

# WESTERN MORDE

## True Tales of the SECRET SIDE By an Ex-Operative

EDITED BY WM. J. BACON

COPYRIGHT U. S. & GREAT BRITAIN 1908 BY W. G. CHAPMAN

### NO. 7. KATYDID MINE

"A RULE the inspectors of the Postoffice Department look after matters of fraudulent uses of the mails," said Captain Dickson on a certain occasion when I had dropped in for a quiet smoke and a glass of sherry, "but when a case develops unusual difficulties the secret service department is called upon. This does not often happen, however, for there is a lot of rivalry between these departments and not a little jealousy. It is only as a last resort that our branch of the machinery of government is brought into requisition, and not until the postoffice inspectors have failed utterly."

I was visiting at the home of Captain Dickson, who had once been high in the councils of the United States secret service but was now retired. Back of us had a chair in our fingers and before us was a sherry decanter—the captain's favorite beverage. He knew what I was there for—a story, and he was willing to tell one as soon as he could find the lead. And the interesting feature about his experience is that they are the happenings, and the simple way of telling them made the picture he drew stand out the more clearly. I couldn't improve on them if I tried to embellish them. I repeat his words as I remember them.

A case of this character occurred a few years ago in one of the larger Western cities. It was a mining case—a company backed by \$50,000,000 capital stock—and to all appearances it was a legitimate business. Among the directors were five well-known Western mining men, one I remember being an ex-United States Senator. It advertised extensively in the newspapers and by circulars. Orders for stock were pouring into the company in such large quantities that it required two and three small wagons, sometimes, to haul a single day's mail.

The stock was sold in small quantities, no one being allowed to take more than 100 shares at a dollar a share, and it was sold at par, a dollar cash a share, and it was selling at a profit of 25 per cent. In five years the subscriber had his money back and still owned his stock, of course. It made a decidedly attractive investment for people from all over the country just broke their necks, parading the expression, to get in on the ground floor.

The advertising matter of the company, which operated under the name of the Amalgamated Gold Syndicate, was cleverly written. It stated that the discoverers of the mine were two poor prospectors without kin or kith but with hearts overflowing with generosity. They had the afflictions of the poor and the scant opportunities for a man of small means to find a safe and profitable investment for his savings. They had decided to share their wealth and prosperity with their fellow-men.

The company placed \$50,000 of stock upon the market each year. It advertised that no one person would be allowed to subscribe for more than 100 shares, and the shares would be closed as soon as the requisite million was subscribed.

The Postoffice Department became suspicious as soon as the first million was subscribed. It immediately put upon the case. They were looking for six months and the case was established beyond doubt that the mine had no real value. They had found out that the promoters had been endeavoring to secure larger quantities, and many instances were discovered where checks for stock subscriptions had been returned with a brief letter stating that the semi-annual issue had been exhausted before the subscription had been received.

On its face it was the fairest sort of deal, although the plan of the two beneficent miners did not exactly average up to the standards of human nature. That the world has come to expect in business men and especially in promoters of mining companies.

Hudson, one of the best men in charge of the office, which I have already mentioned, while Mason, the other discoverer, was in control of the mine. Both Hudson and Mason bore out the characters that the advertising matter of the syndicate gave to them. They dressed in rough, cheap clothing, chewed tobacco and showed a disregard for money that is characteristic of men who have worked hard all their lives against adverse fortune and who have suddenly come into great wealth. In everything they acted the parts of unworldly, uneducated sons of the soil.

At the Katydid mine, visitors were always welcome. They were shown over the properties with the greatest freedom, only one place, the little building where the metal was separated from the amalgam, was denied to them. Mason explained this by saying that the company possessed a secret process for refining which he had discovered, and which was known only to himself, to Hudson and to Belden, the company's chemist.

This, in brief, was the status of the case when I was put on it. It was given to me because I had been a miner and prospector and had studied geology and assaying.

After working a week on the case I was satisfied that the company was a fraud, but I really saw that I had no common sense to deal with. In the first place, the plan looked too fair and generous. It was like an alibi that is too perfect. I had seen miners make lucky strikes, but I had never known a single instance of a man sharing his profits with others who had no call upon him. Another thing that added to my certainty was the quality of the ore from the mine. It was fairly rich in gold, but not sufficiently so to yield the amount of gold the company sold each month. I secured specimens and had it assayed by the best chemists. It was a low grade ore. I then measured one of the ore cars and hid out behind a boulder for two days on the mountain side near the mine, where I could see and count every car of ore that came from the mouth of the mine.

My figures showed that the mine was producing less than \$200 a day, little more than enough to pay the expenses of operating, and certainly not enough to sustain the expensive offices in the city and pay the fabulous dividends on the stock. For 20 per cent a year is something to make a stockbroker's heart strain almost to the point of breaking.

I didn't take a bit of stock in Mason's claim of a secret process of refining. I knew that was a fake outright, but I wanted confirmation of it, and the only way to obtain this was to get inside the little building at the mine where Mason and Belden slept and where the separation of the gold from the amalgam was effected. I wanted to get into that building as badly as ever a life prisoner wanted to get out of the penitentiary, and I was ready to do most any desperate thing to accomplish my desire.

My chief's instructions had been explicit and they suited me to a "T." The postal inspectors had been rather offensive lately over one or two matters and there was a bit of friction between the heads of these departments. Hence, the desire of my department that I should clear the matter up without assistance. I had been told that I must work out my own salvation, and that was the kind of assignment I always liked. It was secured by the best talent of the department that one Secret Service man was worth all its corps of inspectors, that I could work out single-handed a proposition that had stumped the best talent. Of course the chief had never said a word of this to me, but I knew the state of affairs, and his terse instructions had been sufficient to let me know what was expected of me.

When I had worked on the case some four or five days an inspiration came to me and I had a quantitative analysis made of a bar of gold from the Katydid mine. It showed just what I expected. Then I made an investigation of the syndicate's deposits in the various banks where it kept its accounts. From these I gathered a few more ideas and really began to see daylight. I next secured what inspectors had been sufficient to let me know what was expected of me.

I put in two or three days spooling up to teach the mine with figures that ran far into the millions. The end of which laborious task for I had never been a good mathematician, I had the solution of the swindle worked out—to my own satisfaction at least. However, I had mighty little evidence that would stand in a law court, and this was precisely what I had been sent out West to gather. The chief impressed upon me that there must be conclusive proof of a bona fide mining venture or of a swindling game. He thought it would be the latter, and so did I for that matter.

The thing now before me was to get proof one way or the other, and I set about it, realizing more than ever that I was face to face with a problem that was going to tax my ingenuity to the fullest. It all turned on the little building at the mine. This was the point about which all of my theories centered. It was the milk in the coconut, and I was satisfied that when I trained I would bag a covey of the shrewdest rogues that had ever planned to part a gullible public from its hard-earned money.

There was no rest for me awake or asleep. I thought over the matter awake and dreamed of it when I tried to sleep. I couldn't figure out a plan for gaining admittance to the secret confines of the little building, although I conceived no less than a hundred schemes, some of them foolhardy and romantic in the extreme.

I had almost worked myself into a fever over it when, one night, I went up to my room at the little hotel of the mining camp after supper and sat down to—ad myself to sleep. I had bought a couple of paper-back novels at the drugstore, from its rather limited stock, and among them there was a copy of Victor Hugo's masterpiece. I had read the book before, but it was a favorite of mine and I hadn't much choice in the matter of selection. I was so wrought up over the question of getting into the refining plant that connected reading was

out of the question, so I skipped about through the book, reading a chapter here and a bit there until I came to the adventure of Jean Valjean in the Paris sewers. In an instant I was tingling in every nerve, for I had found the solution of my problem, although it was both foolhardy and beset with the gravest dangers. From its rather limited stock, and among them there was a copy of Victor Hugo's masterpiece. I had read the book before, but it was a favorite of mine and I hadn't much choice in the matter of selection. I was so wrought up over the question of getting into the refining plant that connected reading was

out of the question, so I skipped about through the book, reading a chapter here and a bit there until I came to the adventure of Jean Valjean in the Paris sewers. In an instant I was tingling in every nerve, for I had found the solution of my problem, although it was both foolhardy and beset with the gravest dangers. From its rather limited stock, and among them there was a copy of Victor Hugo's masterpiece. I had read the book before, but it was a favorite of mine and I hadn't much choice in the matter of selection. I was so wrought up over the question of getting into the refining plant that connected reading was

out of the question, so I skipped about through the book, reading a chapter here and a bit there until I came to the adventure of Jean Valjean in the Paris sewers. In an instant I was tingling in every nerve, for I had found the solution of my problem, although it was both foolhardy and beset with the gravest dangers. From its rather limited stock, and among them there was a copy of Victor Hugo's masterpiece. I had read the book before, but it was a favorite of mine and I hadn't much choice in the matter of selection. I was so wrought up over the question of getting into the refining plant that connected reading was

out of the question, so I skipped about through the book, reading a chapter here and a bit there until I came to the adventure of Jean Valjean in the Paris sewers. In an instant I was tingling in every nerve, for I had found the solution of my problem, although it was both foolhardy and beset with the gravest dangers. From its rather limited stock, and among them there was a copy of Victor Hugo's masterpiece. I had read the book before, but it was a favorite of mine and I hadn't much choice in the matter of selection. I was so wrought up over the question of getting into the refining plant that connected reading was

out of the question, so I skipped about through the book, reading a chapter here and a bit there until I came to the adventure of Jean Valjean in the Paris sewers. In an instant I was tingling in every nerve, for I had found the solution of my problem, although it was both foolhardy and beset with the gravest dangers. From its rather limited stock, and among them there was a copy of Victor Hugo's masterpiece. I had read the book before, but it was a favorite of mine and I hadn't much choice in the matter of selection. I was so wrought up over the question of getting into the refining plant that connected reading was

out of the question, so I skipped about through the book, reading a chapter here and a bit there until I came to the adventure of Jean Valjean in the Paris sewers. In an instant I was tingling in every nerve, for I had found the solution of my problem, although it was both foolhardy and beset with the gravest dangers. From its rather limited stock, and among them there was a copy of Victor Hugo's masterpiece. I had read the book before, but it was a favorite of mine and I hadn't much choice in the matter of selection. I was so wrought up over the question of getting into the refining plant that connected reading was

out of the question, so I skipped about through the book, reading a chapter here and a bit there until I came to the adventure of Jean Valjean in the Paris sewers. In an instant I was tingling in every nerve, for I had found the solution of my problem, although it was both foolhardy and beset with the gravest dangers. From its rather limited stock, and among them there was a copy of Victor Hugo's masterpiece. I had read the book before, but it was a favorite of mine and I hadn't much choice in the matter of selection. I was so wrought up over the question of getting into the refining plant that connected reading was

out of the question, so I skipped about through the book, reading a chapter here and a bit there until I came to the adventure of Jean Valjean in the Paris sewers. In an instant I was tingling in every nerve, for I had found the solution of my problem, although it was both foolhardy and beset with the gravest dangers. From its rather limited stock, and among them there was a copy of Victor Hugo's masterpiece. I had read the book before, but it was a favorite of mine and I hadn't much choice in the matter of selection. I was so wrought up over the question of getting into the refining plant that connected reading was

out of the question, so I skipped about through the book, reading a chapter here and a bit there until I came to the adventure of Jean Valjean in the Paris sewers. In an instant I was tingling in every nerve, for I had found the solution of my problem, although it was both foolhardy and beset with the gravest dangers. From its rather limited stock, and among them there was a copy of Victor Hugo's masterpiece. I had read the book before, but it was a favorite of mine and I hadn't much choice in the matter of selection. I was so wrought up over the question of getting into the refining plant that connected reading was

out of the question, so I skipped about through the book, reading a chapter here and a bit there until I came to the adventure of Jean Valjean in the Paris sewers. In an instant I was tingling in every nerve, for I had found the solution of my problem, although it was both foolhardy and beset with the gravest dangers. From its rather limited stock, and among them there was a copy of Victor Hugo's masterpiece. I had read the book before, but it was a favorite of mine and I hadn't much choice in the matter of selection. I was so wrought up over the question of getting into the refining plant that connected reading was



WITH A QUICK SURE STROKE I BROUGHT MY REVOLVER DOWN ON THE BACK OF HIS NECK.

out of the question, so I skipped about through the book, reading a chapter here and a bit there until I came to the adventure of Jean Valjean in the Paris sewers. In an instant I was tingling in every nerve, for I had found the solution of my problem, although it was both foolhardy and beset with the gravest dangers. From its rather limited stock, and among them there was a copy of Victor Hugo's masterpiece. I had read the book before, but it was a favorite of mine and I hadn't much choice in the matter of selection. I was so wrought up over the question of getting into the refining plant that connected reading was

out of the question, so I skipped about through the book, reading a chapter here and a bit there until I came to the adventure of Jean Valjean in the Paris sewers. In an instant I was tingling in every nerve, for I had found the solution of my problem, although it was both foolhardy and beset with the gravest dangers. From its rather limited stock, and among them there was a copy of Victor Hugo's masterpiece. I had read the book before, but it was a favorite of mine and I hadn't much choice in the matter of selection. I was so wrought up over the question of getting into the refining plant that connected reading was

out of the question, so I skipped about through the book, reading a chapter here and a bit there until I came to the adventure of Jean Valjean in the Paris sewers. In an instant I was tingling in every nerve, for I had found the solution of my problem, although it was both foolhardy and beset with the gravest dangers. From its rather limited stock, and among them there was a copy of Victor Hugo's masterpiece. I had read the book before, but it was a favorite of mine and I hadn't much choice in the matter of selection. I was so wrought up over the question of getting into the refining plant that connected reading was

### AMERICAN GIRL WINS RECOGNITION IN GRAND OPERA



NEW YORK, Nov. 28.—(Special.)—Kathleen Howard is another Jean de Reszke pupil who has made good. She is an American girl, who has been studying under the great French tenor and who began her operatic career in a subordinate position in the Municipal Opera House of Metz. The director of the Frankfort Opera House heard her and immediately engaged her and she made a great success under his management, singing the contralto roles in "Das Rheingold" and "Die Walkure." She is here pictured in the role of one of the wives of Niccolai's "Merry Wives of Windsor." She hopes to sing during the coming season in the Royal Opera House in Berlin.

### CHICAGO WOMAN MAY MARRY SON OF PRETENDER TO PORTUGAL THRONE.

NEW YORK, Nov. 28.—(Special.)—It is now reported that Prince Miguel de Braganza, son of the Pretender to the Portuguese throne, is to marry Mrs. Frank Avery, formerly of Chicago. Prince Miguel has been reported to marry many times, the most recent report was that he would marry Mrs. S. S. Chamcey. This was denied quickly by his father, who wants him to marry a princess.

### TEACHERS ON HORSEBACK

THE appointment of traveling teachers is the novel method recently adopted by the Ministry of Public Instruction to combat illiteracy in the Abruzzi. The percentage of illiterates among the inhabitants of the Abruzzi has always been very high, and recent statistics show that despite the fact that many schools have been opened in the towns and villages within the last five years, 68 per cent of the population is still illiterate. The cause of this condition, which is limited to the Abruzzi, was variously explained. The Anti-Clerical members of the Board of Education were convinced that the clergy opposed elementary instruction lest the peasants should lose their religious faith, while others put forth the theory that the inhabitants of the Abruzzi had been ignorant and unlettered for centuries, and consequently they had lost the aptitude to learn. Professor Emidio Agostini discovered the real cause. He noticed that the government schools in the towns and villages were not well attended, not because the boys were not willing to get to them, but because they could not. The majority of the inhabitants in the Abruzzi are shepherds, and they spend nine months out of the year in the mountains. Being in huts and tending their flocks, Signor Agostini therefore suggested to the Ministry of Public Instruction the plan which has now been adopted, but only as an experiment. Instead of having schools with teachers and empty benches, why not send the teachers up to the mountains, where the boys are, and hold classes there? he asked. The plan pleased some influential members of the Board of Education, and 15 teachers were accordingly furnished with horses and instructed to ride out every day and beat the country for pupils. Where they found boys or men willing to learn they were to stop and teach. The 15 traveling teachers have their hands full, as to their great surprise they found that the shepherds, young and old, are not only willing to learn to read and write, but that they are very quick and intelligent. The number of teachers will soon be increased, and next year's statistics will show that the percentage of illiterates in the Abruzzi has greatly decreased. Better Times. Indianapolis News. As business you see improve, And industry with his a-s-h-m-b, You naturally feel that you're a tighter cinch upon your job. The price of living's on the run Which is, you note, exceeding swift; But two can live as snug as snuff. Or, of course, by some ingenious shift. You know all through the doubtful days That ears have listened for the chime Of bells that ring more joyous ways, And so for that ringing now's the time. And so while trade is on the boom, You naturally feel that you're a tighter cinch upon your job. Come through! Come through! Forget your gloom, And tell it to the only girl.

### MRS. FRANK AVERY.

