you girls have trouble making good boiled frosting? Here's a simple trick. Put one cup of sugar with a wee bit of water and boil. Beat the egg white in a bowl, slightly, then add two tablespoonfuls of the partially cooked sirup and continue to beat the egg white until firm and stiff. Boil the remainder of the sirup until it will "ball" when tested in cold water, pour while melting hot onto the egg white, beating constantly until thick. This will never fail to harden and yet is soft and delicious "beneath the surface."

Oh, dear!—It's "good-by time" again. I'll put the rest of the ideas I was going to tell you about back in their handbox.

Yours,
PRETTY POLLY.
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A Black Reputation.
"That ladies' tailor is a man of dark designs."
"In what way?"
"He makes a specialty of mourning outfits."

Naturally So.
"Did the fat woman submit to being put out of the line where she had forced her way?"
"No, she didn't submit. She offered a stout resistance."

