

# Dragging the Threat-Letter Writer from Hiding

## The Newest Oddity in Crime Detection—It's Mere Matter of Science

BY ANON.

IT IS not always the wisest course, I have learned, to introduce your business simultaneously with yourself when you are calling upon an expert. So I had simply introduced myself.

The man looked me over pleasantly, and said:

"You wished to see me—"

"Quite so," I said, "or I should not be here."

"Ah, yes. And—?"

"Did you ever write, and mail it, an anonymous letter?" I asked.

"What did you say in yours that worries you?" he asked.

But I detected the twinkle that flickers behind the eyes of many men and some women when, feeling their ground, and I played the game by laughing. "No," I said, "I never wrote an anonymous letter or mailed one. Neither did you. But you are a whole lot acquainted professionally with persons who indulge in the outdoor-indoor pastime of pestering other persons through Uncle Sam's letter-boxes, and I came in to ask you about it. What do you know?"

"More than I have any intention of telling you," the man said.

"Naturally," I replied. "I do not blame you by a hair for that. But—what do you know?"

"I think," said Mr. Stein, "we understand each other."

"I am perfectly sure we do," I said.

"And between man and man you won't need to choke the twinkle in your eyes while you feed me facts."

"That's a promise," he said. "Well then, the sending of letters through the mails without the name of the author signed to them has increased enormously in the last few years. Whether this is one of the results of a general increase in crime it is difficult to say, but it is sufficiently alarming to be cause for grave concern, and shows the necessity for a careful investigation of the facts and a determined effort to find these cowardly assassins of character."

"You phrase yourself with a professionalism that is almost entrancing," I said. "Can't we come down to earth and just talk?"

"We can," he grinned; "and we will."

"When do we begin?" I asked.

"Now!" he said. "What do you know about the idiosyncrasies of typewriters?"

"I know about them," I answered dignifiedly, "more than your science has ever dreamed of. I have used them in newspaper offices in these many years, and I can look back upon early times when my fond but feeble fingers slipped down between the keys. I—"

"But I speak seriously, man. Do you know that every typewriter ever made has some keys that crush their special individuality into the paper they attack? Do you know that through this fact viciously anonymous letters are often traced to their authors?"

"It is interesting," I said, "but I am forced to tell you I am learning nothing new—yet William J. Burns told us that years and y-e-a-r-s ago, in San Francisco. Come again."

"You are cynical to the point of impoliteness," the man said.

"Or to the point of impolity," I suggested.

"Quite so," he said. "Now listen and be quiet while I cure the agnosticism of your imperfect knowledge:

Mister Audrey  
We want \$25,000.00 and no monkey business. Put it in dark package and leave by post in front of old mill next Sat. night between twelve and one \$10 and \$20 bills no marks on them. Don't talk about this

If you do not follow our directions you will lose more. Your barn or house may be burned or we may kidnap your daughter. Remember the Coughlin baby. As we may dynamite your house with you in it. Do not fail or it will mean death or worse to you and your family

Joe

Anonymous	Standard	Anonymous	Standard
We	We	Put it	Put it
Ar	Ar	want	want
Sat	Sat	next	next
of	of	not	not
\$20	\$20	Your	Your
\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00		

Snaring the guilty writer by the deadly comparison. This is an example of how the identity of a writer is proved. In the columns marked "Anonymous" are words taken from the threatening anonymous letter. In the columns marked "Standard" are the same words taken from a suspected writer's genuine, unquestioned writing. A careful study of the similarities between the two sets of words shows how conclusive the identity of the actual writer may become when comparisons are made in this way. Every quality, characteristic and attribute of writing has some significance as indicating that the suspected person did or did not write the matter under investigation. The analysis is that of the "black-hand" letter shown on the left.

You will find me in the north end of the lake I would rather die than go on without happiness  
Esther

this

Small "h" out of alignment shown by test plate. The letter is too high and too far to the right.

"Many words," I said. "Let's to the veil."  
"By all means. You may or you may not know that habits of character imperceptibly formed through years cause persons to strike certain typewriter keys (as they are arranged in their banks and with respect to whether the person sits upright or slouches, or is of dominating or hesitating character)—cause, I say, persons to strike certain keys with undue stress, or from an angle and so forth. Now, do you know that by these mechanical characteristics as displayed in an anonymous typewritten letter it is frequently possible for one who has studied the subject to not only—having for comparison a 'genuine' copy of something written by the suspected person—determine upon what particular typewriter in what particular office or place the anonymous communication was written, but also to determine with a remarkable sureness whether the suspected person or some other person wrote the anonymous letter?"  
"You make my head ache," I said.  
"Your question is almost as imposing as the modern hypothesis in a well-financed murder trial."  
"I do wish you would be serious," the man said.  
"Serious?" I said. "Could I be otherwise when you talk that way?"  
He handed me some photographs of typewriter stuff, magnified, and here they are without any comment other than his own. What he had written was plenty, I thought. And I do respect an expert's opinion on something expert upon which he has expressed his knowledge expertly.  
Then, while I drew the photos to me on the desk so they should not escape in the excitement of conversation, and half closed my eyes to let my psychometry take full control of my mere outer senses, he told:  
"The dishonest schemer has found a

use for the typewriter in fraudulent operations, and when used in this way typewriting may become the cloak of respectability to conceal what would otherwise be an obvious and glaring piece of rascality. The typewriting machine is an assistant to the rascal and the criminal in defeating justice in both civil and criminal cases, and it is not an uncommon occurrence for a high-handed, impertinent fraud to be successful because the typewritten documents in the case are not suspected, and therefore not properly investigated."  
My psychometry was in fine control now, and I listened on:  
"There are many lawyers who do not know what definite and valuable information can sometimes be obtained from a page of typewriting when it is examined by a competent observer who has the necessary knowledge and adequate reference material to determine the facts. Modern photography and the use of instruments of precision for measuring minute deviation of size, slant and location of letters have made it possible in many cases to prepare such effective

tainly no young woman capable of the self-sacrifice of suicide, is content to be merely constant."  
"Surely," I said, "you are not trying, in the silent presence of Esther's note, to be clever?"  
"It would be a poor occasion," he said. "I am merely shooting at truth, and that is a hard target to hit."  
He said nothing more, for a moment; then pushed across the desk the lensed reproduction of a peculiarly fustian letter, addressed "Mister Audrey" and signed "Joe."  
"That," he remarked, "is a terror-producing letter designed to extort money by suggestions of danger and threats of violence. A person who receives such a letter cannot be wholly free from anxiety until the writer is known and the danger removed."  
"Fortunately it is possible to identify handwriting as having been written by a particular person when the genuine writing of the real author can be procured. Habits and peculiarities are formed in the writing of an individual without his or her effort or knowledge; and, of course, what he knows nothing about he cannot change. These characteristics are sufficiently constant to make a satisfactory basis for the identification of the writer, in most cases. Chamberlayne said: 'The man, as it were, writes himself into his handwriting; to the trained eye he stands revealed by it.' And the duke of Wellington said of a soldier: 'Habit is nature. Habit is ten times nature.'"  
"Is it a correct assumption," I asked, "that all writers and senders of anonymous letters are cowards?"  
"No," he said. "Some of them are crazy. Trained psychiatrists report that the writing of certain kinds of anonymous letters is often one of the incipient manifestations of insanity."  
"I am glad you told me that," I thought. "Somehow, I would rather think of Esther as insane than as a coward. It is like dropping a flower beside her grave."

### SOUTH CAROLINA RUNS ADULT SCHOOL TO FIGHT ILLITERACY

Need of Doing Something Quickly Discovered as Result of Tabulation Made During Drafting of Men for War Service—Tact and Patience Used to Get Entries.

BY M. P. CALVERT.  
WHAT is an adult school? It is a school for grown-ups who never had a chance while they were children. These schools were called into being by the sense of shame felt by loyal Carolinians when they were confronted by South Carolina's standing in the table of illiteracy. Next to the lowest state in the union! Something must be done about it, and it must be done quickly. The shame of it was driven home by the report of the surgeon-general in the world war, which showed 49.5 per cent of illiteracy among the soldiers that were mustered into service from that state, as against 16.6 per cent in New York, even with its large foreign element. The percentage in South Carolina was so high as to cause a doubt concerning the accuracy of the data. A check was made and the figures verified.  
It was in 1913 that the first school for adults was opened. Miss Julie Selden, who was teaching in a cotton mill school in Spartanburg, S. C., became obsessed with the idea of a school for grown-ups. With the co-operation of the mill authorities she opened a number of night schools in the mill villages. The teachers were paid \$1 per night, the expense being defrayed by the mill. It required tact and patience and infinite human sympathy to get the pupils into those first night schools. "I would love to know how to read and write, but I ain't never had no chance and am ashamed now," or "Oh, I'm too old; I can't learn nothing now." Such would be the answers when a teacher would approach one of these

### RICH GREEK ART TREASURES ARE DISCOVERED OFF AFRICAN COAST

Bulk of Cargo, Which Went Down 2000 Years Ago, Consists of Sixty Marble Columns and Many Objects in Bronze Also Are Found and May Be Salvaged.

IF the heavens above are navigated, why not the depths of the sea? He who sails the sky will never gain such treasure as awaits the man who scours the sea floors.  
One such adventurous Frenchman established the archaeological world of Paris with rich finds off the coast of Tunis. Two thousand years and more ago a Greek galley with a cargo of art treasures foundered in a gale off the African shore, near Mahdia, and Alfred Merlin, a scientist, entrusted by the French government with archaeological researches in Tunis, made the sea give up some of this sunken treasure.  
As told by Mr. Merlin to the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres, a group of sponge fishermen discovered, at a point on the Tunisian coast, between Soussa and Sfax, three miles northeast of the fishing port of Mahdia, the wreck of an ancient ship. It was lying at a depth of 19 fathoms, and judging from the objects subsequently removed from it by divers, was sunk during a voyage from Athens to Italy at the beginning of the Christian era.  
The bulk of the cargo, it is said, consisted of 60 marble columns, with the capitals and bases, most of which were of the Ionic type. Besides these were many objects in bronze which have withstood their long immersion, as the marbles have not.  
Among the objects, raised to the surface is a splendid torso of Dionysus, the work of the sculptor Boethus, whose signature it bears, who lived in the year 11 B. C., and who is known as the author of the famous statue of a child strangling a goose, mentioned and admired by Pliny the elder. It is life-size, and is composed of a head with beard and mustache on a quadrilateral pillar. This is one of the statues that used to be placed at the doors of Athenian houses, and were held in great reverence.  
Near this torso was found a fine statue of Eros, also in bronze, three feet in height; evidently a replica of an effigy by Praxiteles; and underneath it were two exquisite cornices in bronze with half-busts of Dionysus and Ariadne. Between the cornices was an erotic statuette, 15 inches in height, also in bronze.  
Further search by divers brought to light a statue with large wings, intended for use as a lamp; several busts and statues of Athena, the Greek Minerva, arranged for use as wall decorations. There are also fragments of furniture, beds, chairs, kettles, basins and cooking utensils. The marbles are very numerous, including candelabra, large vases with bacchanalian bas reliefs, beautifully carved, which are duplicates of the well known Borghese vase in the Louvre museum. Other vases with carved bacchantes in bas reliefs are duplicates of a vase now in the Campo Santo at Pisa. There are a great many fragments of marble statuary, unfortunately terribly injured by the action of the salt water, which has eaten deeply into the stone, giving it the appearance of old coral and sadly impairing its artistic value.  
The only marble objects in good preservation, after their submersion of nearly 2000 years, are those which were deeply buried in the mud. The bronze objects, on the contrary, have suffered but little. A great variety of bronze bas reliefs, with Greek inscriptions, have been brought up. The ship also carried fragments

### Just Like a Woman

Los Angeles Times.

Theodore Dreiser, the novelist, said at a tea in Greenwich Village: "Criticism is a lost art. The average critic understands the work he criticises about as well as—"  
"But here's a story: A woman was going through a picture exhibition with her husband. They came to a picture called 'Saved,' which represented a dripping Newfoundland dog standing over a dripping and unconscious child that he had just rescued from the river flowing in the background."  
"The woman was deeply interested in this picture. She said:  
"No wonder the poor child fainted after dragging that great big dog out of the water."