

## *Story of a Chew of Tobacco*

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The Chicago Evening *Post* relates an extraordinary case of detection of a mail robber through the latter's use of plug tobacco. A registered letter was forwarded to Chicago, which ought to have contained five one hundred dollar bills. When the envelope was opened the money was missing. The matter was placed in the hands of an experienced and skillful detective. The envelope had arrived intact at Chicago, and to all appearances had not been tampered with in the least. There was not the slightest clue to the robber, and the detective finally abandoned the matter in despair of success. But one day, from what motive he did not himself realize at the time, the officer took the envelope, soaked it in water and carefully removed the portion where the sealing process had been effected. By the assistance of a microscope he found that small particles of plug tobacco still adhered to the paper, and from this fact became convinced that whoever wet the mucilage of the envelope had used that description of the weed. Here, then, was found a faint clue upon which the investigation might be continued. He determined in the first place to ascertain if any of the offices through which the letter had passed used tobacco of that description. Office after office was visited, from Chicago to the locality where the letter was first mailed, but in not one of these was there a single person who masticated anything but "fine cut." He arrived at the last office with a faint heart, fully convinced that the last clue by which to entrap the guilty party had utterly failed in its accomplishments.

The postmaster was an old acquaintance and friend of the detective. He was an upright, respectable citizen, was loud in his denunciation of the crime, and regretted with manifest sincerity that the culprit could not be brought to justice. The Chicago official had not the slightest suspicion in the direction of this honest postmaster; but he had asked so many for "a chew," that the habit had grown upon him, and, addressing the worthy P.M. by name, he said:

"Will you give me a chew of tobacco!"

"Really," was the reply, "I don't think I have any tobacco that you would use. *I would never use anything but plug!*"

The detective was dumbfounded. That respectable man whom he had known for years, and who maintained a character among his neighbors above reproach as the only man in all the offices through which the letter had passed, who chewed plug tobacco; the person who sealed the envelope used the article; consequently the conviction unwillingly forced itself upon the officer's mind that his friend was the thief. He believed the postmaster to be guilty and acting upon this belief at once informed that functionary that he was his prisoner. His residence was then searched, and after every crevice and corner had been examined without finding any money the officer was about to leave, when spying upon the parlor table a daguerreotype case, he took it up and found carefully folded within five one hundred dollar bills.

The postmaster is now in the State Prison working out a penalty assessed for the crime.

*The Placer [CA] Herald*, June 10, 1871