

## Shorty McGovern, Burglar.

BY FREDERICK WHITE.

Shorty McGovern was a good burglar—from a business standpoint.

His victims would probably have admitted as much had they been called upon to testify, but they never had the opportunity, for Shorty always succeeded in getting away safely.

From the ethical standpoint, it may be presumed that he was a bad burglar, but, being human, it may also be presumed that there was still some little good in his make-up.

And good there was, as the few who knew him well were willing to swear.

A master craftsman, a stanch friend and, outside of his profession, a man of quiet, simple tastes.

A reader of books between jobs, and not too diligent at his work, which in his case was more to be commended than deplored.

Shorty often strolled about uptown—sometimes with an eye to future business, more often because he liked to feel that he was part of the everyday, respectable life of the city.

Sometimes he regretted that poverty prevented him from being respectable all the time; but a man must live, and he was too good a burglar to be anything else.

Today Shorty was only half way up-town; likewise he was only half way respectable, for, seated on a bench in the square, he could not help noticing that the brownstone house opposite looked prosperous and—easy.

That balcony, screened by vines from observation below, was accessible, and the window behind old fashioned and not difficult to force.

Shorty possessed a nicely trained eye and often saw things that would have escaped an ordinary observer.

As he sat there going over prospects and possibilities the door of the house opened and a child ran down the steps and, crossing the street, stepped quickly behind a tree trunk in the park. Shorty glanced up at the house, expecting some one to follow, but the door did not open again.

The boy, for it was a boy, slipped over to another tree, bringing him near the bench upon which Shorty sat.

Shorty grew interested. The boy was evidently hiding from some one.

Shorty was fond of children. He liked to talk with them, and in this case perhaps the boy might say something worth hearing.

"Hello, kid!" he said. "Playin' Indian?"

The child looked up shyly.

He saw a pleasant faced young man smiling at him reassuringly.

Evidently he was a man worth cultivating, for he understood the art of playing "Indian." Strange men usually embarrassed him, but there was something very companionable about this one.

He did not look just like the men who came to his own home, and this fact interested him also.

He leaned against the tree and pushed back the disordered hair from his face, regarding Shorty gravely.

The observation was apparently satisfactory, for after a moment's hesitation he answered cheerfully:

"No, I'm a burglar."

The smile left Shorty's face at this startling piece of information, but he recovered himself at once.

One of the boy's hands was thrust in the front of his sailor blouse, and Shorty noticed this.

"Get anything?" he asked.

The boy looked a little doubtful.

"Yes," he answered, but his hand remained where it was.

"That's good," said Shorty. "I used to play burglar myself when I was about your size. Could fun, but we never had much worth takin' where I lived."

"We got lots of things at our house," said the boy, "an' they're worth a lot too. I guess some of 'em's worth as much as a dollar."

"Maybe," said Shorty doubtfully, "but you can't always tell."

"Well, I guess what I got now's worth it," said the boy, his pride aroused.

"Let's see," said Shorty carelessly.

"Sometimes things look mighty pretty that ain't worth much after all."

The boy hesitated. Something warned him to be careful, but the desire to prove his assertion was too strong. He drew a small morocco case from his blouse and opened it.

"There!" he exclaimed triumphantly.

The sunlight fell upon something that glittered brightly, and Shorty realized that he was looking at a cluster of jewels of great value.

His first impulse was to seize them and run, but he checked himself. The risk was too great. The boy would cry out, and pursuit was certain. He must use strategy.

"Pretty, ain't it?" he said calmly.

"Shouldn't wonder if they were the real

thing." An idea flashed into his ready brain.

"By the way, he resumed, "did you ever hear that goldfish was crazy about diamonds?"

"No," said the boy wonderingly.

"Well, they are. I've tried it myself. You just hold a thing like that over the water, an' they come right up an' make eyes at it. Want to try?" pointing to the fountain across the park.

The boy could not resist. Such an experience was too novel to be lost. He nodded his head.

"Well, tuck it away," said Shorty "an' come on."

No one was in the immediate vicinity of the fountain, and the opportunity of escape was better there.

Shorty held out his hand and the boy took it confidently. He was very young and had never been imposed upon before.

Shorty knew that there was great risk of being seen from the house, but should any one appear he had decided to take the case from the boy and make a run for it.

He was all professional now. Once on the other side of the square and he would be safe.

"We must be sure not to let the fishes get it," said the boy, "'cause my mother thinks a lot of it."

"I'll see that the fishes don't get it all right," replied Shorty.

"You see," the boy went on, "my father gave it to her just before he went away. My mother says we won't never see him again. It makes her cry to talk about him, an' she says I must be a good man like he was an' take care of her now."

Shorty began to feel uncomfortable. He was sorry the boy had told him this. Somehow it seemed almost like robbing the dead. Yet it was so easy, and he was in need of the money. Shorty did not know it, but he was afflicted with a vivid imagination. He saw the mother's grief at losing the last gift of her dead husband. He saw her apprehension when she discovered that her son had taken the jewels even in play. He also saw the boy's terror when the case was taken from him.

And yet it was so easy and the opportunity had come without his seeking. There was no one near them.

He stopped suddenly and grasped the boy by the shoulder.

The child's eyes opened wide in affright, for he saw that he was in danger of something. The man looked very cross and different now.

"Don't you open your mouth or I'll kill you!" said Shorty savagely. "Now listen to me."

"You're a thief an' I'm a liar an' a thief. The goldfish don't know or care anything about diamonds. I told you that to get you over here so I could get that thing away from you. I know all about diamonds, an' I care a lot for 'em too."

The boy, too frightened to stir or cry out, trembled in the clutch of the man.

"You've been playin' a bad game," Shorty went on, "an' you've met a real burglar, one who really steals things an' scares people half to death. Now, listen to what I tell you, an' don't you ever forget it."

"You go straight home an' put that thing

where you found it an' never—you understand me—never play that kind of a game again. You needn't tell your mother, because she's got troubles of her own, an' it would only make her feel worse if she knew you took it. Do you understand, an' will you promise?"

The boy gulped and nodded his head quickly. All he wanted was to get home; but, young as he was, he realized that he had done something very wicked.

Shorty smiled at the forlorn, frightened little figure. Then his face grew red, and, bending over, he hurriedly kissed the boy's curly head.

"Git," he commanded, "an' don't you stop runnin' till you're inside that door."

The boy brushed the tears from his face and started.

"Hang them kids!" said Shorty, "That's the second time they done me out of a good thing, but I'll bet that one don't play burglar any more."

With a pleasant, respectable feeling under his coat he watched the boy mount the steps of the brownstone house. Then he turned away and resumed his walk uptown.

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#### The Literary Black List Act, 1903.

A correspondent recently suggested that editors should have a Black List in connection with their papers, in which all the overworked, commonplace terms used by journalists should find a place. We offered a Prize of One Guinea to the reader who sent in the best contribution on the subject, and this has been won by Mr. John Johnston, 21, Little Victoria Street, Belfast, for the following suggested Act:—

Be it enacted by the King's most excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Long-Suffering and Sorely-Afflicted British Reading Public, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—

1. Any journalist, litterateur, novelist, penny-a-liner, or any other ink-slinger who, after the passing of this Act, shall write, print, or publish, or cause to be written, printed, or published, any of the following or similar hackneyed or overused phrases—that is to say, in alluding to the awful mystery of death shall refer to "that bourne from whence no traveller returns"; or, in mentioning a deceased person, shall write of him or her as having "shuffled off this mortal coil"; or shall designate the condition of the unmarried as "a state of single blessedness," or speak of a newly-married couple as "the happy pair," or of the wife as "the better half"; or shall deny by implication an indisputable scientific fact by asserting the possibility of a person's being "conspicuous by his absence"; or shall write with profane pen the expressions "a sigh for the gods" or "a sigh to make angels weep"; or in reference to physical attributes or peculiarities, shall use any of the following expressions.

"the human form divine," "bated breath," "eagle glance," "magnetic gaze," "dilating nostrils," "willowy form," "daintily-gloved hand," "arch smile," "golden tresses," "flowing locks," "delicately-tinted lips," "the inner man"; or shall speak of "the popular president," "the courteous general manager," "the genial secretary," "the charming hostess," "a few well-chosen words," "the succulent bivalve," "the psychological moment," "so near, yet so far," "last but not least," "a dull or sickening thud," "his own inimitable style," "old Sol," "the gentle light of the moon," "a cool million," or shall use any similar hackneyed expression, such person shall be guilty of misdemeanour, and, being thereof convicted by public opinion, shall be compelled to pay away half his salary to the Home for Old Jokes, and the delinquent shall offer an ample apology to the public and agree to never again infringe the provisions of this Act.

2. This Act may be cited as the Literary Black List Act, 1903.

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March 4, 1903.

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The oven is made of heavy steel, and oven bottom is well braced with angle irons, positively buckle-proof. Oven door is

balanced and is nickel plated, and when open forms a shelf.

Top is made in four sections fitted with interchangeable key plates.

Ashpan is very large and will easily hold two days' ashes. It is removable through door under fire door at side, and is so made that when pan is removed no ashes can fall on the floor.

Low Down Reservoir is heavy retinned copper. Entire Reservoir Casting is Ornamental Cast Iron and guaranteed rust proof. Back Flue is also cast iron.

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#### Death of J. S. Sanborn.

News has been received of the death at Somerville, Mass., on Monday night May 11th, of James S. Sanborn, of the firm of Chase & Sanborn, coffee manufacturers. Mr. Sanborn was well known as the proprietor of the Elmwood stock farm of Lewiston, Me., and a successful breeder of French coach horses. It was from him that the local government procured the stallions Galloway and Lavater, imported in the spring of 1902.

The "Bookman's" May list of the six best selling books of the past month (for the whole of North America) is as follows:

1. "Lovesy Mary," Hogan.
2. "Lady Rose's Daughter," Ward.
3. "The Pitt," Norris.
4. "Letters of a Self-Made Merchant to His Son," Lorimer.
5. "Under the Rose," Isham.
6. "The Circle," Thurston.

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