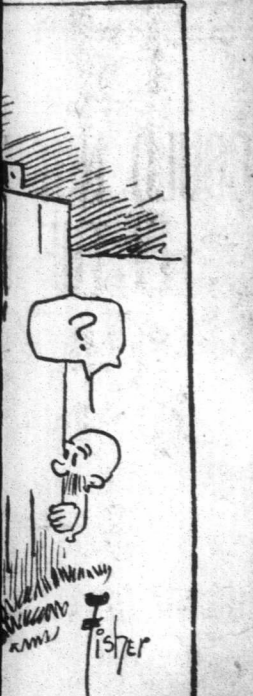


"Fisher"



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CASE-BOOK OF A PRIVATE DETECTIVE

Inside History of the Methods Employed in Criminal Investigation, Embracing True Narratives of Interesting Cases by a Former Operative of the William J. Burns Detective Agency. BY DAVID CORNELL

5—The Bribe Takers HOW A CLIQUE OF CORRUPT CITY FATHERS WAS BROUGHT TO BOOK.

(Copyright, 1912, by International Press Bureau.) Editor's Note:—In order that no annoyance may accrue through the publication of these narratives to persons named therein, other names and places have in many instances been substituted for the real ones.

The connection of the Burns detective agency with the exposures of bribes and bribe-takers in various towns throughout the country has been so well exploited that it is unnecessary for me to say anything about it here. I am going to tell the actual story of how the ring of choice crooks, in the council and out, who had for years looted the city of Springvale finally were, run to earth, sent to prison, or otherwise rendered innocuous and the political life of the city purged for a time at least.

Springvale is not the real name of the town. The case is too recent, and there are too many raw threads of it still hanging about, to permit the use of the actual name. But ahead of readers, who have kept track of my story in the newspapers in the last year, may be able to guess which of our cities it is that I am telling about. It is a typical case of the exposure of municipal corruption by outside detectives, and has been duplicated in a half dozen instances in other cities to my own knowledge.

Springvale had for years been what a magazine writer once called "corrupted and content." It was a busy manufacturing town. It was prosperous. That is, there usually was plenty of work to be had for the working people, plenty of business for the merchants, and plenty of money to be handled by the local banks.

Naturally these violations could not be committed and continued, year after year, without being disturbed, without the connivance of the local authorities. The mayor, the councilman, the chief of police, the building commissioners, in fact, all the active heads of the city government, must have winked at the lawlessness of the factory owners, or the lawlessness would have been stopped.

Naturally, these heads of the local government, being human, and most of them politicians, did not agree to wink so accommodatingly as to let the good of their health. They did wink, there was no doubt about it. Thus, the factories became a fertile source of corruption of the city government of Springvale.

The whole town, naturally, in time came to take its moral tone from the influence. The banks were in on the deal. The bank that contributed most to the prosperity of the politicians was

wooden blocks for paving in your city knew little about how such things are managed. Now you and I, my dear Alderman, are men of experience and we know how such things are done. I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you at noon at the imperial hotel in your city. It is long since I have taken part in any selling campaign, but in a matter like this, Alderman, I feel it is better and safer that I, and I alone, cover the ground.

"I suggest that you destroy this letter. I have always found it advisable to save as few papers as possible. I am, very truly yours, HERMAN V. STEGER, President American Wood Block Co."

"When Stein got that letter he saw at once that it was from a man of his own heart. The tone of it showed the writer to be 'right' according to Stein's peculiar point of view. The cautious advice to destroy the letter was a warning. It showed that 'Steger' had been through the mill and was too wise a bird to overlook any bets. Stein sat down and wrote a brief note to Steger, advising him that he looked forward to the latter's appearance at the imperial hotel with much pleasure."

"I came into Springvale at night and registered at the imperial as Herman V. Steger. I stayed close to my room the next morning. It seemed indeed that Stein was awaiting my arrival with much pleasure, for at noon a telephone message from him informed me that having seen my name on the register, he walked impatiently to welcome me to Springvale."

"Come up," Mr. Stein, I said, "I have been expecting you." Stein and Corcoran came up together. I had taken the best suite of rooms in the hotel. I had attired myself in a manner as expensive as was consistent with fairly good taste. I wanted to give the impression of plenty of ready money.

"Well, gentlemen," I said, "I am here to sell Springvale some cedar blocks. And I won't be so foolish as to talk about how much money I can make the city."

"The whole town ought to have wooden block paving," said Corcoran. "I know it. It's got to have it." Again we laughed. We were getting along famously.

"Show me a good hand in this matter, gentlemen," said I, "and I'll show you a better one."



"But how is the money to be got to the right men?" "The money wagon," said Stein. "I handle all such deals for the boys. Then without any solicitation on my part, he related in detail how he had carried money from briber to bribe-taker in half a dozen cases. He had a wonderful memory. He gave dates, places, figures and names with an exactness that was marvelous."

"Next morning I saw that Stein had introduced and the council had passed an ordinance calling for the paving of two blocks of an important street with wooden blocks."

"Why," I said, "when he called upon me, soon after breakfast, 'how do you like that for action?' That's just a sample we showed you. Now all you got to do is to pay the price and we come across with the whole delivery of goods."

"Where did he get the money with which to buy beautiful things? From a rich uncle who died. Does the artist hold lovely after-noon receptions? He does. He has long had been painting the picture? About seven years. Will he ever finish it? NO!—Puck

"and raising my fist I shot it through the wallpaper."

R. L. S. IN THE ADIRONDACKS

Stevenson, While Fighting Off Disease There, Remained Loyal to the Law of Health.

Robert Louis Stevenson, for so wise a man, seems to have been singularly unaware of, or indifferent to, the laws of health, but that, too, may have been part of his wisdom. He spent the winter of 1897 in the Adirondacks struggling against the disease which was not to subdue him for seven years. He lived in a little cottage that was much overheated and from which all ventilation was carefully excluded.

Graceland East Indians

Describing the women of India, a writer says: "Even the most withered old woman has a sliver of carriage and a woman might envy. The 'ari' is draped in an easy-flowing style and adjusted as it slips back with a graceful turn of the silver-banded arm, the shifty legs move rhythmically, and the small feet fall with a slanting pantherlike tread. It is the beauty of nature and untrammelled motion, and says much in favor of the abolition of the corset, for the Indian women retain their upright posture and suppleness of figure till bowed with age."

Helped

Mrs. Willis has been very watchful of her husband's diet lately, and is in constant fear lest he overeat. "John," she asked anxiously one morning when Willis had been telling her about the banquet which he had attended the night before, "how many helpings did you have last night?" "Two," answered Willis absently; "one at the banquet and one on the way home"—Lippincott's.

Out of Mouths of Babes

Little Harold, aged five, helped his grandfather last summer setting out fruit trees, and was telling his father about it the other night. "Thinking to improve a moral, father said, 'Who made the trees, son?'" "Who made the trees, son?" The kid thought for a moment, then said: "I did."

Dear Doubtless

"Dear Doubtless: If you can spare it I'd like to borrow that umbrella of mine for a couple of days. Can you oblige me?"—Harper's Weekly.

Facult Request

Doubtless was a confirmed borrower, and what was worse, he seldom returned the borrowed articles. He had held on to Whiffey's umbrella, for instance, for nearly a year. "And I'm tired if I know how I am ever going to get it back," said Whiffey. "Why," said Hickenlooper, "I'll be a messenger and send Doubtless this note."

And he scribbled off the following:

"I'm not sure, my son, but I know that the aisle of woman is the one by which she drags a man up to the altar."