

should return immediately for more the following evening."

Bones chuckled. "Darkies are fond of chicken," he replied, quoting me. "Yes, I think he will return to-night, my dear doctor."

"Nevertheless, Bones, if you hide as you say in the hen-coop, Mr. Chicken-stealer, whoever he is, will see you and get away."

"My dear Swatson, that is where the professional crime tracker comes to the front. The only part of me visible on a dark night will be (provided I have on a black wrapper) my face and hands, and these, doctor, I shall darken by means of grease paint, so that I shall be as black as a shadow against the side of the coop."

Little more was said that evening in face of that brilliant scheme, but as I did not wish to stain my skin with the stuff it was decided that Bones should go forth unaided and alone.

After a light dinner, Bones insisted upon my disguising him immediately, noting also, with some misgivings, how much like a negro he did look.

Sherlock Bones, however, was decidedly elated, and procured a bag, which he said he would clap over the rascal's head the minute he showed the slightest resistance. And thus he departed.

Next morning, as I was awakened by the brilliant sunshine that gained admittance through our window each morning at an early hour, I turned to question my friend Sherlock Bones as to the success of his adventure.

There was no answer. Turning to ascertain the cause, I discovered that he was not there, and that his bed had not been slept in!

Full of mingled fears and misgivings, I dressed myself hurriedly, and was about to go in quest of my friend, when I was stopped on the street by our visitor of the day before, Lord Ormsby.

"Hullo!" he cried. "We trapped the thief, sir, last night in the hen-coop. But whatever was wrong with your friend Sherlock Bones? He didn't put in an appearance at all."

"What!" I almost screamed. "Do you mean you——"

"Yes," cried his Lordship, excitedly. "Yes, we caught the chicken thief in the hen-coop. He had a big bag there, ready to steal some more of my pretty bantams, the knave. But we trapped him, sir! I grabbed the nigger from behind, and smothered him in his own sack, while my servant Wilkes fetched the sheriff, who locked the black rascal up. It was as neat a piece of work as I've seen done for some time, sir!"

"But," I cried in dismay, scenting what had happened, "didn't he say anything to excuse himself?"

"He couldn't," grinned Lord Ormsby, "he was half smothered in his sack, as I told you, sir. Oh, it was decidedly neat, sir! Decidedly neat!"

Without a word I turned and almost ran down the street to Beta street, on which was situated the public station. Into this I burst, and arrived, breathless, in time to hear the clerk read out the first half-dozen charges. At last he read out the charge of chicken-stealing against a negro, "name unknown." All eyes were turned to the door as he did so, and in a minute in marched two officers, dragging between them no other than Mr. Sherlock Bones.

He had managed to rub off most of the incriminating paint, but still presented a most forlorn, hopeless picture.

"Waat do you mean, you blundering, half-witted fools!" screamed Sherlock Bones, "to mistake me for a negro—me, Sherlock Bones!"

Amid the roar of laughter that followed the sheriff and court officials saw their mistake, for in daylight now it could be plainly seen that the prisoner was no negro, but a white man, and promptly set him free, at which he made a bound for the door and started down the road, with myself in hot pursuit.

"Sherlock Bones!" I cried. "Wherever are you going?"

"Back to London!" screamed Bones, almost purple with rage. "Back to London, and out of this miserable country! Quick!"

"But we had better return to the hotel first," I cried. "There's chicken for dinner."