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Last Exploit of the Bogus "Hant Catcher" on Paradise Island

After Ransacking the Homes of Honest Law-abiding
Citizens, He is Cleverly Discovered and
Completely Routed



The bluff on which the old justice projected the image of the black devil. The "hant catcher" here had an excellent opportunity to demonstrate his skill in capturing "hants."



At this juncture the terror-stricken lad from Dyersburg broke loose and made his get-away.



Miss Janie Barks, who raised turkeys to finance her way through a music school. But the unscrupulous thief did not spare this industrious young lady's well-kept poultry farm.

By EYE G. BILLINGS

Peace, good-will and a reasonable degree of prosperity reigned on Paradise Island, — that is, until the "Hant Catcher" came. It required all the cunning and wisdom of Moses Williams, the dispenser of law on the island, to determine whether or not this strange character was responsible for the depredations and the mistrust developed by the wave of thievery that followed his appearance in the community.

Paradise Island is in Egypt which is located in Southern Illinois. Egypt is that territory lying contiguous to the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. In this Egypt are Cairo and Thebes. The land is as rich as the Valley of the Nile. The Southern Illinois Egypt has a very large colored population.

The Island received its name through the efforts of a philanthropist to establish a colony of free Negroes there prior to the Civil War. Like many other colonies established for special purposes it had not been very successful. It had been given the name at that time—whether in good faith or in a spirit of jocularly is not known — and the name has endured. A few descendants of the original colonists still live on the Island.

Speaking with geographical strictness Paradise Island is not exactly an island. On the west is the Mississippi River; on the south, and part of the east boundary a creek curves around to the river; from where the creek touches the Island a range of steep hills, with scattered bluffs of rock, swings in a curve to a point near the bank of the river north of the Island. The land thus encompassed is the "Island." It is three miles long and it has about the same width at the widest place.

Most of the inhabitants of the Island are colored and the greater part of them own their own homes and farms. For many years Moses Williams has been a justice of the peace on the island. His constable was Ike Pettitt. There was very little felonious crime on the Island and it was not often that the justice of the peace had any legal activities. Rev. Thomas Anderson, who filled a pulpit at Cairo once a month, was a lawyer of sorts. He was sometimes called on to represent a client before Judge Williams.

One Sunday a stranger as noticeable as a twenty-dollar bill in a church collection-plate, appeared at the First Baptist Church. His striking appearance at once commanded attention. A radically different type from what they produced on Paradise Island. His proportions were of the grade that caused young men to be called "Big Boy."



The Reverend Thomas Anderson, a local attorney, who practiced law in the Paradise Island Justice of the Peace Court. He figured prominently in the "hant catcher" case.

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