

Safe Cracking Dwindles—But Feminine Forgetfulness Keeps Locksmith Busy

Fair Drivers Will Lock Keys Inside Sedans—And So His Business Booms

SAFE cracking, with police approval of course, has been a profitable occupation for many years for W. A. Robblee, Tacoma, Wash., locksmith. But today it is rapidly dwindling in importance alongside another phase of the locksmith's business—one in which the feminine influence is making itself felt. In fact, since women have commenced to drive closed cars, safe cracking has become just a sideline for Robblee.

Feminine drivers must be more absent-minded than those of the masculine persuasion, Robblee believes. Anyway, drivers of the fair sex leave their keys inside the car or at home so frequently that 40 per cent of a locksmith's business nowadays is getting into locked cars!

Robblee has been cracking safes for a couple of decades, and in all that time no policeman has attempted to put him behind the bars. He believes he knows how to open practically every safe. Also, he opens safe-deposit boxes and front doors when absent-minded householders forget and leave keys inside.

HOW do you open a safe, or any kind of a lock, for that matter?

Well, that's a trade secret known only to a select group of men, the locksmiths. And, just like Daisy, the locksmith never tells. He doesn't even



W. A. Robblee, Tacoma, Wash., locksmith and safe expert, says that safe cracking has become just a sideline with him since women began driving closed cars. He spends a good portion of his working hours opening the doors of coupes and sedans for feminine motorists who have forgotten their keys or left them inside the cars.

tell his helpers. They have to learn the business by keeping their eyes open.

There are still a few members of the profession who don't like to be watched while they work. But they are pretty old-fashioned, Robblee believes. Anyway, he doesn't mind spectators. Sometimes, when he gets a call for assistance from a motorist who has locked himself out of his car, a hundred or more spectators will be watching by the time he has the job finished.

Robblee started to learn the locksmithing trade

when he was a boy of 13 in Newton, a suburb of Boston. He wasn't told anything by his teacher, a professional locksmith, but he had sharp eyes and a quick mind, so it didn't take him long to acquire the finer points. Then he went into business for himself in Tacoma.

During his years of experience opening safes, Robblee has been called upon to open a number of strong boxes filled with nitroglycerin by less ethical members of the profession who had been

Craftsman Still Opens Nitro-Glycerin-Filled Safes For Police, Too

frightened away by police before completing the job.

OPENING a safe in which there is nitro-glycerin is no task for the chicken-hearted. Most safe crackers (those that work without police approval) open a safe by filling up the cracks around the door with soap, then making a soap cup above the top edge of the door in which is poured the thick nitro-glycerin. They then hang a detonator over the knob on the outside. The concussion that follows explodes the nitro-glycerin inside and blows off the door.

When Robblee is called to treat such a safe after the safe crackers have been frightened away, he follows a similar technique. First he pours a neutralizer in through the door and over the explosive which has leaked out on the floor. After he is sure that the safe has been washed out thoroughly, he opens the door.

Robblee is proud of the fact that he has never opened a safe nor a house for the wrong person. He insists on being certain he is working for the right party before he takes the job. He is particularly wary of night calls, and says he has no intention of going to a dark office or plant and having someone stick a gun in his ribs and tell him to go to work.

When one knows how to open safes, one can't be too careful, he believes. Your services might at times come in too handy—for someone else!

"It's Fun Being Crazy," Says Famous Reno Preacher

By BREWSTER ADAMS
For 25 Years Reno's Baptist Preacher

WE SAT by a prospect hole down in Southern Nevada, the old-timer and myself—prospector and preacher. The reader will smile and say,



Brewster Adams

"There's a good combination, a couple of God's fools who are always seeking treasure in strange places; followers of dreams, who believe that unlikely places and unlovely hearts are worth prospecting. Crazy folks."

Few people in this world realize the joy of being crazy. Most of the fun I have had was in being a fool. If wisdom makes a happy man, I have never met him.

"Old Badger"—that was the name they gave him, for he let the badgers do his mining, assaying the dirt they mucked out and brought to the surface—was queer. All prospectors and preachers are. That is why we get a lot of satisfaction finding values where the wise and prudent pass them by.

It is strange how you can only find real conversation where there is solitude and silence, such as you find out on the desert.

The old-timer never hurries his speech. He has been too long with the silences of the eternal hills. He is unlike us, for he thinks a lot and speaks a little. But when he speaks it is from long thoughts, gathered as he worked over the hills and sat by sagebrush fires alone. His philosophy is deeper than ours, for he has gone deep into his heart. When you leave him, you know you have met a better man than you are. He knows real values, for he has dug deep to dig them out.

OLD BADGER'S find was undoubtedly a rich one—the camp at Gilbert followed it. It was located on a little hill overlooking a vast sea of

sage and sand—a blow-up from the deep treasury of the earth, carrying values almost to the grass roots. He had swept off the overburden, leaving a beautiful exposure of almost picture gold. Prospectors know how to dress their windows.

Before he could talk of his new-found wealth, hospitality must be served. That's where the wise men of the world think he is crazy. "Money should come first." But to him friends came first. He wiped out the frying pan with a bunch of sage and we ate his bacon and beans, seeming com-

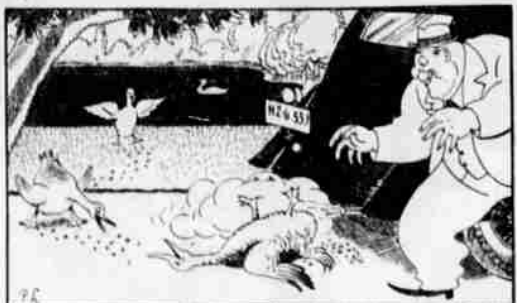
Newest Menace to Game Captures Wildfowl With Rice, Auto Exhaust Gas

Criminal Invades Sanctuary With Ingenious Method for Killing Hungry Birds

HERE'S the latest, most unique "duck-soup" recipe—cooked up by an ingenious criminal who is now the object of a city-wide search by San Francisco police.

To one automobile (any make) add one package of uncooked store rice (any brand). Spread the rice lightly but evenly beneath the exhaust pipe of the automobile and leave the car engine running. The result is roast duck for dinner!

The epicurean offender has been steadily de-



stroying the wildfowl population of Stow Lake, in the heart of San Francisco's famed Golden Gate Park, by his novel method of theft.

He has also caused a large number of that city's policemen to spend much of their time hiding behind bushes and trees in a fruitless effort to surprise him.

So far they have not succeeded, although park department employees declare the criminal probably works his wiles just after sunrise. His technique is to park his car close to the edge of the lake, which is a thronged water sanctuary for every type of waterfowl. With the engine still running, he then lays a nice, thick, inviting trail of rice from the very edge of the water clear up to the back of his car.

Beneath the open exhaust pipe he piles a particularly inviting heap of rice. The pile is high enough to reach almost to the pipe's outlet. Hunger does the rest.

One by one the ducks spy the intriguing trail of rice. One by one they peck their way up from the water to the car. And—finally—one by one they fall insensible, overcome by the carbon monoxide fumes from the exhaust pipe.

So successful has the criminal's policy proved that game wardens, wild-life conservation authorities and police throughout the entire Pacific states area are becoming alarmed lest the San Francisco evildoer's deft trick be imitated in other important centers of waterfowl life.

pletely to forget the wealth at his elbow.

"It looks good," I offered, endeavoring to open the conversation.

"You just can't tell," he replied. "It might pinch out."

It was not that he was gloomy about it, but you could see by the look in his eyes that he was thinking back over hopes that had come and had vanished.

NOTICING my apparent anxiety, he turned with a sly smile and ventured, "Don't worry partner, there's enough—enough to sell a mine anyway." He is canny—this old man of the desert—and willing to share the risks as well as the returns.

"It's pretty," I started the conversation again.

"Sure, it's pretty—prettier than it will ever be when men give their souls and women barter themselves for it. It's clean, too; clean as when God made it. A lot cleaner than it will be when it gets out there." And he waved his hand toward the civilization I had left.

"I think sometimes that I would like to cover it up and let it lie untouched and untainted. I think of the kiddies it might feed, of homes it would build, of happiness it could bring, and then I think of other greed for it and the mad struggle of men to possess it. Sometimes I can see blood upon it—stains of human strife upon my gold, and I wish I could put the dirt back on it. But I guess I am no different than the rest: I want the money," he added.

"What were your feelings when you found it?" I asked him, for I had often wondered what was the sensation of finding wealth so suddenly.

"Well, you see, it was like this. I grubbed around this hole a badger had made, cleaned it out and sunk a short hole and then I found this piece of float. It surely looked rich—too rich. I thought it was too rich, too good to be true. There must be something wrong. Maybe it was the lucky piece we old-timers always carry in our pockets. You never see one of us without it, you know. But I looked in my coat and it was there and this was here. Then I thought I must be dreaming it. You know a prospector dreams a lot about finding something good. I burned my fingers with a match to see if it hurt and decided it was real and that I was awake.

"Then I began to worry. Honest, Reverend, the sweat poured out on me. I climbed the ladder and looked off over the trail, certain that someone would come and steal it. I piled dirt over my discovery, took the ladder away and hid it. I went and examined my stakes to see that they were in order. I imagined a thousand ways I might have it taken from me. Well, I was so worked up and so nervous that I knocked off for the day. That night I never slept a wink, the first night in months, for you know we old-timers make a business of sleeping!"

WEALTH and worry, I knew what he meant, for I had seen it so often in civilization—so-called. Men who gain and who lose so much with the gaining. The cares of this world destroy so much of peace and tranquility.

"Well, I suppose you will sell it and go to the coast for a good time," I offered. "No," he replied, apparently quite ready for me, as they always seem to be. "You see, there was a Swede I knew who made a rich strike and planned to go to the coast. He got in such a hurry that he lit a short fuse and the rock blew off the tip of his nose. It is a wonderful climate and the Swede put the piece back and tied a bandana around it. It healed perfectly, but in his hurry he put it on wrong side up. That was all right in this dry country, but

MYSTERY SHIPS The Kobenhavn Modern And Sound, Yet She Disappeared

ONE of the greatest sea mysteries since the war was the disappearance of the five-masted Danish barque *Kobenhavn*, which vanished like the legendary *Flying Dutchman*.

In December, 1928, she sailed from Montevideo, bound for Melbourne to take Australian wheat to Europe. She was sighted by a steamer two days from the River Plata—and never seen again. Although she carried wireless equipment, no messages of distress were sent out. Was the storm (or whatever disaster overtook her) too sudden? It seems incredible.

Ships searched vigilantly for her. No wreckage, no lifeboats or evidence of her fate was found. She went down—supposedly—carrying 60 apprentices and a crew of expert seamen—sailors who knew their business, and boys from the best Danish families. Not one survived.

The *Kobenhavn* was more than an ordinary sailing vessel. Built in 1921 at Leith, Scotland, she was 6000 tons deadweight, fitted with a Diesel engine



for mild winds and calm days—one of the best-equipped sailing ships afloat. Her log had recorded as much as 305 miles for a day's run.

A few weeks later, January 21, 1929, a missionary on Tristan de Cunha Island reported a wrecked sailing ship. It looked like a ghost ship, driving in through the mist, and was five-masted. Painted like the *Kobenhavn*—a white band around the hull—she was apparently unmanned. The vessel was three miles out when first observed. It drifted in past the reefs, through water too rough for the missionary's boat. He last saw her within a quarter of a mile from shore, within the dangerous reefs. She began to sink. Buff-colored boxes washed ashore, and a flat-bottomed boat.

Were the crew all dead? Had the ship been deserted far out at sea? There is no certainty that the wandering vessel was the *Kobenhavn*. Landsmen seldom are accurate about ships and the sea.

Seven years have passed since her disappearance, and the puzzle is as great as ever. The polar regions may give up their secrets after many years, as the ice melts—but the sea is not so kind.

when he went to Los Angeles it rained and drowned him."

"SAW it was time for me to go, so I said goodbye and added, 'I hope to see you in the Better Land. You know the Good Book says that 'the streets of that city are paved with gold.'"

"So I have read," he answered, with a wink of his keen eye. "And if they let me in I hope to knock off a few good specimens for myself."

"Goodbye, Reverend."

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How Do You Explain This

IT HAD been a calm night, with a light snow falling. In the early morning the people of South Devonshire found hundreds of strange prints in the snow—such footprints as had never been seen before.

The marks apparently were made by a hoof—two and a half inches across. Perhaps the foot of a young colt—except for this weird fact: the beast mu- have been two-legged—or had only one leg. The prints ran in single file, one directly in front of the other.

Stranger still, they went across roof tops, through gardens protected by high walls—in places where no known animal with hoofs could go. The marks were invariably 8 inches apart, and they appeared in an area covering five different English towns.

Hunters and hounds followed the tracks to a forest. Here the dogs stopped—they howled, backed away, and refused to go into the trees. The men, dismayed, went home again—and the beast which left the prints was never discovered.

Similar puzzling prints have been seen in Scotland and in Poland—always after snow has fallen.

How do you account for these curious prints? How were they made—by what queer animal?