

LANDS

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Not Officially Reported.

BY EDGAR WELTON COOLEY.
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"A number of years ago, while tracing the movement of a registered package that had been lost in the mails," said the old secret service man, "I missed train connections and was forced to lay over for several hours in one of the cities in a certain southern state. So, as the local postmaster was a personal friend of mine, I called upon him.

"While we were conversing in his private office a young man entered and the postmaster presented him to me as his chief clerk. I have reasons for not revealing his identity, even at this late date, so I will give him the incorrect name of James Bradford.

"As a matter of course I prefer, at all times, that my profession should be hidden from the public and especially from government employes, but, unthinkingly, my friend introduced me on this occasion as a member of the secret service.

"I was looking keenly into the young man's eyes and noticed him start and tremble. But he immediately regained his composure and offered me his hand, which I clasped warmly.

"I knew at once that his was a guilty conscience. A thousand thoughts flashed through my mind. I tried to, in some way, associate him with the case upon which I was working, but I could not do so since the missing package could not have passed through his hands.

"At this moment the postmaster was called from the room and I immediately determined to test the young man's nerve to the utmost. So I arose and closed the door. Then I turned to him. 'Sit down,' I said. 'I wish to talk with you.'

"I watched his face closely. I saw it grow suddenly scarlet, then pale, and I noticed that he clasped the arms of the chair so tightly that the nails were forced into the wood.

"But I was at a loss how to proceed. That he was guilty of some criminal act I felt assured from his agitation, but I had absolutely no theory upon which to work.

"Determined to unravel the mystery upon which I had so accidentally stumbled, I felt disposed to allow him to nurse the evident fear that I was in possession of certain facts regarding the crime he had committed, whatever it might be. Yet, so far as possible, I desired to disabuse his mind of any thought that I suspected his connection with it. So, drawing a chair in front of him, I laid my hand upon his knee and said, in a confidential tone:

"Mr. Bradford, it is true that I am an agent of the secret service. But I beg that you will do me the kindness to keep that fact to yourself. I am here to investigate certain irregularities in this office and, since you know my mission, you may be of vast assistance to me.

"He promised to do my bidding, but while he seemed somewhat assured it was plain to see he was ill at ease. Then I dismissed him.

"When the postmaster returned we continued our conversation. Presently I referred to the business of the office and casually expressed a desire to see the last statement of the postoffice inspector. My friend brought me a copy. It was dated but ten days previously and the accounts of the office were certified to as being apparently correct.

"That is a good showing," said I. "Who handles the funds of the office?"

"Mr. Bradford," he replied. "Is he married?"

"Yes. He has an estimable wife and a beautiful baby boy."

"Reliable man, I suppose?" said I.

"Perfectly. There is not a dishonorable hair in his head. He's been employed in the office six years."

"The young man's reputation certainly seemed good, but I determined to shadow him. I did so. Without arousing suspicion I watched his every

movement, I lay on the floor with my eye to the hole, watching Bradford.

"During the entire time he appeared nervous and excited. In moments of leisure he would stare absently at the wall or at his desk, every feature of his face marked with despair and wretchedness.

"Finally the hour for closing arrived. I saw him lock the outside door; I saw him place the stamps in the vault and return with the money box, filled with bills and coin; I saw him count the small change that was in the money drawer in the desk; I saw him make a note of the amount and enter it in a book.

"Then he glanced around the room, apprehensively, frightened, a wild look in his eyes and perspiration on his brow.

"Suddenly he set his jaws together determinedly and with feverish haste filled his pockets with the bills and silver. When he had emptied the box he placed it back in the vault and closed and locked the door. Then he advanced a few steps and paused.

"What thoughts must have passed through his mind at that moment as he stood upon the threshold between honor and disgrace! Never before nor



He gazed at it in silence.

since I have seen such agony on a human face as I saw then.

"Presently he staggered to his desk and picked up a baby's photograph. For a few brief moments he gazed at it in silence. Then he pressed it to his lips and, turning, reopened the vault, took the money from his pocket, placed it back in the box and locked the door. On his face was a bright gleam as of a great happiness and up from the depths of my heart there surged a cry. 'God bless him!'

"With a smile on his face he turned out the light and hurried from my hiding place. I met him at the door. He was startled when he recognized me, but I held out my hand.

"Bradford," said I, pressing his hand in mine, "you couldn't do it, could you?"

"No," he said, a tremor in his voice. "I couldn't do it; I couldn't break my wife's heart and bring everlasting disgrace upon my baby boy."

"Now, my boy," said I, kindly, "don't turn back. Tell me the rest—perhaps I can help you."

"He looked me in the eye a moment. Then he said:

"I will trust you, sir. I have been too extravagant in my living and have used about \$500 of the office funds. I did not intend to steal; I expected to make it good, but I do not see how I can. I decided to run away, but I can't do it, sir; I can't do it."

"I rested my hand on his shoulder. 'Bradford,' said I, 'I believe you are honest at heart. It is not too late to rectify your mistake. Go home now and go to bed. In the morning I will see what can be done.'

He looked at me with tears in his eyes. 'Thank you, sir,' he said.

"Well," continued the old secret service man, after a pause, "I told the postmaster everything, but secured a promise from him to give Bradford another chance. Between us we made up the deficit, taking Bradford's notes. These notes were paid long since and to-day Bradford is holding an important government position and is entirely trustworthy. As I had not been detailed upon the case, I made no report of it, but I have always been thankful that I missed my train that morning."

To Cure the Stammering Habit.
A new method of curing the stammering habit is being advocated. It is based upon the alleged fact that stammerers rarely if ever show any impediment of speech when talking in a whisper. What may be called the "whisper cure" is as follows, says the New York Press: For the first ten days the stuttering person is not allowed to speak at all. This allows rest for the vocal cords and is the first stage in the cure. After ten solid days of absolute silence the patient is allowed to speak, but only in a whisper. He generally is kept in this second stage for a space of fifteen days, sometimes more, sometimes less, according to the severity of his case. After the whisper period is passed, the patient is allowed gradually to increase his tone of voice until a conversational one is reached. This is the most critical period of the cure, and the transition from the whisper to the conversational tone must be very gradual. There is certainly one thing to be said for the new cure: it does not cost anything, and any stammerer can try it for himself without calling in a medical adviser. The only objection might be that the preliminary ten days of silence might interfere with the patient's prosecuting his usual business. He might, however, try it when on his next vacation.

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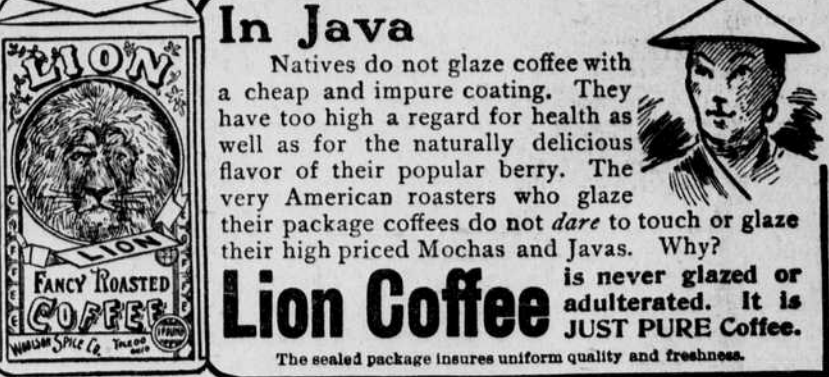
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