

AN OLD GAME REVIVED

P. H. Woodward

Table of Contents

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <u>AN OLD GAME REVIVED</u> | 1 |
| <u>P. H. Woodward</u> | 2 |

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On the 18th of September, 1875, a fellow was arrested in West Virginia who sent the victims whom he proposed to bleed letters whereof the following is a copy:—

"A lady who boarded with me died on last Saturday of apoplexy. She left a trunk containing the following property: One very fine ladies' gold watch and chain, one ladies' gold necklace, six ladies' finger rings, earrings, and a great deal of ladies' clothing. Among other things was a letter addressed to you. I suppose you to be a relative of the deceased, and want to send you the trunk. When Miss Thompson died she left a board bill unpaid amounting to \$20.50. You will please send this amount by return mail, and the trunk will be forwarded to you immediately."

Instead of remitting the money as modestly requested, the recipient of one of these choice douceurs, a lady residing in the interior of Pennsylvania, sent the letter to the mayor of the town where it was dated and postmarked, who in turn handed it over to special agent T. P. Shallcross; and he in the course of a day or two succeeded in capturing the miscreant.

This particular form of the confidence game is very old; yet in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and seventy-five a swindler by means of it succeeds not only in maintaining himself in dashing style, but also in sporting a flashy traveling companion of the female persuasion!

Where the letters are addressed to men, the articles reported to be found in the imaginary trunk are changed to correspond to masculine habits and wants. The operators receive many singular and some entertaining replies. The following, dated long ago from a small town at the South, may serve as a sample, the orthography of the original being preserved:—

"COL. SNOWDEN,

"Dear Sir,—Yours received, and you say John is dead. Poor fellow! I always expected it. Death runs in the family. Dyed suddenly of appleplexy—eat too many apples. Well, I always thought John would hurt himself eating apples. I s'pose you had him buried. You said nothing about funeral expenses. He had a trunk—gold watch in it. Well, well, what an unexpected legacy! but strange things happen sometimes. Never thought I should get a gold watch so. And he had the watch in his trunk, did he? Poor fellow! was always so particular 'bout his watch and fixings. Had two revolvers. What is them? I never heard John say anything about them. Well, you have been so kind as to write to me; just keep all the balance of the things, you can have them; but the gold watch, send that to me by express. Send immediately if not sooner."

"Very truly,

"GEO. STREAM.

"P. S. My mother in law says, if you come this way, call. She likes to know all such good, kind folks."

It is safe to conclude that "Col. Snowden" never accepted the invitation to call from the hospitable mother-in-law.