

# ADVENTURES of the WORLD'S GREAT DETECTIVES

By George Barton

## The Milk Punch Revenue Fraud— An Episode in the Life of James J. Brooks, once Chief of the United States Secret Service.

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IN THE summer of 1886, Internal Revenue Commissioner Rollins summoned James J. Brooks to Washington. The officers of the government were greatly perplexed. Congress had placed the almost prohibitive tax of two dollars per gallon on whisky, and immediately illicit distilleries sprung up in all parts of the country. Commissioner Rollins very much desired to break up the illegal traffic, and he had selected Brooks as the man for the purpose. The interview between the two men was long and important. "Brooks," said the commissioner, "the frauds connected with the production and removal of spirits are becoming alarming. Great public dissatisfaction has arisen from the failure to collect this tax. Besides it is ruining discipline in the service, and unless some remedy is obtained, I fear further demoralization."

"Are the conditions as bad as that?"

"Worse! I have figures which show that 60 per cent of the whisky reported made and warehoused has been sold without payment of the revenue tax. Such extensive fraud is not possible without the knowledge of responsible revenue officers. It is exceedingly difficult for officers in Washington to detect collusion on the part of their subordinates in other places. These frauds have not only robbed the national treasury, but have corrupted many men of heretofore acknowledged integrity. Men of capital but without conscience have sometimes been found to be partners of those whom they have put to the front for bribery or perjury and the perils of detection. Brooks, I want you to help me break up this business."

After outlining the general situation, the commissioner became specific in his statements and informed the detective just what he expected him to accomplish. That night Brooks departed on his assignment, which was to a little town near Cincinnati, and which, for the purposes of this narrative, shall be known as Meadboro. He wore no disguise. He never did. He was in the habit of saying humorously that his actual appearance was all the disguise he ever needed.

The man who alighted from the train at Meadboro was a tall, commanding figure. He had a benevolent look which seemed to say: "I am at peace with all the world." Only two parts of his organism could be said to talk. His eyes bespoke intelligence, and his lips expressed determination. He was about 40 years of age, but his whitening hair gave him the appearance of being much older than that. Before he had been in the little village long, it was whispered about that he was a tract distributor and an agent for some charitable institution. He registered at the only hotel in the place under an assumed name. It did not take him long to get into conversation with the proprietor and so some of the loungers about the place. The talk, after exhausting itself on the weather, and horses, and politics, and church matters, finally turned on Meadboro and its inhabitants.

He learned that John Davis was probably the most important man in the locality. He combined the business of a distiller and a dairy man. He had 20 cows and a distillery, and a farm of a hundred acres. Everything seemed to be open and above board. Davis apparently worked hard, and with a son and his hired men, did not seem to have much spare time on his hands.

Brooks managed to come in contact with Davis, but there was nothing about the personality of the man that gave him any clue. Davis wore a look as though he were constantly exhausted through lack of sleep. His countenance did not give any indication of the operation of his mind. He was a man of few words. He had preferences, but no friendships. The dull horizon of his life seemed undisturbed save by occasional streaks of tact in business matters. One of the loungers in the hotel credited him with having once brought about a corner in pork on a limited scale. Another indicated that he had once mixed fine white meal with his lard. These things did not seem very important in themselves, and yet they were traits of character which made it possible to believe the charge that he had habitually withheld from taxation nearly three-fourths of his yield of whisky.

Brooks contrived to visit his farm on various occasions. He went through the dairy, examined the live stock and managed to get a peep into the distillery. He arranged his visits so that one day he went in the morning, another in the afternoon, and still another in the dusk of evening. But he was never able to find anything out of the way. From time to time whisky was sent out in casks, but it was always properly gauged and the government appeared to be receiving its tax.

Among other persons with whom the detective became acquainted was a queer old character named Ezra Wallace. He was a Scotch Presbyterian, and was the sexton of the village church. He was an intensely religious man and hungered for discussion of theological subjects. Brooks accommodated him more than once, and it was not long before he found himself among the

boarders of Ezra Wallace's humble home. The old man would have cheerfully lodged and fed him for nothing for the sake of religious controversies on which he lived, and thrived, and had his being. One night the two men needed a book to verify some disputed point. It happened to be in the church library. Brooks volunteered to go after it. The sexton handed him the key and he went to the church and obtained the book, but he conveniently forgot to return the key.

Some time after midnight he quietly hurried to the church, and using the purloined key, made his way into the edifice. It was quite dark and the place was unfamiliar, but he managed to grope along until he reached the stairway leading to the choir loft. From thence he climbed to the dingy attic at the base of the church steeple. He crawled up by easy stages until he reached the belfry. A rustling noise startled him. This was followed by another and then still another. He realized that the rats were scampering from their accustomed haunts. The fluttering of wings near the top of the structure reminded him that he had disturbed the bats. It was still quite dark, and he began to feel quite chilly, but determined to remain in the belfry until daylight.

He never realized before how slowly it is possible for minutes to pass by, but his long vigil finally came to an end. Daylight appeared and the detective brought forth a powerful telescope. With the aid of this instrument he was enabled to get a splendid view of the surrounding country. In fact, he could see everything quite clearly within a radius of a mile or more. Good housewives at work in their gardens, farmers driving their

wagons to market, and men working in the fields, were all to be seen with wonderful clearness. Presently his curiosity was satisfied and he climbed down from his lofty perch and quietly retraced his steps. He went to his boarding house and ate breakfast with a heartiness that made the cook tell him that he had the appetite of a horse. While he was at the table, Ezra Wallace came in. The sexton spoke to him very coldly. Brooks became alarmed. He did not desire the ill will of the old man, and, above all, did not wish to have his plans go astray, so he tried to conciliate him.

"Good morning, Ezra! you're looking fine this morning."

"That's the way all respectable folks should look," was the gruff rejoinder.

"Sure," responded the detective, who did not quite grasp the meaning of the sexton's remark.

The latter eyed him coldly for a moment and then said in an accusing voice:

"I may have my faults, but I've never stayed out all night in my life."

That was opened and that, like the other, yielded only Alderney milk. "Now," said Brooks, "let me see the contents of the can in the middle."

"Oh," exclaimed Davis, "this is carrying a joke too far."

The can was opened, however, and it was found to contain high proof whisky. Every one of the other 17 cans were filled with distilled spirits. Davis was arrested, tried and convicted, and the far-reaching conspiracy of defrauding the government defeated. Brooks was highly complimented by Commissioner Rollins, and shortly afterwards was assigned to Philadelphia, where he won new laurels in ferretting out and convicting those who were cheating Uncle Sam of his legal dues.

At this psychological moment the detective gave a terrific sneeze. "If you had been in your warm bed last night," said Ezra, now making his accusation direct, "you probably wouldn't have had that cold."

"Oh, that's all right," was the cheerful reply.

"It is not all right," retorted the sexton, "and I'll thank you to give me back that key."

Brooks handed it to him with some misgivings.

"What are you going to do?" asked the detective.

"I don't know yet," was the reply. "I'll find out first whether anything's been taken out of the church. After that I'll decide what to do."

It took Brooks nearly an hour to pacify the old man, and in convincing him that although he was traveling under an assumed name, and spent the night in the steeple of the church, he was engaged in a legitimate business, and assured him that in a short time he would explain it all to his satisfaction.

The day after his night in the church steeple, Brooks was very busy. He telegraphed to Cincinnati several times, and during the afternoon and evening it was noticed that several strangers alighted from the way train that stopped at Meadboro. The detective was very stiff from his exposure, but he managed to conceal his discomfort in the thought of the important work that lay before him.

He was up at daylight the following morning. He stationed himself in the road that led from the Davis farm to the station. The two-horse team that was in the habit of hauling the milk to the train was due at six o'clock. It rumbled along just at the hour. Davis, himself, occupied a place on the seat beside the driver. The detective stood near a turn in the road. Behind him, concealed in a clump of bushes, were two able-bodied assistants. As the team reached that point Brooks stepped in front of the horses.

"Good morning, Mr. Davis—how are you feeling this morning?"

"None of your business," was the rough rejoinder. "Get out of the way and let these horses pass."

"You're not very polite this morning."

"I'm in a hurry, and I've got no time to waste on you."

"Then you'll have to take the time," Davis' answer was characteristic of

of whisky on which you have not paid a cent of tax."

Davis' lips curled with scorn.

"I thought you didn't know what you were talking about. We have 20 cans of milk in the wagon and it's consigned to the Harvey Milk company of Cincinnati. Isn't that true, Sam?"

The driver of the wagon, being thus appealed to, nodded a sleepy head.

"Yes, sir," he said, "that's as true as gospel."

Brooks climbed up on the hub of the front wheel and looked at the wagon.

"If you have milk here," he said, "let's see it."

"Yes," said the other detective, jocularly, "I'll take a quart."

"But it's fastened for shipping."

"Open it," said Brooks. "Open that can on the end."

The man did as he was bade, and sure enough it contained nothing but pure milk.

"Any other you'd like to see?" asked Davis triumphantly.

"Yes; open the can on the other end."

Dean of London Bar 100 Years Old.

A Gorion Hake, the dean of the London bar, celebrated his one hundredth birthday recently at his home at Brighton. Mr. Hake is a master of five languages—Greek, Latin, French, Italian and Spanish—and reads Horace, Virgil and Montaigne.

He attributes his long and healthy life to plenty of riding—he had for years a favorite horse named Daisy—and to walking and to abstemious living. He has never cared much for modern varieties of dress.

The Rev. T. G. Hake tells a good story of his father's rough and ready toilet. Dr. Charles Hanson once called on him at his chambers and asked permission to put on his barrister's wig and gown.

"Now," he said, "lend me a looking glass." He was handed a razor—the nearest approach to a mirror possessed by his friend.—Law Notes

Belonged to Father.

Every one knew Jonathan Skinfint as a millionaire, with the exception, so it appeared, of Skinfint himself. He invariably wore the shabbiest of clothes and is reported to have dined one day on a couple of peas and a grape skin.

One day an old friend endeavored to persuade the miser to dress better.

"I am surprised," he said, "that you should let yourself become so shabby."

"But I am not shabby," expostulated Skinfint.

"Oh, yes, you are," replied the friend. "Remember your father. He was always neatly, even elegantly, dressed. His clothes were very handsome."

Skinfint gave utterance to a hearty laugh. "Why," he shouted triumphantly, "these clothes I've got or were father's!"—Ideas.



Waiting for an Opinion.

"Now Rastus," roared the major, "what is the use? Don't you know that I know you are lying?"

"Yassuh," replied Rastus, "but ye see, Marsa Henry, I kind o' thought I'd like to hab yo' opinion on de subject befo' I decided dat I was lyn' fo' sho' mahself. Now dat yo' says I is, Marsa Henry, I jest regularly knows I is, suh."—Harper's Weekly.

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### THE AMERICAN HOME

W. A. RADFORD EDITOR

Mr. William A. Radford will answer questions and give advice FREE, OF COST on all subjects pertaining to the subject of building, for the readers of this paper. On account of his wide experience as Editor, Author and Manufacturer, he is, without doubt, the highest authority on all these subjects. Address all inquiries to William A. Radford, No. 172 West Jackson boulevard, Chicago, Ill., and only enclose two-cent stamp for reply.

Real estate dealers and speculative builders in the larger cities and suburban towns have long realized that every dollar spent in making more attractive the interior of the houses that they offer will come back ten-fold in the increased selling price that can be obtained or the larger rental that can be asked.

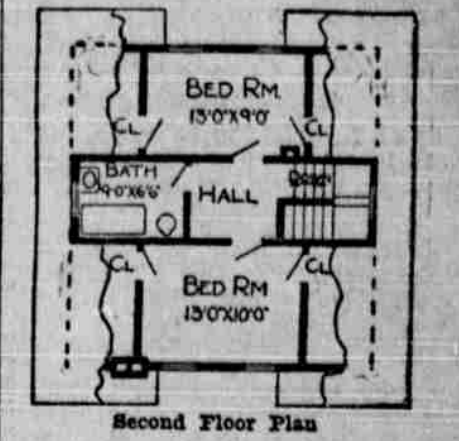
This is something which the home builder who has but a limited amount to invest, or the builder in the smaller towns, does not always realize. Indeed, it really pays better in the end to cut down the size of the house if it should become necessary to economize, rather than to omit any features which add to the selling value of the property.

One may say that he is building a house for himself, that he has no intention of selling, but expects to live in the house for the rest of his life and can do without the frills if only the house is big enough to accommodate the actual needs. What, therefore, is the necessity of considering selling or rental value?

There is an old and very true proverb that "man proposes, but God disposes," and though a man may be building a home, circumstances may in time arise that make the sale or renting of the house imperative, and every feature that adds to its selling or rental value will be doubly appreciated. Death may make it necessary to sell the house in order to settle the estate. Business reasons that cannot be foreseen often compel a man much against his inclinations to move to some distant part of the country; and I have found out by personal experience that there is nothing more unsatisfactory as an investment than

and dollars to the price he can realize for the house, or five dollars a month—perhaps more—to the amount of rent he could get for it.

Attractive wall papers, while adding much to the selling value of the house that is erected as a real estate speculation, especially when chosen with a good taste and artistic feeling that is now possible to command—even with the low-cost papers—can be better left for the future than any other item which the home builder needs to consider. Wall paper must be renewed every few years at best, and the paper-hangers are no more objectionable to have about the house than the scrub-women that seem to be an inevitable



part of the spring and fall house cleaning.

Gas or electric features are another item that can, if necessary, be postponed till some time in the future, provided the house is piped or wired for them, because there is no need for expensive or disturbing mechanical work in placing them in position; but it is the poorest kind of economy to omit the necessary piping or wiring—according to the custom in the locality—or both in those towns where both gas and electricity are installed.

But those features which are built into the house and which form an essential part of the construction or the



real estate which is so far away that the owner cannot see for himself whether repairs asked for by the tenant are really needed or not, but must be compelled to depend upon the word of the real estate agent, whose interests seem often to be rather with the tenant than with the landlord. At such a time, the owner realizes that anything which by catching the eye and the fancy of the prospective purchaser makes a house sell more readily is something decidedly to his advantage.

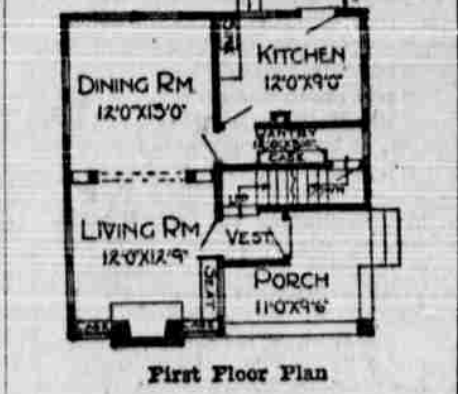
The man who is compelled to borrow money in order to build his house usually endeavors to keep the sum that he borrows down to the lowest possible notch, and will cut down wherever he can in order to accomplish this object. But it is possible to carry this pruning too far. To the man unfamiliar with the cost of building, the things which appear to be most expensive are those items of interior finish and decoration which add

finish should never be put off until a more convenient season, because the mechanical difficulty and the expense of adding them later will prevent them from ever being put in. The seat at the bottom of the stairs and which forms a part of the paneled should be built at the same time the stairs are, and made an essential feature of the design; and the same thing is true of the built-in china closet in the dining room.

The design illustrated here, is an excellent example of the small house equipped with all the attractive little features that are so much appreciated by the housewife and in such demand by those who are looking to purchase a home, yet, at the same time, do not cost very much when provided for in the original plan and put in at the same time the rest of the work is done.

A desirable feature of this design is the arrangement of the stair hall separated from the rooms of the first floor. This is the way it should be, in case it is ever desired to rent a room, since the rooms on the second floor are directly accessible from the front entrance without disturbing anyone on the first floor.

The economy of this design may be seen from the fact that the house has been built as illustrated, using all first-class materials, for \$2,500. The width of the house is 28 feet, the length 25 feet 6 inches. There are three rooms on the first floor and two rooms on the second floor, besides bathroom, large clothes closets, etc. The exterior appearance of this house is attractive and up-to-date.



Did Horse Seek Death?

This theory is brought forward through a singular affair at Frighouse, England. About a week ago a horse fell into a pond in the vicinity of the Frighouse cricket field, and it was got out after two hours of strenuous exertion. A day or two later the horse found its way to the same pond, and this time met with its death. Frighouse people are asking if the horse went there purposely.

Does Away With Posing.

The latest craze among the Berlin smart set is having one's portrait sketched or painted while asleep. The craze was started by an Austrian aristocrat, Countess Chivick, who, according to a current story, fell asleep while waiting in the atelier of a well-known painter. The painter found the countess so charming as she slumbered that he drew her in that condition. The portrait was a great success.

Keeping the Balance Even.

Nine times out of ten the woman who is worth her weight in gold marries a man who isn't worth his weight in scrap iron.

