

OPAL STORY STILL PERPLEXES PROBERS

Investigators Encounter All Manner of Problems.

PICTURE EVIDENCE CITED

Photographs Seem to Disprove Content of Mystic Writer-Psychologist Probing Case.

(Continued From First Page.)
to the grandmother. The complexion of the children are remarkably alike and the resemblance of Opal to the third child of the family is thought by some to be more striking than that to the one so frequently photographed with her. The prominent front teeth of the upper jaw, a characteristic brought out in pictures taken during young womanhood, are a characteristic tending to prove family ties from the Whiteley side of the family.

None who knew the mother presume to think for a moment that any secret was kept from the husband or from Mrs. Whiteley's own mother, still living. Even the diarist does not stretch fancy that far, so that if any substitution was made, it is known to the members of the family still living. That much can be accepted as fact.

Psychologist Probes Case.

In company with Dr. Conklin, professor of psychology of the University of Oregon, I have visited several members of the family, including the father and grandmother, also many of the former chums of Opal. Dr. Conklin has made a study of hundreds of cases of foster parent fantasy and is more than usually interested in this peculiar case because it has so many angles so different from that of any case of foster parent fantasy which he has before studied. The further the inquiry was conducted the deeper became the mystery, but not in a single instance did he find what seemed to him the minutest evidence of an attempt on the part of anyone to hide a mystery from the world. Seen separately, none told a story that was at divergence with that told by others.

If we presume that the story of Opal is true it necessarily follows that we say that the relatives have woven into their lives a fantasy that has become as deeply rooted and equally as fanciful as is this fantasy of the prodigy diarist in the event we presume her story not to be true.

Interesting Fact Cited.

Here is something that I have seen no others call attention to: In an interview not over three years ago Opal said, "One of my earliest recollections is of pulling up wild flowers when I was 2 years of age and planting them in a bed my mother had prepared for geraniums." In the introduction to her diary she speaks of many things which took place before the alleged adoption by the Whiteleys. She remembers that her mother gave her the instructions often given such reporters, "Always get the what, where, when, how and why." She remembers that the little cabinet of drawers and the two little copy books were given her by her parents. She remembers other details of the things that took place at that time. Why, then, does she not remember what her name was before she was taken by the Whiteleys?

A child's name, by which it is called many times a day, which every child usually has written many times before it attains the age of 5, which such a precocious child as Opal must have been, regardless of whose daughter she is, would be rarely, if ever, forgotten. It is to be more deeply impressed upon the mind than the little incident about the wild flowers, then the little incident of walking through the fields.

Facts Given in Diary.

If the copy books referred to in the author's introduction were given Opal by her real parents for the guidance of her future life, why were there nothing in the books to give any clue to Opal's real name and the names of her parents? Parents in making a present of this kind as a rule insert a few loving words of presentation.

It is a fact that a trip was taken at about the time the alleged substitution is said to have taken place. It is a fact that the Whiteleys came to Lane county from Washington by train at that time and the substitution is said to have taken place on a train; it is true that the diary describes truthfully in minutest detail many of the events in Opal's life which took place at the age between 5 and 6; is it possible that a whole family has woven a fabric of deception so perfect as to defy all efforts at finding a weak spot? But we cannot believe this unless we believe that a child would forget its own name while remembering things that took place before that name was taken from it.

Much Apparently Fiction.

There is so much in the diary that is known to be fact and so much that might be pure fiction that the correct solution only seems further away as the investigation into the mystery progresses. The place where the road goes three ways is still there; the lane that went to the house on the hill is still there; the girl "without sewing" is identified; the Sannie McKenzie is identified. All of these events must have taken place, if they took place at all, not over 15 years ago, yet the Jean and Larry, whom God furnished a baby on such short notice, cannot be identified; those who lived at the time and around the place where Jean and Larry are supposed to have lived can place no such persons, the Uncle Caleb and Bob Ryder and equally mythical persons so far as those who have known every person who ever has lived in that vicinity are able to recall. Michael Angelo Sanzio Raphael, the fir tree with an understanding soul, cannot be identified. Not even a stump of such a tree can be found near the old barn, which still stands. None remember such a tree. Facts and fiction seem strangely mixed, but one is told with the same embellishments of plausibility as the others.

How much is fact and how much is not?

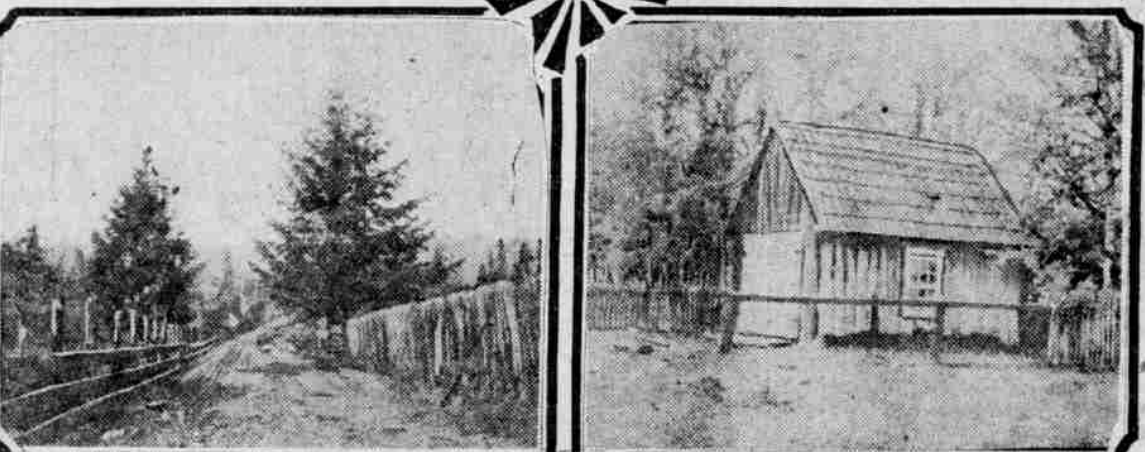
Why does she not remember her former name, although she had arrived at an age when it would seem that one so precocious could not so quickly forget something so important now?

Diary Hardly Complete.

Why is not the story of the substitution told in the diary, or do the references to THE mamma, THE papa, THE grandma, THE Uncle Caleb infer that they were not of her blood?

If there has been a substitution, how remarkable that at the moment of the death of a daughter another of the same age should have appeared bearing all the characteristics of a child of the family, one having the precocity for writing, one hav-

SOME OF THE PLACES MENTIONED IN OPAL WHITELEY'S NOW FAMOUS DIARY.



Top—(Left) Portrait of Opal, showing the prominent front teeth, said to be a Whiteley characteristic, and (right) barn from which "one gets such good, wide view of the world." Middle—The singing creek, where the Williams grove." Below—(Left) Lane where "caterpillars and beetles go walking," and (right) house once occupied by Whiteley family.

ing the same inquisitiveness for exact details of every little event that the father remembers in the other child.

On the other hand, where did those copy books, which had such an influence on her life, come from? Why have they so mysteriously disappeared? Are they and their disappearance pure fabrication? How are we to account for the fact that this fantasy, known to have existed several years ago, has been carried way past the adolescent age, when all other children dropped it?

Atlantic Duped—Perhaps.

We who know Opal well, who know the innocently sincere way in which she tells her stories, who know of her deeply religious nature, who know of her love of God and his great outdoors, who have often seen the face to which deceit and hypocrisy would seem strange companions, can easily understand why the editor of Atlantic

would believe whatever may have been told him when, as the editor himself says, he drew out the foster parent story and the fact of the existence of the diary on an occasion when their author came to see him on an entirely different mission. Plainly the author had no intent to capitalize this alleged incident in her life; plainly she had never thought of using the diary to gain the literary fame which she craved, to get inside the covers of Atlantic, a longing which every author has. In the pleasant relations that followed while the diary was being pieced together in order that its value as a literary document might be judged, a friendship ripened, there was a mutual meeting of minds and souls. The stage could not have been purposely and studiously better set for the reception without question by even so scholarly a man as the editor of Atlantic, of the story Opal told.

The idea that Opal has but recently

invented the foster parent theory for literary purposes is as untenable as the charge that the staid and respectable old Atlantic has done something of that sort. No person familiar with Atlantic thinks such a piece of deceit could come from it. None who know Opal well doubts her sincerity in her claims. Her relatives, her father, scout such an idea.

Is it not possible that Atlantic had what it deemed more positive proof of the foster-parent claim than any presented in Opal's own introduction? Such proof might as easily be explained away as some of the other statements that seem untenable, yet it is probable that such proof is not only such as to explain why this fancy of Opal's, if such it is, has remained with her past the age when others have dropped it, but also sufficient to convince Atlantic that there was no need to investigate the statements made by one so apparently sincere as Opal and apparently so incapable of deceit or hypocrisy. Per-

haps the storm which has risen may result in the presentation of this contributory proof of this strange tale. If there is such contributory proof, Atlantic, it would seem, owes that much to its readers. Opal, it would seem, owes that much to her many friends who maintain that what she says is fact as far as her own belief goes.

Another Question Raised.

While there are many to scoff at the claim that so much of the diary as has been printed is the literary effort of a child of six, there are many incidents to make this claim seem much more than probable. It would seem unlikely that a child of that age could spend so much time in writing and still keep her literary efforts hidden from her parents; it would seem unlikely that a child of that age would be so secretive; but parent, relatives and friends remember that Opal was not an ordinary child; there are those who knew her in her babyhood who say she was a very odd youngster; that at the age of six she talked like a grownup; that she had few companions.

I have found no one who ever saw the diary, but it is remembered that the child spent much time in forming words and writing. Even at the age of three the one whom we may positively call the real Opal could tell most of the letters and could form words from a copy book. As the other children grew older they learned that Opal kept a diary, but none were permitted to see it except as the author read to them from it.

Evidence Not Conclusive.

There is, therefore, no positive proof that the diary being printed is the one written by six-year-old Opal, but Atlantic Monthly's editor should be a good judge and he has accepted it as such. That page of the diary of which a fair facsimile has been published certainly indicates the work of a child of very tender years. Being printed in capital letters would indicate that it was written before the child learned to make pot-hooks, and she started to school at six. Any who believe that Opal in later years, during the time she was cramming her head with her lore of the great outdoors, took time to write 150,000 words (which Atlantic says the diary contains) and in doing so to imitate the painful and labored print of a child, to imitate the misspelled words and peculiarly twisted English, probably is wasting time in some prosaic occupation when he should be writing the best sellers in fiction.

If the diary was polished up in later years, why such words still remaining as "secretive," "new moon," "rowdy," "woolly" (for wool), "dus" for dusk, and "wus" for was, while such words as "untangle" and "silken" are correctly spelled.

(To be concluded tomorrow.)

VOTERS REGISTER SLOWLY

Indications Are Total Will Be Less Than Hundred Thousand.

With the closing of the registration books a month away, the daily number of registrants at the courthouse is increasing, but even at the present rate will be 15,000 short of the 100,000 mark.

At present the total is 79,573, yesterday's registration being 236 and the total for the week 1,586. With 250 a day the total by April 21 will only be around 85,000, less by more than 10,000 than at the last presidential campaign.

County Clerk Beveridge is maintaining a full force in the office in the courthouse. It is open every day, except Sundays, from 8 A. M. to 5 P. M.

All voters must register who have not voted in the past two years or who have moved from the precinct in which they last voted. The present totals are:

	Male	Female	Total
Republicans	33,438	22,067	55,505
Democrats	11,128	781	11,909
Other parties	2,413	1,808	4,221
Grand total			79,573

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