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## The Goat Degree

By AUGUSTUS WITFIELD

I entered Carlock's apartments and found him swinging in a hammock. He gave me a quick glance and heaved a deep sigh.

"Why so melancholy?" I inquired. "I had hopes that your afternoon would be at my disposal, but of course, since you are going to the ball with Emmons, I cannot look for you to assist me in the mysterious case of O. B. C. Osofat."

"Who told you I am going to the ball game?" I asked.

"Why, Watchem," he answered, "the truth is self-evident. You are wearing your summer garments on a week day. You can have put them on only for the purpose of lending color to the yarn you told your chief that your grandmother is to be buried this afternoon."

"As she has died at least a dozen times to my knowledge, I can deduce but one thing, and that is that the interest will be at the usual place."

"Carlock," I commented, "you are right. But what gets me is that you know I am going with Emmons."

"Easiest thing out," replied Carlock. "Emmons came in and tried to borrow a dollar from me. Said he was going to the ball game. Ergo, he must be going with you or he wouldn't have to borrow the money."

"Carlock," I said in amazement, "you're a wonder. But tell me, why are you swinging in a hammock?"

"Because I enjoy the suspense," he replied. "Suspense stimulates the mental faculties, and, besides, a hammock affords free way to the imagination."

"Have you discovered any clue to the mysterious disappearance of the case of Fat-Reducio which was consigned to O. B. C. Osofat, and which was lost while in transit on the Pole-to-Pole railway?" I asked.

"Before answering your query," replied Carlock, "I wish to refresh your memory on the subject. You remember it was while I was engaged on the famous case of the Gold Coupler that O. B. C. Osofat came to me with the astounding information that a case of Fat-Reducio had disappeared in transit on the Pole-to-Pole railway."

"Mr. Osofat had ordered the preparation with the idea of reducing his excessive weight, and, in anticipation of the results which had been guaranteed by the manufacturers, he had

donated most of his clothing to the home for above octogenarians, and had ordered a liberal supply of new ones to fit a man weighing a hundred pounds less, or one hundred and seventy-six pounds.

"The preparation had been consigned to him by the manufacturers at Phantasmia, and was receipted for in good order by the Pole-to-Pole at Patricktonia. Somewhere between that point and this city it disappeared completely. The resources of the road have been exhausted, and as a last resort my marvelous powers have been enlisted in an effort to solve the mystery."

"Mr. Osofat is one of the largest stockholders of the road, and, consequently, the directors are especially anxious to please him, as they realize that heavy stockholders are not to be made light of."

Carlock paused, and opening his medicine chest, he handed me a paper tablet.

"What is this for?" I asked.

"Take it," he replied, "it will help you to digest the evidence."

I did as he directed, and he continued:

"I took hold of the case there was absolutely nothing to work on. After infinite pains I discovered that the baggage car of the train that received the case at Patricktonia was in charge of Pud Judson, one of the heavyweight baggage smashers of the road. I looked up his antecedents and found that he had lots of first-class records, which he used on his phonograph. He was credited with being as straight as a string, but considerably thicker."

"I also discovered that, after reaching New York on that trip, Pud had disappeared and was missing for four weeks. When he finally reported for duty he had grown considerably thinner. The cause of his falling off in weight has never been explained."

"As the case now stands, I remarked, 'what do you make of it?'

By logical deduction, I arrive at the conclusion that Pud Judson is responsible for the disappearance of the case of Fat-Reducio, and I propose to fasten the crime on him."

Precisely at three-thirty, the indicator on the wall announced that Pud Judson had entered the building, and was even then on his way to Carlock's apartments. In a minute or so the elevator stopped, and then there was a knock at the door. Carlock opened it, admitting a short, emaciated man in a railroad man's uniform.

"You sent for me?" he asked, addressing the great detective.

"I summoned you," said Carlock. "Be good enough to note the distinction. A professional man never sends for any one."

Carlock surveyed Judson critically, having taken a post-graduate course in surveying at a correspondence

school. Suddenly he made the startling accusation:

"Judson, you are short!"

Judson cowered.

"Only a matter of fifty shares or so," he asserted.

"I do not refer to your petty market speculations," said Carlock severely. "I refer to your weight. You have lost about a hundred pounds. Had you lost this weight in a legitimate manner it would not have been necessary for me to summon you, but since you have usurped the loss which should have been another's, it is my duty to secure from you a statement of the facts."

"I do not know what you mean," asserted Judson.

"You know that on your last run there was a case of Fat-Reducio consigned to O. B. C. Osofat of this city. You also know that when you reached here the case had disappeared."

"But why accuse me of knowing what became of it? If the case was lost, I do not see how I am to blame for it," protested Judson.

"Judson," said Carlock, "a crime has been committed, and it is necessary that the criminal be found. You were in that car alone with the case of Fat-Reducio. You are known to have often expressed dissatisfaction with your excessive weight."

"In the solitude of your car, you succumbed to the temptation, and when no eye was on you, you ate up that case. Come, man, you may as well admit it. I know what I am talking about."

"I did not eat it," said Judson. "I was not in the car alone. There was a fat man on board. It was consigned to a cattle show in Kentucky. I tell you I know nothing about it."

"Watchem," said Carlock, turning to me, "this is the toughest case I've ever tackled. I've got to get an admission out of him at any cost. The directors have ordered me to make a report as quickly as possible."

He turned, and, opening his safe, he took a handful of gold pieces from his pocket. Facing the gold on the table, he addressed Judson:

"Did you ever see this before?"

"No," replied Judson.

"It is yours," intimated Carlock.

"No, no," moaned Judson. "I wish it was."

"It is yours," repeated Carlock.

"Come, now, like a good fellow, admit that you ate the Fat-Reducio."

"I do not understand," wailed Judson.

"But if you say the money is mine, perhaps I am mistaken. Perhaps I did eat the Fat-Reducio."

"The money is yours," Carlock asserted him.

"Come, now, admit that you ate the case of Fat-Reducio."

"What all this?" exclaimed Judson, joyfully. "Yes, I think I did eat it."

He picked up the gold pieces and let them flow from one hand to the other. Then he put them into his pocket.

"You did it," persisted Carlock. "You

know you did it."

"Yes; I did it," said Judson, wearily.

"Whew!" exclaimed Carlock. "That was a tough job. Twenty minutes by the clock. Did you photograph it, Watchem?"

"Yes," I replied; "it is all on my card."

Carlock dismissed Judson, and proceeded to transcribe a full report of the confession. He was a lightning operator on the typewriter, and I watched the sparks flying from the machine as he wrote.

"Are you not afraid of setting fire to the paper?" I asked.

"No danger," he replied. "I use anbestos safety-paper."

As he finished his labors, the postman entered and handed him a letter.

Carlock passed it to me and asked me to read it to him.

I broke the seal and opened it.

Clearing my throat, I read:

HOOP, HORN & HIDE, Goat-Breeders, Venezuela, S. A.

Mr. Carlock: Buenos Aires, U. S. A.

Dear Mr. Carlock:—We are addressing you as the head of the detective staff of the Pole-to-Pole railway, and beg to report to you that some time since we shipped one of our prize fat goats over your road to the Kentucky Agricultural Fair. The goat was a beautiful specimen, weighing 220 pounds.

Shortly after its delivery to the Agricultural show people it commenced to lose weight, and in the short space of one week it lost the amazing sum of 100 pounds. It is needless to note that the goat was unfit for show purposes, and we were compelled to withdraw it.

We determined to investigate the cause of this loss in weight, and on Mr. Arsenic Lee Ping was assigned to the job. With the greatest care he located the man who had charge of the baggage-car in which the goat had made the trip to Kentucky.

He found him in New York suffering from a mysterious malady, and, claiming himself as a trained nurse, he gained admission into the sick room. He was rewarded by learning from the delirious ravings of Pud Judson that a case of Fat-Reducio in the car had been entirely consumed by our prize fat goat.

We propose to enter suit against the Pole-to-Pole railway for damages sustained by us through your carelessness in transporting our goat.

Mr. Arsenic Lee Ping sends you his greetings, and assures you that you will have to get up early to beat him.

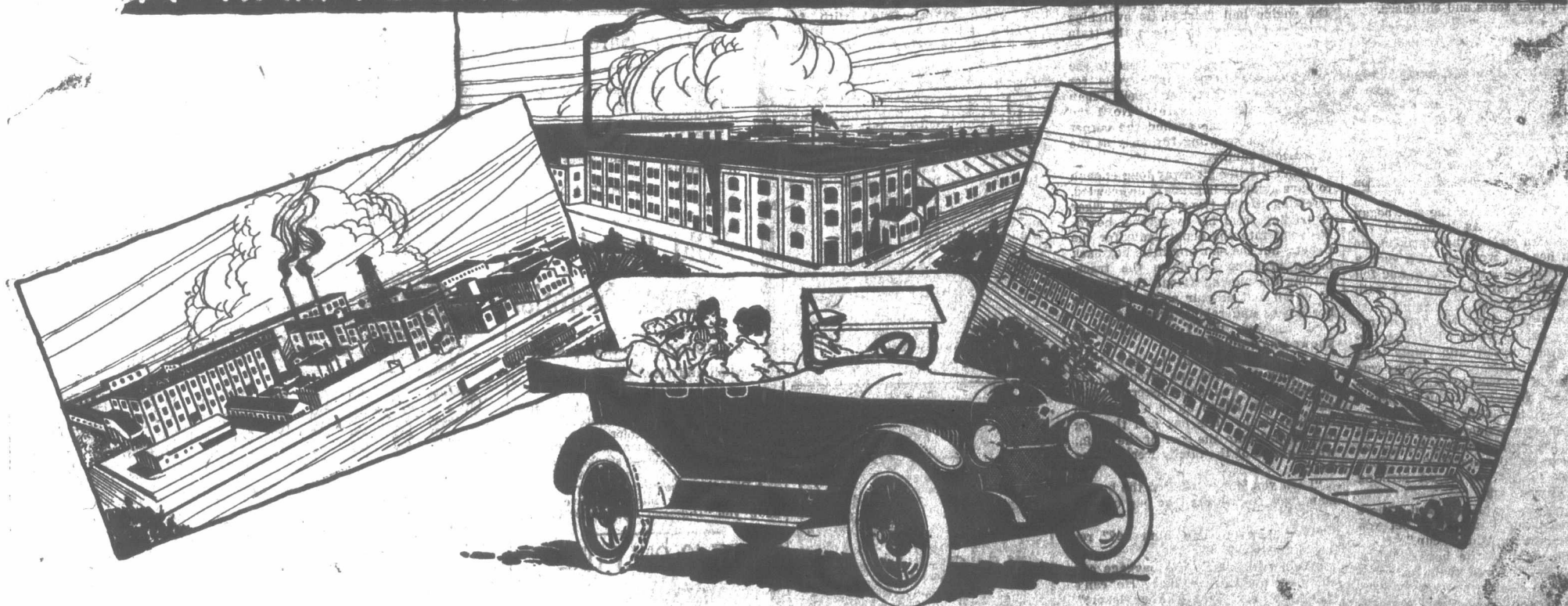
Very sincerely,

Hoop, Horn & Hide.

"Carlock," I commented, "it looks to me as though Pud Judson has the best of you. There seem to be two goats in this case."

"No," replied Carlock, bitterly. "There is only one. Fat is."

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