
Guide to the Don De Fremery Collection

Collection number: MS 3856

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Scope and Content

Don De Fremery explains in an introduction to this manuscript, which is typewritten on 16 legal sheets and bound at the top like a legal brief, that the items described below were found in Oakland, CA among the papers of attorney Colin Campbell. (According to De Fremery, Colin Campbell was the lawyer son of Judge Alexander Campbell. Colin's legal specialty was mining law. At the same time, he owned and operated gold mines himself, albeit unprofitable ones.)

Among Colin Campbell's papers were the following -- undated, transcribed by De Fremery and arranged in what he has judged to be the original order. They deal with the blackmail of a San Francisco medium by the proprietors of the *Enterprise*, a weekly newspaper published in San Francisco. Most of the names contained in this manuscript have been reduced to initials. The manuscript is dated June 4, 1958. The items are described as follows:

- Item 1 (written in longhand). Mrs. A. D. H. asks Mr. Campbell to call at her house immediately as she is in trouble.
- Item 2 (typewritten). Mrs. H. is being questioned. She says she met the defendant last summer when he came to her house to complain about being persecuted by other mediums. She gave him money for food and clothes. Then on November 1 about 10 a.m., he came to tell her that negative things about her were going to be published in a newspaper. When questioned about this, he said he had been warned by Mrs. De G. that Dr. H., Dr. and Mrs. S., Dr. E. and Mrs. A. had paid an unspecified amount of money to have Mrs. H.'s business ruined.

At 3 p.m., Mrs. H. admitted the defendant, Mr. Harry W., and Mrs. De G. Earlier she had contacted her attorney, Mr. Nygh who recommended she retain the services of Mr. Hanks, a detective. Mr. Hanks secreted himself in Mrs. H.'s house. When questioned, Mrs. De G. repeated the news that a sum had been deposited with the *Enterprise* on Merchant Street (published by K., G., and F. with Mrs. De G. as a silent partner) for the purpose of ruining Mrs. H.'s business. As a friend of Mr. W.'s, Mrs. De G. had heard of Mrs. H.'s kindnesses to him, and therefore felt Mrs. H. should be warned of the impending trouble.

Mrs. H. asked what she could do to rectify this situation. Mrs. De G. replied that she could buy them off. She suggested that Mrs. H. come to her house at 6 p.m., when Mr. K. would be there, and they could make arrangements. Mrs. H. refused to do this.

Mrs. De G. said they intended to blackmail Mrs. W. C. next and expected she would pay them about \$20,000. Mrs. De G. and Mr. W. left laughing, and were heard to say as they descended the stairs, "Isn't she soft?"

Earlier in the day, before Mr. Hanks arrived, Mr. Harry W. had admitted to Mrs. H. that he was a little "gone" on Mrs. De G. and therefore couldn't get angry with her. Harry W. returned at 6 p.m. to get Mrs. H.'s answer. She told him she would pay nothing and told him to leave. He left laughing.

On November 2, R. F., one of the *Enterprise* owners, came to say the blackmail fee had been reduced from \$1,000 to \$750. Mrs. H. feigned illness, said she had not been able to go to the bank yet, and asked him to return at 3 p.m. She then went to the bank, stayed 15 minutes, and emerged with a satchel, hoping she had been observed.

Mr. Hanks, Mr. G. and Mr. C. arrived, and Mrs. H. secreted them in room 5, where they could hear conversations in the back parlor. Mr. F. returned, requested the \$750 again and promised never to blackmail her again if she paid the sum. Mrs. H. asked for a written guarantee. She asked Elmes to light the gas and bring paper. Mr. F. wrote out the guarantee and signed it. Then Mrs. H. asked him to write one for her to sign. As he worked on this, she bolted into room 5 and handed Mr. F.'s signed guarantee to Detective Hanks -- as Mr. F. reached for a weapon, then dashed into the hall, out the door and down the street.

- Item 3 (typewritten). Mr. J. G. Hanks is questioned about the events of November 1, 1888 described above. Mr. Hanks arrived in Mrs. H.'s house about 1 p.m. The first interview took place about 4 p.m. on that day. He says that Mrs. De G. claimed to have learned of the blackmail while she was dining with Mr. R. F., a proprietor of the *Enterprise*, the previous evening. Another gentleman entered the restaurant and handed a paper to Mr. R. F.; Mrs. De G. looked over his shoulder and read the paper.

According to Mrs. De G., the paper said that Mrs. H. was a fraud, that she had lured a young girl in and taken all her money, that she had sold the girl a charm for \$100, that she had influenced the girl to sell some jewelry to pay her debt and that she had forced the girl to enter a "bad-house" to earn more money. Mrs. H. said all this was lies. She claimed never to have charged more than \$5 for a charm.

Mrs. De G. then suggested Mrs. H. go to the *Enterprise* office on Merchant Street, across from Old City Hall, Room 10, to negotiate the blackmail payment. Mrs. De G. identified the proprietors of the newspaper as Mr. R. F., Mr. J. C. G. and Mr. W. W. K.

The second interview took place about 7 p.m. on the same day. Mr. Hanks was in Mrs. H.'s house along with Robert Elmes. At that time, Harry W. came to call, saying he had seen the *Enterprise* article and it was devastating. Mrs. H. implored him to help her.

A third interview on November 2, 1888 about 3 p.m. at 995 Market Street between Mr. R. F. and Mrs. A. D. H. Mr. Hanks and John A. Green were secreted in a closet listening to the conversation. It ended as described above, with Mr. R. F. running out of Mrs. H.'s house.

- Item 4 (typewritten). Robert Hogan says in his statement that on November 2, 1888 he asked Police Officers Conboy and John Parrott to go to the *Enterprise* office, buy a copy of the newspaper, and notice who was present in the office. They reported three people in the office: a dark-complexioned woman (Nellie B. De G.), a tall young man (S. D. A. B.) and a Jewish-looking young man (J. Charles G.). Hogan then arrested J. Charles G. on Green Street on a Grand Jury indictment. Mr. K. was arrested by Police Officer Johnson also on a Grand Jury indictment. Hogan later went with Police Officers Parrott and Johnson and Mr. Hanks to 1528 California Street where he asked Mrs. D. if her brother Mr. B. and her sister, Nellie B. De G., were in the house. She denied that they were. However, the searchers found Nellie B. De G. and S. A. D. B. (alias Richard F.) in the house and arrested them.

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- Item 5 (typewritten). Police Officer Johnson describes how he, Officer Parrott and Detective Hogan surrounded the house at 1528 California Street and arrested Richard F. (alias S. A. D. B.), the brother of Mrs. De G. Adolpho C. was arrested on the corner of O'Farrell and Jones Streets. Harry W. was arrested on Turk Street between Taylor and Jones Streets. G. was arrested at Hayes Street and Van Ness Avenue. K. was arrested at Green and Clay Streets.
William D. Wiswall says he was employed by Haggin & Dibble, attorneys, to secure evidence against the *Enterprise* people. On November 6, 1888, he found Mrs. De G. in charge of the newspaper office. He was told that the paper made money by blackmailing people. On November 10, 1888 Wiswall saw Mr. G. in charge of the *Enterprise* office.
 - Item 6 (typewritten). John A. Green makes a statement about his knowledge of the events of November 2, 1888 about 3 p.m., when Mr. Richard F. came to extort money from Mrs. H. at her house at 995 Market Street.
 - Item 7 (typewritten). Robert Elmes makes a statement about his knowledge of the events of November 1, 1888, when Mr. W. came to tell Mrs. H. that she should buy off the blackmailers. Elmes called on Mr. W. about 7:10 p.m. and was told he should join the blackmailers and make a few dollars, something Elmes' counsel had advised him to do. Elmes and Mr. W. then walked to Mrs. De G.'s house at 1528 California Street. Elmes was introduced as someone who worked for Mrs. H. and would help De G. and W. to get the money from his employer. Elmes was asked how much Mrs. H. would pay; he said he really didn't know, but thought perhaps \$100 or \$200. Mrs. De G. and Mr. W. thought the amount would probably be \$1,000. Elmes said he knew Mrs. H. wouldn't pay that amount.
Mr. W. seemed pleased by the news Elmes delivered that Mrs. H. most likely would prosecute Mr. W. and Mrs. De G. -- because, he said, it would bring attention to the *Enterprise* (albeit it negative attention). The blackmail price was lowered to \$750, with \$100 each promised to Mr. W. and to Elmes.
Elmes consulted with Mrs. H. that night, even though it was 11 p.m. when he returned to her house. Next morning, Elmes went to Mr. W.'s place of business to tell him he thought Mrs. H. would pay the blackmail. Mr. W. said he knew she would. He went out and bought a new suit of clothes and a box at the theatre in anticipation of his pay-off. Elmes and Mr. W. then went to the *Enterprise* offices together about 11 a.m.; the paper was due to be published at noon. There Mr. K., Mr. G. and Mr. F., the three proprietors, said Mr. F. had been selected to go to Mrs. H. to collect the \$750. Elmes was promised \$100 as soon as she paid.
Elmes accompanied Mr. F. to Mrs. H.'s house and place of business. She said she would not have the money until after 3 p.m. Mr. F. returned at that time. (Elmes' account follows those of others given above. When Mr. F. reached into his pocket for a gun, Elmes grabbed a hammer with which to defend himself should it become necessary. The episode ended in Mr. F.'s running out the door and down the street.)
 - Item 8 (longhand). This item is replicated in longhand as follows: "San Francisco Nov 2 1888. Thereby agree as guarantee of good faith, that hereafter no article of any kind detrimental to Mrs. A. H. will be published in the *Enterprise*. Richard F."
On the reverse side appeared "Exhibit a" then "Pros Ex A" and the initials "F. E. D." and "Peoples Ex 'E'" and the initials "J. M. D." and "D. C. C."
 - Item 9 (longhand). A letter addressed to Harry from Nellie thanks him for remembering her but admits this was the saddest New Year of her life. She wishes she could see him before he goes to court which Douglas tells her is the following day. She admonishes him to remember his first statement and to think before speaking. She wishes she could get even with K., but doesn't know how. She requests an immediate answer from Harry.
 - Item 10 (longhand). A second letter to Harry from Nellie says she just received his note rather late and is "about crazy". She wants to know whether he has had an answer from K, who has left Nellie and her brother "out in the cold". She says the old belief about honor among thieves does not pertain to K. She asks what Harry is doing.
 - Note: The following identifications of people and organizations mentioned in the blackmail events outlined above are taken from Langley's San Francisco Directory, 1989:
 - Colin Campbell is listed as being associated with Campbell & Sanderson with a residence in Oakland. Michael J. Conboy is listed as a policeman living at 407 Vallejo Street.
 - Robert Elmes is listed as a clerk residing at 995 Market Street.
 - John A. Green is listed as being employed by the Oregon Immigration Bureau and residing at 139 Fourth Street.
 - Haggin & Dibble are listed as attorneys at law (Louis T. Haggin and Henry C. Dibble) with offices at 45 Nevada Block.
 - Robert Hogan is listed as a detective living at 520 Kearny Street.
 - William A. Nygh is listed as an attorney with offices at 420 California Street, Room 29 and a residence at 418 Steiner Street.
 - William T. (sic) Wiswall is listed as residing at 100 Fifth Street.
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