

STORIES OF THE FAKIRS

By J. P. JOHNSTON

Author of "Twenty Years of Hus'ling," "What Happened to Johnston," Etc.

THE GOLD BRICK GAME.

An Old But Successful Method of Swindling Wealthy Farmers—Plan So Intricate That Few Have Understood It—The "High Mark" and His "Gang"—An Indian, a Citizen and an Assayer Play Their Respective Roles—A Small Part of the Brick Pure Gold—Haul of \$7,000 for the "Gang."

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The old-time "gold brick scheme," although familiar in name, to almost everybody, nevertheless is a game of whose inside workings few people have the vaguest idea. Even men bunched out of thousands of dollars by it have been unable to understand or explain every phase of the play.

The sharpers engaged in this risky work are careful, educated men; in fact just the class one would suppose would keep clear of such dangerous and atrocious work.

In my investigations of all sorts of bunco schemes, it was many years before I was able to understand how it could be possible to sell an intelligent farmer a gold brick for from \$3,500 to \$7,000.

A man might stop at the same hotel with a dozen of these confidence men for six months and never suspect what was their business, or even that they were interested in one another.

Always supplied with money, well dressed and educated, they disarmed suspicion, and for that reason were the more dangerous.

Even while working up a gold-brick job, no two of them were ever seen together. Nothing would be known of their work until some farmer had been swindled out of several thousand dollars. The newspapers could give only a vague account of the affair, because of the farmer's inability to explain how he had been duped. Besides not one of ten victims would let it be known that he had been gold-bricked.

Had I not accidentally discovered that an old acquaintance was in the gold-brick business, and had been for years, I never should have fathomed the mysteries of the game.

Having naturally a good physique this grafter developed into a magnificent specimen of manhood. When 24 years of age, he weighed 230 pounds, was handsome, well proportioned and a fluent talker with the vocabulary of a college professor. After leaving college he was first with a large St. Louis tobacco house, as a traveling salesman. While on the road he began playing poker and eventually neglected his business. Later he began

question from me as to the direction in which they were going next he said that they had plans all laid for a job up in Wisconsin.

"What are you fellows working now?" I asked.

"The gold brick," he replied.

"Charlie has been working the gold-brick game a long time, hasn't he?"

"Yes; and he is one of the finest in the country. No doubt he has turned the trick for bigger money than any other gold-brick man in the world."

A few moments later I invited "Charlie" into my private office, and surprising him with my knowledge of his business, got him to tell me the story of his life, from the time he had left college.

He and his gang, of which he was considered the head, never played for small stakes; \$7,000 being the maximum, and \$5,000 the minimum. They had three plans of "putting up the job," one of which he explained in detail, as being very successful.

Their first step was to locate their victim, and this required skillful work on the part of the "advance man." When a substantial farmer, with plenty of property and a good bank account, had been selected, the "High Mark," as the head man was called, would visit the locality. Calling upon the farmer, or "Rummy" as he was known to the gang he would explain that he was a business man from Massachusetts and was looking around with a possible view to buying a small farm, upon which to spend his remaining days.

They had turned their last trick in southern Ohio, working it as follows: "Charlie" as "High Mark," called upon the farmer, who had been carefully selected by the advance man. After giving the above explanation to account for his visit he inquired whether there was any kind of good hunting in that section. When informed that there was excellent squirrel hunting and that the season was then open, he became enthusiastic and asked the farmer if he ever hunted.

The reply was that he scarcely ever did, principally for the reason that he had a poor gun.

"Now, see here," said the grafter. "I have at my hotel several fine guns and plenty of ammunition, and I want to have a little fun. If you will give me board for a week or two, I'll bring out my guns and will pay you \$20 or \$25 a week with the understanding that you are to give up your personal time to go out with me. What do you say?"

To this the farmer agreed. The following day the grafter returned, bag and baggage.

The first day they went to the woods to erect a blind under which to hide, while waiting for squirrels. After the blind was finished the grafter hinted that he had a bottle of "good stuff" in his pocket, and producing a quart bottle of choice wine and whisky mixed, took a drink and passed it to the farmer, who also took a social smile. Then, to make the blind more attractive, he hid the bottle under a log, remarking that it would come in good play hereafter.

Being an experienced sportsman the grafter's success in bringing down a fine mess of squirrels every morning made things doubly interesting; besides a swig from the bottle created a good appetite for breakfast.

After the "High Mark" had established himself in the good graces of the farmer and his family, one of his

dirty broadcast and then covered the spot with pieces of sod, very carefully pressed down.

Of course during all this performance Mr. "Grafter" and Mr. "Rummy" were fairly staring their eyes out and speculating as to what the fellow could be doing and where he came from.

Having finished filling up the hole the man cautiously looked around, then hid his shovel in a clump of bushes, and climbing the fence, started back through the woods near enough to the blind to enable the hunters to see that he was an Indian in full buckskin suit.

When satisfied that the Indian was safely out of the way the grafter suggested as investigation. The farmer, overflowing with curiosity, was only too ready to look into the matter and the two started for the spot.

Of course the first thing to do was to procure the shovel and dig. Very soon they came upon a hard substance wrapped in a gunny sack. Opening it, what did they find but an immense

brass and placing a drop of the acid upon it let them see how quickly it began to boil and turn green. Then he tried a piece of copper and a piece of low karat gold with the same results. Then, picking up the "chunk of gold," he placed the acid upon it without affecting it in the least.

"Now," said he, "we have tested the outside; suppose we drill into the inside." After drilling into the metal an inch or two he filled up the hole with acid, which did not in the least affect it.

"Gentlemen, you needn't worry about this, it's all right," he said.

"What is the value of that chunk?" asked the "High Mark."

"I can tell by putting the needles to it and weighing it," said the assayer, and, after a moment's figuring, he said:

"That is worth a little over \$16,000."

"How much do we owe you?" asked the farmer, excitedly.

"Oh, about 50 cents," the accommodating assayer replied. "We never charge much for information."

Thanking him for his kindness, the "Grafter" and "Rummy" placed the



"THAT CHUNK OF GOLD IS WORTH A LITTLE OVER \$16,000 IN CASH."

chunk of what appeared to be gold. Why should the man have hidden it if it were not gold?

With such a prize in their possession, what course should they pursue? Who was the Indian? How had he come by the gold?

Should they report the case to the authorities? Neither the grafter nor the farmer suggested this course. Possession being considered nine points of the law, they felt no disposition to give up their extraordinary "find."

Finally the grafter proposed burying it in the farmer's wheat bin for the present.

At this point Charlie explained that under no circumstances did he call it a "gold brick," but always a "chunk of gold."

The wheat bin suggestion was followed, and after filling the hole and placing the shovel where it had been found they carefully concealed the gold underneath three feet of wheat in the barn. The farmer now became anxious to make certain that it was really gold. The grafter felt no doubt on this point, but agreed it would be best to have it tested.

At last the farmer suggested just what the grafter had been waiting for—that they look up an assayer, provided it could be done with safety, and let him test it. So the next day they drove to town, left the team at a livery barn and together went by train to Columbus to have the material tested.

Having reached Columbus they started uptown, and very soon met an intelligent looking man, who, of course, was one of the gang. Stepping up to him in a businesslike way, the "High Mark" asked if he could tell him whether there was an assayer's office in the city.

"Oh, yes," said the man, and directed them to a certain building where an assayer's office was on the top floor.

All this looked plausible, and when they reached the top floor sure enough, there they found a sign over one of the doors: "U. S. Assayer's Office."

A man, in short sleeves, with no collar, and wearing a duck apron—another member of the gang—greeted them pleasantly.

"Could we have a piece of metal tested?" asked the grafter.

"To be sure," said the assayer.

"Can you positively tell us whether or not it is gold?"

"Why not? That is what I am here for."

"Now," said the grafter, producing the chunk of metal, "I wish you would first show us how you test metal, and then test this in our presence."

"Very well," said the assayer. "To give you a demonstration, I will produce three or four pieces of brass and copper, then a piece of gold of such low karat that it will not stand the test. After this, I will test pieces of gold. Here is some acid that nothing but pure gold can stand."

So saying, he picked up a piece of

"gold bar" (as the assayer had called it), in the bag. They returned to the farmer's home in high spirits, and again buried the gold bar in the wheat bin.

In the estimation of the grafter, the most feasible way to dispose of it was for one of them to go alone to some large city and have the bar made into several ferret dealers. He even hinted that he would be willing to do it.

"Two men together," he said, "would be likely to create some suspicion, as offering the gold for sale is different from calling upon an assayer for information."

This suggestion was intended to make the farmer suspect that his partner was working a scheme to beat him out of his half of the gold.

The following morning a telegraph messenger came to the farmer's house with a telegram for the grafter, which read:

"Mother very sick; given up to die. Come immediately."

(Signed) "Mary."

Half beside himself, the grafter showed the telegram to the farmer, and said:

"See here, I haven't the money to buy your half of the gold bar, and I haven't time to wait to have it melted and divided, so I'll tell you what I'll do. If you will give me \$7,500 you can have my half."

Naturally the farmer hesitated, if for no other reason than to get a better deal; whereupon the grafter showed him that by accepting his offer he would be getting \$500 the best of the bargain.

"Well," the farmer said, "if I can raise \$2,000 more than I have on hand, I'll give you \$7,000 cash for your share."

"All right," agreed the grafter. "Take me to town and settle with me and I'll start for Massachusetts on the first train for the east."

The cash was, of course, forthcoming, and would have been had the farmer been obliged to mortgage his farm.

"Now, Charlie," said I, "suppose I should step into another room and call the chief of police, and turn you over to him, what would be the outcome?"

"Well," said he, "I haven't given you the name of anyone we have buncoed, and as none of the 'rummies' have kicked or made any kind of a squeal, what could they do to me? I'd simply say that I had lied to you, and that would end it."

A small piece had been taken out of the brass or copper brick, and a sufficiently large piece of gold inserted, upon which to enable the supposed assayer to place his acid. With the exception of this small piece of pure gold, the whole brick was nothing more nor less than brass or copper.

It will be remembered that the Indian, instead of burying the metal in the timbered lot, "planted" it on the opposite side of the fence, on land owned by some one other than the farmer. This gave the farmer no chance to claim the whole chunk of gold, on the ground that it was found upon his property.

Cur Age.

Every dog has his day, and even a cur may possess courage.

THE BUMPER WHEAT YIELD OF CANADA.

100,000,000 Bushels of Wheat from 4,000,000 Acres of Land.

In order to secure the attention of the reader to any special article that is brought before the public, it is often the custom to lead the reader on by the introduction of an interesting story until, by one bold jump, he is introduced to the subject that it is desired shall be brought to his notice. This is not fair to the reader, and it is not the intention to do that in this article. It will discuss in the briefest way "Western Canada" and its possibilities for settlement. For the past six or seven years the Government of the Dominion of Canada has talked of the resources of Western Canada to the readers of this and thousands of other papers throughout the United States. The quality of the soil was spoken of, the large area of fertile lands was discussed, the possibilities of the country as a grain-growing district were talked of, and the story of the success of farmers from the United States was told. The two hundred thousands from the United States, who have made Western Canada their home, who have taken advantage of the 160 acres of land that the Government gives free to actual settlers are telling the story to-day to their friends. They have proven the statements made through these columns, and by the Government Agents. They have produced from their land twenty, thirty, forty and more bushels of wheat to the acre, and netted profits ranging from three to ten and more dollars on every acre tilled. They have found the climate fully as good as they were told it would be, schools were convenient and easily organized, railways were not far distant, and markets close at hand. The social conditions were such as they chose to make them, and law and order were observed. Many of them bought land, because it was low-priced and good, and hundreds of cases could be cited where the purchase price of the land was paid out of the first crop. The writer knows of cases this year where the farmer, as a result of the yield on his farm, was put in a position that would enable him to increase his holdings three extra acres for every acre cropped and pay cash for it. Is it any wonder that one grows enthusiastic when speaking about Western Canada.

But what may be said of this year? We are now in a position to speak regarding it. The conditions throughout Manitoba and the new provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan have been remarkably favorable. Had conditions been no better than in past years there would have been every cause for congratulation. We find, though, all previous records broken, and that from a four million acre crop of wheat there will be one hundred million bushels of a yield—25 bushels to the acre. Could anything better be desired? Covering the entire country the same splendid reports are being received. The following dispatch was sent by Mr. F. W. Thompson, Vice President of the Ogilvie Milling Co., one of the most careful grain men in America:

"Have just returned from covering several hundred miles of the crop district. I never saw anything like it in this country before. The average yield and quality far exceeds our earlier expectations. It is an immense crop. The weather is extremely favorable." Up to three weeks ago it was Mr. Thompson's opinion that the crop would not reach general expectations.

F. W. Thompson sends another telegram from Winnipeg to-night, saying that his estimate of the wheat crop is now one hundred million bushels. Before he went west he thought it would fall considerably short of that figure.

The moral of this story is that there should be no hesitation in making a decision if you wish to better your condition; or, if you have a family of boys that you wish to become settled on farms, it is a safe proposition to call upon the nearest authorized Canadian Government Agent, and get particulars as to most suitable districts and railway rates.

Not the Best. "Honesty is the best policy," remarked the old-fashioned man. "Yes," answered the discontented citizen. "But some of our big insurance companies haven't been writing that kind."—Washington Star.

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Positively cured by these Little Pills. They also relieve Distress from Dyspepsia, Indigestion and Too Hearty Eating. A perfect remedy for Dizziness, Nausea, Drowsiness, Bad Taste in the Mouth, Coated Tongue, Pain in the Side, TORPID LIVER. They regulate the Bowels. Purely Vegetable.

SMALL PILL. SMALL DOSE. SMALL PRICE.

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PRICE, 25 Cts.

TO CURE THE GRIP IN ONE DAY ANTI-GRIPINE WAS NO EQUAL FOR MANY YEARS

OLD-WORLD ODDITIES.

A Birmingham (Eng.) man named Batchelor has just married a young lady named Widow.

In Paris white horses are employed for the funerals of children or young unmarried people.

A hairdresser at Leipzig, Germany, has built a two-story house entirely of cork, and fitted it up for a shop and baths.

Four burglars, arrested in the act by the London police the other night, were all wearing gloves, in order not to leave finger prints behind them.

A clock in the tower of the new Naval college, at Dartmouth, England, will mark the time as it is kept on board ship, striking eight, six, four bells, etc.

A French road-mender, on a road near the Little St. Bernard, who has saved many travelers from death in the snow, has been made a knight of the Legion of Honor.

For the last 20 years there has been employed at the Cherry Tree Inn, Old Southgate, a blind hostler. He can tell regular customers by the sound of the trotting of their horses.

An organ grinder is perambulating the streets of London, having attached to his organ a placard stating that he is a whipthong maker thrown out of work by the automobiles.

An inhabitant of Farmoutiers, France, has left a legacy sufficient to provide prizes of 25 francs each yearly for the two most polite scholars—male and female—of the town. The winners are to be elected by ballot of their school-fellows.

Get Big Salaries. The combined salaries of the presidents of the 14 leading universities in the United States do not equal the amount paid the head of one life insurance company.

The One Woman. "I believe," he said, "that for each man a certain woman was created." "Yes," she replied, "and the divorce records show that he generally finds her sooner or later."—Record-Herald.

W. L. DOUGLAS \$3.50 & \$3.00 SHOES

W. L. Douglas \$4.00 Clit Edge Line Cannot be equalled at any price.

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W. L. DOUGLAS MAKES AND SELLS HIGH-HEEL SHOES \$3.50 TO \$7.00—THE ONLY DIFFERENCE IS THE PRICE. If I could take you to my factory at Brockton, Mass., the largest in the world under one roof making men's fine shoes and show you the care with which every pair of Douglas shoes is made, you would realize why W. L. Douglas \$3.50 shoes are the best shoes produced in the world.

I could show you the difference between the shoes made in my factory and those of other makes, you would understand why Douglas \$3.50 shoes cost more to make, why they hold their shape, fit better, wear longer, and are of greater intrinsic value than any other \$3.50 shoes on the market to-day.

W. L. Douglas Strong Made Shoes for Men, \$2.50, \$2.00, Boys' School & Dress Shoes, \$2.50, \$2.00, \$1.75, \$1.50. CAUTION—Beware of cheap imitations. No no substitute. None genuine without his name and price stamped on bottom.

WANTED: A shoe dealer in every town where W. L. Douglas Shoes are not sold. Full line of samples sent free for inspection upon request. Fast Color Ejecta used; they will not wear drab. Write for Illustrated Catalog of Fall Styles. W. L. DOUGLAS, Brockton, Mass.

\$10,000 REWARD to anyone who can improve this statement.

W. L. Douglas \$3.50 shoes have by their excellent style, easy fitting, and superior wearing qualities, achieved the largest sale of any \$3.50 shoe in the world. They are just as good as those that cost you \$8.00 to \$7.00—the only difference is the price. If I could take you to my factory at Brockton, Mass., the largest in the world under one roof making men's fine shoes and show you the care with which every pair of Douglas shoes is made, you would realize why W. L. Douglas \$3.50 shoes are the best shoes produced in the world.

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\$16.00 an Acre

of WESTERN CANADA is the amount many farmers will realize from their wheat crop this year. 25 Bushels to the Acre will be the Average Yield of Wheat.

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CHAS. FILLING, Clifton Bldg., Grand Forks, N. Dak. J. M. MACHLAN, Box 116, Watertown, S. Dakota. E. T. HOLMES, 315 Jackson Street, St. Paul, Minn. Mention this paper.

SLOAN'S LINIMENT CURES [60c. and \$1.00.] Swine Disease and Hog Cholera. Send for Circular with Directions. Dr. EARL B. SLOAN, 615 Albany St., Boston, Mass.

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TO CURE THE GRIP IN ONE DAY ANTI-GRIPINE WAS NO EQUAL FOR MANY YEARS



WITH MUCH CURIOSITY, BOTH WATCHED THE OUTCOME.

frequenting gambling houses, and this brought him in contact with the sporting element. He lost his position, and being without funds or influence to procure another he had recourse to gambling as a business.

For many years I supposed, as did many others of his old townsmen, that he had turned out to be an all-around sport, a frequenter of race tracks, a bettor on baseball games, pugilistic encounters, etc. However, we were all mistaken.

While I was in the jewelry business in Chicago he made frequent calls at my store, and on different occasions purchased a watch and several diamonds.

On one of his visits he was accompanied by a bright looking fellow with whom I happened to have a few moments' conversation. In reply to a

pals appeared. This accomplice was a full-blood Indian, who had been educated by the United States government. He had joined the gang in the west and had been with them for several years. He was a shrewd, foxy fellow, quick to detect a weak point in the game, or to appreciate a strong one.

On going to the blind one morning the grafter happened to notice, a short distance away beyond the fence inclosing the farmer's property, a man who seemed to be digging a hole in the ground. He immediately called the farmer's attention to the stranger and both watched the outcome with much curiosity.

When the man had dug a hole, about three feet deep, he placed a chunk of something in it and covered it up; after which he scattered the surplus