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Ashes—the Only Key to Woman's Vanished Millions

Death Subtracted—And All Sarah Smith's Relatives Found Left of Her Vast Fortune Was Fifty-Six Cents

ONE million! Two million! Three million! Four, five, six million! The flying fingers of the bank clerk tumbled and stopped. Beads of perspiration broke out on his very pale brow. He cleared his throat and called for an assistant—a couple of assistants! For "Cash-and-Carry" Sarah E. Smith, the nation's most eccentric millionaire, was opening her first bank account in San Francisco.

Pumped, hospitably, expensively treated, she walked into the West Coast bank followed by three stalwart private detectives, each weighed down with two bulging suitcase bags apiece. Opened by the middle-aged woman's staring eyes these bags surprised a grand total of \$12,000,000 in currency!

As strange in death as in life is the history of "Cash-and-Carry" Sarah and her vast wealth. As mysteriously as she appeared with her vast fortune—which she inherited by a bizarre "death bed" in 1908 to James R. Smith, millionaire "Hecla Jim" Smith, millionaire silver miner—did she vanish with it from her palatial Bellingham, Wash., estate in 1929. A nationwide search failed to produce a single clue.

Then, five years later, her whereabouts was dramatically established when a silver urn containing her ashes—two years old—was produced in a Yakima court where her relatives were trying to determine what had become of all her millions, however, was fifty-six cents secreted in the lining of an expensive fur coat she had left in charge.

"Cash-and-Carry" Sarah Smith's relatives are still looking for her funds with the aid of the law. They refuse to believe, as has been suggested, that she had her millions secreted with her. (One of her many eccentricities was to go about with her entire fortune secreted on her person in bills of large denomination.)

Complicating the search was the death of Reese B. Brown, widely known capitalist and real estate man. For more than a year before he vanished, Brown had acted as business manager for and legal adviser to Mrs. Smith. So far as anyone knows, Brown was the last man to figure in "Cash-and-Carry" Sarah's colorful life.

But it's follow from its beginning the meteoric trail of yellow bags that Sarah E. Smith blazed across the country:

She was perhaps Chicago's first mobile stenographer in the old, rude days.



Mrs. Reese B. Brown, seated, brushed aside mystery of "Cash-and-Carry" Sarah Smith's disappearance by producing silver urn containing the ashes of the eccentric millionaire. She is shown in Yakima, Wash., court with Vera Hurn, her attorney.



The above is one of the last pictures ever made of Mrs. Sarah E. Smith, who liked to carry her millions concealed in the lining of her coat.



James R. "Hecla Jim" Smith, who cleaned up millions in Idaho silver, kept company with Sarah for seven years, but refused to marry her until he was on his death bed.

had rung. But Sarah, whose penchant for the bizarre, the unusual, seemed to be perennial, rushed into "Hecla Jim's" life with a minister. He died, a married man, four hours after the hasty ceremony and left his millions to Sarah.

Thus provided with almost inexhaustible ammunition, Mrs. Smith proceeded to take a shot at the stock market. Her success won her the title of the "Hetty Green of La Salle Street." Possessed of few inhibitions, apparently, she diverted herself often by making dramatic displays of her wealth.

One of her favorite pastimes was to cash checks in amounts as high as a million dollars, deriving intense satisfaction from watching the bank teller's eyes bulge.

She acquired the odd habit of

carrying rolls of \$1000 bills in her handbag and concealing other wads of currency, in huge sums, in the lining of her wearing apparel. There was not a nook or cranny in any of the various dwellings she occupied during her lifetime, her servants reported, that had not been utilized as a repository for stacks of yellowbacks—hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth.

Oddly enough, despite her lavish display of wealth, romance did not blossom again for "Cash-and-Carry" Sarah until eight years after "Hecla Jim" had expired. Even then, it was short-lived. A few months after her marriage in 1916 to R. T. Willard, Spokane salesman, and former Yale football star, on whom she lavished gifts totaling \$200,000, they were fencing with one another in the divorce arena. Sarah soon took to cashing large checks again as her choicest diversion.

Then more years of playing hide-and-seek with \$1000 bills up and down the West Coast, and Mrs. Sarah Smith-Willard embarked upon her third and most adventurous matrimonial voyage—this time as the bride of George Francis Scollard. Some motive prompted the newlyweds to invite Scollard's former wife, Mrs. Maude E. Harvey, to accompany them on an extended honeymoon voyage to Europe and South America. Some say "Cash-and-Carry" Sarah welcomed the presence of her husband's former wife as a sort of auxiliary money carrier—a glorified bill folder.

But in the tropics Sarah and her new husband became hot under the collar. They became involved in a silly argument over a mere \$1,000,000. Parting angrily at Buenos Aires they raced back to Seattle and Bellingham on separate ships. Their destination proved to be a

safety deposit vault in a Bellingham bank. Scollard won by a nose and got to Canada with \$1,000,000 in bonds. He was later exonerated of charges pressed against him by his wife. They were divorced.

World weary, Sarah retired to her mansion to count money. Small comfort, however, was the discovery that her vast fortune had dwindled to but \$5,000,000. About this time she engaged the services of Brown, the Yakima capitalist. A year later she vanished.

The mystery of her disappearance came to an astounding climax after Brown had been fatally injured in an automobile accident last year. Sarah's relatives sued Brown's estate for an accounting. There were grim accusations.

Then, one day, a representative of the Brown family accented counsel for the guardian of Sarah's estate in a hotel lobby, with the cryptic remark:

"You are looking for Mrs. Smith? Here she is."

The attorney was handed a crimson bag. It contained a silver urn. This, in turn, was filled with the ashes of "Cash-and-Carry" Sarah!

The urn had been found among Brown's personal possessions, it was explained, by his son. It bore the inscription: "Sarah E. Smith. Died at Montford, July 24, 1932." It was accompanied by a certificate of cremation and a Quebec death certificate which indicated she had succumbed to broncho-pneumonia.

But why had Brown secreted the ash-filled urn for two years?

"I know he had the urn," explained Mrs. Reese B. Brown, attractive, gray-eyed widow of the capitalist, from the witness stand. "But I said nothing of it until now because of my love for Mrs. Smith."

She denied knowing that her husband had been other than a friend to Sarah.

"As for Mrs. Smith's property," the widow concluded, "I know absolutely nothing."

So Sarah's potential heirs were left holding the bag—a crimson bag containing ashes. At latest advice, all they could find of the vast fortune left her by "Hecla Jim," the silver miner, is fifty-six cents.