



# Notice of Dissolution

by John E. Rosser

**T**HIS is to notify all and sundry that Slim Jim and Cutaway Bill, experts in flimflaming, brace games and diverse con' schemes, have permanently dissolved partnership. What I'm saying is that I'm plumb smackdab done with Cutaway, and that I'm now looking for a new sidekick in the laudable enterprise of alienating the come-on from his exchequer.

Now, get me straight on this: I'm not sore with Cutaway, personally. With just one exception, no man could buck on any of Cutaway's habits. He never has held out on me, and the bulls haven't got pliers enough to twist a snitch out of Cutaway. And nobody could call him a fool. He's got a fine head for special and assorted graft. But you never can tell what his heart will make him do. And that's where we busted up.

Why, after we'd had a fine run of suckers and had padded our clothes with the long green until we were warm enough to side Doc Cook on his next jaunt after fiction material, I've seen Cutaway slip a kid a ten-spot for a yellow extra, and if a curbstome panhandler would whine half like he meant it, my philanthropic partner would strip off one of the yellow-backed boys and part with it with a yawn. And although that sort of doings is somewhat out of my line, I didn't make any howl on Cutaway so long as he confined his donations to what you might call the interest on our capital and didn't dig into the principal. My theory is, as I told Cutaway, you aren't supposed to have any heart when you get down to your working capital. And you know yourself that I'm right about it.

You see, Cutaway hasn't been a crook

so very lone—a half-dozen years or such a matter. I tied in with him four years ago, and I know that then he had to have a guide if he got off the main streets of New York. He had been a cashier of a bank down in Georgia, he told me, and he got a little flip-like with other people's coin. That's why they gave him a full and complete course in overall-making. The stir sure didn't make much of a hit with him, for when he got out he was pretty sore against 'most everybody and everything, with the exception that, as I've already told you, he'd have those wild spells of giving the dough away.

Cutaway wouldn't talk much about the prison part of it, but if you wanted to find out why he blew up in the bank, all you had to do was to ask him why he always wore a white carnation in his buttonhole. No matter what season it was, Cutaway could always find a flower for the lapel of his coat; and I guess he never has worn any kind of coat but a cutaway: that's where he got his monaker.

NOT long after he and I had drawn up articles of agreement preparatory to our mutual dash into high finance, I put it up to Cutaway about that flower.

"Look here. Cutaway," says I, "why in the name of smoke do you want to go around with that flower on you all the time? It's such a dead give-away that one of those ivory-domes from the Central Station could track you with that through a Coney crowd if a Rube ever squealed on us. It ain't safe. That la-de-da coat of yours is tip enough, without that posy. Next thing, I guess you'll be wanting to advertise our business in the papers."

Then I was sorry I had jacked him up like that, because the saddest look I ever saw settled in his eyes. He sort of cleared his throat before he spoke.

"Slim," says he, "I surely don't want to be the cause of your getting the nippers put on

you, but I hope you'll indulge me in this little habit of mine. I guess there's enough other guys wearing flowers in their clothes to make it fairly safe for me. Anyway, this is for the Girl's sake, or rather—er—er—her memory."

And with that he told me how a human skunk of an opera-singer had come down his way and stole the affections of the Girl that Cutaway was engaged to. I guess she must not have been fitted for the cold weather up East, because they hadn't been up there long before she contracted the T. B., and then that dirty devil deserted her. She wrote Cutaway about it after a while, telling him that she believed if she could get out to Colorado she might pull through alive.

Well, Cutaway had become reckless after she left, and he'd thrown his money to the winds. But when the Girl's letter came, he just took from the bank what he thought he needed, made a few cover-up entries, expecting to pay it back when he could, and caught the train for Boston; He gave the Girl his roll, and she started for Trinidad. While he was gone, a bank-examiner came round, and when he stepped off the train they put the cuffs on him. They gave him ten years, and while he was making overalls, word came to him that she had died.

"Slim," says he, with a kind of gulp, "she pressed a white carnation into my hand the night she promised to marry me."

SO, after that, I never said anything about the flower, and we got along harmonious until the break came that I was telling you about. Cutaway and me made a good pair. I had had a fine bit of schooling as a crook, and Cutaway was as fine an actor as you'd expect to see in a two-dollar show. Just give him the idea, and he'd put it over in great shape. I'm not much for looks, myself—skinny as a side-show freak, and no tailor on earth could make a suit of clothes look right on me. Cutaway would make Beau Brummel look like a hobo.

Not even a wise guy would ever think of us working together. And that's where we got the Rube.

But, as I said, that's all over now, and I'm looking for another partner. And I know the fellow I want to hook up with, too. That's 'Frisco Dick, the cleverest crook that ever came from the Slope, a man naturally endowed for grafting, and having had the unsurpassed advantage of a postgraduate course among the Juarez gang; and if there's a game those boys don't know, nobody has sprung it yet.

I've looked up Frisco Dick's record during the past few days, and he's the guy for me. He not only has a bunch of flossy little stunts of his own devising, but he can let the other fellow name the game and then beat him at his own lay. I know genius when I see it, and 'Frisco Dick's got it. He may be in New York right now, but whether he is or not, I'm going to stay on his trail until I find him. Me for him! But I want to make it perfectly clear why I've quit Cutaway.

We had tried all sorts of con' games, and we got results, too. But it was my idea that we ought to specialize on one trick and stick to it. Simplicity is the thing you are looking for in business methods. You want to work out something that a Rube's head can follow, or nearly follow. If you put too much paint on the fly, the trout wont strike. Given a neat, naughty little scheme that appeals to a Rube's greed, something with a get-rich-quick twist to it, especially if it's based on the ponies, and you'll get your game nine shots out of ten. That's my idea, and Cutaway agreed with me. And we were going good when the blow-up came.

IT was Sunday morning, the latter part of December, and I was strolling around on Sixth Avenue and the cross-streets along in the Thirties. Sunday morning's a mighty good time to work a trick on the wayfaring Rube:

whatever suspicions he may have any other time, he seems to leave off then.

Cutting across to Fifth Avenue, I saw a tall guy standing with his back to me, looking up at the buildings on the opposite side. Just the once-over was enough to tell me that he was new to the Big Burg. When I came alongside of him, I saw that his face was sort of tan-and-red, like you see on all folks from the plains country. He was wearing a broad-brimmed black hat, and his fob was a pair of gold cattle-horns.

You couldn't ask for better game than a cattleman from the Southwest, come to town to have his little fling, and always with a roll big enough to stop a busted hydrant with. They're out for something different, and they expect to pay for it.

"Beg pardon," says I, "but can you tell me the name of that building?" I pointed toward the Knickerbocker Trust Building.

"Nope," says he, with an easy drawl. "Looks like it might be the courthouse, though."

That was all I wanted. I always make it a point to be sure what I'm doing when I start anything.

"Ah," says I, "then you're a stranger in Little Old New York the same as me?"

"Yep," says he; "never had time to leave the ranch before. Had to come this time, though, business or no business."

The more I looked at that affidavit face of his, the better he looked to me. His clothes were wrinkly, like he had slept in them instead of taking a Pullman. I saw that he had on boots instead of shoes, and he was wearing a black string tie as an unusual concession to the requirements of city folks. I knew his kind; everywhere you poke them your finger hits a bulging wallet.

"Same way here," says I; "just run up to Philadelphia on a little business for the old man, and I thought I wouldn't go back without hitting a few spots in New York. Collected a

big overdue account down in Philly, so the old man can't kick if I'm a little reckless with spending money on the trip. Where you from?"

"Down in Texas," says he. If I'd had ten guesses, all of them would have been Texas.

"That so?" says I. "I'm from down that way, myself. I live in Parsons, Kansas. Old man runs a big store there. Don't think much of me, though. Gives me a little spending money,—I've got two thousand in the bank now,—but he thinks I'm too wild yet to be taken into the business. Maybe he's right; I guess I am a little gay. But believe me, whenever I'm dead I want 'em to bury me. Aint that right?"

"You bet," says he, and laughed.

"By the way," says I, "I've just started out on the Avenue to find Senator Clark's home. They say that is one bird of a place. I've read in the papers about it—cost four million, and got pictures and things in it from all over the world. Open to the public, too, they say. Don't have 'em like that down our way, do they? Thought I'd like to see it so I can tell 'em about it down in Parsons. Gee, their eyes'll bulge out on the stems! Join me?"

"Don't care if I do," he drawls, careless-like.

WE started up the Avenue, and after a while I asked a bull how far out the Clark place was. It was eleven o'clock, and the silk-hat swells were thick as flies around a bowl of sugar.

"These boys with the shiny lids wouldn't last long down our way, would they?" says I.

"I guess not," says he, and his face wrinkled up on one side.

"Thompson's my name," says I, "—just plain old John Henry Thompson. Call me John. That's the way I am—plain as an old shoe."

"Williams is mine," says he, "—

Richard Williams, to be exact."

"Well, Dick," says I, "you and I both have got plain handles. Good enough for us, though, eh?"

So I rattled on, and I could tell I was getting closer to him all the time, although he was the kind of fellow that don't talk much about his own affairs to everybody. He acted like he was worried about something, too. I told him how that morning I had pretty near made up my mind to knock the block off the waiter who had turned up his nose and swept onto the floor a dime tip I had left by my plate. I could tell that kind of talk made a hit with Williams.

By the time we reached the Plaza Hotel, Williams was liking me fine. I asked a messenger-kid what building the Plaza was, and Williams said he'd like to take a look inside.

Both of us said we'd had late breakfast, but I took Williams into one of the eating-rooms and asked him to have a sandwich with me, anyway. While we were eating I said:

"By the way, wait here a minute for me: I want to go find a paper from down our way; they ought to have it at this swell dump."

Then I got on the 'phone and talked to Cutaway. At the news-stand I got a copy of *The Kansas City Star*.

"Didn't have a copy of *The Parsons Herald*," says I, when I got back, "so I had to take this."

I paid for the lunch, and when we got up, Williams said he'd buy the cigars. The girl at the stand pulled some twenty-five-cent straights. Williams was going to pay for two when I said:

"None of that Gotrox stuff, girlie! We don't want to go beyond ten-centers."

WE walked out the door fronting on Central Park and continued our walk along the Avenue. We hadn't gone more than three or

four blocks when I squeezed Williams' arm and pointed toward a man standing on the curbing. He was wearing a cutaway coat, with a white carnation in his buttonhole.

"Do you see that guy?" says I in a whisper. "I know that bird; now see if I don't."

We drew up alongside of Cutaway, and I says:

"My friend, haven't I met you before?"

Cutaway gave me the icy up-and-down and back again.

"Not to the best of my knowledge and belief," says he.

"Oh yes, you have," says I. "Weren't you down in Parsons, Kansas, last summer a year ago. and didn't you win a hundred thousand dollars in a poolroom there on the Sunstar Sweepstakes in Juarez?"

"You evidently have me confused with some one else," says Cutaway. I'll bet he looked just like that when he used to turn down a fellow's request for a loan at the bank.

"Aw, come on." says I; "I was right there at the time you did it When you cleaned up, everybody said they'd never seen you before, and we couldn't find where you come from. The proprietor of the Elite Hotel offered to sell out and go with you. Now, ain't I right?"

"Since you've got the dope on me straight," says Cutaway, with a grin, "I guess I might as well own up the corn. But say, you fellows are not reporters, are you?"

"Forget it," says I. "My friend here, Dick, and I are just out for a good time. We live down Parsons way. Say, you haven't got anything good you could give us to-day, have you?"

Cutaway reached in his inside pocket and took out his wallet. He tried to hand a twenty-dollar bill to me and one to Williams.

"You got me wrong, friend," says I. "We're not trying to panhandle you, and we don't want your money. What I was asking is,

have you got any good tips on the races to-day? I don't know what your system is, but I'd back your guesses for a little one."

Cutaway looked at his watch some time before he spoke.

"Well," he says, "you two look like sociable fellows, so I'll tell you. Yes, I've got the dope on Juarez for to-day. The races are just about to begin there—their time is faster than New York time, you know. I was just starting round the corner to the Commission Club. Going to lay a couple of thousand on the first race—Sea Lion, at four to one. If you want in on that, all right."

CUTAWAY took a telegram out of his pocket He showed it to Williams and me, holding his thumb over his name. Up in the corner of the message was written, "Rush." It was all in cipher, but the names Sea Lion, Myrtle Maid, Autumn Breeze and Dipper were clear enough.

"Here," says I, "take this twenty and lay it on Sea Lion. I know it's a piker's bet, but racing is out of my line."

Cutaway took my money and placed it with a handful of bills of his own. Neither of us said anything to Williams about putting up any money. Cutaway walked across the street, diagonally, and disappeared around the corner of one of the big houses of Millionaire's Row.

"If we win," I told Williams, "I'll divide with you. I just want a little sport, that's all."

Pretty soon Cutaway was back.

"Did we win?" I asks, fairly jumping up and down with what Williams was to take for excitement.

"Not so fast," says Cutaway, laying his finger on his lips. "I just put up the money; the race is being run now. I didn't want to stay over there among all those sports until my face became common to them."

He looked at his watch, and says:

"I'll be going. It ought to be over

now.”

I noticed that Williams fidgeted a good deal where he and I were sitting on an iron bench up against the park wall. There are mighty few of them that can see easy money coming in without getting the fever.

When Cutaway came back he drew out his swollen wallet and coolly skinned off a hundred dollars.

“Here’s yours,” he says, “—eighty dollars winnings and your twenty back.” It made my hand quiver as I took it.

“Take half of this,” I says to Williams, holding out the money. He didn’t want to take it, but I stuck it in his pocket anyway. “Good cigar money while you’re here in New York, eh?”

Cutaway made as if he were going to leave us.

“Gee,” says I. “this is great! When is the next one to come off?”

“Right now, pretty quick,” says Cutaway. “I’ve got to be going, to get my money up. It’s Myrtle Maid—six to one. I’m going to put up three thousand on her.”

“Look here,” says I, “do you think she’ll win?”

“If I didn’t, I wouldn’t put up my money on her. I’m not a blamed fool. What’s more, I don’t *think* she’ll win; I *know* it.”

“Well, then.” says I. “I’m going to put up five hundred. That’s all I’ve got with me!”

“Hold on, my friend,” says Cutaway to me. “Now, if you want to bet on this race, you can help me. You see, I don’t want to go over there too much. Those rich guys will get my number. If you will go over and put up my money with yours, I’ll let you in on this.”

“You’re on!” says I. I took out my five hundred, and Cutaway laid a wad of greenbacks in my hand. Then he took a printed card out of his pocket. Up in the corner were the names of James R, Keene and August Belmont. Across the top, in big type, was THE MANHATTAN COMMISSION

CLUB.

“Here,” says he. “just go to the first door round that corner. Rap three times, and the porter will open up. Then you hold the card just so, with your thumb lying along the edge, and the doorman will take hold the same way on the other side of the card. “Then you just walk right upstairs. You’ll make it all right from there on.”

I made him show me all over again, and then I started.

“Wait a minute,” says Williams; “I’ll go you five hundred on that myself, if you’ll let me.”

They can’t keep out of it long. I took his money and walked across the street.

I KNEW what was happening while I was gone. Cutaway pulled a fake newspaper-clipping about that Parsons clean-up, and explained that he was in with a syndicate that bet on sure things. He told how the whole Juarez bunch are crooked, and how everybody is fixed, from jockey to judges, so that, having been given in advance the winners of the day, there was no way on earth for him to lose. And he said that the syndicate cleaned up by having agents like him to go about over the country and hit the fancy betting-joints, You couldn’t find a flaw in his spiel anywhere.

When I came back, Cutaway and Williams were talking. Says Cutaway to me:

“You got the money up all right, did you?”

“Now, wait a minute,” says I, “and I hope you don’t get sore with me. But the truth is, I didn’t find the right door at first, and I got there too late to get the bet down. They were cashing in just as I stepped up. Myrtle Maid won, all right.”

You would have thought Cutaway was going to bust wide open, he looked so mad. But then, I told you he was some actor.

“You idiot!” he roars at me. “I thought I could trust you, and now what have you

done? You've got me in bad with my syndicate! I have to bet on the horses they tell me, and turn in their part of my winnings. You've fixed me, all right! Give me my money and get away from here!"

"Say, friend," says I, "I couldn't help it, honest I couldn't. If you'll just give me another chance—"

"Another chance! You've spoiled this one, and you want to ball up another one, do you? Not on your life!"

All the time Cutaway and I were talking, Williams was just listening and walking back and forth. Finally he says:

"If there's to be another one, I wish you'd give my friend another chance. I know he feels as bad about it as either of us. I don't think he'd lummix up the next one."

Cutaway scowled and pulled his watch again. Then he says to me:

"All right, I'll try you on this last one. It's Dipper—the killing of the day, a ten-to-one shot. And mind you, you'd better get it right this time!"

Then Williams said he would put up a thousand—all he had on him but twenty-five dollars, he declared. Cutaway said he would put up ten thousand even. Then I chimed in.

"I've got a check on a Philadelphia bank for twenty-five hundred. Will they let me put up a check?" I says.

"Sure," says Cutaway, "only hurry up!"

So I placed the check against the park wall and endorsed it. While I was doing this, Cutaway instinctively stuck all of our money into his pocket, but Williams didn't seem to notice this, and to tell the truth, I didn't either, at the time.

NOW I'll have to explain a little about what Cutaway and I were working toward.

It was our custom when we had the sucker putting up his last bone, to work in the check stunt. You see, the horse wins, but when

I go back for our winnings, they tell me that because they've lately taken in so much in bad checks, without casting any doubt on the one I have up, they must wait for it to go through the banks before they can settle with me.

That's the story I'm to bring back to Cutaway and the Rube. Then Cutaway asks about the check, and I explain it's made out to the old man's company, and that I just signed it for him. Cutaway goes up in the air and says I've committed forgery and that we'll all be pinched, unless we can get together the money at once to cover the check, knowing that the Rube has put up his pile, just as have the rest of us. Then the Rube gets scared and beats it, and Cutaway and I divide.

WHEN I came back over, after I was supposed to have put up the money, I found Cutaway sitting on the bench, with tears in his eyes.

"Where's the Rube?" says I, quick enough.

"He's gone," says Cutaway. "Sit down."

"Gone? Gone where?"

"Back to Texas," says Cutaway. "Just be easy, and I'll tell you about it. You see, while you were gone, that fellow told me his story. A scoundrel from New York lured his girl away from her home in San Antonio, and he's scouring the continent for her. He knows that the mean devil only pretended to marry her, and he guesses she's somewhere here.

"He says that he's going to find her if it takes his lifetime to do it, and then he's going to find the scoundrel who ruined her and kill him. He said he never has bet on a horse-race before, and that he wouldn't have done it now, only he needed more money to go after that pair with. And when he said that, I turned over to him every cent I had on me and told him how we had been framing up on him. He certainly was grateful."

You could have knocked me down

with a straw.

“You gave him back his money?”

“Not only so,” says Cutaway, quietly, “but I’ve just told you that I gave him yours and mine, too. I tell you he needed it, and we can get some more some day.”

DURING the next week I didn’t want to see Cutaway—I was afraid I would do him violence. Around at Murphy’s place—Murphy knows every crook in the country—I asked certain questions and received some real enlightenment. That’s when I decided to leave Cutaway.

I found him one night drinking highballs upstairs in Mooney’s. He was sitting off by himself in a corner.

“Cutaway,” says I, “what was the name of that guy you gave up the dough to?”

“Why, Williams, wasn’t it? That’s the name he gave, I believe. Why?”

“And another thing,” says I: “didn’t he ask you about that flower in your buttonhole?”

“Why, yes, I believe he did.”

“And you told him why you wear it, and then he told you about the girl from San Antonio—that’s the way it happened, wasn’t it?”

“Yes, I believe I did tell about the carnation and then Williams—”

“Williams! Williams!” says I. “I want to tell you that the full name of the guy that got our pile is ’Frisco Dick!”