



# Pay Out West

By THOMAS THURSDAY

*Hey Rube! Slap that coin down on the table—right this way, gents—and watch the little spirit-guide double your stock in ten minutes!*

WELL, HOMBRES, I hope things are breaking better for you than they did for Professor Phineas, the Psychic Marvel, who is billed to be the villain of this slice of delirious drama. Not wishing to keep you in suspense, I'll report now that the hero of this jovial bed-time story was "Hokum" Howe, the smarty of the second part. If it hadn't been for Hokum's little *coup de grace*, the slick professor would now be sitting witty, counting over a flock of stolen dough.

In case you don't know me, as Lindbergh remarked to the dumb-founded Parisians, I'm

"Doc" Sweeney, manager of the side show with Hy Harrison's Greater Grafters' Circus and Freak Hippodrome, a thirty-car trick that opened the season at Beezark, Arizona.

Though I had personally booked the regular line-up of freak attractions, such as the Fat Girl, the Tattoo Man, the Snake Charmer, the Albino Beauty, the standard bunch of strange, odd and curious peepul from all parts of the world, it was Old Man Harrison who had hired Professor Phineas.

"What the kid-show needs," says the deep-thinking boss, "is bigger and better novelties. The

towners are getting all washed up on the usual load of hackneyed boloney. This Phineas guy should be a wow; why, he can actually talk to the dead!”

“What of it?” sniffs Hokum Howe, my inside lecturer. “That baby ain’t got a thing on *me*; I been talkin’ to the dead for years, right from the platform!”

“His stunt is over your head,” snaps the boss.

“So’s your hat,” says Hokum, politely. “Besides, I knew that merry lad when his name was Tim Thorpe. This was ten-twelve years ago, and he was then high-pitching Dr. Hooeys’ Golden Hair-Hoister, which cured dandruff, warts, measles, asthma, whooping cough, or what have you. He makes out that he don’t recognize me, but there’s a reason: If he did, he would also have to recognize the fact that he owes me ten bucks, which he borreyed whilst I had a fit of either dumbness or generosity.”

“I’d rather not hear anymore about it,” says the boss, and starts off down the midway.

“Are you kidding anybody about that guy?” I asks Hokum.

“Not me,” he says. “He’s so crooked a pretzel-maker could use him for a pattern!”

**P**ROFESSOR PHINEAS had his “studio” at the left side of the tent, and his admission charge was two-bits a head or even half-head. On the opening night, he got a good crowd into his den, thanks to the work of our press-agent, Bill Dolen, who knew more about writing fairy tales than the Grimm Brothers ever heard of.

Beezark was a typical Arizona burg, consisting of cowboys, rangers, two-gun bimbos and the usual assortment of tough and tender feet.

Wishing to get an earful of the professor’s act, me and Hokum ducked around to the side-wall, opposite his deadfall, and listened in.

In a preamble lecture, which me and Hokum could hear plainly, the professor broke down and confessed that he was gifted with psychic powers, and that with the aid of his “guide”—who was then hobnobbing in the next world—he could perform feats of magic. However, it was positively necessary for the audience to be in harmony with the seance, otherwise the guide would get peeved and strut out on the act.

After speaking along them lines for about ten

minutes, the professor announced that he was going to let the folks in on something extra-special. He then told the lads that his guide was working on a system of reproducing real money, and it should be fully developed within a week. To make a clean breast of matters, the professor’s guide wouldst endeavor to duplicate any coin that one of the patrons would lay upon the table. For example, if some hombre slapped down two-bits, the guide would make every effort to place *another* two-bits beside it, just to prove his power.

“That’s a nifty!” whispers Hokum to me. “We ought to hand it to the dear professor, but we won’t!”

“That’s a new one on me,” I says. “If the system works, it should put the U. S. Mints out of business. Er, what’s the trick?”

“Clever,” says Hokum. “He’ll take a week to develop it, and then—blooey!”

“What d’yer mean, blooey?”

“Wait and see,” says he. “Quick! he’s doused the lights. Les’ duck under the wall and watch his act!”

Lifting the side-wall canvas, we sneak into the studio. Inside, it’s almost as dark as the ace of spades in a coal-mine.

“Now, folks,” says the professor, “I want to impress upon your minds that there is nothing avaricious about this business of reproducing money. It is merely a demonstration of psychic power, and positive proof that my guide is in close touch with the affairs of this world. That being understood, I will ask some gentleman in the audience to place a small coin upon the table, say, a twenty-five cent piece.”

A quarter hits the table with a jingle and the professor thanks the donor.

“Before going on with this scientific experiment,” continues the quack, “it will be necessary for us to get the proper atmosphere. In order to attain this, we must all sing some old and touching melody.”

A cowboy suggests that they sing “Sizzling Mama,” but Professor Phineas lets out a whinny of protest.

“Jazz,” says he, “is not attuned to the demonstration that we are endeavoring to give. May I not suggest that we sing ‘Silver Threads Among the Gold’?”

They all joined in an effort to ruin the old

favorite, and when they had finished, the professor goes into a trick trance and asked his guide if he was hovering in the neighborhood.

The guide was supposed to answer through a trumpet, which stood in the center of the table.

However, Mr. Guide failed to answer, and I guess he was busy resting.

"It is evident," says the professor, "that we have not acquired the correct atmosphere. More singing will be necessary. Let us all sing 'O Sole Mio'."

This goes over their heads and hits the top of the tent.

"Really, gentlemen," says the professor, "I am surprised that such a cultured audience as this is not familiar with 'O Sole Mio'. Well, suppose we try 'My Old Kentucky Home'."

The boys hit that with such a bust that I bet Steve Foster, the bird who wrote the gem, kicked the roof off his tomb.

Once more the professor asked his guide if he was in the vicinity. Much to the amazement of the audience, the trumpet tuned up with a few well-bred squawks, after which the guide announced that he was playing around and ready to serve the professor.

Next, the professor asked his playmate if he would be so kind as to duplicate the quarter lying on the table, and the guide replied that he would do his best. A few moments later, midst a silly silence, a clink was heard on the table, indicating that the guide had got down to business.

"Lights!" snaps the professor and, just as we ducked out under the side-wall, I noted a companion quarter beside the first one. What took place after that, I don't know; but the meeting broke up and the customers tramped out with puzzled expressions on their pans. Hokum Howe stops the lad who had contributed the quarter and asks a few questions.

"Did the professor give you the other two-bits?" asks Hokum.

"He shore did!" says the puncher. "Er, how long has this been goin' on? Gosh, whut's the use of herdin' cattle at forty dollahs a month when yuh kin get money as easy as that!"

"Listen, Big Boy," I butts in, "why didn't you place some large bills on the table, and have the guide fade you?"

"The professor says he didn't want to over-

tax his guide," replies the lad. "We're gonta have a meetin' every night this week and work the guide easy. The professor says if his guide finds out that we are greedy fur gold he will go away and nevah come back. Wal, see yuh to-morrer!"

SHORTLY AFTER, Professor Phineas strolls out of the tent, smoking a newly-lit cigar. He inhales a large gob of smoke and exhales it around Hokum.

"What this country needs," snaps Hokum, "is a good five-cent cigar extinguisher!"

"What this country *really* needs," hurls back the professor, "is less wise-cracking chumps!"

"Jump in the river," retorts Hokum, "and there will be one less."

As both begin to steam up like the Twentieth Century, I pass a few soothing remarks, fearing that Hokum would pin one on the dear professor's chin.

"What this show needs," I says, "is bigger and better cooperation."

"Then tell that ape," sizzles Hokum, "to send in the ten-spot he hooks from me ten-twelve years ago!"

"The man is unbalanced," bellers the professor. "Why, I never saw him before in my life. In fact, he and I don't mix in the same social strata. Well, what can one expect from common stew-bums?"

"Ten bucks!" yelps Hokum, getting red-headed, "that's what I expect from common stew-bums. Them Civil War whiskers and Buffalo Bill goatee don't fool *me* none. You may have picked up a lot of five-and-ten dollar words since last we met, but under the skin, feller, you and me speak the same langwidge. I'd know you if you was disguised as Mary Pickford! Meanw'ile, how about shooting in 'at ten?"

"Bah!" remarks the professor, and walks away briskly.

"Listen," I says to Hokum, "are you sure that that guy is Tim Thorpe, and that he used to high-pitch with a medicine show?"

"Am I sure!" echoes Hokum, with a pained look. "Say, why not ask Charlie Lindbergh if he'd recognize the *Spirit of St. Louis* if he chanced to fall over it? Only difference between that baby and Captain Kidd is that the captain done his looting on the water."

"Well, don't stir up too much excitement," I says.

"Not too much," says he; "just enough to ruin 'im!"

**N**EXT NIGHT the professor held his second meeting, with the same audience, but it was a complete, absolute flop. His guide failed to appear, and no money was reproduced. The jovial professor went through the usual motions, such as having the boys sing solemn songs, but the racket must of scared Mr. Guide up toward Baffin Bay.

Finally, the professor asked to be excused, claiming that the lads must of peeved the guide, or annoyed him, in some mysterious manner. Anyway, until the professor would have a chance to have a personal talk with his guide, the meeting would be adjourned until the following evening.

"What's he figuring on now?" I asks Hokum, after the meeting broke up.

"He's working a ready-up system," says Hokum. "He's a shrewd biscuit, and knows his Bermudas, don't think he doesn't. When he gets the boys all aflutter, he'll pull a fast one, and blow away prompt and speedy. Well, let 'im blow!"

"D'yer think he's got a ace in the hole?" I enquires.

"He has," says Hokum, "and if it's what I think it is, I'll have a ace in the hole myself!"

Comes the third night. The usual bunch goes into the professor's boob-trap, and he goes through the usual boloney. His guide seems to be in much better humor, and when two of the lads placed fifty-cent pieces upon the table—while the lights were out—they were duplicated when the lights went on, netting them a profit of one hundred per cent.

Of course, this demonstration got the lads all excited, and some hombre yelps that he would like to place a ten-dollar note upon the table, if the guide would do his stuff. However, the professor would have none of that, saying that his guide must not suspect that the folks in dear old Beezark, Arizona, were the wee bit greedy.

"You must bear in mind, dear folks," says the professor, "that my guide is a highly sensitized, moral and ethical spirit. If he were to suspect that we were money-mad, he might go off into space and never return to us again. However, if you will all assemble here again tomorrow night, I shall

make an effort to talk with my guide and gain his good graces."

On the fourth night the guide failed to materialize at all, although the lads sang five different songs, all sad enough to make a crocodile shimmy with the blues.

But the fifth night was much better! Professor Phineas asked three of the boys to place three cartwheel dollars upon the table for duplication. Then they sang a flock of tear-jerking songs, the lights went out and, when they went on again, each dollar had been duplicated.

Naturally, this method of earning money got the boys all hopped up, and they began to dream dreams. What was the sense in riding ranges, chasing cattle, and cleaning corrals for a living, when you could place jack on a table, sit in the dark, sing songs, and have your sugar doubled? Hot cactus!

"Gentlemen," says the professor, "I trust I have given you a good demonstration of ectoplasmic powers, and now I have some exceptionally good tidings for you. Last evening, after you had left the meeting, I got in touch with my spirit guide and told him what a fine, upstanding bunch of gentlemen you were. I informed him that you were public-spirited, kind-hearted, gentle, and ever willing to help those in distress. To sum up, my friends, I told my guide that if he would be gracious enough to duplicate a twenty-dollar gold-piece, placed upon this table by each of the gentlemen who have regularly attended these meetings, you would all use the money for a good and noble purpose. Now, my friends, tomorrow night, Saturday, will be our last meeting, and I want each of you to bring a twenty-dollar gold-piece for duplication. As for me, I ask nothing in return; I am able to live on the small admission fee you pay at the door, and I might add that I glory in the work I am doing. Ah, good people, you cannot realize the satisfaction I get from doing work that advances the interests of science! What greater glory does a mortal want than the knowledge that he is helping his fellow man! Lincoln, Washington, Jefferson, and countless other great men, were glad to help the world's progress, and that in itself was sufficient reward for them. I, in my humble way, feel as they did. Gentlemen, I thank you and, remember, to-morrow night!"

That same evening, as they remark in the movies, Hokum Howe, who shared a coop with me at the Hotel Sombrero, failed to appear until the spree sma' hours of the morning. Even then I would not of known he had returned, only he tripped over a chair, the end fell on my beak, and I'll have you know the same ain't made of rubber!

"A slight error," says Hokum. "Sorry!"

"Don't mention it," I says. "I was merely sound asleep and decided to wake up at the moment the chair whanged my beezzer. Er, where you been?"

"'Twas a big night for Mr. Howe and a bigger one for Professor Phineas," he says, removing his shoes.

"I hope you haven't been sap enough to sock that baby, have you?"

"Do I look like a chump?" he inquires. "I may be crazy but I never work at it. Well, two o'clock and all's swell. Move over, ape! I crave sleep and plenty of it!"

"What have you been up to, besides your neck?" I want to know.

"Wait and see," he yawns. "Even if it was good, the professor wouldn't like it!"

**SATURDAY NIGHT.** After the audience had filed into his studio, Professor Phineas rubbed his hands professionally and beamed on one and all.

"I feel, gentlemen," says he, "that our guide is in most excellent humor this evening. After your departure last night, I had a long chat with him, and he has promised me that he will do his best for you. Now, eh, I suppose you gentlemen have each brought your twenty-dollar gold-piece for duplication?"

They replied that they had and, what's more, they wouldst be tickled silly to have Mr. Guide do his stuff. The lights went out and me and Hokum sneaked under the side-wall, the same as usual.

"I suggest that we all join in singing 'Silver Threads Among the Gold'," goes on the professor. "My guide seems to like that dear old song, and I want you folks to sing it with much feeling and spirit. As soon as you have finished singing the first verse, place your twenty-dollar gold-pieces upon the table. All ready, gentlemen, start singing."

They wobbled the first verse, and at the end,

the clink of coins resounded all around the table.

"Now, the chorus, gentlemen," whispers the professor, and the boys snapped into it.

"Louder, please," begged the professor. "I told you that this was the favorite song of my guide and he—eh—doesn't hear well. That's it—*louder!* Put vim, vigor and feeling into it. *Louder!*"

The boys almost raised the roof with their voices. When they concluded, not a sound was heard and they sat in the darkness for half a minute.

"I guess it's up to me to turn on the lights," whispers Hokum to me.

A moment later the lights flooded the studio and—ah me alas and alackaday—Professor Phineas had flown the coop! The genial gent had scooped up the loot, and ducked out into the night, leaving the customers singing "louder." Not being let in on the joke, I looked forward to spending some time in quelling riots, seeing that there wasn't a dime on the table. Meantime, Hokum grins broadly and steps to the head of the table, all of which puzzled me plenty.

"Well, folks," he says, "I hope you are all glad that you listened to me last night!"

"Yore darn tootin', ole timer!" yelps one puncher, while the rest bellered assorted rejoicings.

"Twenty-dollar gold-pieces," goes on Hokum, "is twenty-dollar gold-pieces. Take *yours* and run home to mamma!"

Five minutes later I corral Hokum near the bally-stand and crave some information.

"Oh, didn't you get the idea?" he coos, with the greatest of innocence. "Why, it was just as simple as falling off a hog!"

"Not to me," I says. "From where I stood it looked like the professor had actually got away with all them twenty-dollar gold-pieces!"

"Well," says Hokum, "I admit that he scooped up something off the table, but if he can spend that kind of gold-pieces he's a wizard. Here's the plot in a nut-shell: When I came home to the hotel early this morning, and woke you up, I had been out interviewing some of the lads who were boobs enough to think the professor was legitimate. Personally, *I* figured that he was going to walk out in the dark and blow with the money, whilst the boys were singing, and all I did was to

beat him to it.”

“How?”

“By explaining to the lads just when and whereas the professor was going to tap ‘em all for a goal. At first, they refused to believe me. Boobs are terrible things, hey? But when I finally convinced that that they were headed for a load of grief, they held a caucus and looked around for a rope to match a tree. However, I jollied them along and told them that I had a better plan to get even with the dear professor. In short, Doc, I give to each one of the fifteen suckers a lead-and-zinc

disk, about the size of a twenty-dollar gold-piece, and told them to place them on the table when the professor gave the word. And that was all settled.”

“Kid,” I says, “you are too clever for this world. Er, where did you get the disks?”

“Had ‘em in my trunk; they were advertisements. One side read, *Present this to your local grocer and receive a free cake of Cleanwash Soap*. The other side said, *I bring you good luck*. Gosh, I bet the professor must of got a kick when he read that!”