

The Observer

MORO, OREGON.
FRIDAY, JUNE 3, 1910

Personal Talk With You.

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A SLIPPERY SCOUNDREL

By C. L. POINER

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The city's moral health being excellent, the sergeant at the desk had nothing to do. Unemployed people are inclined to be gregarious, and the sergeant talked a stream.

The slickest pair, he said, I ever came across were Darby and Williams. They used to play confidence games together, and they did them so naturally that they could take in a police inspector as easily as a countryman. Darby used to do the work, while Williams would play confederate. We of the police were on them, but when we got them the difficulty was to prove anything against them.

Their villainies became so frequent that we determined to lay a trap for them. We started a farmer down among their moorings, and as we expected, he fell foul of them. They took a marked ten dollar bill from him—at least, Darby did—but managed to get rid of it before we could catch him. Nevertheless we had a strong case if we could prove his record.

On the day of the trial, just as we were filling up the last two or three men on the jury, a gentleman of evident respectability appeared and said he had been summoned to serve. He would like, if he must serve, to do so at once since he was expected to attend the funeral of a near relative within a few hours. The judge, glad to get such a man on jury duty, closed matters up, Mr. Worthington—that was the gentleman's name—being the last man chosen.

We knew that Darby had served a term at the penitentiary and that one of the physical characteristics noted on his records was that his right eye, "Agnes," had been tattooed on his right forearm. We brought our farmer to tell his story as to how he had been bunked, but Darby, who had a way of changing his expression, confessed the witness, and he wouldn't swear that he was the rascal. But if we could prove that the man who had swindled him was Darby we were sure of a conviction.

The prisoner was instructed to take off his coat and roll up his sleeve on his right arm. He did so, and we were disappointed at not seeing a tattoo. Fancyping we had been misinformed and that the letters might be on the left arm, he was ordered to roll up his left sleeve. There were no letters on that arm either. Thus far he had fooled us. In some way he had got rid of the tattoo. The next step was to prove, if possible, that the man had been tattooed. A medico-legal expert was called in, who applied strong friction to the prisoner's arm. This had the effect of bringing out white lines with a slight bluish tint. These lines were letters and spelled the word "Agnes."

Having brought circumstantial evidence, though it was weak, to prove that the prisoner was the man who had swindled the farmer, this proof that he was an ex-convict made a case so strong against Darby that we did not doubt that we would get rid of his pranks for at least the period of another term in state prison. Our only regret was that we couldn't recall his partner, Williams, with him. But Williams had given us the slip, and though we sought for him everywhere, we couldn't find him. You see, we had evidence connecting him with Darby that we had never had before, and having the deadwood on one of them, we would have no difficulty of convicting the other.

The judge virtually gave the jury instructions to convict Darby, and some of us expected they would do it without leaving their seats. The foreman held a brief consultation with the other eleven before retiring, but there seemed to be opposition somewhere among them—we couldn't tell where—so bringing in a verdict that way, and they got up and filed out of the courtroom.

I waited around for half an hour to make sure that we'd got Mr. Darby where we wanted him, but the jury didn't come back. Then I waited another half hour, feeling certain that it wouldn't require more than an hour to settle the case of a man who had been proved to be such an arrant rascal, but sixty minutes didn't serve the purpose. I fell to thinking of Mr. Worthington, the gentleman who expected to get through in time to attend the funeral of his relative. The delay must be very aggravating to him. Indeed, it was now past the time for the funeral—that is, judging from what he had said about it.

Well, I waited till dark. Then, being hungry, I took more interest in my supper than the conviction of Darby and went home to get something to eat. After supper I went back to the courtroom. The jury was still out. At 10 o'clock the foreman sent word to the judge that they couldn't agree. The judge sent back word that they must agree. At midnight he sent in again to ask what was the prospect of a verdict, and they assured him that owing to the obstinacy of one man there was no hope of a verdict except for an acquittal. He sent back an order to settle the matter one way or the other. Then they filed in and brought in a verdict of acquittal.

And who was the obstinate jurymen? He was Mr. Worthington, the man who had come in at the last moment and was in a hurry to attend a funeral. And who was Worthington? He turned out to be none other than that slippery scoundrel Williams in disguise.

The B'a's Den Ghost

By FRANK H. SWEET

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JONAS WARNER of Tannery town, being an enterprising Yankee boy, cast about for some way to increase his cash capital, which amounted to \$2. For this sum he bought from old Mr. Higgins the exclusive privilege of gathering nuts on the southwest side of Sixpence hill. This transaction occurred about the middle of October.

Next morning Jonas was on the road at sunrise with a bundle of grain sacks, gun, sledge hammer and tin lard pail, containing his noonday meal. An unusually severe frost the night before had burst the chestnut burs, and the trees radiated a sparkling fusillade upon the dead leaves.

"I'll hide my nuts in the b'a's den," thought Jonas as he sat at the roots of a gnarled oak eating the piece of pie that had been put into his pail first 'n' in the b'a's den, and when I get 'em all picked I can come after 'em with the old express wagon."

So when he ceased work that afternoon he shouldered his spoils and rolled up the steep hillside to the b'a's den.

The b'a's den is a cave situated on the southwest slope of Sixpence hill. Here the ledge crops out in many places, leaving sharp activities of gray and mossy rock. The largest of these ledges stands out like a gigantic cut into the heart of the hill. A gnarled grapevine clings tenaciously to the corpse of a strangled moosewood near the verge and lowers itself to the face of the rock.

Under the ledge is the main entrance of the cave, shrouded by moss, birches, blackberry briars and an overhanging mass of rock. This opening is a passage large enough for a human being to squeeze through. If one did so he would find himself in a very narrow fissure, which soon becomes so high that its roof is invisible, even to one carrying a lighted torch or lantern.

This fissure turns around a corner and then becomes so narrow that its exploration is impracticable, except to raccoons or lesser creatures.

What lies beyond is not known. There is an opening at the top of the cave, and tradition says that this opening was the favorite entrance of the bear which gave the place its title.

Jonas Warner deposited his nuts as far back in the cave as he could crawl. He thought he had more than enough nuts to make up the sum he had invested in certain furs that Abijah Williams claimed. Abijah and Jonas were about the same age and had been good friends, but during the last six months they had had nothing to do with each other.

The quarrel had been the result of Jonas' trading propensities. One day during the previous spring he had

smiled stole over the face of Abijah, bought a package of furs from a French Canadian woodchopper at a great bargain. The Canadian left town quickly without explaining that he had found the furs on the public highway. They had been dropped there from the wagon in which Abijah Williams had been carrying them to sell in the village.

Abijah, who had trapped them during the preceding winter, lost his assurance that he himself had trapped them. Therefore Jonas refused to give up the package unless Abijah would consent, they parted angrily. Jonas kept the skins, and Abijah threatened to replenish them. Mountainside the pellets were being spied by moths in the back room of the Warner homestead.

Thus the matter stood when Abijah, hunting squirrels on Sixpence hill, discovered Jonas busy among the trees. With the patience of a loon hunter Abijah watched his former chum until he learned where Jonas deposited his booty.

Then a smile of satisfaction stole over the freckled face of Abijah Williams. He had determined to appropriate the nuts on account of his lost furs.

Next night he left the house as if to go on hunting.

And from among the ledges and faintly falling away (ill silence again) ruled the night. The three men stopped running and began to talk.

"Fellers," said Hiram, wiping the perspiration from his brow with the back of his hand, "we're lost him."

"What makes you say so?" panted Uncle Hosea.

"Think so? Why, I'm tellin' on ye I know it. The ragin' heat o' prey has took sanctuary in the b'a's den. Ye might just as well try to catch a pond skinner in a steel trap as expect to find a coon that gets into the b'a's den."

"I told ye, didn't I?" snarled Uncle Hosea. "I was 'n' no use in comin' out here after coons? They allers manage to get into that pesky hole. Let's go home."

"Wasn't I aint' goin' back now," said Chute resolutely. "I got my moon mud up for dat coon. 'n' I tell my woman I catch one coon home to him. My woman—she's de best coon."

"She won't cook no coon that ain't caught, I guess," said Acton.

"I told ye," exclaimed Chute, "up in Canada I smoke out coons in place, lard dat. Take some dead leaf 'n' strike a match, 'n' dat coon will come out poosy mighty quick, ye ah!"

"Chute, ye might just as well try to drive a coon out o' Hosea's tunnel by lightin' a match at one end on't," said Uncle Hosea.

But Uncle Hosea Swale seemed to think the plan worth trying, and presently Chute was sent to light a fire at the upper opening, while the others stayed at the nearer entrance with the dogs.

Chute was instructed to smother the fire with leaves and brush, so that its draft would be downward and through the cave and out of the lower entrance.

His companions heard the crackling of the brush as Chute went through it. Then all was silent save the howling of wind in the treetops overhead. The solemnity of the night became almost oppressive.

"It's kinder fun-like here, ain't it, Acton?" said Uncle Hosea in a low tone.

"Kinder. I wight that Frenchman 'd bury up."

"What, entirely, maybe. Ye remember old Sam Ma's den, don't ye?"

"Him that bruk his leg loggin' for Henry Brasseet? He said he heard it crack in three places. He was so scared that he insisted on bein' brung home on an ox sled. When they got him halfway home he jumped over the sled an' went back after his dinner pail. Yes, I remember old Sam Ma's den."

"Wasn't he a cuttin' sort of a critter. He did tell the most singular stories. He used tell sometimes 'bout explorin' this here b'a's den. He skart himself so tellin' it one night over to Bennett's huskin' that he didn't dare to go home alone."

"What did he see in there?" asked Acton, lighting his pipe and leaning back against a boulder.

At this point Chute came back to report that the smudge was burning finely. He sat down, and Uncle Hosea went on with his story:

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UNDER TWO FLAGS.

The Union Jack and the Stars and Stripes.

By ANNA BENTLEY.

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As soon as we had dropped anchor at Valparaiso Jack Hoskins, Tom Archard and I,