

# True Tales of the SECRETIVE By an... No. 1 THE HOUSEBOAT OWL

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A modest little brick cottage on a quiet side street of one of the larger cities lives an elderly gentleman whom I met through my newspaper work. Our acquaintance soon ripened into a close friendship, and I have spent many pleasant evenings with him in his cozy library smoking and talking. The old gentleman, whom I will call Captain Dickson, his real name being too well known, had spent his life in the service of his country—the service which upholds the integrity of our money and postage stamps and bonds and securities and safeguards our public officials. Worn gray in the service, he had retired, seeking out the quiet corner in which to spend his declining years; he had surrounded himself by his books and the curious collection of souvenirs he had gathered in his long service of detective work for railroad and express companies and for the National Government. In the first months of our acquaintance Captain Dickson studiously avoided talking of his adventures, but as our friendship ripened he would lay aside his reserve, and, over a pipe and a glass of rare old sherry, he would spin yarns of the things he had experienced in his long and interesting career. As nearly as possible I have followed his exact language in recounting these adventures, neither commenting thereon, expurgating, nor adding them.

"I was never a sentimental man," ventured Captain Dickson one evening, settling back in his chair and displaying his Kentucky ancestry by holding his feet upon the table, a characteristic attitude with him when in full repose, but on one occasion I fear I let some full measure of my duty. It is not a long story, and I will relate it, so you may judge for yourself if my action was not for the best. That belief is held by my conscience when it jerks me for this dereliction.

"A few years ago, as you will remember, there was quite a scandal over the discovery of a gigantic swindle worked on the Federal Government through bogus cigar stamps. The trick was turned by a large cigar factory in a certain Eastern city. I worked on this case from start to finish, and it was a pretty feather in the cap of the secret service department. The printing plant of the counterfeiters was captured, together with all of the operatives, and a large quantity of the stamps for boxes of 50 and 100 cigars. The president of the factory, a highly respected banker, was involved and sent up for a term of years along with the other criminals.

"Only one person escaped who was known to have been connected with the scheme. This was the engraver of the plates from which the stamps were printed. The engraving was excellently executed and denoted skill and what the artists call 'feeling.' There is an individuality about the work of every artist, just as there is a distinctive quality to every person's handwriting. Perhaps you have noticed this in the pictures in the papers and in some sections of the dailies. One familiar with these drawings can name the artist every time without seeing the signature. This rule holds good quite so much in engraving as in any of the other drafting arts.

"In the files of my library are samples of the work of every engraver ever employed in the secret service. Engraving and printing, as well as of every employe of the large printing

companies which make postage stamps and bank notes for foreign governments. These samples are labeled and filed away with data regarding the engraver and a photograph. If that is obtainable, the Government has to keep a constant watch upon these men, for from their ranks come the most dangerous and troublesome counterfeiters with whom we have to contend.

"The bogus cigar stamps were enlarged by photography and compared with the work of every engraver in the files. It was evident to the experienced eye that none of these had turned the trick.

"Among the captured plates was one which had never been used. It was for a stamp of small denomination. It was found in the safe where the other plates were kept, still oiled and included in the wrapper that had doubtless been put on it by the engraver when he finished the job. Plainly marked on the wrapper, with the vaseline that coated the plate, were the prints of four fingers and a thumb. These were long, shapely fingers—undoubtedly those of an artist. Here was undoubted proof of the identity of the engraver or of the person who had tied up the die after its completion.

"One of the members of the gang had said that this plate had never been interrupted, and I decided to investigate in the safe just as it came from the engraver. The prints of the fingers, however, gave the slightest clue to the identity of that individual. In fact, it seemed that the person who had tied up the die knew who had made the plates, and while he made a complete confession on all other points, he was as mute as a oyster on this subject.

"Some years had passed since the stamp case was closed, when I accepted an invitation to visit a college mate in one of the cities which lie on the Mississippi River. I was determined to have a complete rest and did not even let the department know my whereabouts. I did not want to be disturbed with professional matters during this vacation. It was a delightful place to visit, a rare old southern household where every member of the family made a point of being on their best behavior and honored by his presence, and I soon forgot my work, the department, and everything connected with it. In the real pleasure of my vacation.

"One afternoon I strolled down to the river front to watch the negro rowers unload the rampart of cotton bales from a big river steamer. A pretty houseboat was tied up near by and while I smoked contentedly, seated on a recumbent bale of cotton, a carriage drove down the steep, rock-faced surface of the levee and stopped at the gang-plank, scarcely 20 feet from my position.

"A man and woman alighted from the carriage. It was evident they were sister. Although her companion, as a rule, were young, intelligent and every inch of him a gentleman; but I took small notice of her, being more interested in the marvelous beauty of the woman. She was slender, graceful and beautiful. Every movement was bewitching. They were lovers, but not the kind that arouse amusement, and, too often, disgust in the minds of the spectator. They were interesting and appealed to every spark of sentiment in my nature. They were the kind of lovers the poet had in mind when he said 'all the world loves a lover.' I watched them in rapt fascination, a feeling of tenderness pervading my mind as I compared the blissful companionship with my own lonely outcast life.

"The boat bore the simple name Owl, and I saw the letters on its bow. I studied it with renewed interest after the charming couple had gone aboard. It was the pleasure craft of a wealthy Chicago manufacturer, a man whose name was known in financial circles throughout the country. For that reason I will call him Mr. Cameron. He and his bride were spending their honeymoon on the boat, making a cruise down the Mississippi and around the coast to his winter home on the gulf. They had stopped over at this point to visit with friends.

"That very night I met the couple at a reception given by my chum's sister. Although the wife, as a rule, are a weariness of the flesh to me, I frankly enjoyed this one. I was honest enough to admit to myself the reason for my interest in the couple was that she was a talented woman and as engaging in her conversation as in her appearance, which is saying a good deal for her conversation. She and her husband invited me to visit them on the houseboat, an invitation which I accepted the very next afternoon, for they had quite captivated me.

"They had been married only two months, and there was that ingenious manner about them so charming in the newly married if not overdone. The boat was a floating palace in miniature, and yet there was the home atmosphere about it. I have always been an admirer of the artistic, and the interior of the cabin was in perfect taste. The walls were hung with



ON THE PAPER WERE THE PRINTS OF FOUR FINGERS AND A THUMB

rare paintings and original drawings of the best artists. Mrs. Cameron learned, was an artist herself, and she pointed out to me several of her pictures, all of which denoted a high degree of skill.

"Our friendship progressed with amazing swiftness and before many days I was on a footing of charming intimacy with the owners of the houseboat. Never did I enjoy a friendship more, and I spent many pleasant hours with Mr. and Mrs. Cameron. One afternoon Mrs. Cameron was making a candy when I was invited to the kitchen, which opened through a butler's pantry, into the rear cabin, where Cameron and I

were playing seven-up on the dining-room table. Piring of the game, Cameron brought out a decanter of wine, and, as we sipped at our glasses and blew smoke wreaths toward the ceiling, he began to speak of his wife's work as an artist.

"He told me she had made quite a success of it before their marriage. She had not followed it alone for some time, but imbued with that spirit of independence which is becoming so general among our American women, she wished to demonstrate that with her own hands, she could make a living independent of the resources she possessed. She had branched out in commercial work, he said, and had made quite a snug sum in this way.

"He left me for a moment and returned with a portfolio of drawings which he spread upon the table and showed me the apparent pride. The first picture in the collection was a copy of the White House portrait of President Washington, done in pen and ink. As I looked at the network of lines something about it seemed familiar, seemed to suggest a picture I had seen somewhere, and I scrutinized it closely, and I was struck by an unconscious drawing in my mind. There were a number of pen sketches of heads and figures and landscapes, a few pastels and water colors, and I decided to look at the portfolio. I came upon some samples of commercial work—letter heads, cards, pamphlet covers, and the like, and to my use I remembered a coupon for a breakfast food company, in one corner of which was a bust of the Goddess of Liberty which immediately suggested the head of Henry Clay on the counterfeit clear stamps used by the factory in the Eastern city.

"Every instinct of my professional training was aroused. My hand shook so perceptibly I had to rest it upon the table to avoid attracting Cameron's attention. A strong suspicion flashed over me which made me thoroughly investigate, and I cursed my insistent professional instinct and the base suspicions it was always arousing. I was disgusted with myself for letting the news of the counterfeit stamps case surge through my mind. Forgetting Cameron and my surroundings, I recalled every dot and line and every mark of the significant engraving of the false tax-paid stamp.

"I was brought back to earth with a start.

"It would seem to me that piece of work," interposed Cameron, "I think it one of the best engravings I have ever seen. It was the last commercial assignment my wife accepted before she gave up her career as an artist. I was not at all jealous of it, for she labored over it with an ardor that entirely shut me out of her world, although I had been a daily visitor. She had finished her fudge-making and wanted her husband and me to pass judgment upon it. We went out on the deck, and I saw Mrs. Cameron's face as she looked at the candy were cooling. I forgot my misgivings in the pretty pride which Mrs. Cameron exhibited over her handiwork.

She was more charming than ever in the simple house gown she wore, her face pink with the bending over the stove. I thought I had never seen so beautiful a woman. If she had not been married I am sure I would have fallen in love with her. I admitted her extravagantly, but I did not love her, for I have never loved a man who could love another's wife.

"This was to be our last evening together. On the morning I was to return to Washington, Mrs. Cameron was to resume her journey down the Mississippi. My vacation was at an end.

"Cameron stepped into the cabin to get a fresh cigar, and I followed him into the kitchen about the same time, leaving me alone on the deck by the table with the candy. Underneath the plates, to my great surprise, I saw the prints of four fingers and a thumb, made with the butter with which the plates had been greased before the candy was poured into them. The prints were long and shapely fingers, undoubtedly those of an artist.

"The training of years asserted itself. I tore away the corners of the paper with the finger prints upon it and slipped it into my pocket. I could no more help doing this than water can help help engraving. The prints seemed to duplicate of those I so well remembered upon the wrapper of the unused plate we had captured in the cigar stamp case. The prints were stronger than will sometimes, and this was such a case.

"I left the boat as soon as I could conveniently do so, and I decided to go strong upon me to destroy the paper which nestled guiltily and accusingly in my side pocket. But I could not. My professional instinct, which I secured the wrapper with the finger prints and compared them with the grease marks on the bit of newspaper. A glance at the prints was sufficient. The same hand had made both. I was staggered, sick at heart, and disgusted with the world and life and people, more especially with myself.

"My first impulse was to make a clean breast of it all to the chief, but, on second thought, I decided to investigate on my own account. I secured a leave of absence and went to the city where the cigar stamp fraud had been perpetrated. Here I learned much that disconcerted me. Mrs. Cameron, whose maiden name I had not heard, had lived there and had been the studio of the banker's trust company had been her guardian, the executor of her father's will. She had lived in a stately old mansion, near the home of the bank president, with a maiden aunt. The aunt had died while the niece was abroad, and I found that the time of the departure of the niece had been coincident with the time of the arrest of the counterfeiters.

"There was no doubt that Mrs. Cameron had executed the plates from which the bogus cigar stamps had been printed. Whether she had known the criminality of her act I have never learned. I have always hoped that she did not help asking when his wife had abandoned her artistic work. He said it had been three years since. I returned the engraving to the portfolio and Cameron restored it to the cabinet where I could not see it. I could not see my equilibrium. The incident had upset me completely and I could not shake off the suspicion which came to me upon the engraving. I felt like a criminal, heartily ashamed of my doubts, but I could not get rid of them.

"Mrs. Cameron came into the room at last, and I saw that she had finished her fudge-making and wanted her husband and me to pass judgment upon it. We went out on the deck, and I saw Mrs. Cameron's face as she looked at the candy were cooling. I forgot my misgivings in the pretty pride which Mrs. Cameron exhibited over her handiwork.

ful, and the paper died an early death. Among other American papers of the great kind, the following were titles afforded a sufficient hint as to their purpose, there may be mentioned the following: "The Divorce-Seekers' News"; "How to Get a Government Office"; "How Mother Used to Cook It"; "Help for Those in Hard Luck"; and "The Lover's Friend."

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## SOME FREAKS AMONG PUBLICATIONS

Curious Periodicals of Which the General Public Never Hears.

IN THESE progressive days every profession, trade, calling, avocation, interest, fact, cult—what not—has its organ, more or less reputable and authoritative, but nearly always interesting to the curious. It would appear that the publication of "freak" periodicals, magazines and journals finds a profitable field throughout the world, inasmuch as a goodly number of them have their birth in foreign countries, though the United States furnishes its due quota.

The first of the old sheets devoted to the "interests" of engaged couples appeared a few years ago in Paris, and while at first thought it might be supposed that its field would be quite limited, it nevertheless prospered. Agents in the service of this publication are employed at various points in France collecting items of interest to folks who have contracted to marry. In each issue there are set forth in the paper the names, addresses and other information concerning engaged couples. Each maiden mentioned receives a free subscription for a limited period. The real beneficiaries of this publication are the tradesmen taking the paper, inasmuch as they are able to approach the girl intending to marry with more or less alluring inducements in the way of materials or trousseaus, etc.

There are one or two periodicals of this nature published in this country, the principal one being put out from a town in the Middle West, and their policy differs little from that of the French paper.

**A Journal for Bachelors.**

Again the papers for the engaged there may be cited, as an offset, a journal for bachelors printed in the United States. This periodical was the idea of members of a bachelors' club in an Eastern city, and its columns are given over to articles from the pens of gentlemen fond of argument in support of the blessedness of "The Single Life," which is, in fact, the name of the paper. A standing caption in this paper is a quotation from Rudyard Kipling, who, as a bachelor, declared that "he travels fastest who travels alone."

The original sheet devoted exclusively to the "interests" of bachelors was born in Paris. This paper, entitled "Le Bon Guide," affords daily a complete list of the baptisms, weddings and funerals to take place in Paris on that day in order that its patrons may be well posted as to favorable localities wherein to pursue the day's "work."

For begging letter-writers "Le Bon

Guide" publishes a list of the addresses, arrivals and departures of travelers known to be of charitable dispositions. The "beggar's London," they have their organ, but it is not of so "high class" a nature as the Parisian publication. The English "Beggars' Journal" is a weekly paper devoted exclusively to the exclusive character of its information. It is unique in that it is written, not printed, by a mimeograph, the paper employed being the common variety commonly used by butchers and grocers in which to wrap their wares. The subscribers who should deal at the inspiration of 40 years, Le Bon Guide offered a free trial.

**To Read in the Waves.**

"Le Courier des Baigneurs (Bathers' Courier)" is the product of a well-known French seaside resort. It is printed on waterproof paper, the inducement to buy being predicted evidently on the idea that the bathers may take his journal exclusively to the beach and so enjoy its perusal while bathing.

On the other side of the Pyrenees the Madrilenos have their "Luminaria," which is claimed, is printed in ink containing an amount of phosphorus which enables the reader to peruse it in the dark.

There are any number of medical journals in the world, but perhaps the most curious is one published in a German city. This publication pretends as its title German equivalent for "rheumatism," and it is claimed that only specially qualified experts are permitted to contribute to its columns.

**Devoted to Mouse Breeding.**

The National Mouse Club, of London, puts out what is stated to be the only organ in the world devoted to mouse breeding. In this sheet it is to be found a mass of curious information concerning our friend the mouse; and no effort is spared to afford the readers with up-to-date news touching the sales of valuable mice, with prices, etc., together with accounts of the latest mice

shows everywhere. It is not to be supposed that "The National Mouse Journal" will ever affiliate with "The Cat Journal" and "The Dog Journal," as it is London is also the home of "The Money-Lenders' Gazette," the title of which sufficiently indicates its raison d'être. Similar publications are to be had in Vienna, Paris and Rotterdam.

Publications obviously not of a particularly cheerful nature are "The Undertakers' Journal" and "The Hangman's Record," both published in the British capital. It is difficult to assign a reason for the latter, which is of respectable age, there must, of course, be a demand for the grim sort of news it dispenses.

**Written by Lunatic.**

"The New Moon," most appropriately named, is a paper published in the United States by a certain institution for the insane. If any one supposes that its columns are devoid of interest for a sane individual, then he is much mistaken, for contributions from the pens of inmates of the asylum frequently evince literary ability of no mean order.

In the matter of mere utility, the palm must be awarded a newspaper published in a fishing town of Norway. This journal points with pride to the fact that it is printed upon paper of so tough a quality that, when read, it may be cut into strips and twisted into a most serviceable rope, which is of small inducement when the calling of the villagers is taken into consideration.

An odd periodical in this country is "The Waters' Friend," which presents the unique appearance of being printed in five languages—English, French, German, Italian and Swedish—arranged in alternate columns.

**Printed on Wallpaper.**

Another product of American ingenuity in the way of freak papers is one published in a Southern city in the interest of paper-hangers. This odd organ is of excellent typographical appearance, but the paper whereon it is printed is no other than wall paper, or rather the cuttings remaining of wall paper used for the usual purpose. Trade pride, presumably, is to be assigned as the reason for this strange notion.

One enterprising owner in an Ohio town conceived the laudable desire to provide persons with weak eyes with a journal that would incur no injury or fatigue to them. This was to be done by means of green paper and white ink. The scheme was, however, unsuccessful,

## WHISTLING PIGEONS

ONE of the most curious expressions of emotional life is the application of whistles to a flock of pigeons. These whistles, very light, weighing but a few grains, are attached to the tails of young pigeons soon after their birth by means of fine copper wire, so that when the birds fly the wind blowing through the whistles sets them vibrating and thus produces an open-air concert, for the instruments in one and the same flock are tuned differently. On a serene day in Pennsylvania, where these instruments are manufactured with great cleverness and ingenuity, it is possible to enjoy this aerial music while sitting in one's room, says the Scientific American.

There are two distinct types of whistles—those consisting of bamboo tubes placed side by side, and a type based on the principle of tubes attached to a gourd body or wind-chest. They are lacquered in yellow, brown, red and black, to protect the material from the destructive influences of the atmosphere. The tube whistles have either two, three or five tubes.

The gourd-whistles are furnished with a mouthpiece and small apertures to a number of whistles, three, six, ten and even 32. Certain among them have, besides, a number of bamboo tubes, some on the principal mouthpieces, some arranged around it. These varieties are distinguished by different names. Thus, a whistle with one mouthpiece and ten tubes is called "the 11-level ones."

The explanation of the practice of this quaint custom which the Chinese offer is not very satisfactory. According to them, these whistles are intended to keep the flock together and to protect the pigeons from attacks of birds of prey. There seems, however, little reason to believe that a hungry hawk could be induced by this innocent music to keep aloof from satisfying his appetite; and this doubtless savors of an afterthought which came up long after the introduction of this usage, through the attempt to give a rational and practical interpretation of something that has no rational origin whatever, for it is not the pigeon that profits from this practice, but merely the human ear, which finds in the wind-blown whistles a derives esthetic pleasure from this music.

## PHYSIOLOGY IN THE SCHOOL COURSE

Prominent Educator, Who Says the Importance of the Subject Cannot Be Overestimated.

By I. N. Hyde, Professor of Physiology University of Kansas.

A TEACHER residing in the southern part of Kansas, whose duty it is to teach all the sciences besides many other subjects, was very much perplexed by the receipt of a letter from the mother of two of her pupils, which was worded as follows: "I don't want you to waste any more time on teaching my children all about their insides. You were hired to learn them to read and write and not to tell them stuff and nonsense about their insides. I don't want them ever to know about themselves."

Not only are some anxious mothers ignorant of what physiology and hygiene really are, and unaware of their importance as a part of the instruction in all grades of school work, but many college graduates are wholly incapable of appreciating the educational value of far-reaching effects that a knowledge of the subjects brings with them.

The idea that diseases were due to the entrance of evil spirits into the body is well illustrated in the Apocrypha by the story of Tobias. It is there related that Tobias, wishing before his marriage to exercise a demon which had taken possession of his bride, fannated her with the burning heart of a fish. The fumes thus arising drove the demon away to the farthest parts of the world.

The view of disease can be traced in many parts of the biblical narrative and has survived up to the present date among the ignorant in all countries.

On the other hand, it must be said that it is impossible for one who understands the chemical and physical basis that governs the activities of every part in the body as well as in plants to spend much of his earnings for patent medicines, or be a prey to quacks who profess to perform miracles.

The urgent need long has been felt of giving more attention to the subjects pertaining to life, those that may be a guide to thrift, health and happiness. The convictions seem to have been shared by the lawmakers of most of the states. The enactments making physiology a part of the course of instruction in the public schools is an evidence of their convictions, and from every point of view the measure appears wise and beneficent. If wisely carried out, this law must be productive of great good. The attention of students will be directed to laws which govern their own being. The truths set forth will find lodgment in the brain, in time they will find expression in daily practice. As a result we

may look for improvements in food, in dress, in ventilation, in habits, in the care of the body, and in everything pertaining to living.

It is gratifying to know that most of the states in America require that the children in the common schools be taught physiology in each grade, and that part of this instruction shall deal with the nature of alcohol, other narcotics and nicotine, and their effects upon the human body. The object is to shape the habits of the child, hence the study runs through the course instead of being reserved in the advanced grades. It might seem after the formation of wrong habits had begun and many pupils had left school. It is evident that proper instruction in this course is not only the sure foundation of obedience to the laws of health, in a growing sentiment in favor of public health, but it is a potent factor in our enormous foreign immigration. By educating the masses to control themselves and to realize the importance of obeying the laws of health, the country will be protected from devastating epidemics and be saved millions of dollars spent in the care of the insane and criminals, whose ancestors knowingly and ignorantly transgressed some of the most sacred rules of right living.

The compulsory study of physiology in the schools in this country is a step toward increased sobriety, strength and efficiency of the American people. These results have attracted the attention of students of social science and moral behavior. To teach the right conduct of the physical life based upon the scientific knowledge of subjects related to physiology should be the principal aim and end of all elementary teaching of physiology, hygiene and sanitation.

The importance of this subject in all education for good citizenship cannot be overestimated. Sanitary science and the public health can be advanced only as they are supported by an intelligent public opinion which appreciates the nature of the problems involved, and appreciates the frequent duty of subordinating personal liberty to public good.

Eight thousand signatures were received by return of post and had to be collected by the school authorities, a special staff of postmen. Thus equipped, this body of experts began the study of the different methods of instruction in the schools employed in America and other countries. In November, 1905, they issued and sent to every local school board in Great Britain and Ireland, a list of suggested courses for Teaching Physiology and Hygiene to Boys and Girls in Public Schools of the United Kingdom. The course and text are based upon the scheme used in the schools in the United States.

It is true that the health and efficiency of the human body has rarely, if ever, been more highly esteemed than they are today, and yet no subject of similar importance is so generally neglected in the schools or where taught, taught less effectively.

Several causes have contributed to this curious state of things, but undoubtedly one of the most important is that the teaching has been too remotely connected with the activities and problems of daily life. Moreover, few students who intend to teach the science have equipped themselves with a knowledge of physiology.

That point of view which regards the human body as a living mechanism is today not only the sure foundation of physiology, hygiene and sanitation, but is also surprisingly helpful in the solution of many questions concerning with intellectual and moral behavior. To teach the right conduct of the physical life based upon the scientific knowledge of subjects related to physiology should be the principal aim and end of all elementary teaching of physiology, hygiene and sanitation.

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**Out of the Dim Past.**

Chicago Tribune.

Butchhadnazar was eating grass. "But I'm not yelling 'Ee-yah' and pretending to like it," he said.

Regardless of what the fans in the grandstand and on the bleachers might think of him, he continued to tear up handfuls and chew it because he hadn't anything else to eat.