

**THE LITTLE
BROTHER: A STORY
OF TRAMP LIFE**

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The Little Brother: A Story of Tramp Life by Josiah Flynt

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JOSIAH FLYNT

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BY
JOSIAH FLYNT

AUTHOR OF "TRAMPING WITH TRAMPS,"
"THE WORLD OF GRAFT," ETC.



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I



SCATTERED along among the many ambitious cities that dot the great Western railway lines are little villages that seem to have grown up out of the black prairie mud, under some impulse of enterprise that has long since subsided, and left a few regular streets, a few business blocks, two or three small white churches, and perhaps twoscore respectable dwelling-houses. One such town, bearing a historic Indian name, has been saved from desolation and decay, possibly by the county organization, which early in the forties dignified it with a court-house and made it the seat of the county government. The court-house stands in an open square, railed in from the

4 The Little Brother

muddy roadway by a bar fence, where horses are hitched and stand to the fetlock in the oozy black earth, while their masters are within, serving on juries, or in the witness-box, or, as is more often the case, taking advantage of the one form of dissipation that the town and the surrounding country afford—watching the progress of a trial for horse-stealing or murder. Just across the street is a smart new brick structure, with a flaunting sign-board, lettered in heavy black and white, and bearing the one word, Saloon. Here, too, are hitching-bars, but only leanly occupied, for the orderly sentiment of the village has made it more respectable for the occasional visitor to hitch on the other side of the road, while as for the steady patron, he generally has no horse to dispose of anywhere.

Around this court-house square, in buildings of one or two stories, are the hotel, post-office, a bank, and a score of small stores whose shed-like awnings stretch out over the wooden sidewalks. One large three-story brick accommodates the bookseller and the milliner in the first story, the former displaying in his

A Story of Tramp Life 5

windows the wares that represent the community's demand for culture and home adornment, such as illuminated texts, chromos, photographs, and the like, while the milliner's windows speak even more loudly of its appetite for fashion. In the second story are the lawyers' offices, a "dental establishment," as it is called, and a public library, which quite distinguishes the village from its neighbors. At the top are the rooms of the masonic lodge, and all that is known of it by the outside world is included in the gold triangle with its flaming all-seeing eye, and the golden letters A. F. and A. M. emblazoned on the dark-blue shades at the windows. The mysterious dignity of these well-guarded openings accords significantly with the esteem in which the ancient order is held by the town.

On the corner stands the wooden hotel or "Mansion House," with its veranda full of loafers, and just opposite is the one-story bank, aristocratic and solitary as a bank should be, if for no other reason than to keep clear of all entangling alliances. Of the other sides of the square, two are given up to business, the rival

6 The Little Brother

meat-markets, the provision-stores, and the hay-scales, while "across the green," as the fourth side of the block is usually designated, rise the two tall spires of the Presbyterian and Baptist meeting-houses, quite above the cupola of the court-house, as is most fitting and proper. Each has its own small parsonage close at hand, and the residences of the most well-to-do "pillars" in both denominations; those of the Presbyterians, the village aristocrats par excellence, being generally the larger and more handsome edifices. A few of the very oldest families, first residents and founders, having remained in the locations they chose while the town was still on paper, are to be found on a street leading out of the square, generally in small white cottages, whose lack of fresh paint is cunningly hidden from the critical public by a wealth of woodbine and lilac-bushes. These are the citizens who invested their little all in the town at an early day, and who have never gained enough by the investment even to keep pace with the slow march of improvements.

Taken altogether the place is not an ugly one, save for the black, black mud which so often