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*A RED STAR Magazine*

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# The Whereabouts of Mr. Moses Bailey

By JAMES B. NEVIN

**The secret of Moses' disappearance together with a business proposition which might be referred to as literally of an out of sight nature**

**T**HE fact that Moses Bailey had not been seen for several days was not, of itself, a very peculiar circumstance.

Mose was known to possess a slight predilection for looking upon the wine when it was red, and his occasional disappearance caused no unusual comment in Belton.

When, however, it was noted that Mose had not been seen hanging around the Central Hotel for over two weeks, people began to wonder where he was.

No one cared much, of course, but when a well known character just simply drops out of a community without any previous warning of his intention so to do and leaves no track or trace behind indicating when or how he left, nor when or how he expects to return, if at all—well, people will talk, and talking, grow curious—wildly curious—that's all.

The excitement grew so intense—perhaps the curiosity—that the town council seriously considered offering a reward for Moses' safe return. Upon further consideration, however, remarking the very ridiculous attitude in which this would place the community, the matter of the reward was dropped.

Mose had never been any specific benefit to Belton; in fact, it was generally conceded that he had been more of a disgrace to it than otherwise.

As for myself, I had a most important reason for wanting to know the whereabouts of Mr. Bailey. The said gentleman was indebted to me in the sum of seventeen dollars and fifty cents—an amount not to be carelessly overlooked.

Candor compels me to state here that several prominent citizens, to whom I mentioned my loss, intimated to me that it was a great pity, so far as the good of the community was concerned, that I did not make my exit at the same time Mr. Bailey made his. It appeared that I did not occupy a much higher place in the estimation of Beltonites than the mysterious Mr. Bailey.

In fact, since his remarkably clever feat of "pulling off" a real live sensation, I am rather inclined to think that Moses took precedence.

Time passed on, and, nothing being heard of Mose, I had given him up as lost, along with my seventeen fifty.

About three months after Mose was last seen in Belton I received a severe shock one day in the following communication, which reached me through the mail, bearing the local postmark:

**Dear Bill:**

**I guess you are wondering what has become of me. To all intents and purposes I am a dead man, but as I have a communication to make to you which it will undoubtedly be to your interest**

to hear, I should be pleased to have you call at Prof. Hucksley's residence at ten o'clock next Friday evening. I can put you on the road to making a lot of very easy money. I depend upon you to keep this matter a secret, as you know you may depend upon me to do the square thing by you.

If I remember correctly, I owe you a small sum of money. It will give me great pleasure to pay the same, when you call.

Trusting that I may have the pleasure of seeing you upon the evening suggested above, I am

Your friend,  
Moses Bailey.

Now this letter gave me a very creepy feeling. It was like some one talking to you from out of the grave.

At the same time I did want the seventeen fifty, and I was reasonably sure that my old friend of numerous brave enterprises of the past would not lead me into anything calculated to get me into serious trouble.

I decided to go, hear his scheme, get my money, and, incidentally, learn something of his queer conduct for the past few months—if possible.

**T**HE following Friday night, therefore, at precisely ten o'clock, I walked boldly up to Professor Hucksley's front door and rang the bell. In a few moments the door was opened and, without so much as a question being asked, I was ushered into the library, which was brilliantly lit with a cluster of incandescent electric lights.

Professor Hucksley, for he had met me at the door in person, now waved me to a chair and addressed his first remark to me as follows:

"Well, Mr. Davis, I am delighted that you did not disappoint us. Bailey will be extremely glad to see you."

"I shall certainly be glad to see Mose," I replied.

"No doubt," said the professor, giv-

ing me rather a queer look and smiling slightly.

At this moment I was startled to hear a loud guffaw right at my elbow. I jumped up and wheeled round suddenly—for it sounded very much like Bailey's laugh—when I discovered, to my intense surprise, that there was no one there.

As I stood gazing into space in the direction from which the sound had come, it seemed that I could hear a suppressed chuckle, and pattering footsteps as though some one was hastily leaving the room.

With a slight thrill of uneasiness, I turned to Hucksley for an explanation. *He had vanished!*

There was the chair in which he had been sitting not more than fifteen seconds before. It was empty.

Now, with all the short comings charged up to me by the Beltonites, no one has ever accused me of being a physical coward; but I am willing to admit that a mighty curious and uncomfortable feeling stole over me in the face of these very peculiar proceedings, and I began to wish that I had paid no attention to Bailey's letter—even involving, as it did, the perhaps indefinite postponement of the collection of my seventeen fifty.

However, being now in for it, I summoned all my courage and endeavored to bring my mind to bear upon the situation.

Hastily crossing over to the door, I closed and bolted it on the inside, resumed my seat, and said, in a loud tone of voice, "Very clever, very clever, Professor Hucksley; now come on, let me see my friend, and go home."

You could have cut the silence with a knife. Not the faintest sound came in response to my remark. It was getting mighty lonesome in that room.

I now began a systematic search of the apartment for the late occupant of the chair opposite mine.

I looked under the bed and behind the sofa, back of the piano, and I even looked in the piano. He was not to be found.

As a last resort, I got down on my knees and looked under the bookcase. No use.

Although I investigated every place where it was possible for a man to conceal himself in that room, Professor Hucksley up to this time was nowhere to be seen.

When I arose from my last named position, there sat the professor in his chair as unconcerned as though nothing had happened.

Involuntarily I glanced towards the door. It was still shut and bolted.

Very quietly I walked over to the professor and remarked, "I would regret the necessity of killing you, sir, but unless you at once conduct me either to my friend, whom I called here to see, or the front door, I shall most certainly proceed to knock your brains out."

With this I turned for an instant and picked up a heavy paper weight which I had previously noticed lying upon the table. Quick as I was, I was no match for my companion, for when my eyes almost instantaneously returned from their glance towards the table, they rested upon the gleaming barrel of a revolver held in the very steady hand of Hucksley.

"Sit down, Mr. Davis," said the professor quietly. "I know you are surprised at these seemingly strange proceedings. But, really sir, one should never be surprised at anything in these days of scientific advancement. With your permission, I will bring in your friend."

"Bring him in, if you please," I said with a shiver, for this thing had got on my nerves somehow, "and please be quick about it."

Professor Hucksley smiled, walked over and unbolted the door and left the room. In a few moments he returned as far as the door, spoke a few words to some one in a low tone of voice, and then I heard his footsteps as he passed on down the hall towards the back part of the house.

Almost instantly following the first retreating footfall of the professor, I was overjoyed to hear the well known voice of Bailey exclaim, "Well, well, Bill, I am glad to see you."

I turned, with a feeling of intense relief, to greet my old friend, but was thunderstruck to see that I was entirely alone in the room.

At this moment I felt my right hand grasped in the strong clasp of something which felt like a hand, and Mose Bailey's voice rang in my ears, saying: "Bill, this is a devil of a joint here!"

I made a lunge with my left fist in the direction of the voice, swung wildly in the air, and then rushed madly towards the front door, intent only upon getting out of this uncanny place at the very earliest possible moment.

When within about ten feet of the door I heard a sharp "click," a peal of hideous laughter, and immediately the lights went out, leaving me in total darkness.

I guess I must have fainted about this time, for the next thing I knew I was lying upon a sofa in Professor Hucksley's private sleeping apartments, while the professor was leaning over me and forcing a drink of brandy upon me.

The idea of any one forcing a drink of anything alcoholic down my throat

was so ridiculous that I involuntarily smiled.

"Good," said the professor, noting the smile; "you are coming around."

"HEAVENS, man," I exclaimed, starting up, "what does all this mean? Have I been dreaming all these horrible things about voices and—"

"No," purred the professor soothingly, "be quiet and listen to what will presently be said to you by one who I assure you is your old friend Bailey. No matter whether you see him or not, talk to him and you will soon cease to wonder at what may now seem very strange."

At this moment Bailey's voice, coming from a point apparently not more than ten feet in front of me, addressed me, saying, "I am glad to see you, Bill, and I am quite sure you are the very man Professor Hucksley is looking for."

"I would be blamed glad to see you," I replied, for the brandy had braced up my nerves a bit, "but it seems that your voice is the only thing about you that is on exhibition today. As for my being the very man Professor Hucksley is looking for—well, you can gamble that I am not hankering after a job under him."

"Oh," replied the voice, "you simply don't know the prof—"

"Well," I snapped, "I am not sitting up nights longing for a more intimate acquaintance. What does all this mean, Mose—if you are Mose—and what is it leading to? You never threw me down in your life, and I came here upon the strength of my confidence in your doing the square thing."

"And you did right," said the voice. "I am not going back on you. After I am through talking to you, if you so choose, you are at liberty to walk

out by the front door—only you are to keep secret the things you have learned here."

"Before I go, however," I rejoined, under a sudden impulse, "you will not forget the small amount of mon—"

"Certainly not," interrupted the voice; "that will be attended to in due time."

This eased my mind considerably, for money is a necessity, and I hold that it is just as well to get all that is coming to you as you go through life, as not.

"In the first place," went on the voice, coming nearer now, "I, Mose Bailey, am here by your side, in flesh and blood. You will feel my hand upon your shoulder."

I certainly did feel something on my shoulder. I also felt for the bottle of brandy which the professor had slipped under my pillow a few moments before, for that gentleman had quietly withdrawn at the starting of the conversation between Mose and myself. I assuredly did not like the queer doings in that house.

"Now, then," continued the voice, "I am here; I, Mose Bailey, to be sure—only *I am invisible, and you cannot see me!*"

"You are a liar," I yelled, jumping up; "this is some trick—and it is a good one, I will admit—but I am not expected to believe it, of course. I know it is some of this infernal hypnotism, or—er—er—ventriloquism, or some of those—"

"I am telling you the truth," said Mose, "only, of course, I do not expect you to grasp the idea at once. Here, feel this."

With the last words, my hand was suddenly snatched from my side by an invisible force of some kind, and directed to a point about ten inches in

front of and on a level with my eyes. There it came in contact with something warm, and gradually I made out the outlines of a human nose, but I could not see the slightest sign of what I felt.

Now, as everyone in Belton knows, Moses' face is disfigured, just to the left of the left nostril, by two unsightly warts, one large and one smaller, just below it. My hand, under the guidance of the something which held it, distinctly felt those warts and convinced me, as nothing else could, that I was actually in the invisible presence of Moses Bailey.

"Well," I gasped, "what in the world—"

"Oh, you don't mind so much," said Mose, "when you get used to it. It is a bit awkward at first, of course, but the habit grows on you. I have visited Belton several times within the last few months and—really, you have no idea of the advantages of being invisible."

"Well, who would ever have thought—but how is the thing done?"

"That is Professor Hucksley's secret," said Mose. "I am getting ten dollars a week, and all I can eat, for simply allowing myself to be experimented upon. When the professor is through with me he will render me visible again, and I shall reappear in Belton not only rich in money, but rich in inside information concerning certain pious citizens—obtained by virtue of my invisible condition—which I think will be worth something to me in a financial way."

"But what have I to do with all this?" I asked, for I will confess that the experience which I was undergoing was most trying.

"For certain further experiments," he replied, "Professor Hucksley wants another subject. I told him that I was

quite sure that your services could be obtained, provided you were approached in the proper manner. He requested me to place the matter before you. The rest you know. The few trifling experiences through which you were put when you first came into the house were, first, to test your nerve a little; second, to demonstrate to you the awe inspiring advantages of being invisible."

"Yes," I interposed quickly; "I want to ask a few questions about the library experience."

"The professor will answer all further questions in person," said Mose, as, at that moment, Professor Hucksley walked into the room and took a seat near me.

"My dear Mr. Davis," said the professor, handing me a cigar, and at the same time extending his case towards the invisible Bailey, "I am very anxious to secure your service for a few simple experiments."

I was not paying the slightest attention to him. I was engaged in watching a cigar apparently lift itself into space, and steady itself in air, while a match calmly arose from a nearby table, struck itself against one of the legs of the table, floated to the end of the cigar nearest me, lit the cigar, went out suddenly, and then plunged wildly into a cuspidor, where it lay very still.

I CANNOT describe to you the very peculiar feeling I experienced while watching that cigar smoke itself in mid-air.

I felt better when I heard Bailey remark to the professor that he did not like this cigar as well as some they had smoked a few days previous to this. I knew by this that Bailey was smoking this cigar, and, while he was invisible, the cigar was not. It was very curious.

"I am willing to pay you the same

that I am paying Bailey," continued the professor, "if you will simply submit yourself to the same treatment. There is no danger, and you will be treated like a gentleman at all times. I calculate, after one more little test, to make the details of my discovery public. What do you say?"

"I thank you for your offer," I said, "but I must decline. I am afraid I could—"

"I am very sorry," he sighed wearily, "but I was afraid that Bailey had too high an opinion of your courage, hence the little experiments when you first came in. Well, well, it is a very simple service, and, as I was so nearly ready to make my work public, I had hoped that you would consent. I guess we can find someone else, though."

Now, I did not like the intimation concerning my lack of courage.

I began to weaken. Perhaps I was throwing away a golden opportunity and for no other reason than that it involved a somewhat novel experience.

Mose Bailey had undergone it for over three months, and, while I had no means of telling whether or not he had grown fat upon the thing, he at least appeared contented. That is to say, he did not exactly appear, in the strict sense of the term, at all; he simply said that he was contented.

"If you would allow me a little more information," I said, addressing Hucksley, "I might consider it."

"Suppose you question me," he replied, "and I will answer such questions as I feel justified in answering just now."

"Well, then, what will you do with me first?" I queried.

"Strip you," he replied, straightening up and showing great animation, "and paint every square inch of your body with a metallic preparation of mine, the

exact composition of which I am not quite ready to announce at this time, after which you will be invisible."

"That's easy." I smiled. "But you can make me visible again whenever you want to?"

"Oh, yes" — enthusiastically — "I should never consider my discovery at all complete unless that feature were well understood. I simply have to ask you into my bathroom, where you will bathe in an especially prepared liquid, from whence you return quite your old self again. The chemical bath washes off the metallic paint."

"I should certainly like to know something about the nature of this remarkable discovery," I said insinuatingly.

"Well," answered the professor, "as you will learn by consulting certain technical works, distinctness of vision depends upon the accuracy with which the rays of light, diverging from all parts of a luminous object, are brought to a focus exactly at the level of the sensitive optical membrane destined to receive them. Taking that proposition as a basic law, and stripping it of all unnecessary detail, it must be true that any object not luminous in the slightest degree must be imperceptible.

"My preparation renders any object to which it is applied positively non luminous (or perhaps I should say it renders the object infinitely luminous, which is the same thing) and incapable of being made more luminous. And it does this regardless of surrounding lights.

"When a ray of light comes in contact with an object coated with my preparation, it passes through just as it would pass through a piece of plate glass, provided the object so treated be completely and absolutely covered with the preparation.

"Result," continued Hucksley, as a little red spot came in each cheek, "is transparency. Even human beings can be made invisible by my process. Why, man, the X Ray is child's play when compared with this.

"To make it clearer," went on the professor, after a pause, "I will illustrate. I took Mr. Bailey, here, and first painted him on one side only. I found that, while I could not see him, at the same time I could not see through him. He simply appeared like a great white blot.

"I then painted him all over and stood him in front of a screen. The result was most satisfactory. When a ray of light struck him it was instantaneously conducted through him to the opposite side and released.

"The first object with which it came in contact, after being released, was the screen. The ray was immediately reflected back by the screen, through Mr. Bailey again, and the first and only impression registered in the eye was the screen."

"You cannot imagine how the success of his cherished hopes affected him," interjected Bailey. "It was really pathetic."

"Wonderful!" I gasped.

"Not more so than the effects of chloroform, the phonograph, and hundreds of other discoveries were thought to be, when first demonstrated," said Hucksley quietly.

"Perhaps not," I muttered.

"I at once washed Bailey in my other preparation," continued the professor, "and he dined with me that night not the least bit worse for wear. We have repeated the experiment many times, and Bailey has not been washed now for nearly two months—that is, not in my preparation. He really prefers to remain invisible, I think."

"I will assist you in your further experiments," I said, coming to a sudden decision in the matter, "only I cannot begin work before the end of the week. There are a few things to which I must attend."

"That will be perfectly satisfactory," responded the professor, with evident gratitude. "Come today week and all will be well. Remember, though, that I trust to your honor not to reveal one word to anyone of what you have learned here until I give you permission. Of course, if you do, I am in a position to make it extremely uncomfortable for you."

After spending an hour or more with Hucksley and the invisible Bailey, during which time I found the former to be a most charming gentleman, I arose preparatory to taking my departure. Upon reaching the front door, I remembered something that had puzzled me and inquired:

"By the way, how did you manage to disappear so completely when we were in the library?"

"Why," replied the professor, with a laugh, "that was easy—a trick, in fact. I had with me, actually in my hand, when you came in, a long bath robe which had been previously soaked in my solution. When you turned your head for a moment I just slipped it on. You could not see me when you looked around, but, of course, I was there.

"You kept me skipping around prettily, though, when you were searching for me. In fact, had you any idea of my real whereabouts, you would certainly have caught glimpses of my feet as I dodged you. It is almost impossible to keep entirely concealed in a bath robe, while moving about.

"Of course, when I was ready to reappear, I simply took advantage of your position, when you were looking under

the bookcase, to throw off the robe."

"Your non luminous compound is remarkable," I said solemnly.

"Yes," he replied as he bade me good night; "it represents years of patient work."

I DID not hear anything from either the professor or Mose during the following week until Friday morning, when the postman handed me a letter.

Belton, July 16th, 1897

Dear Bill:

You need not come to Hucksley's tonight. You will not find me there; neither will you find the professor. It took me quite a long time to see through that man, but I do at last, and very clearly.

Now, in our early experiment, Hucksley was very much worried by one seemingly insurmountable obstacle in the path of complete success. Paint as he would, he could not render my mouth and eyes invisible. Of course, as long as I kept them shut, it made no difference, but what is the pleasure of being invisible if you can neither speak nor see, without giving the thing away? Then again, a man cuts a very novel figure going around with everything about him invisible except his mouth and eyes. It would most certainly cause unpleasant comment. How to get around this was the constant study of the professor for over four weeks.

At last he discovered a way out of the trouble. He made me drink a quart of that stuff—and it did the work! This was just two days before you came. I was completely and absolutely invisible—eyes, mouth and all—as you know.

The morning after you left it occurred to me that I would like to resume my visible state again, for a day or so. I prepared my bath, as usual, using the proper chemicals for removing the transparency mixture and plunged in.

Upon getting out and glancing in the mirror I was surprised to see that it had had no effect upon me at all. I thought, perhaps, I had made a mistake in mixing the chemicals for the bath. I called in Hucksley and told him about it.

He looked keenly in my direction, seemed a little upset, but carefully prepared another bath for me. It was no use, the charm would not work. I could not be made visible with the bath.

Hucksley was very much worried, but told me to give him a few hours' time to study the case. The upshot of it all was, I was tearfully informed, the next day, that there was no possibility of my being made visible again while I lived. The mixture which I had taken into my stomach had so impregnated my system that I was hopelessly transparent forever!

I suggested that I swallow some of the bath mixture. I was informed that it was a deadly poison, taken internally, and could not be thought of. I, of course, prefer a transparent existence to no existence at all.

Now then, maybe I wasn't mad.

Then I thought of revenge. I cooled down, told Hucksley that I knew it was an accident and that I would forgive him. I suggested that we drink a bottle of wine on it.

Well, in the wind-up, I succeeded in getting Hucksley as drunk as a boiled owl. It was easy, the poor fellow felt so bad. Just before he fell under the table I went out and procured about a quart of the transparency mixture—we had just made some fresh and strong—and every time the professor took a drink after this, I made it half wine and half mixture. In this way I succeeded in getting about half of it down him.

After he fell under the table I stripped him and painted him good and proper. The professor is certainly out of sight today. He has the remorse so bad from his last night's jag that he is perfectly content to be invisible.

We are leaving for parts unknown tonight, so do not look for us. It is very novel. We will be compelled to steal all we eat, as we cannot buy it without exciting comment.

Hucksley says that you are at liberty to tell as much of your experience as you see fit. He says that he will never make his discovery public, as it is not complete, and besides, it is too dangerous.

Yours, etc.,

Moses Bailey.

I have never heard from them since. I have never heard anything of that seventeen fifty, either.