

When a murder is committed the dives hear about it—it is whispered about in its details among the denizens of the underworld. The police, who, in the eyes of the world, are following fine spun clues, go about their work in a really simple manner. They round up gangs of well known criminals, threaten each of them with punishment upon some overlooked offense, and get, in return for immunity, the desired information. Then, without hesitation, they arrest the criminal.

No. 390 and 400 understood this system, and although they had been at this juncture caught in the perpetration of a serious offense, yet they knew and understood the anxiety of the police force to run the Smith mystery to the earth. Accordingly, after talking the matter over carefully they concluded to send for the chief. They intimated that they had some news about Constitutional Smith. The chief, without the slightest faith in their announcement, nevertheless had the two produced before him in his office. With him at the time was the plain-clothes man from New York.

"Now, what have you two fellows got to say?" demanded the chief. Say it, and say it quick.

No. 400 shook his head. "That won't do, Chief," he answered doggedly. "We may know a story and we may not. The question is, if we do know one and if we can help you put your finger on this here Smith what good it's a goin' to do us? That's the question."

The chief snorted, but he was listening just the same. "Can't do a thing for you," he answered; "you're in it, that's all. What d'ye think? You ain't got any story anyways. It's only a bluff. You can't get anything out o' me."

"All right, then, Chief," said No. 400, warily; "then send us back. That's all we've got to say."

The chief and the plain-clothes man put their heads together and talked for a long while. Finally the chief again faced the two.

"Let's see," he inquired; "did you fellows swipe anything the other night?"

"Nary thing," they answered; "everything we had was took off'n us. We didn't get a thing." The chief waved his hand.

"It's all right, then," he said. "Go on and tell your story." Still they shook their heads.

"Not yet," they answered. The chief snorted once more. "Well, then," he said, "I tell you it's all right. I'll see that you are not prosecuted. I promise that, mind, if we can put our hands on this man Smith, and through you. Is that enough?"

The chief was famed for being a man of his word. But it was difficult to get his word. He was too apt to appear to promise, but to fail actually in binding himself. He had bound himself now to the entire satisfaction of the two, and they were satisfied. No. 400, who was the spokesman, began his tale.

"Constitutional Smith was here in town—he came here some months ago and he's here yet. We saw him when he first came here. We've seen him a good many times since. I'll tell you how it was. We was in Coloman's alley one night, waitin' for a fellow, when we see this Constitutional Smith come down the street and hide in an old shed. He hadn't been there more than ten minutes before another fellow came along. Smith was layin' for this fellow, and knocked him out and dragged him in the little shed."

"Well?" said the chief.

"Well, it wasn't more than fifteen minutes more than the door to the shed came open and a man came out. And right here was the funny part. The man that came out was the man that had been knocked out, that's what. He was as right as a trivet. That was the funny thing."

"Well?" said the chief, impatiently.

"Well," went on the other, "we ain't the kind to mix in anything that we ain't up to ourselves. But after this fellow had walked away we went over and peeped into that shed. And what d'ye think? Say, there was Constitutional Smith lyin' on the floor and breathin' heavy—Constitutional Smith, mind. An' the other man had walked away."

The plain clothes man was taking shorthand notes. The chief again opened his mouth. "Well?" he remarked again.

"That's almost all there is to it. We skipped. We hadn't no business there, an', naturally, we didn't want to get in a mix up over it, an' that's all, except just one thing—"

"And that thing?" asked the plain clothes man.

"The man that had been knocked out, we found out later, was the man who lay on the floor of the shed. Smith had changed clothes with him. We thought he was Smith. Smith walked away in that man's clothes. And he did it because he looked like him, or pretty much like him at any rate. And the man that had been knocked out—"

"That's the point," said the plain clothes man.

"That man," went on No. 400, "that man was nobody else but Billington O'Keefe right here in town. That's who it was. It was Billington O'Keefe."

The chief never moved. Under his hand was an electric button. He pushed it with his finger. A couple of officers appeared at the door.

"Billy," said the chief to one of them, "take these two suckers back to the cooler. We're through with them."

"But," protested No. 400, "I tell you it's so. Find out for yourself—"

"But, nothin'," said the chief. "You're a couple of merry liars. Take 'em back, Billy."

They were taken back. The chief whirled in his chair and faced the plain clothes man.

"What d'ye think of it?" he inquired.

The plain clothes man shook his head. "I'm inclined to think it's true," he answered, "but that's not enough. By George, it's up to us to prove it. We've got to prove that this man here is Smith and not O'Keefe, and we haven't got any evidence of the fact. There's the trouble. If there was some positive difference between them that we could put our fingers on. But we don't want to have all New York and all Monroe laughing at us. We want to be mighty careful, but we've surely got to do something pretty soon."

The chief shook his head. "I don't believe a word of it," he said, "but I ain't so much afraid of tackling Billington O'Keefe that if we get a hook to hang on I won't help you out. You get your information and I'll go to O'Keefe with you. We can settle it then and there; he won't mind. I'm pretty sure of that."

A few days later the creditors of Billington O'Keefe, large and small, received a notice that the claims of all would be paid in full, with interest and costs, if any, provided each creditor would attend in person with a general release two evenings later, at half past 8, at the O'Keefe mansion. The foreclosure sale of the house itself was due to take place on the morning following this meeting.

What these notices meant no one knew. Smith, if he had anything up his sleeve, certainly gave no sign.

Another thing happened on the day of the meeting. The plain clothes man received a telegram in cipher from New York. Translated, this telegram read:

"Smith has letters H. S. tattooed on right arm; dancing girl on left and Goddess of Liberty on breast. This is correct; just found it out. Proceed."

The plain clothes man exhibited it to the chief. The chief was pleased.

"Now," he said, "we've got something to work on. We'll have O'Keefe come down here. But, no," he went on, "he's had trouble enough lately. He may not want to come down here. I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll call at his house tonight after hours and we can settle this thing in three shakes of a lamb's tail. That's what!"

The plain clothes man did not want to wait. He did not like to take any chances. He was afraid the story might be true, and if so, that the bird would fly. But he was in the chief's hands and under considerable measure of obligation to him; so he subsided.

That night, a little before 8, two men attended at the house of O'Keefe. They were the plain clothes man and the chief. "Mr. O'Keefe in?" asked the chief of the servant.

The servant shook her head. The plain clothes man gave an inward groan. He had heard of the meeting called for tonight and he thought that O'Keefe, or Smith, had determined to make a big bluff, and then, without attempting to keep his appointment with his creditors, would leave town and escape.

"I'm pretty sure," said the maid, "that Mr. O'Keefe went out. But he may have come back. Wait a minute and I'll see and make sure."

She went and returned almost immediately. "Mr. O'Keefe is in," she said. The plain clothes man sighed with relief. "If you'll give me your names," she continued, "I'll take them up."

The Chief and the plain clothes man exchanged significant glances. They had stationed two or three men outside, but they were still afraid of escape. They gave their right names, however, but took the precaution to follow in the footsteps of the girl. They were immediately behind her when she entered the little den. They did not give her time to announce their presence. The Chief, somewhat abashed, pressed forward and shook her master by the hand.

"Mr. O'Keefe," he said, "we're here on what may seem to you a ridiculous sort of errand. But it's a thing that's got to be done, and I know you won't mind it. I'll tell you the facts."

The plain clothes man scarcely breathed. He kept his eye on every movement of the man sitting at the table. He narrowly watched his countenance.

"Mr. O'Keefe," began the Chief again. "I'll tell you what it is. There's a fellow over in New York that's one of the slickest strong-arm men and swindlers on the continent. The police over there have laid at his door any number of crimes. His name is Constitutional Smith—"

The man at the table never moved. "Hezekiah Smith is his real name, but he's called Constitutional Smith. Now the point is this: My friend here, Mr. Huckleback, is one of the best men of the whole department over in New York. He's detailed here on this Smith case. They traced Smith here—understand. We're pretty sure that he reached Monroe; but then they lost him. But there's just one thing about him that

makes trouble. You see, but for a beard, he looked just like you—"

The other nodded and looked from the detective to the chief. "I see," he said, easily, "and then—"

"Exactly," returned the chief, "that's just it. And we ain't saying anything about it yet, because we don't place no stock in it, and that story is that the real O'Keefe was knocked out, and that Smith, because he looked so much like him, took his place. See? And so it comes down to the possibility—"

The chief stopped and smiled weakly. Then he went on: "To the possibility that—that you're Smith and not O'Keefe."

The man facing them was so placid and undisturbed that the chief felt like a fool—he was sure he had made a mistake. The plain clothes man kept still and said nothing, but watched everything that happened.

"That's the whole thing," said the chief, "the New York gang suspect that you're Smith and not O'Keefe. Now, they've struck just one way to prove it, and that's just why we're here tonight."

"And that one way," asked the other, easily, "just what is that?"

The chief stammered. "This—this here Smith," he said, "had some tattoo marks on him, and these marks we know, and we want to see if you've got these marks—that's all. Hang it, I hate to ask you, but I've got to do it."

The man at the table toyed lightly with a metal paper knife. The plain clothes man watched him. Finally the former, still with the knife in his hand, smiled and spoke.

"Would you mind," he asked, "telling me just what those marks were?" The chief looked at the plain clothes man and the plain clothes man looked at the chief.

"They were," said the plain clothes man, "the initials H. S. and a dancing girl and a goddess of liberty, all upon the upper portion of the body."

The man at the table thoughtfully poised the paper knife in the air.

"Mr. O'Keefe," said the chief, "you've had your own troubles, and I hate to ask you to do it, but there are some things that we police officers have got to do to accommodate others. Is it too much to ask you to strip here in our presence and let us look at your arms and chest? In one way it's a good deal to ask, but—"

The other had risen. He frowned. "It is a good deal to ask, gentlemen," he began. He rose to his full height. The plain clothes man and the chief instinctively placed their hands upon their hip pockets.

The other man hastily tore off his coat and vest. Then started forward suddenly and took off his linen shirt. How easily it would have been for Constitutional Smith to leap upon these two men, throw them to the floor, leap through a window and escape. But no such move was made. The chief and the plain clothes man backed off a little and kept tight hold of their revolvers.

"I suppose," said the other man, pausing an instant, "that I must accommodate you. Well, here goes, and good luck to you."

Then he did something that caused the chief and the plain clothes man to stand stock still and look on. Their hands fell nervously from their guns. Their eyes bulged out.

And for no apparent reason. For all that this man had done was to remove his inner shirt and exhibit to them his breast and arms. But upon this breast and these arms there were no such designs tattooed such as they had described. Upon the chest there was quite a different design. And the marks upon the arms consisted of two words, and that was all. And these two words were "Billington O'Keefe," and nothing more.

For this man was not Constitutional Smith. It was none other than Billington O'Keefe—the real Billington O'Keefe—come back after many months to claim his own.

"Well—I'll-be-hanged!" exclaimed the plain clothes man. He grunted with disappointment. "I could have sworn," he said, "that you were Constitutional Smith—though I will confess," he added, "that in this light you don't look so much like him as I thought you would."

The chief burst into an embarrassed laugh. "Mr. O'Keefe," he said, holding out his hand, "don't give this away to anybody. We'll be the laughing stock of the place. There's a fine supper, and a big one, due you from me and Mr. Huckleback."

Later in the headquarters the chief called for the two toughs. "You're a pretty pair of liars," he said, knocking their heads together; "this cooks your goose. After this you'll go up for the biggest term you can get; and, by George, after that I'll follow you up close. You fellows'll never get a chance to lie to me again. I'll tell you that." He knocked their heads together once more, just for good measure, and then sent them back.

Mr. Huckleback reluctantly telegraphed in detail to New York. Next day he was ordered back home, and he went. Back in the O'Keefe house, Billington O'Keefe was once more donning his wearing apparel, and while he was about it the door below was opened from the outside with the aid of a key, and a man ascended the stairs and entered the den. This man was Constitutional Smith.

Now it may seem queer that Billington

O'Keefe, who by this time knew the whole story about Smith, did not give Smith up to the chief and his gang, for the punishment he deserved. It will appear later why he did not.

Constitutional Smith stepped inside the room, and shut the door. "Who the devil are you?" asked Constitutional Smith, "and what the devil are you doing in my house?" He might have pounced upon O'Keefe at once, had he so desired, but he did not so desire. It would involve a noisy scuffle, and the house would be alarmed, and it would end in his ruin. Besides, Billington O'Keefe was holding a revolver in his hand. Constitutional Smith had determined upon a much bolder scheme.

"What the devil are you doing in my house?" demanded Constitutional Smith.

"I'm Billington O'Keefe," answered the other. "You know that well enough by this time."

"Know it?" retorted Smith, "of course I don't know it. I am Billington O'Keefe."

"Prove it," returned O'Keefe. Smith smiled. "I don't have to prove it," he answered. "My people will recognize me as O'Keefe. They will know me. It's up to you to prove that you are Billington O'Keefe and that I am not."

"I guess that's a simple matter," returned O'Keefe, "for you have your initials and the goddess of liberty and a dancing girl tattooed on your body—foolish of you, too."

Smith started. "How did you know that?" he demanded. O'Keefe smiled. He did not answer the question. He tore off his shirt once more. "And these are the marks that I have upon my body," he continued.

Constitutional Smith stared. He was beaten and he knew it. And what was more, Billington O'Keefe knew it. But he admired genius. "You're a clever fellow," he said to Smith. Smith bowed. "I am," he admitted. "So are you yourself."

O'Keefe beckoned with his hand toward a chair. "Sit down," said Billington O'Keefe to Constitutional Smith, "come now and let us reason together."

(To be continued.)

Pointed Paragraphs

Men talk shop and women talk shopping. The silent partner in a firm always has a lot to say.

Stock quotations are the dialogue used in comic papers.

Haste is said to make waste, yet there are few hustlers in almshouses.

Many a man follows the races because he is unable to get ahead of them.

Some real estate men make a specialty of transforming molehills into mountains.

The girl who looks forward to a matrimonial alliance should not be forward-looking.

An Ohio genius is said to have invented a device for utilizing the heat of an argument.

Many a man is capable of judging the affairs of others better than he is of judging his own.

At the age of 40 a man is very apt to feel under everlasting obligations to the chap who married the girl he was spongy on at the age of 20.—Chicago News.

A Bachelor's Reflections

A man can keep his expenses 'way down at home by playing the races.

Some of those shirt waists make a man feel as if it was time to put out the lights.

It is hardly worth while for people to get a divorce, since they just go and do it all over again.

Mighty few men can ever be really happy unless somebody is trying in vain to cure them of a vice.

Some men have such an imagination they can be as light-hearted as bachelors when they are away from home.—New York Press.



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