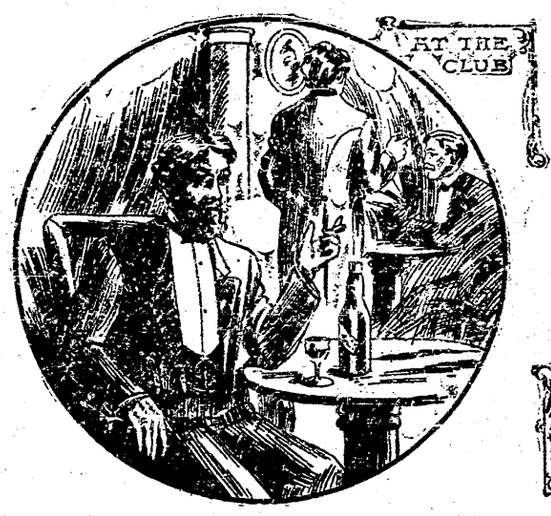
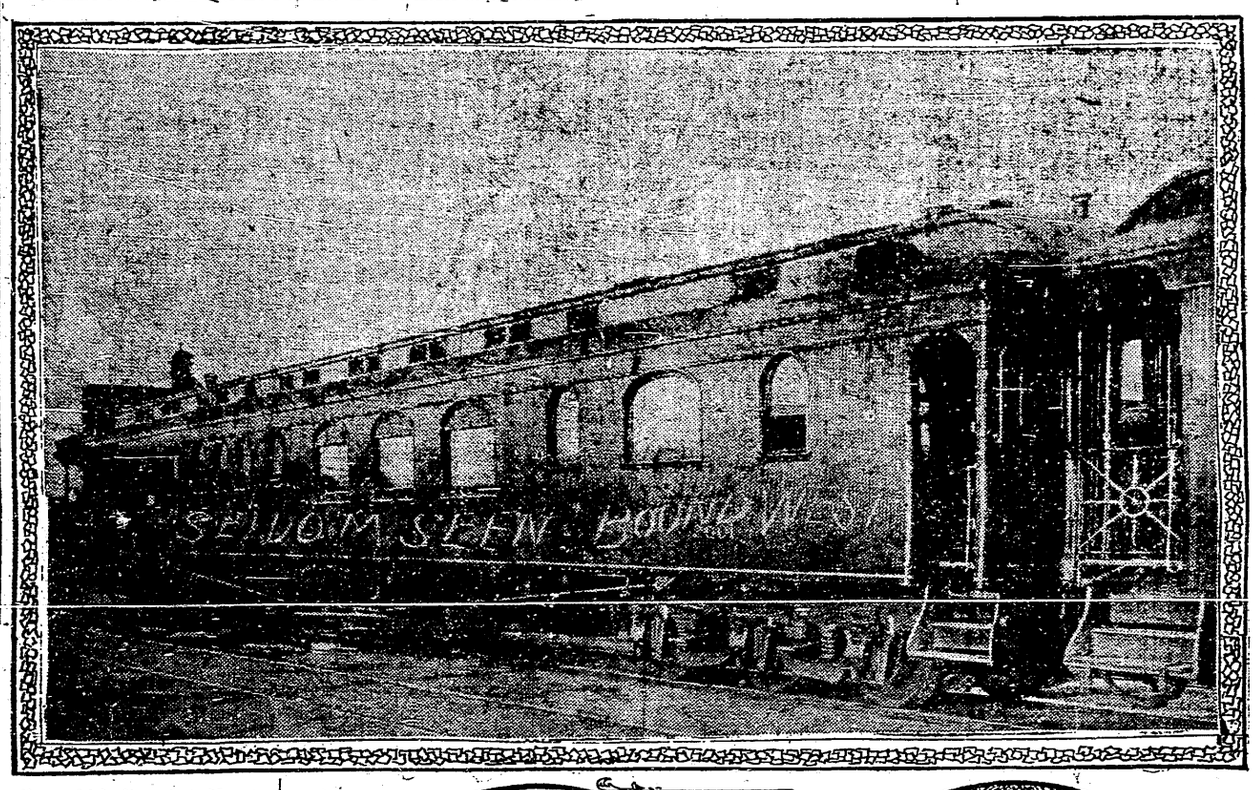
THE HUNTED PRINCE of TRAMPS

Strange History of "Seldom Seen" most Versatile of Hoboes, Once a Well-to-do Lawyer, Whose Mania for Defacing Cars Has Cost the Pullman Co. a Fortune

"SELDOM SEEN" FROM A RECENT SNAPSHOT.



PULLMAN CAR DEFACED BY "SELDOM SEEN"



EVERY tramp has heard of "Seldom Seen." It is a "monogram"—as the hoboes term a nom de plume—more familiar than "Pittsburgh Pete," "Belfast Paddy," or "Chi. Slim," and it is one about which clusters, in the mind of the professional bum, a charming atmosphere of respect, envy and admiration.

"Seldom Seen" has long been known as the King of American Hoboes—the unemulated paragon of his prideless profession—but he is even more: He is the undisputed Master Hobo of the world—a tramp without a peer in any country—preëminently the leader of his ilk.

Nobody ever knew the real name of this graduate of the gundels. In New York, when arrested for picking the pocket of a millionaire who had given him a dollar with which to buy a meal ticket, "Seldom Seen" gave to the police the name of "James F. Kelley." An hour after he had been acquitted of the charge—from which he had ably defended himself before the Police Magistrate—and after he had lost himself in some of the tenderloin retreats, the police accidentally learned that they had had in their power the most-wanted hobo in America. But the discovery had come too late.

In New York alone, there are said to be rewards aggregating over $2000 for the arrest of this unctuous itinerant. The list of crimes that have been laid at his door in that city embrace everything from the theft of a watch and chain to the robbery of a Fifth-avenue jewelry store. Murder is the only crime of which "Seldom," as he is commonly known, is not accused. It is said that he is proud of this one fact—that human blood has never yet stained his hand—and yet he has undoubtedly been guilty of nearly every other criminal offense known to the docket.

"Seldom" is a most peculiar character. You might meet him five minutes from now, in almost any walk of life, and not suspect his identity or character. And you would be just about as apt to meet him in some fashionable café, attired in evening dress, as in the worst underground dive that ever flourished.

There is no telling to what extent this king of hoboes will not carry his stupendous nerve. He can adapt himself to any atmosphere, be thoroughly at home in a drawing-room as in a gambling hell. In the presence of one whom he wishes to impress, his urbanity and dignified personality are simply wonderful. He is at ease, and thoroughly at home in any situation, whether he be languishing under a petty sentence in some metropolitan bastile, "boiling up," "making a Mulligan," or "sleeping it off," beside some railway water tank. Much travel and outdoor life have made him somewhat tanned; but he is not unkempt. He is always well shaven, neatly attired, and of a clean, genteel appearance. He has been known to pass for an aristocratic tourist on more than one occasion. In stature, "Seldom" is of medium height, broad-shouldered, and of athletic proportions, with dark—almost black—hair, deep-brown eyes, well trained to govern their expression; a rather Roman nose; a dark "theatrical" complexion, and, altogether, a fellow of handsome, prepossessing appearance. He is said to be a graduate of Harvard; if not, he is at least educated. Greek, Latin, French and Spanish are to him almost as easy as is English, and he speaks them fluently.

If he happens to be "mooching" (begging) a minister, or a "railway" (a priest,) he becomes remarkably Biblical, and quotes from scriptures, with many displays of a profoundly religious temperament, in a manner that convinces the good man of his worthiness. He is always "good for a couple of plunks," as the hobo puts it, meaning that he is always sure to get a couple of dollars.

"Seldom" is happy when discussing religious problems with some deacon of a church. He can even wade deeply into psychology, and into many of the modern-day fads and fanciful religions that treat of mental science, magnetic healing, etc.

In politics, he is not found wanting. He reads the papers carefully, and is always posted on the political situations of both parties. As glib as many a professional politician, he has an argument for either side he may wish, temporarily, to adopt. He can be a Democrat, or a Republican, just as the occasion demands. He has even been known to be a Populist. But a Prohibitionist!—only when the occasion is positively serious; for the fear that he may miss a drink which is coming to him is like a sword suspended by a hair over his head. Yet "Seldom" seldom misses any drink but water. That is one beverage he does not care for.

Years ago, it is claimed, "Seldom was a prominent attorney of Memphis, Tenn., whose practice netted him a luscious income. Through some malpractice, the outcome of which he was unable to control, he was forced to fly from justice, and it was this first step which wrought his future. Moneyless, but cheerful, he adapted himself to his circumstances, and became a tramp—hoping, of course, to rise ultimately above the condition.

But the wandering life "along the ties" has a fascination for many, and "Seldom" was no exception to his class. There was something about the excitement of sitting on the "rods," lying on the gundels, crouching on a breakbeam, or stealing his way up the vestibule to the "hurricane deck" which held him in a charm.

In time he became an expert at "swinging under the steprod;" at "taking the blind on the fly," and "gripping the bumpers." An athletic fellow, he learned the tricks of the hobo as readily as he learned the tricks of law. He acquired the tramp vernacular just as he had acquired his Greek and Latin in college days. And his success in petty crimes—such as "picking gooseberries," (robbing clotheslines,) and "glomming gumps," (stealing chickens,) won for him a reputation among the tramps with whom he sometimes traveled. As years went by, his reputation grew broader and much greater. He became "the king of tramps."

If you are ever in Pullman, Ill., and happen about the car shops, or at Pullman-car headquarters, mention the name of "Seldom Seen" and observe the reception which it gets. No one has better reason to remember this hobo-in-chief than the Pullman manager, for many a Pullman sleeping and dining car has returned for repair with the mark of his knife running full length along its side.

"Seldom" is a vandal when it comes to Pullman cars. Nothing affords him more delight than to carve his name, with a sharp jackknife, deeply into the varnished panels of a Pullman. Some grudge which he entertains against the company is said to have brought about this spirit of vandalism. Years ago he began to satisfy that grudge—almost with the first appearance on American railroads of the Pullman palace car. Pullman, himself, now dead, must have felt keenly the revenge which "Seldom" wreaked upon him, for it is said that when the first car was disfigured by him—a beautiful new sleeper which was pulled into the shops bearing the words "Seldom Seen, Bound East," carved along the outside for the full length of the car—he offered for the arrest and conviction of "Seldom" the sum of $1000. But "Seldom" was not arrested.

It was about this time, according to trampology, that the hobo was given his queer "monogram" of "Seldom Seen," for his vandalism, combined with a series of other equally grave offenses, caused him to be much sought for by the police of many cities. He was compelled to travel carefully, and to conceal his identity.

For years, and until now, "Seldom Seen" has remained mysteriously slippery and uncertain. Today his "monogram" will be suddenly spied carved upon a water tank—fresh and dated to the hour—and tomorrow he will be as far away as twenty-four hours and steady railroading can take him. Like the Irishman's flea, neither the hoboes nor the police can ever agree as to where he is most apt to be found.

The tricks resorted to by this clever tramp are well worthy of recording, for many a judicious almsgiver has been "taken in" by his cunning and roguery. When "Seldom Seen" wishes to change his clothes, or to get a better suit, he hies away to the "hangout" (hobo camp) and there proceeds to cut, tear, soil and disfigure his clothes to every possible extent, doing it in such a manner that the garments will appear to be really worn out and naturally dirty. Then he walks dejectedly into some aristocratic residence district, where no police are visible, and begs for better clothes, saying that he has been offered a good position with some well-known firm, but that he is ashamed to show up for work without better clothes.

Of course a great many will wish to help him along, and he is given every conceivable article of apparel, from underclothing to hats, shoes and shirts. With each armful he hies away to his "cache," apart from the district he is "mooching" (begging,) and there "plants" (hides) it, returning for more. When he has accumulated a large assortment, he selects the very best, dons them, and sells the remainder to a second-hand clothing store. Before he is through "ragging up," (dressing up,) he will have blossomed out as a "rose in the warmth of spring," and with the best of wardrobes will start into another portion of the city, there to cultivate an acquaintance in a different sphere, and to adopt new tricks.

Appearing as a gentleman, he is often able to work a "flimflam" on men who would hold aloof from him were he poorly dressed.

Before leaving the city, "Seldom" procures a sweater, a pair of overalls and a cheap hat, which he dons, wrapping his coat and good hat in a newspaper, and thus saving them from dirt. When he arrives in the next city, it is but the work of a moment to make himself ready, with a fairly respectable appearance, for other pastures.

As a laboring man, in which guise he generally travels, "Seldom" is a hit. He generally wears bib-overalls, an engineer's jumper and a cap, on which he rubs a little grease; and this outfit, combined with a measuring rule, which he carries where it will be seen, and several pencils, etc., give him the appearance of being an engineer, or some kind of laboring man—hence immune to the strong arm of justice. No one would suspect him in this equipment, and he is enabled to impose still further on the credulity of the police.

Besides the reward of $1000 offered by the Pullman Car Company, it is said that there are other rewards, in almost every city, for the arrest and conviction of this master hobo; but as "king of tramps" he is held in such esteem by them that none has ever been known to "squeal" as to his whereabouts. It is claimed that for a year or so he will allow his beard to grow, and that as soon as he is wanted for some serious crime, he will shave it off and adopt new haunts, in some unsuspected role. Men who have met him claim that he is a poet of no little ability, and that—contrary to the rules of hoboism—he has sometimes been known to work. He is an expert jeweler and optician, and has a fair knowledge of several trades and professions.

"Seldom" has enjoyed one of the most checkered careers of any character on the road. For eight years he sailed beneath the mast, and won for himself considerable reputation as a seaman. He claims to be the only man who ever toured Europe without a cent. But "Seldom" has other distinctions.

It is claimed, and on good authority, that this tramp originated "the hobo's bug." The "bug" is something entirely unknown to most civilized people, therefore a description of it will not be offensive—fiendish as its criminal element may appear to those who are sensitive and unsteeped in a knowledge of hobo crime.

The "bug" of the hobo is nothing but a most miserable, running sore. It is generally found on the arm, or leg of a young boy who has run away from home, and whom some burly tramp has taken in hand to train as a beggar. This boy is soon cowed by the burly, and made to believe that if he ever "squeals" he will "grease the rails," i. e., he will be thrown under a moving train and ground to pieces. This fear of "greasing the rails" hangs like a threatening shadow over the lad who once falls into the merciless hands of a professional itinerant beggar. Very often, too, the threat is carried out, lest the lad confess and the hobo-master be sent to prison.

If the lad submits to the hobo, the latter at once trains him for a successful beggar by taking him through a course of "sprouts." About the first thing he does is to convince the lad that a "bug" doesn't hurt, and that it can easily be cured. This done, he procures a bottle of muriatic acid, and applying it to the lad's arm, or leg, produces, with three or four applications, a sore that has all the appearances of coming from blood poison. These sores, while ugly looking, are said to be cured in a few days by a simple application of vaseline and flour, but in many instances blood poisoning really follows, and the result is fatal.

When the "bug" has developed as it should, another and still another is produced. After five or six of them appear on the boy's flesh, they are lightly bound, and a pair of crutches, or canes, are procured for him. He is then made to go from house to house with a tale of woe, declaring that he is "the victim of hereditary blood poisoning," and that he is "trying to get back to the Arkansas Springs to be cured." Kind old ladies, and others, feel sorry for the afflicted lad, whose sores produce a shudder, and he receives much money, all of which he is made to give to his master, the hobo. The lad who has a desire to run away from home and "beat his way" about the country should be able to know but a few of the things in store for him. He would hardly nourish the desire a moment longer.

"Seldom" was also among the first of American hobos to originate many clever ruses to escape performing manual labor in exchange for "hand-outs" and other favors. Shortly after his flight from Memphis, he discovered that by carrying his right arm in a plaster-of-paris cast, or by pretending that it was paralyzed, he could do away with the horrors of having to chop wood in exchange for his breakfast. No woman with a heart would ask him to work when he was crippled.

In one city "Seldom" has a broken leg; in another a dislocated arm; in another he has only one arm, and again he appears totally paralyzed, blind, deaf and dumb, or otherwise afflicted. If he is followed till nightfall, he will probably be seen to blossom forth as a gentleman of leisure, or as a mining promoter, or an ordinary wealthy tourist.

With such a variety of resources, it is little wonder that the "king of tramps" has long puzzled the detectives of America. Hardly a year passes that he is not in jail, or at least under arrest, but it never occurs to his captors that they have in their grip the most wanted man in America, so he always escapes with a simple sentence.

Two weeks ago this king of beggars, tramps and criminals was in California. The authorities of San Francisco should keep a sharp lookout for him, as in the guise of a refugee, or relief worker, which he is capable of assuming, he could work unnumbered crimes in the devastated metropolis.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA

THE great progress of development in South Africa in the last thirty years has been due to one cause alone—the opening up of the most highly mineralized part of the globe. The inexhaustible diamond field of Kimberley was the pioneer discovery, and the further important discoveries of the gem in the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal would indicate a long and useful life for this industry. Following almost immediately on the discovery of the diamond came the gold of Barberton and the great banket reef of the Witwatersrand. Coal in abundance, copper, tin, iron, have followed in their wake. In the far north, Rhodesia bears evidence of largely supplementing there almost permanent industries.

These discoveries are by no means final, and South Africa may look forward to an indefinite number of years of dependence upon the values of her mineral resources.

It is always a matter of regret when communities are dependent for prosperity upon the floating and often cosmopolitan populations of mining centers. South Africa has happily been spared much of this uncertain prosperity. Here diamond and gold mining are more in the nature of established industries than ephemeral mine patches. The gold industry is a staple manufacturing establishment, subject certainly to fluctuations in the value and life of its raw material, but an industry which can never be individualized, as was the case in the gold diggings of America and Australia.

The life of the present mines is not fleeting, though perhaps determinate. The mining centers dependent upon them are orderly, well-administered communities, of incalculable value to the population on the land.

The attractions of the town are such that the country will rely mainly upon the efforts of the Dutch section of the population for agricultural requirements. The old inhabitants of the land have an ineradicable love of the countryside, an innate and prejudiced, though perhaps not unnatural, mistrust of the modern urban populations.—[From "The Railways of Africa," by Lieut.-Col. Sir Percy Girouard in the May Scribner's.

CLERGYMEN'S DRESS.

Australia was never noted for conservatism, but perhaps climate rather than radicalism is responsible for the discussion now raging there over the proprieties of clerical costume on a hot Sunday. What is the "rational" dress for a clergyman on a broiling day? The question arose from the action of a Church of England clergyman, who on a hot Sunday appeared in the pulpit in "a pair of tennis trousers, a soft print shirt with a pale pink stripe, a broad waistband and a pair of light shoes." He looked cool, says the reporter, but also a little nervous, as he expressed the hope that the congregation would not object to the innovation in view of the excessive heat. "I do—most emphatically," said a lady in an old-fashioned black bonnet. A canon of St. Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne, who has taken part in the discussion, says he knows a case in which a brother clergyman conducted a service in the costume of a cricketer. He adds: "The climate in which the recognized dress of the English clergyman was evolved is not the climate of Australia." The Rev. Dr. Fitchett, the president of the Australian Methodist Conference, confesses that he has at times preached in "unconventional costume," once, when on a cycling tour, in sweater and knickerbockers.—[New York Tribune.

NEW YORK'S IDEA OF DISTANCES.

"HOW far is San Francisco from New York?" asked Blobs.

"About a mile and a half," said Hamburton. "I know the maps show it as some 3000 miles or less, but don't you let the maps fool you in these days of the annihilation of space.

"Distance isn't measured by miles any more, but by the way you feel about it. And to a New Yorker San Francisco doesn't seem much further away than—I was going to say Philadelphia; but that peaceful town is far, far off from Broadway.

"It's funny about such things. To the average New Yorker the furthest away place in the United States is New England. Everything northeast of our little island is clean out of the country, away off in the dim and distant imaginative parts. Boston is miles further than 'Frisco or Paris. As far as we're concerned, there's no such thing as Maine. Pick up a New York newspaper and you'll find columns about Chicago, New Orleans or Salt Lake City to inches about what's going on up in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont or even Massachusetts. Connecticut is a little nearer; in fact, it quite belongs to New York; but once you get past Hartford you leave Manhattan behind.

"Chicago seems right in hand, somehow, and anything out by the Pacific Coast hits us as being in the neighborhood. As for Paris and London, we look on them as sort of suburbs.

"This is a peculiarity of us New Yorkers, but I dare say every locality has it, though I know that Bostonians don't regard New York as being so far away. Over there they think about us, read about us, hear about us—which is natural, of course. But to us they're clear out of the radius. We don't mean it as a mark of disrespect—only that our horizon ends just east of Greenwich, Ct., though it extends to great limits in all other directions."