

The Three Swindlers of Lorraine

BY WILLIAM HAMILTON OSBORNE.

Copyright, 1903, by Wm. Hamilton Osborne. The town of Lorraine was a big town and a successful town and an important town. On the map it was not indicated by a dot or by a circle—not by a long shot. It was indicated by what appeared to be a small piece of irregularly shaped mosquito netting, from which there radiated at least half a dozen railroad lines. This fixed its status from the start.

But there was one thing the matter with the town. It was too easy—that was all. Its business men, as business men were cautious and conservative. They would not buy corner lots nor loan upon them without making the most exhaustive examination of the title to the land. And yet, almost as one man, they would place good size wads of bills in the hands of any smooth tongued stranger who claimed to own a mine, or an oil well, or a gold brick. In other words, Lorraine was the stamping ground of swindlers. Regularly enough, none of these swindlers were ever caught.

Now there was a town of Lorraine. A few hard headed old fellows who had been swindled once or twice too often. They started in to watch. And they soon discovered that the police department not only winked at the little games played by these gentled swindlers, but further, that the police department was itself hand in glove with them. The local papers were put at work on the case, much to their delight, and one bright morning when the chief of police rose from his couch he read with much surprise in the Lorraine "Liberty Bell" this ominous headline: "SHARPE SHARES WITH SWINDLERS."

As the name of the chief of police happened to be Sharpe, he considered the suggestion to be somewhat too personal. However, he took the pains to read column after column upon the subject.

"Hang those fellows," he muttered to himself, "there ain't a word of truth in what they say. But the devil of it is," he finally concluded, "that they can prove the whole darn business."

One hour later he handed in his resignation, drew his back pay, and left town by a circuitous route. This relieved the hard headed old fellows who had begun the investigation, and while it robbed the papers of the delights of a sensation, still it was the easiest way out of it.

Now in the town of Lorraine there was a man whose name was Peter F. Clancy. He was said to be an honest man. He was also a student of human nature, and none of the swindlers who had ever come to town had been able to come to him. The hard-headed old fellows made it plain to the mayor that Peter F. Clancy was the man for the vacant place of chief of police. The mayor, whose skirts perhaps were not altogether unsoiled by the Sharpe affair, hastily acquiesced.

He started in in the conventional way by talking for publication. Both the Liberty Bell and the Morning Glory had the pleasure of printing a long interview. In this interview the new chief stated that the cynic's shame of the town was swindling, and that he proposed to stop it, and stop it quick. All went well for a space of two months. No swindler dared to show his face in the town of Lorraine.

It was on the 25th day of May that a stylishly and well-dressed man stepped into the private office of P. Toler Andrews. Mr. Andrews was a young man who had just come into a fortune. The stranger presented a letter of introduction from a prominent New York man, with whom young Andrews had some slight acquaintance. He explained that he was stopping at the Belmont, Lorraine's very swiftest stopping place. Mr. Andrews became his guest at the hotel, and played several friendly games of cards, at the close of which the stranger was slightly out of pocket. Andrews was about to leave when a messenger arrived with a special delivery letter addressed to the stranger. The stranger examined the envelope, opened the letter, and from it fluttered a handsomely engraved and profusely certified check on one of the first banks of New York, to the order of the stranger, and to the amount of several thousand dollars.

"Well, by George," he exclaimed the genial man, "we've got to have another bottle on this thing." Over this bottle Mr. Andrews' host explained to him all about the check. It represented his profits on a lucky deal in sugar. He had placed a few hundreds with Roberts, McCoutts & Co.,—the firm of Wall street. Roberts had inside information and this inside information was making for the friends of Roberts rapid little fortunes on the quiet.

The next day Mr. Andrews, as a sort of flatter, put up a hundred-by wire, of course with Roberts, McCoutts & Co. The day after he received his check. It was for \$250. This was a good thing—too good to keep. With the permission of his new-found friend he told some of the boys about it, and Andrews and the boys put up several thousand on sugar. It so happened at this juncture that the stranger's business was concluded in Lorraine. He was on his way back to the metropolis, and as a matter of accommodation, he agreed to deliver the few thousands to Roberts, McCoutts & Co. He gave his receipt for it, and, emerging from the light blue smoke of 20-cent cigars, left the good old town of Lorraine.

In a few days Mr. Andrews, who had received no word from Roberts, McCoutts & Co., wrote them a letter. The letter came back. There was no such firm. He had deposited his check of \$250 in his bank at Lorraine. The check came back. It was a forgery. Mr. Andrews and his friends had been done—done brown. They squealed and the newspapers took it up. The chief of police was horrified—paralyzed. And he was more so when it was discovered that the swell stranger had not only done up Andrews and his crowd, but two or three other crowds as well, all whom he entertained lavishly at the Belmont at different hours of the day and night.

"That's devilish strange," muttered the new chief of police. "How the devil could I have missed that fellow, anyway?" It was devilish strange. But the stranger's part of it was that on the very night when the stranger left two men sat in the back room of a saloon, in an obscure part of town, and conversed in whispers. One of these men resembled the chief of police—the other the slick stranger. At the conclusion of the conversation the stranger

passed a wad of bills to the chief and the chief buttoned them in his inside pocket. And then each went his several ways rejoicing.

Two days went by. When Mr. James F. Wallace, Lorraine's successful business man and real estate agent, came near kicking out of his office a shabby frayed little man he came near making a mistake. This man proved to be a near relative of Wallace's wife. She was away at the time. Wallace was secretly glad of it. All that the man wanted of Mr. Wallace was to get a \$5 check cashed. Wallace sniffed suspiciously, but the amount was small, and he cashed it. The little man discovered that Wallace's wife was to be away for some three weeks. He expressed regret at this, but confided to Wallace that while he was in poor circumstances just at present he was interested in a Chicago estate which was now in process of settlement, and he fully expected to get several thousand dollars in a week or two. He was in Lorraine because he had succeeded in getting a small position there. He did not bother Wallace again for a few days, until he came back with a check for \$10, signed with the name of a small grocery house. The other check had been all right, and Wallace cashed this check. This, too, went through all right. The next time the man came in he was radiant. He had a letter from his Chicago lawyers, in which they said they noted his suggestion that he would have difficulty in getting large checks cashed in a town where he was unknown, and they, therefore, had sent him by express \$5,000 bills, on account of his share in the estate of his deceased relative. He had the express package, and the five \$1,000 bills. He wanted to take this money to his home town and deposit it in his local bank, but preferred not to carry the cash. He therefore requested Mr. Wallace to give him a check for his order. Wallace, who liked moneyed men, acquiesced with alacrity. He put the five bills in the safe, wrote the check, handed it over, and then invited the relative of Mrs. Wallace out to lunch. The little man stipulated that he must be released in time for his train, which went at 3 o'clock. The lunch was finished, and the little man left. Instead of taking a train, he went to a bank, where, by the courtesy of another business man of the place, he was identified as the payee named in the check. He thereupon received from the bank five \$1,000 bills. Then he, too, disappeared.

The same evening Mrs. James F. Wallace returned to town, and James F. told her about her relative. She had a relative of that name, but he had been dead for five years. The next morning James F. Wallace sent the \$5,000 bills to the bank for deposit to his account. The bank returned them with its thanks. Each bill was a cleverly executed counterfeit. James F. Wallace had been taken in—and not he alone, but a dozen other men besides.

And on the evening that the relative of Mrs. Wallace disappeared, he said another man who resembled a man whose name was Peter F. Clancy, talked earnestly together in a dark alley. Some money passed between them.

Again the police force went up in arms. Again the newspapers howled. Again there was a lingering wait of anguish from the victims.

"This thing," exclaimed the Morning Glory in a rage, "this thing must stop. Either the police department is woefully deficient or else the citizens of Lorraine are a pitiful lot of sap heads—one of the two, or both."

A bluff, hearty man, with a travel-stained appearance, stepped into the First National bank, with the proprietor of the Lorraine hotel. This bluff, hearty man wanted to deposit to his credit some \$100. The hotel proprietor was rather proud of this man—for he was John Billings, the famous cattle king of Arizona. Lorraine was a great grain center, and, attracted by the low prices at which feed and fodder was being offered, he had come on to give an order way ahead against the coming winter. He made extensive purchases at several places on credit. As the goods were not to be delivered for some months to come, the

swindled to attend him in person at 3 o'clock on the following day. There were several of these men, and they each of them were invited inside the railing. Then Clancy opened up the door to the clamoring crowd. As soon as quiet was restored, Clancy signaled to an officer who stood at an inner door. Immediately there sauntered into the office a well-dressed man with a smooth face. At his entrance young Mr.

leading between them a bluff, hearty, powerful looking man.

"This man had no sooner entered than there was a wild hub-bub. "Let me get at him!" yelled one of the millionaires wildly. The cattle king, for it was he, folded his arms. "Come on," he said with a twitching mouth, "I can take care of you I guess."

It is to be noticed that this was the first of the three swindlers who had spoken. And when this man spoke, three men slightly started. One was young Andrews, one was James F. Wallace and the third was the millionaire. The cattle king went back.

"Now gentle," said the chief, "all this here's just a bit of play-by-play. Bring in that Tracy fellow," he announced. The Tracy fellow came in. "Tracy," said the chief, "you're made up. Undress."

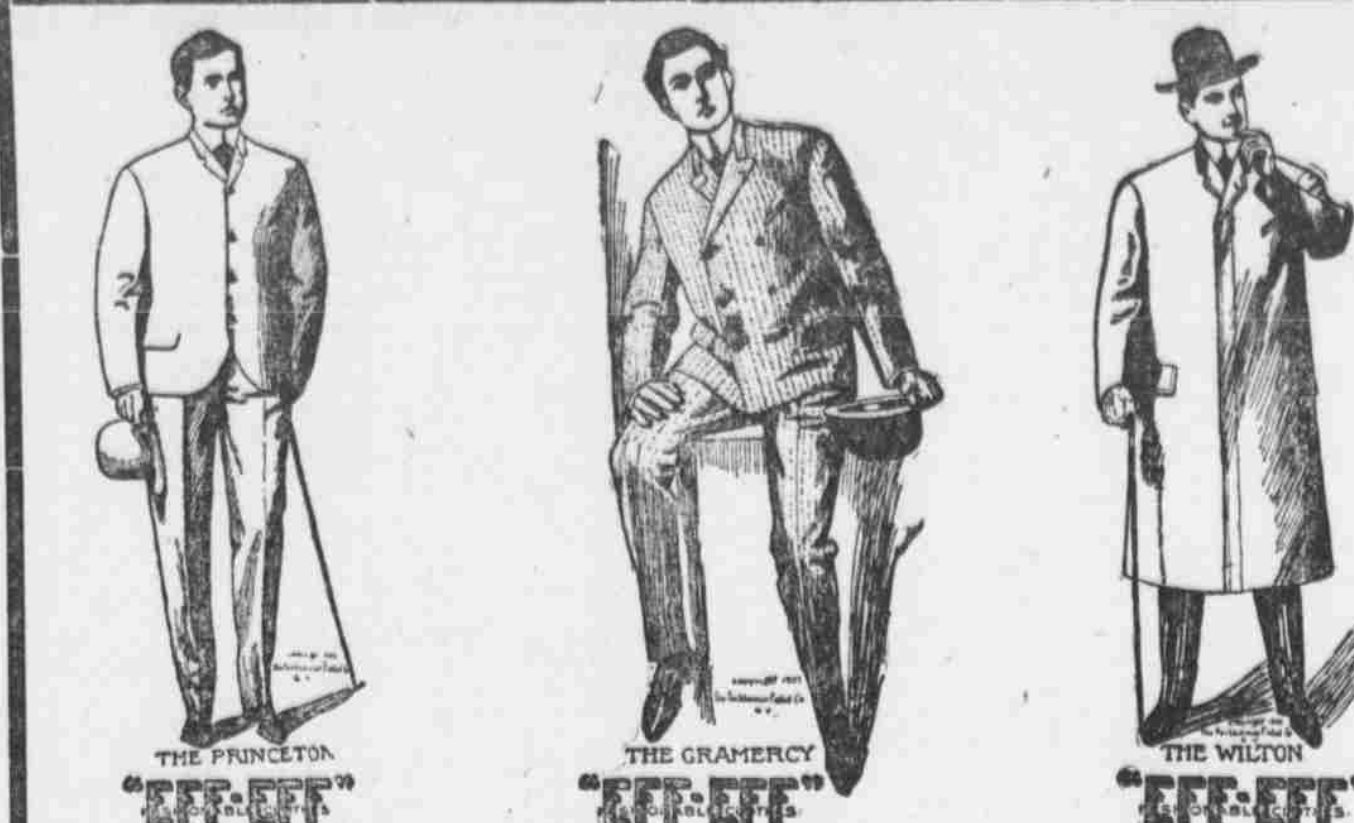
Tracy looked around. "Here?" he asked uncertainly.

The chief answered him gruffly. "I'll save you the trouble," he said. He motioned to two officers, who seized the well-dressed man and jerked from his head a wig.

He smiled a smile large enough for three men. And then the chief smiled. And after the chief smiled he reached back of his head and opened a large safe. From this safe he took out several large rolls of bills. "Gentlemen," he began, "I started in to cure this town of swindlers. Bein' swindled is a disease, and I've been around to vaccinate a few, to prevent the spread of the epidemic. Several of you gentlemen have lost some money, but it was for the good of the community. Now I've caught this three-fold jailbird, gentlemen, and I made him cough up what he had left. I've just about divided it up in the right proportions. And now," he added, holding out the bills to the several victims.

Each grasped his own and began to count it. The first to complete the job was P. Toler Andrews. "Why, why," he plattered, "I've got it all back."

"Mine, to," a dozen voices shouted. The chief smiled again. "You're right, I guess. I started in to cure this town of swindling, and by the help of the police, and by the help of the newspapers, I done it. But gentlemen," he went on, "that fellow wouldn't have amounted to a row of pins all by himself. The man who done the trick is old Boness Smith, the slickest detective in the city of New York, and the greatest sleuth-hound in the world. And that man Boness Smith, gentlemen," concluded the sheriff, with a broad grin, "is none other than that jailbird lookin' fellow that stands there."



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SEDATE STYLES FOR THE MIDDLE AGED AND ELDERLY MAN. STYLES WITH PLENTY OF DASH AND GINGER FOR THE DRESSY YOUNG FELLOWS.

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After he made a little round of calls upon the grain dealers, he said good-bye and went back to his cattle ranch. That is where he said he was going. Where he actually went no one exactly knew—except, perhaps, one man. That man was Clancy, chief of the police department.

Ultimately the grain dealers and the millionaires communicated with John Billings at his far west address. He answered leading between them a bluff, hearty, powerful looking man.

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Nebraska Clothing Co. A Superb Display of Women's Man-tailored Suits

Have you visited the beautiful third floor department—by all odds the handsomest, best appointed and most elegant show room in Omaha? Take advantage of Saturday's very special inducements to give yourself the pleasure of a visit. In keeping with the elegance of the surroundings you'll find the collection of women's made-up wearables unsurpassed in styles and extent of the display. From the new lines we've selected the following for special emphasis Saturday—every price should prove an irresistible temptation to come.



Special Offerings in WOMEN'S TAILOR-MADE SUITS

- Women's Tailor Made Suits: Made of a very fine quality of the new Elaine Cheviot in all shades—made of the very newest shapes—with cape collar and the new sleeves. Suits you pay \$25 for in any other store in Omaha. Our Price \$18.75
Women's Tailor Made Suits: Made of the very finest quality of Zibeline and Panne Cheviot—the new Louis XIV shape (exactly like above picture, elegantly finished and tailored—as good as any \$50 suit in America. Our Special Price \$35
Women's Tailor Made Suits: In Broadcloths, Cheviots, Zibelines and fancy mixtures in all the very latest effects—dresses or walking lengths; they would be considered cheap for \$25 elsewhere. Our Price \$24.75
Women's High Class Tailor Made Suits: Just arrived by express, about 50 sample suits, from the finest makers in this country. They are true copies from the other side—only one of a kind. Come and see them. At Prices \$47.50, \$55, \$65, \$75

GOSSIP ON COMMISSION ROW

Old School Lobsters Are in Town with that Same Tight Hand-Shake. Some fine old-school lobsters are in town again shaking hands in their hearty way making dates with the familiar live-bolled joints. There is no half-hearted limps about the hand grasp of the Maine lobster, he likes you there; although he may be your enemy in the Lobster-Newberg-dream-hop combination. The lobster of last week were as a rule the young and perhaps slightly flavorless ones who, through dare devilry and lack of specific gravity, had been caught in the storms and had to seek refuge in the lobster pots. The bigger lobsters stayed safe below until the storm was over. This week the Maine coast is calm, and so the good old lobsters are again on the market, and the price, which was last week up, is again at the normal for this season.

Now is the time to make a shell-fish sandwich of yourself. A full line of oysters are in and for this season doing the biggest business ever known. This will increase until after New Year. Of the less aristocratic oysters who come here in bulk to be canned the smallest and easiest to buy are the Standards. But if they are little they are the true marines.

Will Hold City Liable. Mary A. Heath, 1317 Burt street, the mother of Leo Heath, the messenger boy who was dangerously injured by falling from a bicycle on Thirteenth street between Cass and California on September 1, has filed notice with the city advising that she will hold the city liable on the grounds of a rough and obstruction-filled stone pavement. The boy, it is said, had his skull fractured and was otherwise injured permanently.

Notice to the Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben. Our brothers to the south of us are holding this week a street carnival, and the board has set aside an Omaha night Friday, September 25, and his royal highness, King Ak-Sar-Ben IX requests that all his loyal citizens journey to South Omaha on that date and participate in the festivities of our brother knights.

UNION PACIFIC \$50.00 ROUND TRIP. Los Angeles San Francisco. Tickets on sale Oct. 8th to 17th, inclusive, RETURN LIMIT, NOV. 30th. Sixteen hours quicker than any other line to the Pacific Coast. For full information call or write CITY TICKET OFFICE 1324 FARNAM STREET, PHONE 310.

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Restores Vigor Horsford's Acid Phosphate. A teaspoon in a glass of water, taken when exhausted or depressed from overwork, insomnia, poor digestion, or summer heat, gives tone and vigor to the entire system.