

CHILD PRODIGY IS OFTENTIMES ARTFUL DODGER

Each Year Produces Marvels of Infant Genius Along Varied Lines.

SOME ARE BORN FRAUDS

BY FREDERIC J. HASKIN.
NEW YORK CITY.—The child prodigy is now a familiar figure among us. Nearly every week the pictorial supplements of the newspapers contain the photograph of at least one child genius who is early blossoming into fame. Last year one of the greatest sensations of the season was a child of 11, and this year it is a 9-year-old chess champion. Columbia University has just matriculated a 14-year-old boy, who is said to acquire his high marks without studious effort, and Harvard, of course, has had a child mathematical genius for two or three years.

But the development of child prodigies has not been confined to the arts and sciences. They are also appearing in amazing numbers in criminal circles. New York is witnessing a rash season of small artful dodgers who are surprisingly skilled in relieving people of their watches and pocketbooks under the very noses of rotund cops. Still others are evidencing amazing ability in the usually mature business of fraud.

There is Sniffski, for instance, aged 6, a prodigy of Gatsby's, who is a master mind in his own line. Sniffski was not born with a silver spoon in his mouth, but with a great talent for acquiring something of the kind for himself. He is one of a large family of ill-cared children who look very much alike, with the exception that Sniffski has an unusual pair of large, expressive, somber eyes, which he has learned to use to good advantage.

Just as Sniffski began to recognize the value of his known, but beginning with this fall the people living in Sniffski's neighborhood were touched by their appeal. A young woman artist was one of the first victims of their magic power. She was entering the corner drug store to buy a sundae when she beheld a small boy with a towed nose and ragged clothes staring at her in the window.

The whole little figure seemed to express a tremendous longing, and she thought vaguely that the child would make a good sketch, but forgot about him in entering her sundae. As she took the first bite, however, she happened to turn to the window and encountered the eyes—large brown eyes, swimming with tears. Just as his attention was attracted by an insistent ringing at the telephone. He shook his head dolefully when he returned to his audience.

"That was a fond parent," he confided, "at whose polite entreaty we delivered two pieces of peppermint stick candy to her promising offspring. Just now she called up to tell me that our boy was out there with it, and her son has changed his mind and wants lemon now, so she is sending the peppermint back, and she wants the lemon sent out at once."

"And when he was arrested here in New York only after a long search.

Elliott is also blessed with a cheerful countenance, which attracted every mouthful of bread to him on his travels, and helped him to remain above suspicion for a long period. Elliott decided to take the money as soon as it was handed to him. As told the police later, "Sure I took it. Who wouldn't? I was getting \$8 a week as an office boy and they handed me \$4,300—I had to count it, you know—and told me to take it to the paymaster. It was more money than I had ever laid eyes on before. It took me away."

With cool determination, Elliott started for the Camden ferry as soon as he left the Baldwin plant. He remained in Camden just long enough to buy an overcoat and three suits of clothes, each with long trousers—his first—and then took a train to New York. From New York he went to Chicago, from which he expected to go to San Francisco. But here he read an item in the news which said that he would probably go to Spokane, where his father was. So Elliott decided not to go West at all, but to take the first train back to New York. From here he returned to Philadelphia and stayed at the Bellevue-Stratford for several days, after which he moved to the Hotel Lorain, which is only a short distance from the Baldwin works.

Finally, he became restless and again took a train to New York, where he at last bought a ticket for San Francisco. It was this act that betrayed him. The ticket office agent became suspicious at a small boy paying \$134.50 for a ticket, and called in one of the railroad detectives. Photographs of missing boys were produced, and Elliott was recognized as the most conspicuously missing of them all.

"That's who I am," said Elliott, when confronted with the photograph. "I don't care. I am tired of spending money anyhow."

Irreversibly the neighbor inquired concerning Sniffski's age, and invariably Sniffski quietly answered "ten." And always the same result was one more coin in Sniffski's small pocket.

In another section of New York an equally clever child prodigy has been working an even more complicated scheme, for separating truthful persons from small portions of their cash. This enterprising lad, who has a cherubic countenance, rings the bell of a house where there is no telephone. Many such houses still exist in New York, especially since the telephone company has become so indifferent to increasing its business.

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On a Sunday morning, Mr. Hibbs, who lives in the third floor front, is informed immediately that he is wanted on the nearest drug store telephone. The drug store has sent a little boy to tell him the landlady explains, breathless from running up three flights of stairs.

As Mr. Hibbs dashes hurriedly into his clothes he wonders who on earth it can be who has called him up in such a fashion. Is it the red-haired flapper he met the other day, who wanted to join his little club, and who inquired so insistently as to how she could reach him on the phone? No; it couldn't be. He is sure that he didn't tell her about the drug store. Too bad he hadn't. Ah, now he knows who it is—it is Brown, of course, who has come to town, found out where he is and called him up. Only Brown would think of calling him from the nearest drug store. It will be great to see Brown again—always was an enterprising chap.

Rushing enthusiastically down the stairs, he is about to clear the front step with one leap when he is stopped by a small boy with a cherubic face, who says a small but determined voice:

"I brought the message, Mister."

"Oh, you did," laughs Mr. Hibbs, "and you want a nickel, I suppose—well, here it is."

Mr. Hibbs continues to dash down the stairs, is about to clear the front step with one leap when he is stopped by a small boy with a cherubic face, who says a small but determined voice:

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"A call," repeats the druggist pithily.

"There is no call for you. hasn't been a call from outside here this morning."

Who told you there was a little boy? I see. Give him a nickel, of course, didn't you? Well, that's just their game. You aren't the first one that's been stung. It's a regular business bringing people to the phone and getting a nickel from them when there isn't any call."

Fourteen-year-old

awards with \$4,300.

Perhaps the most notable of all child prodigies in affairs of this kind is Elliott Michener, the 14-year-old office boy, who recently walked out of the Baldwin Locomotive Works to Philadelphia with \$4,300 belonging to the company in his pocket.

Writes New Book



Any Way You Figure This Thing of Jobs the Other's Better

Druggist Uncovers Few of Psychic Reasons for Crime and Bad Table Manners.

"Talk about psychological reactions of people toward kindness," grunted the druggist after he had supplied a Mary Garden sundae to the youthful customer. "A woman came in here the other day and asked me to keep her two kids while she went downtown, and when she got back she gave each one of them a piece of candy she bought some place else and told them both with even thanks that she had torn her skirt on a nail while over here and requested me to see that the damage was made good."

"The things that make you sore," he continued, "are when you have to get up in the middle of the night on a special call and then find that your customer wants you to change a dime so he can use the telephone. One night last week I answered the emergency bell to find that a man wanted to pay a cabman who couldn't change a dime. I said that he could not tell me to tell you."

"The lecture on the impositions of the innocent public upon the poor middleman continued with the information that his store does a rushing business in wrapping up for mailing free of charge packages purchased at other stores with the additional request that some packages be sent to be rewrapped by the careful owner."

"Talk about gratitude," he snuffed. "Last year a woman called up and asked me to send out a \$10 money order. When the clerk got over there she gave him the \$10 and told him to charge the 10 cent charges since her pocketbook was upstairs and it was too much trouble to go up and get it. I said never did I do that, either," he concluded.

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wants that new pacifier we stocked up last week."

"Charge it," commanded son, making a short cut to the door.

"Charge it is the most popular expression," Druggist language," declared the druggist, making an entry upon his book.

"You can charge anything from a 1-cent stamp to a concrete road roller, not omitting the war tax on ice cream sundae."

"Say, mister, can you tell me how many steps there are on the monument?"

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"I don't think the State needs more witnesses after I have heard the defense and one of the audience in the intermission," he declared.

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