

drum American town, not an hour and a half from his office chair by the expresses.

In going about this task he was to conduct himself with the frankness and straightforwardness of a sneak-thief. Not a soul in New York was to know where he had gone. Not a soul in Hunston must dimly suspect what he had come for. It must be gumshoe work from start to finish, and the *Cypriani's* motto would be the inspiring word, "Sh-h-h." Though he had to find a nondescript child whom he did not know from Eve, he was forbidden to do it in a natural, easy, and dashing way. He could not ring her mother's door-bell, ask for her, throw a meal-sack over her head, and whip his waiting horses to a gallop. No, he must beat the tall grasses before the old homestead until such time as she chose to walk abroad alone. Really, when you came to think of it, it was an asinine sort of proposition.

But when Mary did come out of that house, he saw that the fun would begin. A well brought-up, moneyed, petted and curled girl of twelve was no easy pawn in anybody's game. He could not win her love by a mere offer of gum-drops. In fact, getting acquainted was likely to be a difficult matter, taxing his ingenuity to a standstill. But he entertained no doubts of his ability to do it, sooner or later.

"Not to put too fine a point on it," mused he, glancing out of his twentieth story window, "they flock to me, children do. I'm their good old Uncle Dudley. But why the deuce isn't she five years younger?"

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