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The Country Boy- Detective

By AD SCHUSTER

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"I AMIS to be a policeman or a detective and I'm thinking you need me around here while the fair is on."

Sheriff Al Trendle looked up in surprise at the red-faced country youth who faced him.

"Detective, eh? Been reading 'Old Sleuth' and have you a microscope, a revolver, and a star?"

"You didn't think," the boy's tone was of protest, "I would come unprepared?"

Trendle gasped. Here was a kid off the stage, a figure from rural melodramas. Yet he was tremendously in earnest.

"Sorry, bub, but my detective force is full. Better go back and take care of the stock. There's no money or glory for you in rounding up cow men and pickpockets at a county fair. It isn't at all like the story books."

"You mean you aren't figuring on giving me a job? Say, I've got a diploma and a fine letter from the head of the school and—" but the sheriff interrupted.

"They're no good. Tear them up and go back, son."

"Not me," the boy spoke sadly. "If I can't be a detective, I can at least stay and see the fair. Dad's taking care of the stock. And say, maybe you would let me help out a little on my own hook just to see what I could do. I won't charge you anything unless I nab somebody who has a reward hanging on his head."

The sheriff saw the anxiety in the country lad's eyes and there came a memory of another youth who, with a deputy sheriff's badge, had thought he was to be envied of the world.

"Might not be a bad idea. Pardon me, but you're just the sort the cow men would pick for a victim. You might pretend you have money, you know, and sort of lead them on. Then call for help and we'll—"

"Leave it to me," said the boy. "Just tip the other boys off I'm working with them and I'll bet I get a regular place on the force within a week."

Three days later the recruit was thoughtful.

"Sheriff," he said, "do you suppose there really is any merit in those money-making machines? The fellow just turned a crank and greenbacks came out."

"Yes, yes," the sheriff was sitting straight, "and then he said he would sell you a machine, that you must bring some bills to show your faith, and you gave him the bills and—"

"Okay," said the kid, "I just took a sample of his greenbacks and here it is, a perfectly good ten. After I get a few more samples I'm going to place that bird."

He grinned. "You see I'm earning my salary while I work on the case. I've got to find out, yet, who the fellow's partner is."

The sheriff whistled. "You had me fooled, kid. Thought you were falling for one of the oldest games in the business. Now I'll tell you what. I'll have a man near you and ready. You tip off the signal and we'll make the pinch. These green-goods men carry rewards."

The sheriff, himself, watched the lad, saw him engaged in serious conversation with a stranger and marked the man as the crook. Still the boy gave no signal.

"It's bigger than you think," the farm lad whispered when he got the chance. "They're a big gang, working all sorts of tricks, and we'll round them all up. Get ready for tomorrow night. I'm on the inside now." And he swelled his chest and looked magnificently important.

Reports of bunko games which would have worried the sheriff were dismissed now in the knowledge the game would be caught. The kid made his report.

"The stout man I was talking to. Grab him first. He'll be on the grounds tomorrow afternoon near the bearded lady show. Ride near, and in disguise I will be waiting. Then we can get the rest."

"Good," said the sheriff, holding out his hand. "I guess you will land a job all right."

They grabbed the stout man next day and led him protesting to the jail.

"It's bad enough to be bunkoed by a red-faced farmer kid," he muttered, "but to be arrested is worse. You'll have to let me go when my attorney hears of this."

"A red-faced farmer kid? Say, where's that hick detective?"

But the boy who had asked for a job was gone. Afforded protection by the sheriff and his men, pretending to be a dupe, he had had his own way for two weeks and that was enough.

"Gee," said the sheriff, "and I thought he was a boob! I guess I'm getting old."

Josephine's Horoscope

Is there such a thing as seeing into the future? Yes. Here is one of the many testimonials to the solemn gift: When the Empress Josephine of France was a girl in Martinique, an old colored woman, named Euphemie, told her fortune. "You will marry a fair man. Your star promises two alliances. With your first husband you will have a tragical lawsuit. Your second husband, a dark man of slender means, will fill the world with his fame and glory. You will be greater than queens." You will die unhappy. The entire prediction came true.

Next to getting a man to go to work, the hardest job is getting him to get down to work when he yets there.

Evolution may make a man out of a monkey, but it usually takes a wedding to make him a goat.

Several fathers wouldn't know they owned a car if it wasn't for the repair bills the balance of the family runs up.

Another thing to be said in favor of eating spinach or dandelion greens is that they don't loosen the fillings in your teeth.

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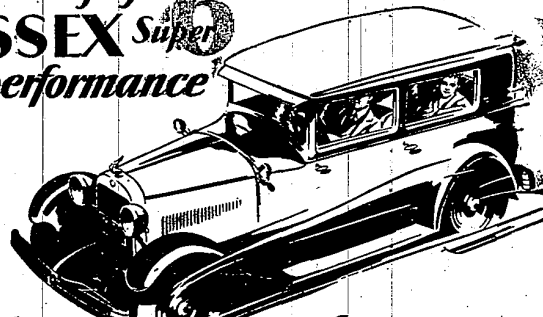
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