

FOOTBALL FORECAST: FIVE HUNDRED
— WAITING TO BE WON!

THE UNION JACK 2^D

Sexton Blake's Own Paper.



THE MAN IN STEEL

ZENITH the ALBINO versus SEXTON BLAKE.

SLAVE ISLAND

by
Gilbert
Chester



THE STORY IN RETROSPECT.

NIXON SCURR is an American millionaire fugitive from justice, living on an unknown island in the Pacific, in which he has set up a colony of people who have been deceived there to minister to his comfort.

HARRY FORREST, the hero of the story, is one of them, a young electrician who has been lured to Slave Island to attend to the installation.

JOAN CARTWRIGHT, another victim, is a cinema actress whom Scurr has likewise kidnapped, and whom he covets as his wife.

In spite of Scurr's threats, Forrest and the girl contrive to meet and to become very friendly. The millionaire's hired gunmen discover this, and Forrest is to

be killed as punishment, but Joan saves him by promising to marry the villain.

Forrest afterwards organises a rebellion of the "slaves" of Scurr, which, however, miscarries. Aided by two of them, Antonio Curci, an Italian singer, and a Cockney named Bill Dingley, he is able to prevent the marriage, and puts Scurr and his gunmen to flight.

They pursue Scurr into a rocky cavern underground, and thence through a tunnel to the sea at the foot of the cliffs. The millionaire attempts to get away in a motor-boat he has in readiness, but Forrest jumps aboard, and a fight ensues.

Scurr goes overboard in the struggle, and Harry goes back to shore to take off his comrades.

The intention is to put out to sea, but the question arises: "What about the people ashore? They can't be left to their fate!"

THE HOIST.



BUT in reply to Harry's protest the Italian singer shook his head.

"Signor," he said, "the best service we can render those mis-ables is to escape ourselves. If we return whence we came—a feat we are not likely to accomplish, judging by the difficulties we encountered on our

way hither—it is most improbable that we shall be able to do anything. On the other hand, if we sail away, find a cruiser, and guide her here, then this nest of evil can be rooted out, and the unfortunates rescued."

In face of this incontrovertible logic, Forrest had to acquiesce to the wishes of his companions, especially as Joan promptly added her vote to the dictum of Dingley and the Italian.

"Then here's for it!" the engineer exclaimed, re-starting the engine.

Heading towards the surf, he set himself to find the narrow way through the reefs encircling the quiet waters of the lagoon.

But this was no easy task, and for some time the motor-boat ran up and down the fringe of the white-crested spray, her crew of four seeking everywhere for the opening through the rocks that they knew to exist.

At last Forrest espied a place that looked promising, and headed for it, nosing the bows gingerly in amongst the rocks.

To his delight, a fairway opened up in the moonlight, and, putting on speed, he set the motor-boat for the heaving

though sprayless lane that promised a passage to the open seas beyond.

But hardly had he changed his course than Curci seized his arm, and, with a loud shout, tugged fiercely for him to stop.

"Too late, signor! Look!"

The opera-singer pointed into the mist of spray that rose continuously from the line of reefs.

Forrest obeyed, and at once his jaw fell.

Ahead, through the parted curtains of the mist, a great bow cut out through the white mantle of high-flung foam.

Straight down the channel in the reefs a steamer was chugging, and as she came the broad beam of a searchlight shot out from her super-structure.

Forrest gave a groan as he recognised her.

He had seen those towering sides before!

It was the Semiramis returning unexpectedly to the island, her white-painted hull barring the sole way of escape.

Once more Fate had tricked them upon the very threshold of victory. Everything that had transpired within the last twelve hours had been in vain!

Worse still, never again would the dice be loaded so heavily in the rebels' favour!

But even here the engineer's presence of mind did not desert him. The Semiramis' searchlight had not yet caught the motor-boat, and in a trice Forrest reversed engines and backed swiftly out of the channel head.

Putting about, he headed shorewards at full speed, while the yacht, pursuing her dignified course, emerged gracefully from the long channel whence she had steamed.

Once—twice—three times the big white beam swept the lagoon with its dazzling

rays, and on the third occasion only missed the fleeing "movie" by a matter of feet.

But a miss is as good as a mile. An instant later it travelled onwards in a wide arc; then swung round again, and bore relentlessly down upon the fugitives.

Nearer and nearer the beam came, searching out the silent waters. And as it came the three men and the girl held their breaths.

It seemed impossible that this time the searchlight could fail to pick them out.

The man at the giant lamp was working his focus by jerks, and ever and anon moved the ray onwards with a start.

For a long instant it swept the shore, the ledge, and the cliff base beyond, and, with a sinking heart, Forrest saw that no hiding-place was available for the little craft even supposing she escaped the searchlight beam.

Then the menacing white finger jumped forward, right down upon the motor-boat.

"Got us!" Forrest muttered disgustedly.

But no! With an equally abrupt movement, the searchlight hand jerked his pivot round in the other direction, and the ray flashed off at a tangent, missing the motor-boat by a yard or so.

In a trice Forrest headed all out inshore, regardless of the roar of the exhaust.

There was a chance—a bare chance—that the hum of his engine would be drowned by the thunder of the reef. With that beam sweeping the lagoon only speed could save them.

"Get grub—get ammunition out of those lockers!" he shouted to his companions. "Quick—for the love of Heaven!"

And as his fellow-fugitives dived hastily for the lockers, Forrest drove the motor-boat full on for the cliff base.

A few yards from the steep he halted her, and, stooping, wrenched the sea-cock open.

"I'm going to sink her," he announced coolly. "We'll have to swim for it. Our only chance is to hide, and if we leave this craft afloat Molloy'll spot her any minute. Certainly as soon as day breaks."

"Couldn't we steal out along that channel under Molloy's nose?" Joan suggested dubiously.

But Forrest shook his head.

"Can't be done!" he answered tersely. "To start with, we don't know the soundings, and so we can't clear out at speed, and then, too, you'll notice that Molloy's anchoring close to the channel head. We shouldn't stand the chance of a celluloid cat in a rosy sunset. No. This is the only way, and there's precious little hope in that, either, I'm afraid," he added glumly.

The water was pouring in through the cock, and already the bottom boards of the vessel were awash. She was settling down rapidly, and, with a last glance at the yacht, Forrest signed for his companions to take to the lagoon.

"Can you swim?" he queried, with an anxious glance at the film actress.

"You bet! Like a fish!" was the answer, and as she spoke Joan slid easily over the side into the water, cool and collected.

Dingley followed, taking a lifebelt with him. Wounded as he was, he felt himself at a disadvantage, the more so, since, as he afterwards admitted, his prowess in the water was of a mediocre order.

Then Curci dived, and, gathering up the loot he had decided to take with him, Forrest followed suit.

(Continued on page 26.)

THE MAN IN STEEL

The man was clad in armour, and, as it appeared in the light of the fire, blood red. His face was of the same sanguine hue. This was strange enough, but as he turned and faced the window his deficiency was manifest. The man had no pupils to his eyes. His open lids exposed two vacant orbs.

Mystery interlocked with mystery! That's the way of this yarn. A typical ZENITH story, told with artistry and spell-binding skill. Stories like this have made the names of Sexton Blake and the "Union Jack" famous.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Pinkeye, the Navvy.

THE congested traffic of Brixton Road was being diverted and delayed by excavation. As if by magic, a strip of the inviolable main road had been roped off, and fifty men had begun to dig trenches there.

Conscious that their labours were mysterious and must remain so, since it was nobody's business to inquire why they thus obstructed the affairs of thousands, the occupants of the deepening trench went about their work with imperturbable deliberation, only applying themselves with real energy whenever they were observed by the bowler-hatted foreman.



Not council employees these, but general labourers hired by a provincial contractor. A scratch lot recruited in record time from the Labour Exchange. They came, via the road and the doss-house, from every corner of the earth; and, when the job was done, or when they ceased to find favour in the eyes of the leading-hand, would demobilise and drift away again.

The one thing which they had in common was the strength to use pick or shovel for eight hours a day, and for that ability—which is not to be despised—were entitled to rate themselves as excavators, and to receive one halfpenny per hour more than the general labourer of the building trade.

Recruits as they were, these stout fellows were necessarily strangers one to the other; but, with the freemasonry of labour, they had already settled down to be free and easy, and bandied insults like old cronies.

Introductions being dispensed with, and the name on the insurance card a matter for strict privacy, the invention of nicknames had proceeded rapidly, and any unfortunate who was disfigured by a hare-lip or a squint, or a face less handsome than a matinee idol's, had the fact brought to his attention whenever he was wanted by one of his comrades.

One of them—a youngish fellow who happened to be an albino—was immediately christened "Pinkeye," or, by way of variation, "Zenith"; and a joke of which the others never tired was to call the attention of the police to his white hair, his eyes which glowed like rubies, his leprous skin, and his effeminate hands, clamouring for his arrest.

"Ere you are," they would say, "there's your man, Zenith the Albino! Why don't you run 'im in? Don't yer want promotion?"

Whereat Pinkeye, soiled with road gravel and disfigured by an unshaven chin, would draw himself up and straighten his dirty rubber collar, grunting with obvious pride at the distinction.

"Look out, Pinkeye," they would say, "'ere comes Sexton Blake after yer! Ain't yer got no automatic?"

It was a great game. Even the bowler-hatted foreman enjoyed it.

Perhaps this story may be said to begin at the moment of 5.30 p.m. on the third day of the excavation, when the foreman blew his whistle, and the only-too-eager navvies tumbled out of the trench.

It being a Monday, and the men having had a "draw" on account of wages, due to their having worked overtime over the whole week-end, the majority of them turned towards a neighbouring public-house.

A small group waited for Pinkeye, who devoted an extra long time to cleaning himself.

"Buck up, Pinkeye," they said, "you got to pay your footing, mate!"

"Right-ho!" agreed the young man, in his rasping, falsetto voice. "But



he raised the ill-conditioned violin to his chin, and the laughter died. Sentences remained unspoken. Movement ceased.
(Chapter 1.)

what about the rest of yer? Ain't you got to pay yer footin's?"

"Gar'n," they laughed, "we're shovel-stiffs, we are. You ain't used to a shovel—anyone can see that. Look at yer 'ands. You bin a sign-writer, or something of that sort. Cost you 'arf a dollar, it will, but you got to do it. We all 'ad to pay our footin', ain't we? You come and do the same. Then we'll let you call yourself a navy."

"All right!" agreed the young man. "I'm on. I don't know as it ain't worth it."

This was the kind of reply which appealed to all hearers, and the group increased in size. The young albino had already sown the seeds of popularity when the round dozen of working men filed into the White Hart and looked at him expectantly.

"Now then, mates," he said, "as between friends, I don't care what you order. What is it?"

His popularity increased rapidly.

"I'll 'ave a pint," said one boldly, thus naming the most luxurious drink which came into his mind.

"Me, too!" agreed several others.

The young albino laughed.

"What's a pint for?" he said. And then, to the barman:

"Got any quart pots, boss?"

As it happened, there were quart pots in plenty.

"Good!" said Pinkeye. "I'll 'ave ten quarts of bitter, one double gin"—this was for the leading-hand, who was too exalted to drink beer—"and—"

He bent over the bar and whispered.

"A tumbler-full of three-star brandy."

"What d'yer mean?" queried the barman. "A double?"

"No!" snorted the young man. "Double? No! Five doubles, ten doubles! Fill it up!"

The man looked at him incredulously.

"Know how much that'll corst yer?"

Pinkeye placed a pound note on the counter.

"Will that be enough?"

"Yes, that'll be enough, but—"

"Well, I'm going to drink it, ain't I?"

The man shrugged his shoulders.

"All right; you know your own business best."

"What's that you're drinking, mate?" they asked, when the first urgency of thirst abated.

"Ginger-ale," replied Pinkeye, unblushingly. "Beer is too strong for me."

"Rather flat for ginger-ale, ain't it?" they scoffed. And the young man knew that the barman had been talking.

He had, in fact, told everybody in the house. Not every customer drinks from a tumbler full of neat brandy, and the barman was furtively watching his albino customer in the expectation of a collapse.

But nothing of the sort happened. Indeed, when the albino navy had finished his tumbler of brandy, and his mates had finished their quarts of beer, he was as sober as any, and more sober than some.

The only effect he showed was a sort of coming-to-life about his face and manner.

He had been a quiet chap, lowering and surly. His voice, when he spoke—which was seldom—had been a creaking falsetto.

Now his mates were not quite sure whether it was, or was not, the effect of the beer upon themselves—his smile had become frequent and brilliant, and his voice had deepened.

"We'll do that all again," he told the barman. And he deposited the necessary money upon the counter.

The others were grateful. Beer was

beer, and not easy to come by. But, at the same time, they showed a tendency to draw apart, and form a group away from their host.

This glittering smile, challenging and charming, this resonant, deep voice which the ear was reluctant to forget, bore such a burden of sadness that they were afraid.

Their mate was paying his footing so strangely that his nickname died upon their lips.

A wandering fiddler came to the door of the public bar where they were, and, holding the door open by means of his foot, played, or tried to play, such pathetic ballads as were likely to open the hearts, and purses, of his clientele.

The navvies, now reduced to eight in number, were in a mood to enjoy anything, and picked up each well-known chorus, in a plaintive monotone not devoid of beauty. The albino, who seemed to have grown six inches taller, gracefully resisted the efforts of others to return his hospitality, and purchased more drink for them all.

Presently the musician ventured to enter the bar, passing a ragged cap from man to man.

The generosity of the poor is proverbial, and a handful of coppers rewarded him.

When the violinist came to where the albino stood, the latter pointed to the silver which he had just received in change for one of his pound notes, and which still lay upon the counter.

"Take it," he said, "and buy yourself a meal."

"Thanks, guv'nor!" whined the musician. "I could do with a meal."

"I knew it," replied the albino, "by the way you played."

He seized the violin.

"Here," he said, "I have just had a meal—of brandy, and I will play to you as only a full man can play."

He plucked at the strings.

"Now," he went on, "if this E string will tighten to concert pitch—"

The others looked at him. This was, they thought, the bravado of a man full of brandy. They began to laugh.

Then he raised the ill-conditioned violin to his chin, and the laughter died. Sentences remained unspoken. Movement ceased.

It was not the perfunctory politeness of a well-dressed crowd. It was the desire to lose not a note, not a thrill, of the wonderful music he made.

Had this man revealed in words the hidden desires of his heart, the height of his exulting, the depth of his despair—desires, exulting and despair which were theirs also—they would not have understood. But the language of music speaks from soul to soul.

He was such a pastmaster of the instrument that his technique was instinctive.

For five minutes he spoke to them, then the E string snapped, and they awoke to the life of every day. Gone was the romance of the past, the glamour of the future. They were navvies, dirty and half drunk, drinking in a public-house.

He laughed—that reckless laugh which was somehow sadder than tears—and, turning, walked out through the swing doors, thrusting the violin back with an absent stare upon its owner, whose face showed the wonder he felt that such strains could be coaxed from his battered instrument.

None followed, none muttered the conventional "Good-night, mate!"

But, somehow, they knew that they would never again see the pink-eyed labourer who had worked beside them

those three days, and paid his footing that night.

And they were not mistaken.

The labourer entered one of the tenements which, like the cells of a Gargantuan coral reef, jut up above the squalor of the Kennington Road, and startled a woman who was frying sausages over a gas-ring.

"Hallo!" she said. "You're late to-night, aren't you?"

"Yes," he replied. "I've been paying my footing—standing treat to my friends on the job. Where's the soap? I'm going to the sink to have a wash."

While the woman was eating her meal of sausage and mashed—a meal which, to her surprise, he refused to share—the young man was writing upon a sheet of paper which had once contained cheese.

When she had finished, he passed the list—for that is what it was—over to her.

"See here, Judith," he said. "I want you to get those things, and I want you to get them now. You've been a lady's-maid, and you know your way about all right. You'd better get a taxi, and make for the West End before the shops are shut. The clothes you will get at the address I have given you."

The woman looked at him with a face which had suddenly turned pale.

"This means that you are going to leave me?"

He nodded.

"Yes."

She walked to the narrow and dingy window, and stood looking out, the list crumpled in her shapely hand. He sat at the table watching.

"Listen," he said, at length. "You have guessed, you must have guessed, that I am not what I seem to the world."

The woman made a gesture to show that she was listening, but remained with averted head.

"You will have heard of a man named Zenith—Zenith the Albino. I am he."

The woman wheeled sharply, still with tear-drops upon her lashes.

"You!" she gasped. "You!"

"Yes," he said, in his deep, beautiful voice. "I am, for my sins, Monsieur Zenith, the infamous thief!"

He took from his case a tiny cigarette, the paper stained brown with opium, and smoked rapidly, as if the narcotic had become vital to him.

"In short," he went on, after a long pause of mutual silence, "I happen to be on the wrong side of the fence."

"There is a man named Blake—Sexton Blake, of Baker Street—"

He paused to knock off the ash of his cigarette.

"Until he crossed my path I was—well, powerful. The police did not even suspect my existence. Then he began to thwart me. More and more often he snatched a prize from my grasp. I—I, Zenith—knew what it was to want, to need money. We fought, he and I, across the years and the continents, in the air, upon the seas, upon the earth and under the earth, and more and more often he defeated me."

"At length he reached the goal for which he had striven. It was an inspiration of genius, Judith, my child, for actual knowledge he had none; I saw to that. He knew that my difficulties were extreme, and suddenly, with a wave of his hand, he made me an outcast—what you see."

"He still knew nothing of where I was, mark you; but he knew my haunts—the places to which I retired until the time was ripe for action—and he closed them, every one, suddenly and completely."

"Yes, the rat was abroad, and each one of the holes was watched by a ferret."

"Picture my plight. I needed money as few men do, and I could get none. I was wanted. Every policeman in the Force had got my description by heart, and the description was plain enough.

"There was only one alternative to capture, and I took it. I dropped out. While I had still a little money left, I joined the Submerged Tenth, the under-dogs. Worked with these hands, turning clay and breaking concrete. I think even Sexton Blake—"

"Sexton Blake," echoed the woman, "how you must hate him!"

The albino smiled his glittering smile. It was a little less sad, a little less reckless than usual.

"No," he said softly. "Why should I? It is all part of the game of life."

He relapsed into a fit of abstraction. The opium was already deepening the lethargy which the brandy had brought to his senses.

"I wonder," he said, "whether life is a fitful dream from which one awakens to happiness, or whether it is a waking from which one sinks again into a sea of happy dreams?"

Then after a moment, during which the rapid ticking of the cheap alarm clock upon the mantelpiece was loud as hammer blows:

"Go," he urged—"go before I sleep! Get me the gear I need for another breath of life, another battle with Blake. This time—who knows?—I may be the winner. Get you gone, Judith. Such as you are and such as I am, I love you! Perhaps to-night we part for ever, perhaps we meet again. Who can say? All things have an end. Even the weariest river winds somewhere out to sea."

With a gesture of resignation, the woman looked at the list he had given her.

"But these things," she protested, "they will cost pounds!"

The albino fumbled sleepily in his pocket, and flung a roll of banknotes upon the table.

"Go," he said, "while—I sleep."

The woman called Judith stood for a long time looking at the bowed head, colourless as a block of Carrara marble.

He had given his life into her hands. There was a price of five hundred pounds upon his head, and she was a poor woman, poor as a church mouse.

Yet for twice ten times that sum she could not have betrayed him, and he had known it.

She puzzled. How had he known?

That, if she had realised the fact, was the secret of the albino's greatness in his unhappy career. He was never mistaken in a man—or a woman. He chose his lieutenants well.

She bent quickly, kissed the pallid brow of the sleeping man, and went out to do his bidding.



"What about me?" grinned the bully. "I'm his father, ain't I? The boy stays 'ere, and I'll thrash 'im within an inch of his life!" "I think you cannot have heard of my name," suggested the albino. "I am Zenith." (Chapter 2.)

master-crook had a childish love of dress and display, and it was the conventional evening gear which he affected most of all. This, for no other reason, it would seem, than that the black and white of evening clothes gave such uncanny emphasis to his bloodless face and to his crimson-irised eyes, half-veiled by snowy lashes.

He descended the stone stairs of the tenement house a few hours after the events of the last chapter, to the last detail a dandy. His silk-hat was quite the latest thing, and worn at quite the latest angle.

The tiny black studs which secured his shirt-front were pearls of considerable value—trinkets which Zenith would have died to retain. His cloak, his stick, his boots, the cut of his clothes, all—all were quite correct.

The outfit had cost the master-crook every penny he had in the world; but in the pleasure of wearing expensive clothes he was able to forget that very unpleasant fact.

Within one hour he had an appointment in the West End. How was he going to get there? Walk? Not much! How then? He neither knew nor cared. Unbounded was Zenith's faith in himself and his lucky star. Even Sexton Blake's tour de force could not shake that.

Such was his vitality, doubly astonishing in an albino, that he had already thrown off the effects of the brandy, and the opium which had followed. As he descended the last flight of stairs, he was swaggering and smiling like the reckless and intrepid rascal that he was.

Here, on the last flight, he encountered a thin gentleman whose clothes proclaimed him to be a minister of religion.

He was leaning back over the iron balusters in a strained attitude, and his

hands which gripped the rail were tense and white. His attention seemed to be concentrated upon a door which formed the entrance to one of the tenements, and he appeared to be listening—listening with terror to something which was taking place within.

The surprise of the two men was mutual.

Zenith was astonished by the attitude of the clergyman, and the clergyman, with equal reason, at the apparition of the peerless albino, in his perfect clothes, upon the dingy steps of a tenement house.

Zenith raised his hat with that inimitable and excessive courtesy which was one of his characteristics.

"Pardon my curiosity, sir. I beg of you; but—your attention—that door. Can I be of assistance?"

The clergyman doffed his soft hat.

"Thank you," he said. "I fear not. A man—one of my parishioners—who lives behind that door, is thrashing his child. That is all."

"And you? You don't like it?"

"A man has a right, they tell me, to thrash his child. But you see, sir, this is not an ordinary thrashing. The man is a brute. He is the terror of the tenements. I have remonstrated with him twice, and each time he has struck me. The last time it was what I think is called a knock-out. I am waiting now another chance to speak with him. It is all I can do."

"Is it?"

The albino's face had lost all its charm. It was the countenance of a fiend.

From his iron-hard mouth and his glittering eyes, the minister shrank back.

"Thrashing a child, you tell me?" muttered the albino.

It was one of the tragedies of the man's tragic life that children were

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

"Suppose Someone Was to Give Him Away!"



THERE are certain natures that cannot admit imperfection, and of such was that of Zenith.

Being afflicted with albinism, a defect beyond his power to mend, he made a boast of it, and dressed so as to accentuate his lack of colour.

As is well known to any reader of these

memoirs who has glimpsed the long duel between Blake and Zenith, the

terrified at him; but, for all that, his love of children was unbounded. No man would hurt a child while the albino could stop him; and, as the clergyman was to see, the albino's capacity in this direction was considerable.

He took from his pocket a morocco case containing several instruments resembling hypodermic syringes. One of these he thrust into the keyhole of the door, using his long forefinger to drive the piston home.

Instantly the door opened, and, followed by the clergyman, the albino walked forward.

The small tenement was divided into three or four small rooms, and from the one on their right, plainly a sitting-room, came the sound of blows and masculine curses.

At the moment of their entry the victim, a twelve-year-old boy, was standing upright in the middle of the floor and receiving without a moan repeated blows from a dog-whip.

The man who thus brutally thrashed this brave little lad, was a tremendous fellow, seeming, by his height and breadth, to fill half the room. One could readily believe that his blow—so temperately described by the clergyman—had been a knock-out. Indeed, the clergyman's courage in thus seeking another interview had been little short of heroic.

No wonder he was the terror of the tenements! There can have been nothing to touch him, in strength, weight, and ferocity, for miles around.

It may be believed that a silent prayer ascended from the minister's heart, a prayer for the strange and opulent creature who opened doors without a key, and, without shrinking, faced an infuriated giant on his own ground. It was perhaps many years since a prayer was uttered on behalf of Zenith—the master-crook; but, judging from the expression of the giant, such a prayer was urgently needed.

He thrust his victim aside and paced forward, towering above Zenith and inquiring, with disgusting invective, how he had entered, where he had come from, and what he wanted.

"We came in through the door, in the ordinary way," drawled the albino. "We want to make you conduct yourself like a man, that is all."

"What?"

Rage and amazement transformed the

word into an unintelligible roar. He threw back the whip.

Zenith, standing there with gloved hand on the knob of his ebony stick, in an attitude of studied grace, did not flinch.

With the appraising glance of a fencer, he looked into the eyes of his opponent, and knew how to protect himself, for the time being, with words only.

"No," he said mildly; "I shouldn't, if I were you."

If he had shown any readiness to dodge, or had raised a hand to protect himself, the whiplash would have cut him across the face; but the big brute, like all his kind, was intimidated by what he did not understand, and lowered his whip to ask whether there was any adjectival reason why he should not kick Zenith's spinal column through the top of his silk hat.

Zenith turned to the clergyman.

"Take that poor lad away," he said. "You probably know some charitable person who will pay for his keep. If not, I—an advertisement in the personal column of the daily papers will always find me. My name is Zenith—Monsieur Zenith."

"And what about me?" grinned the giant, with amazement. "I'm 'is father, ain't I? I got my rights; you ask the parson. That boy stays 'ere—and I'll thrash 'im within a inch of 'is life. You 'op it, both of yer!"

"I think you cannot have heard my name," suggested the albino. "I am Zenith!"

"What, the crook? Lor' love a duck! 'Ere, parson, d'yer know what you've got 'ere, 'elping yer? Zenith—Monseer Zenith—a bloomin' crook, wanted by the police!"

The brave little padre walked forward and placed his arm around the lad's shoulders.

"You're coming with me, old chap," he said.

And then to the boy's brutal father: "I don't care what this gentleman has been, is, or will be. To-night he has played the part of a gallant and Christian man. With all the reverence of my heart, I say—God bless him!"

Zenith bowed his head. "Amen!" he murmured. "But your prayers are not for such as I. Be off, sir. I will undertake that this man never troubles you again."

The padre stopped on his way to the door.

"Pardon me," he said appealingly, "if I wrong you. But I have heard that you are a dangerous man. If your intention is—please forgive me—murderous, then—"

Zenith laughed.

The big man laughed also, but for a different reason.

"No," said the albino. "I give you my word not to kill him. Be off!"

The parson and his charge disappeared in the direction of the stairs. With astonishing indifference, the giant watched them go.

"Now," he said, when the entrance door had closed behind them, "you and I'll 'ave a little talk. I suppose you wondered why I let them go? I'll tell yer. You say you ain't goin' to kill me? I know you ain't. But I'm a-going to kill you! And I want no witnesses, neither. That's why I kep' quiet and let them go."

He walked over to the fireplace, and, removing a loose board, returned with a life-preserver in his hand.

It consisted of a short length of lead pipe in a leathern sling, a dangerous weapon which the man handled as if he were accustomed to its use.

"Now!" he snarled. "Now, Pink-eye!"

He flung up the weapon.

Probably the quickness of Zenith the Albino was not equalled by any other man in the whole world, and the hitting power of his spare frame was unequalled by many a heavy-weight.

He reacted with the speed of a striking snake, of a compressed steel spring. And the force of the blow lifted the giant off his feet, blotting out his senses, causing him to fall like a bag of flour.

Zenith looked ruefully at his glove, which was burst across the knuckles and stained with blood from the big man's broken skin. Then he went to the sink, returned with a hand-bowl full of water, and poured it into the giant's face.

The man gasped, and attempted to sit up.

Zenith thrust his polished boot into the man's face and thrust him back to the floor.

"Stay there," he said—"stay there, fellow-thief."

The man obeyed. That sensation which is so often compared to that of the roof falling in is not pleasant, and he had no desire to experience it again for a few minutes.

He had, however, regained use of his tongue.

"Ere," he blustered, "who are you calling a thief? I—"

"I have seen you once before," Zenith told him, "and I never forget a face."

"What d'yer mean?"

For answer, the albino extended his hands, palm down, and the thumbs pointing towards the floor.

"The Last!" gasped the man. "S'elp me, I didn't know!"

It was indeed the sign of the cobbler's last, of that surviving branch of the Criminal Confederation which is called the League of the Last.

"If you had known," murmured Zenith, "I might not have been able to make the reverend gentleman the promise that I did make regarding your life."

"Now," he continued, "I will make you another sign."

Still with his hands in the same position, Zenith brought them together so that the fingers crossed. It was a variation of the sign such as only a Prince-Cobbler of the League would dare to use.

"I never knew," quavered the man, now terror-stricken—"s'elp me, I never knew! It wasn't my fault, guv'nor! 'Ow was I to know?"

"You know the penalty, I suppose, for raising your hand to one of the Princes-Cobblers?"

"Yes. Bu—"

"Be quiet. My instructions to you are that you never see that boy again. If you do, even by accident"—he shrugged his shoulders—"I shall allow it to be known that you raised your hand to me. After that, there are a hundred and fifty thousand men who will not dare to let you live. It will come to the same thing."

Zenith tossed his soiled glove to the floor and went out.

For a long time the giant lay where Zenith had left him, his face distorted by futile rage.

"Yes," he rasped at length, "but you don't know me, Mounseer bloomin' Zenith! I'll get even with you, don't you forget it!"

He rose, snatched a cap from its peg, and followed the road taken by Zenith.

A few minutes later, by sheer luck, he caught sight of the albino entering a taxicab, and even overheard his instruction to the driver: "Piccadilly Circus."

The penniless albino was travelling in

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state; but a real and imminent danger followed at his heels.

"Suppose," reflected the big man whom he had so easily disposed of, "someone was to give 'im away—give 'im away so as 'e couldn't escape? There's five 'undred of the best on 'is 'ead, and, with five 'undred quid, anybody could get across to South America—the Argentine. Live like a lord!

"There's a lot in the League," he reflected, "but not many in South America, so far as I know."

He hurried to the Oval Tube Station.

"What's the quickest way to Piccadilly Circus?" he asked.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

"There's Your Man!"



THE myriad multi-coloured lights which have earned for Piccadilly Circus a new name, "The Poor Man's Picture-Show," were all in operation by the time Zenith's taxicab set him down beside the Monico.

Above him, a bottle, limned in light, poured inexhaustible port into a magical glass. Near by, the wheels of an incandescent motor-car revolved at furious speed. Still nearer, electric lamps outlined a puppy who alternately smoked, and did not smoke, a cigarette. Near him, a baby, happy with a bottle of patent food, or sad without it.

And so on every wall of that civilised arena which so appropriately revolves around a statuette of Eros, the God of Passion. Lights waxing and waning, forming and fading, changing colour with kaleidoscopic facility. And, above it all, remote, changeless, and unimaginably vast, the ultramarine of London's night.

It might be supposed that Zenith, undisguised as he was, and mindful of the fact that he was known to every policeman in the Force, would slip quickly from his cab, make what arrangements he could about the fare, in the absence of means to pay, and hide himself within some place of public resort where he would stand a fair chance of escaping recognition.

This, however, was not his policy.

He who would win must be ready to lose, and Zenith took a course which was likely to succeed because of its superb audacity.

It was the sublime bluff of a card-player who bids till he hits the ceiling and has not a card in his hand.

Instead of hurrying over his transactions with the taxidriver, and so drawing to himself the ready suspicion of the police, he lingered in the full light of the portico and chatted affably what time he felt for his well-filled notecase—that essential of life in the West End which, in his case, was a fiction only.

"Can you change a pound note, my man?" he inquired, as his hand went to his breast-pocket. And then: "Oh, I say. I'm so sorry! I've left my case behind me. Haven't a penny. Will you drive me to my club, or accept my card and call for the money? Which ever you please. I'm in no hurry."

"Leave it to you, sir," said the man willingly. He could size up a fare with anybody in London, and reckoned that, whatever happened, he was safe to get the money and a bit over, which, in fact, he was.

"Then leave it to me," agreed Zenith. He handed the man a card, which bore the name of Adrian Rickard and an address in the Albany. It was, of course, a fiction. But the adroit albino had contrived to slip his gold cigarette-case into the man's overcoat-pocket, and it contained a pencilled message bidding the man to keep it. Zenith was a crook, but he did not rob men who worked for their living.

Thereafter, with the pleased and slightly bored expression of a man of leisure, "all dressed up and nowhere to go," he stood, swinging his stick and wondering, as it seemed, whether the time was ripe for a cocktail, or whether a carefully chosen meal would be more amusing.

As he stood thus he was confronted by an individual whose very existence had already passed from his mind—the clergyman from the tenements.

"I have followed you," said the padre, "and for, as I think, a good reason."

"Any reason must be good which gives me the pleasure of meeting you again," replied the courtly Zenith. "Pray proceed, sir!"

"I will. First, tell me, did you have trouble with the father of the boy whom you so courageously rescued?"

The albino smiled and looked at the knuckles of his ungloved hand.

"There was," he said, "a momentary misunderstanding."

"Because," the clergyman hurried on, "he has dogged your steps to this place. I was returning, because I feared for your safety, and I saw you enter a cab. I also saw him watching you, and the expression upon his face was terrible. No sooner had you entered the cab than he hurried away, as if he had made up his mind to some revengeful act. I—I took it upon myself to ascertain that he went to the Tube station and inquired the quickest route to Piccadilly Circus."

The clergyman paused for want of breath.

"I am grateful to you," smiled Zenith.

"I presume," continued the other, "that you take my meaning. You were sincere enough to inform me in his hearing that you were a—a—"

"Thief?"

"That you were 'wanted' by the police. And it struck me that he might intend to inform against you. Hence my unwarrantable pursuit."

"If all persons were like you," said Zenith, "there would be fewer in my unhappy plight. The thief thanks you, and will not forget. Good-night, padre!"

He raised his hat and the padre turned away.

At that moment, however, a big man with a bruise upon the side of his jaw, pushed his way through the crowd and halted in front of them.

He was followed by a policeman and a police-sergeant, both in uniform.

"There's your man!" he said, pointing to Zenith. "Zenith the Albino! And don't forget that it was me what put you on to him."

The albino took his cigarette from his lips and laughed with bewildered amazement.

"What does this mean?" he asked of the sergeant, with pleasant curiosity.

"If you don't mind, sir," replied the officer, already impressed by Zenith's manner, "we will step back into the foyer here. I shall have to ask you a few questions. This gentleman"—and he indicated the clergyman—"had better come with us."

They entered the long hall of a fashionable cafe, then almost deserted.

"I must apologise if I am making a mistake," said the sergeant, "but this

man has laid information against you which identifies you with a notorious criminal. He accuses you of being a certain Monsieur Zenith, with whose published description you agree."

"Please don't apologise!" protested Zenith. "Is this Monsieur Zenith also an albino?"

The sergeant nodded.

"Yes."

"Poor fellow! I could forgive him anything. Myself, I have the misfortune to work for a living and pay income tax. My name is Rickard—Adrian Rickard. I am a broker on the Corn Exchange, in Mincing Lane. Here is my card."

"Thank you, sir!"

The sergeant passed the card to his subordinate, but plainly it cut no ice with either of them. The word of a suspect—even when the suspect is smilingly at ease—has little value in the eyes of the Force.

At the same time the sergeant did not care to suggest the obvious course of taking a taxicab to the police-station. True, this man in every respect tallied with the description circulated of Zenith the Albino. But how can any description distinguish one albino from another? The usual traits—colour of hair, colour of eyes—what use were they?

"I am afraid I must ask you," he said, "to turn out your pockets."

"Turn out my pockets!" protested the suspect. "Oh, I say, officer, that's a bit thick, isn't it? Well, here goes!"

Needless to say, Zenith had not courted arrest with incriminating material on his person. There were several letters, perfectly innocent missives, addressed to Adrian Rickard at the address already given on the visiting card. A business card—"Rickard, Ross, & Co., Importers and Merchants, Corn Exchange, London"—an old cloak-room ticket, and the invitation of a titled lady to some forgotten dance.

The well-known cigarette-case, with its opium-sodden cigarettes, which the sergeant had hoped to see, lay at that moment in company with a threepenny racing telegram in the overcoat-pocket of a taxi-driver.

Thus did Zenith's lucky star fight on his side.

Perceiving that his quarry was in a fair way to escape, the big man burst out with further accusation.

"Why," he said, "arf an hour ago this bloke was in my place at Kennington. Give me the sign, he did. Adrian Rickard? He ain't no Adrian Rickard! Ask the parson. He knows. He'll tell yer."

"Hold your tongue!" admonished the sergeant. "Now, sir," he continued, "where were you half an hour ago?"

"Half an hour?" pondered the albino. "Why, half an hour ago I was having a drink with a friend of mine, named Detmold. I was going to meet him here. Ah, here he is! He can confirm that himself."

A second gentleman, whose evening clothes were only less precise than those of the albino, at this point pushed open the swings doors and joined them.

"Hallo!" he said genially. "What's this? You under arrest, old man?"

"Something of the sort," replied the albino punctiliously, returning the other's salute. "Can you bail me out, or whatever they call it?"

The sergeant held up his hand.

"Please keep silent for a moment, sir!"

He turned to the newcomer.

"Will you oblige me by telling me who this is?"

"Yes; he's one of the biggest rascals in Mincing Lane."

The newcomer appeared to enjoy the situation.

"And," he went on, "I hope you will imprison him for a long time. He is an infamous criminal, named Rickard, belonging to a notorious firm of criminals called Rickard, Ross, & Co. His lair is in The Albany."

The sergeant smiled.

"And who—if I may ask the question—are you?"

"My name is Charles Detmold. I am a secretary at the German Legation. To be serious, I am afraid you are making a mistake. I am quite ready to vouch for this gentleman's bona fides, and I should be glad if you would release him. I fancy that he requires a drink."

"Clearly," agreed the sergeant, "I am making a mistake, and I hope that Mr. Rickard will accept my apology."

"Then we may consider ourselves at liberty?"

"Just one moment, gentlemen."

The police-officer was remarkable for his pertinacity. He asked of the clergyman:

"Do you know this gentleman?"

The clergyman turned first white and then red.

"Yes."

"In what circumstances did you meet him?"

"He—ah—he has assisted me in one of my charities."

This was hardly an answer to the question, but the sergeant was already satisfied. The parson's hesitation he attributed to the diffidence of his order. Assisted in a charity? Could any testimony be more favourable?

"Good enough!" said the sergeant.

He saluted smartly.

"Good-evening, gentlemen, and many apologies!"

The big man tried to speak, but the constable silenced him abruptly.

"You get out of here!" he said.

"We've had enough of you!"

The parson returned to Brixton on the top of a bus, prayerfully wondering whether he had told a lie. The big man became uncontrollable, and was finally charged with assaulting the police.

A few hours after his release from prison a month later he was unfortunately run over and killed by a motor-lorry. It appeared to be his own fault, and a verdict of "death from misadventure" was returned by the coroner's jury.

The report which went in to the headquarters of the League ran as follows:

"No. 2971 removed per instructions. Finger-printed, Nos. 697 and 4390."

The big man's number in the League of the Last was 2971. In such wise was criminal justice achieved.

Within a hundred yards of the spot where Zenith had staked his freedom—and, indeed, since freedom was life to him, life itself—on a false, but carefully-thought-out identity, he and the diplomat called Detmold lingered over an almost perfect dinner.

The diplomat himself was a gourmet of pretension; but both he and the head waiter found reason to accept Zenith's decisions in the matters of food and wines. The albino had subsisted on fried sausages long enough to give much thought to the selection of a decent meal.

The bill, certainly, would be unusually heavy; but this was a matter of indifference to both the albino and his host, since the charge would be debited to the Secret Service of a country which could well afford it.

The diplomat raised his glass.

"Mr. Adrian Rickard," he said, with an accent of subtle irony, "I drink to your freedom, and the continued success of your firm of cotton—or was it corn?—brokers; also to your forethought in instructing me as to their existence. Is it not fortunate that I have a good memory?"

"Fortunate indeed," replied the albino, in response.

And then, in a lower voice:

"Within seven days I will bring you the formula which will make your nation paramount among the nations of the world."

"And where," queried Detmold, "is the formula now?"

"I don't mind telling you," replied Zenith. "It reposes in a quiet Sussex village known as Dipton End. It will not be easy to get it, because a well-known private detective, named Sexton Blake, is there now, but I shall succeed."

"I," he continued, "have one advantage over Sexton Blake, an advantage which is worth much."

"And that is?"

"He does not know of the existence of the formula. I do."

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

"I Can Put My Finger on the Man!"



DIPTON END is a halt, rather than a station.

The triple duties of stationmaster, booking-clerk, and porter, are usually performed by a single individual—an eccentric who must be one of the oldest employees of the Southern Railway Company, and who occasionally wears a silk hat to signify

that he is the man in charge.

This was one of the occasions. Not only had the silk hat been drawn from its nest in the lamp-cupboard, but it had received such extra gloss as a boot-brush was able to impart.

For Mr. Sexton Blake, of Baker Street, was expected on the midday train, and Miss Silvia Lanesmere was there to meet him.

A great occasion.

Silvia Lanesmere, pale, and dressed in the deepest mourning, sat at the wheel of her late father's four-seater, and watched for the white cloud of smoke which would herald the coming of Blake's train.

She was sure that the detective would come. He had said that he would not fail her, and he was the sort of man to keep his word. She had asked him, pleaded with him, to come down and continue the investigations he had begun at the time of her father's tragic death. This because the suspense which followed was unendurable.

Yet she was afraid of what he might find out.

Her father had been a scientist. Exactly what sort of a scientist nobody knew. He had read papers on ballistics and molecular physics subjects at a meeting of the British Association. Otherwise, he had been a recluse, and, to his daughter, anyhow, his experiments had been a mystery.

Gilbert Lanesmere, F.R.S., had been more than a recluse. Although his daughter did not admit the fact, even to herself, he had been a crank and an egotist.

When Derek Ross, the youthful master of a neighbouring property, had proposed marriage to her, a proposal suitable and

satisfactory in every way, especially to the principals, Derek and Sylvia, the old man had reminded his daughter of her promise made to a dying mother that she would care for him as long as he needed her.

She had accepted the burden with resignation, and refused to join in Derek's wild abuse of her father.

"He is my father," she had said dismally. "It breaks my heart, Derek dear, but you must forget me."

And then, one terrible night, her father had been found with a bullet wound through his skull.

Suicide had been impossible. The weapon from which the bullet had been fired was found fifty yards away, and near the body strange footmarks had been found.

There was a thought in the girl's mind. No, not in her mind, in her sub-consciousness, in the dreadful dreams which visited her fitful sleep. This was the fact which made her dread the coming of Sexton Blake.

She believed that if any man could discover her father's murderer, the Baker Street detective was that man.

She told herself a hundred times over that Derek Ross, the chivalrous gentleman whom she loved, could never descend to a crime so dastardly as this.

Yet he was an Irishman, dark and passionate. He had said terrible things against her father—things then forgotten, gladly forgotten, but now rising like bubbles of poison gas, to the placid surface of her memory.

Not only this.

She had heard him assure the Scotland Yard detectives, who had taken over the case from the county police, that he was at home during the whole night of the crime. Yet, when he had come to condole with her, and had taken her in his arms, she had noticed and remarked upon it, that his coat was damp.

"Yes," he said, "the rain—!" And then checked himself.

It had rained on that night!

What if Derek Ross was the man?

Her gauntleted hands trembled upon the driving-wheel of her car. She longed for Sexton Blake's coming as much as she dreaded it. Would that distant cloud of smoke never appear!

When at length the broad, athletic figure of the great detective came down the steps and across the country road towards her, the dark cloud of fear lifted a little.

He was so wholesome, so honest, so sane, that it seemed impossible he should bring news which would break her heart.

And the fine, upstanding lad by his side, a lad whom he introduced in one word as "Tinker," was a younger edition of himself.

"Well, Miss Lanesmere," he queried, with something of the manner of a physician, "have you been sleeping better?"

The girl tried to smile.

"No."

"You won't be happy until this mystery is cleared up—eh?"

"Perhaps not then," thought the girl, but she gave no answer in words, and merely nodded her assent.

Sexton Blake took the seat by her side, while Tinker, together with a huge bloodhound which they referred to as Pedro, took their places in the seats behind.

"I have had," said the girl presently, "another shock, a dreadful one. Please take this seriously, Mr. Blake. I am not mad, I assure you. It is the truth. I have seen my father's ghost!"

One might doubt the statement, but it was impossible not to take it seriously. Sylvia's face, even her lips, were livid as she uttered the words.

For answer, Blake placed his hand upon her arm.

"Courage," he said gently. And then: "When you feel like it, tell me a little more."

Sylvia started the car and began to drive slowly along the quiet Sussex lane.

"There is not much to tell," she went on, with extraordinary calm. "Last night, not being able to sleep, I was standing looking out from my window. It was then I saw my father. He walked straight across the lawn in the moonlight, straight up to the house. Then—he vanished."

"How did you know it was your father? Did you recognise his face?"

"No; I knew it was my father by—by what he was wearing."

"That is not a very satisfactory means of identity, Miss Lanesmere."

"It was, Mr. Blake—it was. The—thing I saw was not dressed in ordinary clothes, but in a complete suit of medieval armour."

"And your father—"

"My father—I think he was a little bit mad, really. On two occasions he has frightened me by appearing dressed like that when he had reason to think I was out of the way."

"What made him adopt that costume? Was he interested in the Middle Ages?"

"Not the least bit in the world, Mr. Blake. He was very modern indeed. He hated things which were behind the times."

"And yet he wore armour. Did you ask him why?"

"No, Mr. Blake; one could not question my father. He was not that kind of man."

"H'm! Have you got that suit of armour now?"

"Yes. I looked this morning. It is locked up in a secret cupboard in his room and covered with dust. No one else could have worn it. I thought of that."

"Perhaps," Sylvia went on, "you think I am only an hysterical girl, and that I imagined the apparition which I am telling you about. I did not. I am quite, quite sure that I saw it, and I am quite, quite sure that it was not of this earth. It glowed with a light of its own. I—"

And without warning, driving the car as she was, Sylvia Lanesmere fainted.

Blake caught her, and at the same instant put in the brake.

Fortunately it was only a short distance to her house; and, even before they reached it, Sylvia was able to resume control of herself.

Nevertheless, when they had safely arrived and garaged the car, Blake would not allow her to continue the discussion of the subject of the tragedy. With Tinker beside him and Pedro at his heels, he walked down to the village inn to see Inspector Coutts.

Inspector Coutts, in his inevitable bowler and blue melton overcoat, gave the detectives a welcome which personally was very hearty and officially was very frigid.

"Well, well, my dear Blake, how are you? How are you, Tinker, my lad? Come right in!"

And then to Blake, in a husky whisper:

"They've got some pre-war whisky. Won-derful stuff! Won-derful!"

A few minutes later, from behind a stiff measure of the hospitable inspector's discovery, Blake was listening to his official friend's opinions and theories.

"Matter of fact," said the inspector, "the case is over. I can put my finger on the man. Mighty glad to see you,



Tinker waited only a moment, and then fired, twice. The shots echoed: Bang! Bang! from the house and the trees. At such a short distance it was impossible to miss. Yet the Thing continued on its way. (Chapter 5.)

all the same. Here's hoping! Yes, the case is over, and I'm particularly sorry for your client."

"Which means, I suppose," said Blake, "that you have brought the crime home to young Derek Ross, her sweetheart?"

"Exactly!"

"H'm. I am sorry, but not surprised. Everything indicated his guilt. One doesn't like to accept the obvious, but even the obvious is a fact sometimes."

"You're right, Blake; although, 'pon my soul, I don't know so much about the obvious! I tell you, I had to use all my powers."

"There wasn't much to go upon. The first thing was a cast of one of those footmarks which were near the body. I made a very nice cast, and I've got a shoe of Ross' which fits it as a glove does the hand. The second thing was that young Ross deposed to being at home all the evening of the tragedy. I can prove—two independent witnesses, Blake—that he was out for a considerable time."

"The third thing is these enlarged photographs. One is of a finger-print upon the barrel of the rifle which fired the fatal shot, the other is of a similar print from a tumbler out of which Ross had taken a drink. The fourth thing is that Ross, and Ross alone, had a sufficient motive for doing old Lanesmere in. Pretty complete, eh?"

"Complete, indeed," assented Blake. "You have enough circumstantial evidence to hang a saint."

"Which Ross, by any manner of means, is not."

"I agree."

Sexton Blake took out his pocket-case, and from that a pill-box containing some small hard object which rattled as he set the box down.

"If," he said, "I might sit at the feet of Gamaliel for a moment, and benefit

by your considerable experience, I should like to ask a question."

"This"—and he inverted the pill-box—"is, I believe, the bullet which killed Mr. Lanesmere."

"Where did you get that?" ejaculated Inspector Coutts. "My chaps searched the whole field."

"Nevertheless," Blake told him, "I found it after your chaps had finished. It's hardly their fault. It was a long way from the scene of the crime."

"Now, the question I want to ask is this: How did that bullet become telescoped, as it is, to half its length?"

Coutts looked at the bullet attentively. It was a nickel-cased, cylindrical bullet such as is fired from a Service rifle, and it had struck some substance so hard that it was almost flattened out.

"The bullet which killed Mr. Lanesmere," said Coutts ponderously, "entered the orbit of his left eye and passed out at the back of his skull. This distortion must have been caused by contact with some bone. That's all that there is to it, Blake. Nothing more, I think."

Blake nodded.

"I have seen such a bullet telescoped, although not to the same extent, by contact with the bones of a man," he admitted; "but I am afraid I must ask you to consider the fact side by side with another. The wound at the back of Mr. Lanesmere's skull was a clean perforation. Now that bullet would have made a hole as big as a half-penny."

"Then," said Coutts triumphantly, "it was not that bullet which killed him."

"That theory," admitted the detective, "is supported by the circumstance that I found that bullet about fifty yards from the scene of the crime. But you must admit that the coincidence is extraordinary. You found no bullet. I found one—exactly the kind of bullet we expected to find—yet we cannot allow

that my bullet is the one which caused the tragedy. Unsatisfactory, inspector. Very unsatisfactory indeed."

"Well, really," protested Coutts, after a moment, "I can't see that it matters. We've got the evidence that we want."

"Quite. But there is this difference between our positions. You want a conviction; I want justice."

"Fiddlesticks, Blake! Fact is, that you don't want to see that poor girl made to suffer again, and there I'm with you. But she's well rid of the scoundrel, don't forget that."

Whereupon Blake dropped the subject and proceeded to talk of other things. But Tinker was a lad of trained observation, and a very ordinary circumstance gave him much food for thought.

Sexton Blake had hospitably placed his cigar-case on the table within reach of the inspector's appreciative hand. But himself, the detective elected to smoke a malodorous briar pipe.

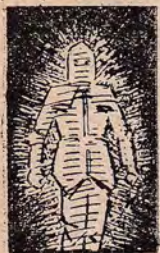
When Blake smoked a pipe, and, above all, that pipe, he was on the war-path.

Tinker rejoiced.

"I wonder," he said to himself, "what time—if at all—we shall get to sleep to-night!"

Plainly, Sexton Blake was not quite so satisfied with Inspector Coutts' conclusions as was the inspector himself.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. The Ghost.



STRANGE and complicated are the reactions of the mind!

When Sylvia Lanesmere heard that her lover had been arrested, instantly she became convinced of his innocence.

"Is it possible," she asked herself, "that I should have given my love to one who could commit so mean a

crime? It is not. Therefore, Derek is innocent, and I am ashamed that I ever doubted him."

Feminine reasoning this, but not unworthy of consideration, for all that.

It had been Sexton Blake's unpleasant duty to acquaint his client of the arrest; and, having very justly congratulated the girl upon her courage, he walked out into the sunken garden adjoining Lanesmere House.

It was late on the night of his arrival, but he was in no mood for sleep.

In the sweet still air of the mild spring night, he paced the long length of a flagged path, smoking, thinking, trying to clear up the mystery of the telescoped bullet.

Tinker was in bed, and the blood-hound, Pedro, was probably stretched out upon the mat outside Tinker's bedroom door.

But Sylvia Lanesmere, his hostess, remained awake, as she presently proved by asking permission to join him.

Blake assented willingly.

He divined that the girl was suffering; and with the object of leading her thoughts away from the terrible subjects of crime and punishment, he began to talk pleasantly about trifles.

Sexton Blake was taciturn, as a rule; but when he chose he could talk excellently.

At length he was rewarded by seeing

a trace of colour in her cheeks, a light of interest in her eyes.

Then, as if designed by some demon of malevolence, happened that which drained the vitality out of her, leaving in its stead the fascination of unfathomable fear.

His first warning, indeed, was the sudden fixity of her glance, the terror-stricken exposure of the whites of her eyes.

Coming towards them from the shadows of the rose-garden was the spectral figure of a man in plate-armour, and as it passed through dark places beneath trees, they saw that it glowed with an unearthly light of its own.

"Father!" cried the girl, and swayed as if about to fall.

Blake was compelled to support her to a seat, and in that moment the apparition passed within a few yards of them.

Blake left her on the stone seat, and turned to follow.

He had seen too many unexplainable things in his eventful life to assert that

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articles and features have appeared in the "Detective Supplement" since the beginning of the present volume, in January last—all on different phases of the subject of crime and criminality.

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a visitant from another world was impossible; but he was not going to accept this or any ghost as a fact until it was proven up to the hilt—and he was not afraid.

One interesting circumstance was that, after seeing himself and Sylvia, the spectre had quickened its pace.

If the ghost was nervous of inspection, so much the greater reason to inspect it. He broke into a run.

The luminous, silvery figure passed with a peculiar, swinging gait straight towards the house, crossing the edge of the croquet lawn, exactly as Sylvia had described in her narrative of the morning regarding the previous visitation.

It was already half-way across when a slim, white figure started up in its path, and a boyish voice challenged:

"Halt, or I fire!"

Apparently, history had repeated itself. This time it was Tinker who had looked from his window and perceived the visitation.

His voice was not quite steady. He asserted afterwards that the chill air was responsible; but, in truth, the appearance of the Man in Steel was terrifying enough to excuse it.

The lad waited only a moment, and then fired twice.

The shots echoed: "Bang, bang!" from the house and from the trees.

His voice trembled, but there is little doubt that his hand was steady enough.

He fired first at the legs and then at the body of the spectre. At such a short distance it was impossible to miss. Yet the Thing continued on its way.

A cloud came over the moon, and, in the darkness, the spectre appeared to be filled with white light. It dived into a large summer-house which looked towards the main building.

Blake caught Tinker by the shoulders.

"Give me your gun," he ordered, "and get back to bed. Hop it! This is no place for you!"

Grumbling that the gun was no good against things like that, and walking, it must be admitted, rather shakily, Tinker obeyed.

Less than half a minute afterwards Blake entered the summer-house upon the heels of the spectre.

The entrance to the summer-house was so dark that the detective could hardly find his way in; but he had had it under observation every second since the ghostly figure had entered; and it was in dark places that the movements of the Man in Steel were most easily followed.

Yet the summer-house was empty.

Blake struck a match.

The walls and roof were of rustic wood. The floor was of concrete.

Blake sniffed.

Did he expect a whiff of sulphurous fumes from the infernal regions? Impossible to say. But that is exactly what he perceived.

"Ah, I thought as much!"

With which cryptic saying, Blake suddenly abandoned the pursuit, and returned to the stone bench where he had left Sylvia Lanesmere.

The girl had recovered sufficiently to walk.

Looking very like a ghost herself, she returned to the house. Thereafter, having obediently swallowed a sleeping-draught which Blake prepared, she retired to her room.

The detective procured an electric torch from his suitcase and returned to the garden, whistling for Pedro as he went.

The fact that he took Pedro with him appears to indicate some scepticism as to the ghostly character of the Man in Steel.

The gravel outside the summer-house was of a soft and binding nature. By lying full-length thereupon, the detective was able to make out the print of a mailed foot. Placing the torch low, so that it threw every depression, however slight, into high relief, he identified tracks both entering and leaving the building.

But, for once, Pedro was less clever than his master.

The hound did his canine best to find a scent in the almost invisible foot-prints to which Blake held his nose; but, in one thing at least, the Man in Steel maintained his ghostly character—he could not be trailed by a dog.

For a full hour longer the detective was searching. He followed tracks both towards the house and away through the rose-garden, but only to lose them on hard ground.

(Continued on page 19.)

THE U. J. DETECTIVE SUPPLEMENT



No. 36. Presented with the
UNION JACK for the week
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Murder for "Honour"

It is well that the modern, common-sense world has ridiculed
duelling out of existence. It can be cowardly, futile, or even
childish.

IT is a mistake to believe that the practice of duelling has altogether died out. Only a few years ago an English nobleman challenged another gentleman to mortal combat. The duel, however, did not come off.

On the Continent such challenges are by no means uncommon to-day, although they are a violation of the law. Mascagni, the composer of the famous "Cavalleria Rusticana," recently issued a challenge to another musician who had offended him.

It is also a mistaken idea that the duellist who killed his man in the days of wigs and ruffles always escaped retribution at the hand of the law. If he were proved to have fought fairly, and the challenge had been issued by the dead man, then he might expect a verdict of manslaughter at the subsequent trial, and probably he would be dismissed with a caution. But if, on the other hand, he had been the aggressor, had forced a quarrel upon the other party, then the chances were that he would find himself doomed to the gallows.

Nowadays, either surviving party in a duel would find small mercy from a judge and jury. In the eyes of the law, the man who kills in a duel is simply a murderer. Not only so, but his seconds, and any other persons connected with the arrangements for the fight, can be charged with aiding and abetting.

A Chronic Duellist.

Some people, like the English nobleman mentioned above, believe even in these days that the duel is an honourable way of settling disputes between gentlemen. The obvious flaw in a defence of duelling is the fact that the practice puts the peaceful citizen at the mercy of any bully who is skilful with pistol or sword, and chooses to pick a quarrel with him.

In the old days no gentleman would think of declining a challenge, even though it might come from someone whom he knew to be greatly his superior at sword-play. To-day, the proper course to pursue on receiving a challenge is, of course, to communicate with the police.

One of the most infamous of bullying duellists was George Robert Fitzgerald,

known as "Fighting Fitzgerald"—an Irishman who made himself feared in the fashionable circles of London towards the end of the eighteenth century. He was a master of the art of fencing, and an absolute genius at picking quarrels. Furthermore, he was a braggart of the first water, and given to the most dissolute habits in his private life.

It was not until Fitzgerald had fought twenty duels that the fact came out which resulted in his being hounded from society. In these twenty encounters he had wounded or killed his opponents in no less than eighteen cases, while he was only once wounded himself. At this point in his career it was discovered that his strange immunity from injury, which had already aroused the suspicions of a number of people, was not entirely due to his talent with the rapier—he was caught wearing a coat of mail under his ordinary clothes while actually on the field!

Covered with shame, Fitzgerald left the gay world of London and retired to his Irish estate. Some time later he reappeared—on trial for his life. He suffered the death penalty for the brutal murder of a Mr. McDonnell.

Brawls arising in the London taverns during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries led to the trial, and in some cases to the conviction, of a number of gentlemen of good position, who killed their opponents in hastily-arranged duels. The slightest thing, such as a thoughtless word construed into an insult, would lead to a challenge and an encounter, which would often take place without delay, then and there, by candlelight among the glasses and bottles, with the table pushed back against the wall.

A very famous case was that of Major Oreby, an officer who had distinguished himself under the Duke of Marlborough, and whose worst fault, it seems, was a hot temper. One night, when drinking and gambling with a number of friends, at the Castle Tavern, Drury Lane, he became incensed because one of the party staked pence, which the major declared to be an impertinence.

A fierce quarrel arose, and later in the evening, Oreby "called out" the

gentleman who had offended him, and they fought, Oreby killing his opponent.

He was arrested, but his case dragged on for over two years, and he was confidently hoping for an acquittal when he found himself sentenced to death. He committed suicide in his cell.

"Without Unnecessary Risk."

Another duellist, Mr. Walters, who figured in a similar fracas about forty years before the case just mentioned, was tried for killing Sir Charles Pym in a duel, but escaped with a verdict of manslaughter, the judge ruling that "the matter was only a storm, such as men are subject to, so that it does not reach precedent malice, but was only subsequent passion."

Duelling has been carried on in many and various ways, in all parts of the world. Medieval knights fought with lance and sword. Italians and Frenchmen brought the art of the rapier to perfection. Spaniards favoured the dagger and cloak. In most of the affairs which have occurred, despite the law, in recent years, pistols have been used.

But firearms are noisy, and people who can fence with skill are to-day in a minority. The "silent duel" is a modern development.

Each of the combatants has to choose one of two straws whose ends are concealed, or to draw from a pack of cards, or to throw dice. The man who picks the shorter straw, or a certain card, or who throws the lowest number, must, as a matter of honour, commit suicide within a stated period. A mere affair of personal insult would hardly be settled in this way. The "silent duel" is the resource of men who find that, for some reason, "the world is too small to hold them both"—and it obviates the risk of the survivor's being tried for murder—unless, of course, the suicide compact could be proved, when the survivor would himself be indicted for murder.

Looked at from a rational viewpoint, we must be glad that the practice of duelling is no longer common—at least, in this country. It arose from a mistaken notion respecting honour, and despite the romantic side which it possesses, it seems a childish method of settling a dispute.

Great Escapes!



The Marvellous Escapes of BARON TRENCK

Recording the career of the most persistent prison-breaker in the world's history.

A Three-part Article—PART ONE.

We have recorded many Great Escapes, and, in response to a demand for more of this popular feature, will continue to do so at intervals. Of all the remarkable prison-breakers we have hitherto described, however, surely none can come within measurable distance of the old-time exploits of Baron Trenck.

THERE has never been a prisoner yet who did not "size" up his prison with a view to escaping from it.

Prisons, however, are built to frustrate such designs, and when the unfortunate captive realises the size of his self-set task, he usually realises he is facing a practical impossibility.

But there are some men who refuse to recognise the word. In them the urge of liberty is strong. Their natures demand freedom as their lungs demand air. They will have liberty or death, and in the overmastering strength of their passion they will pit their brains and bodies against bars and barriers till they have won to freedom, or till death stills their last effort.

Such a man was Baron Friedrich von der Trenck, a German, for whose marvellously stubborn prison-breaking exploits we have to go back to the years between 1743 and 1763.

He must surely be classed as the most persistent and plucky escaper of any age. He had to face the prison barbarities of the Middle Ages—chains, walls and floors of immense thickness, and starvation. From one after another he attempted to win free, till his prowess was recognised to the extent of having a prison built especially for him, a distinction which he probably shares with no other captive in history.

One attempt after another he made, and all but one failed miserably. Four times he was caught and brought back to his prison, each time with fresh precautions added to deter him.

But again he essayed his freedom, and won, only to be recaptured in another town, and thrown into the stronghold of Magdeburg.

Here, although he was faced with far greater difficulty than before, he would not give up, but made five further attempts.

A Lifetime of Escaping.

The story of his earlier essays for liberty cannot be given. The tale of them is an epic in the art of escaping, and one that would take too long in the telling. It is only possible to select a

few representative examples of his wonderful attempts at freedom, though the events that preceded them may be briefly reviewed.

Baron Trenck was an officer in the army of the Prussian King Frederick when he was first imprisoned for being in friendly communication with his cousin, an officer in the army of the enemy Austrians.

The king, according to the historians, did not intend to keep him a prisoner long, meaning to give him a chance to learn his lesson. Before many months, however, he made an attempt at escape, and the king reconsidered his decision to set him free within a year.

The first escape was frustrated by the betrayal of an officer; another came to an end when Trenck got stuck in the mud of the prison moat. A third failed owing to the vigilance of a guard, who caught him as he was mounting the last obstacle to freedom. He was betrayed in yet another attempt, but on the fifth got clear away, and was free for several years in the city of Dantzg.

These continuous attempts, culminating in a successful escape, had finally hardened the heart of the king against him, and Frederick determined that, once in his hands, Baron Trenck would remain there—in a prison that none could break.

Eventually the escaper's breath of freedom ended. The king once more laid hands on him, an event made possible by the betrayal of the fugitive by the imperial resident and the Dantzg city authorities.

This time he was taken to the citadel of the city of Magdeburg, and immured in a dungeon stronger by far than any he had previously encountered.

A Man-Size Job.

This cell was part of a casemate, or dug-out, six feet wide by five feet long, and adjoining it was another cell of similar proportions.

The wall was no less than seven feet thick and was pierced with one tiny window. Very little light was enabled to filter through this window, as it was protected on the outside with iron

bars set so close together that no sign of earth or sky could be seen by the unfortunate inmate of the cell.

Outside the dug-out, and quite close to the window, a high palisade had been erected, with the idea of preventing any communication between prisoner and guards. Trenck could not even see if there was a sentinel on guard near his cell or not.

The interior of the prison was bare enough and cold enough to chill the most youthful and hopeful of spirits. The floor was composed of stone and bricks, and the furniture, which consisted of three articles—a bedstead, a table, and a small iron stove—was all firmly fastened to the floor.

One meal a day was the allowance received at this prison, and this was pushed into the cell through an aperture in the massive door. The door itself was only opened once a week, and that was on the occasion of the visit of the governor of the prison.

The captive's greatest hardship at this period appears to have been hunger. His daily meal consisted of a pound and a half of bread of very bad quality, and a jug of water. Possessed as he had always been of a hearty appetite, Baron Trenck found this pittance merely aggravated it, instead of satisfying it. The allowance was, of course, not nearly sufficient, and for a time the habitual prison-breaker was in such a state of pain and weakness through semi-starvation that he did not even attempt to plan a way out of his dungeon.

Mankind, however, is nothing if not adaptable, and after some eleven months of suffering in this manner, Trenck's constitution at last became reconciled to the menu, and he began to cast about in his mind for an idea of how to get out of this stronghold of Magdeburg.

Attacking the Wall.

The complete isolation of his cell, and the regularity of the prison governor's visit, which invariably took place at the same hour of the same day each week, gave him a certain amount of freedom from observation, and he soon had a plan outlined.

The cell next his own was unoccupied, a fact he had learned from one of the sentries outside the casemate, with whom, although he could not see, he had succeeded in getting into communication.

It was his bold intention to dig his way into this empty dungeon, and by forcing the door of it, which would not be guarded, to make his way unseen out of the fortress. It should be remembered, at this point, that he had no tools with which to work, and that the wall was seven feet thick.

With incredible labour, and the patience born of his many attempts at escape from prison, Trenck first of all managed to break off the heads of the huge nails which fastened the cramps of his table to the floor.

Wrenching off the iron bars, he thus obtained for himself a few crude tools with which to commence his superhuman task. The heads of the nails he replaced in order to cover up his efforts when the time came for the governor's visit.

The first layer of the wall was of bricks, and the mortar was so old, and had become so hardened, that it was extremely difficult to pick out. However, with the aid of a knife which he had luckily been able to retain in his possession when he was thrown into the dungeon, he cut splinters from the wooden bedstead, and with these splinters he picked the loosened mortar from between the bricks.

The fragments of both bricks and mortar had necessarily to be carefully harboured, for the same reason that he was keeping the heads of the nails. And also the prisoner had recourse to many other subterfuges, so that his efforts would not be discovered.

The whitewash on the walls of his cell was very thick, having been plastered on time after time without any of the under layers being removed. This served him in good stead. Some of the whitewash he scraped off, pounded into powder, wetted it, and with the resulting mixture filled in the crevices between the various strips of mortar and bricks.

Ground to Powder.

With a brush made of his own hairs he put the finishing touches to his brick-laying job, drying the newly-made whitewash by seating his warm, naked body close against it.

This task of replacing things in their exact positions to hide the ravages he had made was continuous and irksome, but so well did he accomplish it that during all the months Trenck occupied this cell, the prison governor noticed nothing amiss.

Each week the process of demolishing this frontage had to be performed, and a further section of the wall scooped out. Behind the bricks the baron found a barrier of large stones, plastered together with earth.

Up to this time it is doubtful whether the would-be escaper had realised the magnitude of the undertaking he had set himself to carry out, but he certainly began to be discouraged when he started to work on these enormous blocks of stone.

Most of them it was impossible to dislodge with the inadequate tools in his possession. Probably nothing short of a charge of dynamite would have shifted them.

But the indefatigable Trenck was not to be beaten. When the first fit of despondency had passed, he went to work again, hacking and hewing at the granite-like chunks of stone—not break-



Behind the bricks the Baron found a barrier of large stones, plastered together with earth. Up to this time the would-be escaper had not realised the magnitude of the undertaking he had set himself, for he was now faced with months of ceaseless, stupendous toil.

ing them to pieces and removing them, but actually reducing them to powder.

A Herculean task—but Trenck stuck to it, and after some weary months of this ceaseless, stupendous toil, he one day found his tool striking against the softer substance of bricks. This meant that his job was almost ended. The layer of bricks must be the facing of the wall of the adjoining cell.

In the meantime there had presented itself another appalling difficulty—that of disposing of the material dislodged from the wall in order to make a passage sufficiently large enough for his body to pass through.

There was a great quantity. What could he do with it?

By Instalments.

Desperation gives birth to many ideas, and this was as true in the case of Baron Trenck as it has ever been. He soon had a plan, which, although it necessitated a colossal amount of energy and patience, enabled him at last to rid himself of the evidences of his excavations.

Scattering some of the earth and mortar on the stone floor of his cell, he first ground it with his feet for some hours; until, in fact, it became like fine dust.

Using the dislodged table to stand upon, the prisoner then scooped up little portions of this dust and placed it in the aperture of the window. It now became necessary to dig a hole under the grating. Working as silently and as cautiously as possible so as not to attract the attention of the sentry, who although unseen, was within hearing distance, this extraordinary young man at last hacked an opening large enough for his purpose.

Still something was needed. This time it was a brush on a long handle.

With the fresh air of freedom almost within his reach, the baron was not to be daunted by the lack of a brush. The required implement was soon manufactured from some splinters cut from the bedstead and tied together with wool unravelled from his stocking. The brush part was formed of human hair pulled from his own head.

Even then all was not ready. He had to wait for a fairly windy night, or the dropping of a quantity of dust would have aroused suspicion, and all his work have been for naught. When the wind did freshen up a bit, the captive was quick to seize his opportunity.

Working the dust gently through the hole under the grating by means of his improvised brush, Trenck had the satisfaction of feeling it blown away by the wind.

No less than three hundredweight of earth was disposed of in this manner in the form of fine dust, a feat requiring the utmost patience and perseverance.

The Messenger.

But the prisoner could already imagine himself free. It only needed another day's work to complete the hole through into the next cell, and all that was necessary after that was some assistance from outside in order for him to get quickly away from the vicinity of the fortress.

To gain this assistance Baron Trenck determined to write to his sister, then living in a small town near Berlin, telling her of his plight and asking her to send him some money.

Through the aid of one of the sentinels a girl was found who professed herself

willing to go on this errand. As payment for her services she was to receive a sum of money which she was empowered by the prisoner to collect from the Austrian Ambassador in Berlin.

In return for the money he hoped to obtain from the Ambassador, Baron Trenck made out a bill of sale on his property in Vienna.

It will be remembered that immediately in front of the window of Trenck's cell there was a high palisade, and this not only prevented the inmate from seeing anything, but it also made it no easy task for him to convey the documents, the letter and the bill of sale, to his willing messenger.

However, by the aid of his long splinter-stick, to which he added a few extra sections, the transfer was accomplished safely, and the girl set out on her journey.

The next news Baron Trenck heard was

from the sentry, with whom he had become friendly, and it was to the effect that the plot had been discovered. Through some adroit questioning of the girl while she was at the Embassy, the details of the scheme had been drawn from her, and the news passed on to the king, who was then on his way to Magdeburg to hold a review.

Out of the Frying-pan.

The prisoner could hardly believe the sentry's news. It seemed impossible that his plans, conceived in desperation and carried out with unremitting toil and labour, were to come to nothing, and that he was to be as far away as ever from the fresh air and sunlight and companionship that he craved.

But so it was. The captive, in fact, was soon to find himself in a worse position than he had ever imagined.

King Frederick, exasperated and incensed by this continual flouting of his

authority, himself set about designing a prison that he hoped and expected would serve as a grave for this refractory subject.

While he was on the job of designing, the king also contrived a set of chains with which to fetter the limbs of this man, who was so ready to carve his way out of any dungeon in which he had yet been immured.

When this chamber of horrors was completed, Baron Trenck was bound hand and foot, blindfolded, and carried out of his dungeon, which he was never to re-enter, and which remained in his memory as a palace of comfort in comparison with what he was now called upon to suffer.

The further exploits of Baron Trenck will be continued next week.

The Artful Argentine!

By DONALD CAMPBELL.

The Wembley Exhibition has been the means of attracting several varieties of crooks to our shores—amongst others, one which has never sought us out before. He is the "smooth" gentleman adventurer from the criminal quarters of Buenos Aires.

AMONG the hundreds of thousands of visitors to London there is a new criminal set.

From the Boca quarter of Buenos Aires has come the Tango dance; but that is not its only product. La Boca is the criminal quarter. It ranks with the Moabit of Berlin, the Apache neighbourhoods of Paris, and other unsavoury districts.

The new invaders do not all come from la Boca, but they are citizens of the Argentine Republic.

They are of two kinds, those who descend from British parents, and the others who are of Spanish descent, probably mixed with Indian.

The latter have had a happy hunting-ground in France for years, and the French police are now anxious to lose them.

As dance instructors and individual performers the Argentines have been coining money on the Riviera, but they have not all been content with earning a living in a more or less honest manner. They have been suspected of many a jewel-robbery, of which the victims have invariably been women.

The English-speaking Argentines are confidence men who work very much in the old accepted manner, except that they can prey on rich South Americans as well as on English and Americans.

There is one of the Argentines supposed to have arrived in England who is very much wanted in Buenos Aires.

This is a gentleman whose identity will be disguised by calling him Jose B—. He is a bad fellow, without even the feline grace of his dancing compatriots. The Paris police had him under observation, as they suspected him of robbery with violence, and wanted to catch him in the act. His compatriots in Europe have not been "rough" however. They have confined themselves to plundering women.

There was the scandal in France of the "Italian count" who went to Deauville, where he taught dancing. He confided to a wealthy Anglo-American widow that he was really a count, but was earning

money by giving dancing lessons in order to be able to restore the glories of the old ancestral mansion.

As it was, he would have to let it. She was told that it was in Tuscany, and as she wished to winter in Italy, she offered him a considerable sum of money to lease the mansion to her. Being a pretty good business woman, however, she caused her solicitor to make inquiries in Italy. Sure enough, he reported that the Bocadora Castle was a fine old place, and that the count himself had been obliged to earn his living in France at some profession or other.

It was owing to the presence of an Englishman who remembered the "count" and his touching little ways, that the widow, who had taken a liking for the dancing instructor, did not lose her jewellery. The "count" had cashed her cheque, but had to disgorge. He was a professional dancer from Buenos Aires, but had come to Europe some six years before his attempt at Deauville. He had danced a good deal in Italy, and had actually run across the real Count de Bocadora in Paris, where the latter was working as a newspaper reporter.

These Argentines believe in the gospel of purple and fine linen. Not for them the neckcloth and cap of the respectable burglar, but silk shirts, resplendent hose, a good ring or so, and perfectly fitting clothes.

Now, in their own home, they are not quite so respectable or comparatively well-behaved. It is not safe for a stranger to stray down in the Boca of Buenos Aires. You may be tempted to step into some cafe—or, rather, wine-den—to see some experts dancing their wild dances—and they can dance—but it is better not to unless you have a very clear head and some capable companions.

The inhabitants of these dens live by preying on the thousands of sailors who come from the big ships that steam up the lordly La Plata river, and who fall an easy victim to the wiles of the la Boca pirates.

Here you see real knife-fighting, not like that of Italy, where the practice is dying out, but the real, old-fashioned method, with a cloth wrapped round the left forearm and the long-bladed Navaja, one of the most deadly weapons in the world, used at close quarters.

It is sad to see those who have been plundered in la Boca. Fuddled with strong spirits, robbed of everything, even their boots and jackets, they sink to those points in the main business section of the city where they are likely to meet some sympathetic Englishman or American. The poor wretches have usually lost their ship.

They meet with scant sympathy from the local inhabitants, and their chance of procuring work on land is very poor, for they have to compete with sweated labour of the worst kind. In the Argentine, you either make very good money or become that most terrible of sights, a "poor white."

But let your Argentine youth emerge from the shades of la Boca and acquire some of the polish to be picked up from the world which frequents the spacious boulevards of the Argentine capital, and he is transformed from the savage half-Indian to a suave Latin-American, whose sole ambition is to be taken for a Parisian.

Till recently this type has kept away from England, but the Wembley Exhibition has proved too much of a temptation. Paris has been in communication with Scotland Yard, and the principal hotels have been warned.

It is very necessary that the hotels should be warned, for these gentlemen from South America are veritable lounge lizards, and to them the lobbies of a big hotel are as a happy hunting-ground to a Red Indian.

Their natural suavity and grace makes them peculiarly fitted for their type of robbery. They ingratiate themselves everywhere, and their manners are perfect until they are found out—and then you are liable to see the true nature of the beast.

Queer Clues

The records of real-life criminality provide almost daily far stranger clues than the most accomplished fiction-writer ever dreams of.

THE button from the murderer's coat, held in the dead man's hand; the piece of cloth left on the spike on the wall by the fleeing burglar; the bloodstained thumbprint; the muddy footmark—these, and others like them, are the clues beloved of the fiction writer and the mainstay of the story's plot.

Interesting as these inventions of fiction are, facts can provide many more curious.

Whatever story-writer ever ventured so bizarre a clue, for instance, as the tip of a man's nose? Yet it happened in real life, and once again truth went one better than fiction.

It occurred quite recently in Germany. A tradesman was walking peaceably home late at night, when he was set on by a gang of footpads, three of them.

His arms were held to his sides by one of the gang grasping him from behind, and the other two got busy with his pockets. He had little chance of defending himself by ordinary means, so he used his teeth.

Jerking his head forward in the scrimmage, he bit.

There was a howl of pain. The teeth had closed on the nose of one of the thieves. Alarmed at the noise the wounded man had made, and startled by the quantity of blood, the others gave up the attack and faded away for parts unknown.

Then the unlucky one followed them—minus his nose-tip.

This unpleasant relic was retained by the victim—not so much as a souvenir, but as a clue for the police. A crook with an undamaged face is sometimes elusive, but it's a different matter when he has a mutilated nasal organ.

And so it was. With the nose-tip as a clue, the police found it no difficult matter to trace their man—and the fragment fitted to perfection.

This clue earned for the hold-up man a term in gaol. The moral seems to be: "Don't poke your nose into other people's—mouths."

Living Evidence.

A quick-witted police-officer and a black fly were the means of solving a mystery some time ago.

The Turkish political murder of Ali Shruki Bey in the early part of last year appeared to be impossible of solution until a young native detective—and the insect referred to—brought the slayer to justice.

Ali Shruki had disappeared mysteriously, and the place where he had been last seen was the house of Osman Agha.

The owner of this house disclaimed all knowledge of the missing man, and the

young police investigator thoroughly searched the building before he was satisfied that there was no Ali Shruki, or yet his dead body, hidden there.

All the detective could discover was a cart-track leading away from the house.

This track he followed for some miles, till it came to an abrupt end in a wild, lonely place. At this point the cart had evidently been turned round and driven back on its tracks, so the clue, if it was to be found at all, must be somewhere in the vicinity of this lonely spot.

On the alert for anything, however unlikely, the detective searched the ground, and was at last rewarded by the sight of a black fly emerging from the earth.

That particular type of fly, he knew, only exists in the vicinity of a dead body. A few minutes' digging at the spot indicated by the obliging insect brought to light the body of the missing man.



"... there was a howl of pain."

One young criminal, all unwittingly, carried about with him a clue that eventually convicted him of theft.

A military canteen had been visited during the night by a member of the burgling brotherhood. Entrance had been gained by a window which the intruder had smashed. Cigarettes, shaving-soap, and other articles had been "adopted" by this unknown person.

Pieces of broken glass were found on the ground below the window next morning, but no indication as to the identity of the burglar.

A private soldier was arrested on suspicion, but apart from the fact that he had a bandaged arm, which may or may not have been the result of smashing through the canteen window, nothing could be proved against him.

It was not until the Army surgeon had examined the gash on the soldier's arm,

and had removed a piece of glass from the wound, that a clue was discovered.

The fragment of glass happened to be of the same variety as that of the broken window. The pieces from the ground were laboriously fitted together, and it was found that the fragment taken from the wounded man's arm fitted perfectly into the jigsaw puzzle.

This portable clue was the means of completely satisfying the magistrate that the suspected man was the guilty one.

Footprints in the mud or clay are commonplaces of crime. One does not so often hear of a boot-sole clue in butter.



"... a trail easy to follow."

Two frisky youths of sixteen, whose ideas of brightening life also took the form of throwing fireworks in letter-boxes, were arrested in Kingston some months ago. Their lapse from the straight and narrow path was not for so mild an exploit, however.

The Buttered Sole.

They had decided to go in for richer thrills—the thrills of real burglary. They picked on a grocer's shop as a likely field for their special talents.

Not being experts, the first thing one of them did when he entered through a back window was to plant his foot in an open tub of butter—a substance not only adapted for spreading on bread, but for retaining a faithful impression of a boot.

This oversight resulted in a sentence of two months' hard labour, a sentence which his misguided partner also received.

Teeth-marks are often heard of as clues, and there have been many cases in which they have led the pursuing detectives straight to their originators. In these cases, however, it is usually found that the culprit has started to eat some article of food and left it unfinished.

One such victim of the teeth-mark clue was doubly unfortunate. Not only did the marks convict him, but the food wasn't what he thought it was.

He was a predatory youngster, who had been rifling desks at a school in search of attractive trifles. In one he came upon an apple, and started to sample it.

No sooner had he taken a bite than he put the thing down with a grimace of distaste, for the "apple" was made of soap. They get these things up very well nowadays!

Being a beginner at burglary, perhaps he did not realise the value of the bitten piece of soap that masqueraded as an apple, and left it for the detective to find.

He was traced afterwards, and when invited to bite on a lump of plasticine

he duplicated the marks and gave himself away completely.

In reading fiction one often comes across instances of pursuing sleuths following a trail of blood-spots, but so far as we are aware no author has yet laid a trail of ink-spots. It has been left for a real-life burglar to perform this considerate action. In justice to him, however, it should be pointed out that he did not do it for the benefit of the pursuing sleuths.

A Hot Scent.

A house in the West End was burgled, and two large and valuable silver inkstands were chosen as a souvenir of the occasion. They happened to be full of ink when the thief "lifted" them, but the force of gravity and the incautious Bill Sikes between them resulted in the inkpots gradually emptying themselves along the line of retreat.

It was a trail easy to follow, and the detectives followed it. The spots led to a house which sheltered both the looter and his loot. Surprised at this quick work on the part of Nemesis, there was nothing for the crook to do but own up.

Nor has the novelist introduced the snuff trail into his crook stories as yet. This ruse was the invention of a tobaccoconist of Danzig.

He had lost a big part of his stock to midnight marauders. A number of nocturnal visits had been made to his shop, and each time the thief had carried away an assortment of pipes and cigarettes. Determined to get on the track of this nightly prowler, the tobaccoconist resorted to his native wit for a remedy.

Before closing his shop for the night he scattered snuff on the floor.

Next morning, sure enough, there were footprints in the snuff. They led out of the shop, but, of course, were not visible in the roadway.

Police-dogs were brought to the scene, and they successfully followed up the scent of the pungent powder. The man they tracked down in this manner was found to have the remains of the snuff still on his feet and socks. He had walked barefooted, and the powder had, of course, stuck to his feet, even after putting on his socks.

The World's Champion Clue.

Most clues have to be searched for—sometimes with a magnifying glass, or a microscope.

It is seldom indeed that the retreating criminal presents his pursuers with a self-made, life-size portrait of himself. In fact, there is probably only one instance of the sort of thing referred to. It is not exactly too good to be true, for it is true; but it is perhaps too good to happen twice.

It can safely be described as the world's champion clue, and a photograph of it is reproduced with this article.

The picture explains itself, and the facts connected with it are soon told. A burglar was surprised in the act of entering a house in France, and was seen by the occupant, who gave the alarm.

Remembering an urgent appointment elsewhere, the unauthorised visitor started off—but slipped in a patch of clayey mud in the garden. He fell flat on his face, thrusting out his hands to break his fall.

Then he scrambled to his feet and made off again—only to be captured later, tracked by his life-size portrait.

For, in falling, his forehead, nose, and mouth had printed themselves in the clay, as had the bottom portion of his waistcoat. The print of this was so clear that the impressions of three buttons and the texture of the cloth were visible.

His right hand held a jemmy, and his left an automatic pistol. The latter was imprinted wonderfully clearly, and both these objects furnished silent but conclusive evidence that the man was not on that spot for the purpose of, say, listening to the nightingale.

The clay-mud imprint was carefully guarded, and a plaster cast of it was afterwards taken by the French police, eventually finding a resting-place in the collection of criminal curios owned by Dr. Edmond Locard, of the Lyons police laboratory.

We mention this fact and reproduce the photo of the cast in case someone might be tempted to remark: "Tell us another."

Giving the Game Away.

Such an accident as this does not occur very often to aid the police, or they would be able to take a long holiday; but at least one other case is on record where the police have had an unexpected stroke of luck.

A man in Paris was arrested on suspicion, and was taken to the police-station, carrying with him a parrot in a cage. As the prisoner refused to give his name or address, the magistrate before whom he was brought was undecided whether to release him or to detain him for a few days as punishment for withholding his identity.

While the point was still being decided, the parrot awoke from his meditations and made a remark which settled the affair.

"Hallo, Lennart!" he said.

This expression was the signal for a hearty burst of laughter, not only from the police, but also from the magistrate, for only a few hours before a message had been received from headquarters giving instructions to keep a sharp look-out



"... listening to the nightingale."



THE WORLD'S CHAMPION CLUE.—This is a plaster cast of the life-size portrait referred to below. The background has been slightly darkened to show the impressions more clearly.

[Photo: Paris & London Studios.]

for a desperate burglar named Lennart, and the parrot's owner admitted being that very man.

The bird which had thus been of such assistance to the police was adopted by them during his master's regrettable absence.

An unlucky burglar who was captured by the American police owes his downfall to his fondness for fruit jelly.

He was a negro, a native of Denver, Colorado, and when he broke into a house in that town one night he discovered, in addition to a gold watch, a dish containing some of his favourite sweet plum jelly.

Too scared to stop on the premises and eat it, and being extremely loath to let it lie there untouched, the burglar took the delicacy along with him.

The gold watch was very soon disposed of to a pawnbroker in exchange for six dollars, but the pawnbroker, being suspicious of a man who pawned such an expensive watch for so small an amount, informed the police of the transaction, at the same time giving them a description of the negro.

He was soon traced. The police invited him to give an explanation of how he came to be in possession of the watch.

"I bought it from a man in the street," was the ready reply; and despite all the rigorous questionings of the police, nothing could shake the negro in that statement.

He would have "got away with it," too, had it not been for the jelly. The police, of course, searched the coloured man's room before they gave up the quest, and there they found the other article which was reported to be missing from the burgled house—the incriminating fruit jelly.

A mis-shapen ear was the clue that recently led to the capture of a whole band of international crooks by the Parisian police.

It was during a visit to London that the first clue to the identity of one of their number was gained, and a wealthy American was their victim in this case.

The visitor from the States was staying at a London hotel, having in his possession a bag containing some very valuable jewels. A man suddenly jostled him, and the bag was snatched from his grasp, the thief making his escape by diving between the American's legs, and so throwing him to the ground.

However, the curious shape of the robber's ear had attracted the attention of the "bereaved" man, and although he was not quick enough to catch the criminal, he was able at least to give the police this little bit of information.

Later on, the man with the "cauliflower" ear was observed in the streets of Paris, and the French police set themselves to watch him, with the idea of gaining information to supplement that which they had already received from Scotland Yard.

Eventually the man with the malformed ear and a number of his associates in crime were laid by the heels.

"Think of a Number."

The New York police, who were called in to investigate the mysterious disappearance of a quantity of goods from a silk warehouse in that city recently, found a solution in a coupon connected with a guessing competition.

The head of the silk firm gave it as his opinion that the person responsible for the theft was a youth in their employ who had likewise disappeared; but the address of the boy, or any clue as to his hiding-place, or that of the goods, could not be discovered.

However, the young absentee had already provided a clue for the police without knowing it.

It came about like this. The police, during their inquiries at the robbed firm, found that another boy in the employ had been out to lunch with the missing youth on the day when the robbery took place.

The detective in charge of the case took this lad, and together they carefully traversed the route taken by the youthful pair on the eventful day.

"Tell me everything that was said and everything that was done, as far as you can remember," commanded the sleuth.

The boy obeyed to the best of his ability. When they came level with a tobacconist's he told the official how he and his friend had entered the shop for the purpose of filling in forms for a competition.

The competition was to guess how many cigarettes there were in the window, and the lad in the company of the detective remembered that the missing youth had estimated four million.

Here, then, was the clue they had been seeking. Permission having been obtained from the shopkeeper to inspect the forms filled in, the police official set himself the lengthy task of sorting them out. He was in luck. There happened to be only one bearing the estimate of four million.

The name and address on this form proved to be a genuine one, and the young man, when faced with the police, confessed to having stolen the silk and sold it for the sum of fifty dollars.

Queer clues, yes—but in almost every criminal case there crops up another just as queer. The novelists have a long way to go before they can match the strangeness of things in real life.

The Third Degree.



By CHARLES BOFF.

The "third degree" does not square with the British notion of fairplay, and it may even be refined cruelty. As our contributor says, it is a wretched system

AS practised in the United States by detectives and others concerned in bringing offenders to justice, the "third degree" has been described as "the art of getting on someone else's nerves"—which sums the whole thing up in a nutshell.

The object of the application of the third degree is to extort confession from a suspect, or to force confession from a prisoner.

One example of its practical application will enlighten the reader more than any amount of explanation. American detectives tried it after all their shadowings and eavesdropping had failed, and after the 'cutest man-trackers and private investigators in the State had confessed themselves baffled.

The third degree may take the form of brutal browbeating, mere bullying, or such persistent cross-examination that the individual on whom it is practised is either forced or tricked into admission of guilt. In the present instance, however, it assumed the form of mental torture which is least capable of being withstood—neither browbeating, nor bullying, nor cross-examination. The suspect was haunted!

The people who did the haunting were detectives, and servants, and restaurant and theatre-attendants bribed by them.

The detectives were convinced that the man concerned was guilty of a certain crime; but, clever as they were, his was the greater cunning. He would neither incriminate himself by word or deed. So there was nothing for it but to cause him to incriminate himself by making his life a burden to him.

The first part of the application of the third degree consisted in inducing all the man's personal servants to give notice to leave together. And they were to give no reason whatsoever for their sudden determination to leave the service in which most of them had been perfectly contented and happy for many years.

Stares and Whispers.

Then all sorts of queer folk were paid to watch the suspect wherever he walked or rode. They watched him openly, without the least pretence at concealment. Wherever he went he felt that at least two pair of eyes were fastened on him. He couldn't help noticing it, for the shadowing was offensive to the eye.

By this time he had more than a suspicion what was happening. He knew that he was yet another victim—in a long, long roll of others—of the third degree. But he wasn't going to give in yet.

He put up with the stares in the

streets and wherever else he ventured, and so invited another turn of the screw that in the end was to drive him, almost insane, to the police-station. The people who hitherto had watched him silently wherever he appeared now took to talking about him—pointing him out to one another and whispering like conspirators behind lifted hands.

The postmen who delivered letters at his home next were drawn into the conspiracy against him. Scarcely an hour in the day passed but a shoal of anonymous letters came to him, threatening him, blackmailing, and accusing him.

So it went on for a month. The man was ageing rapidly, but still he appeared to be unaware of what was going on. The detectives began to fear that the third degree, which had never previously been known to fail, was now doomed to very conspicuous failure. Still, they had one more card to play.

They played their last card that night. As the haunted suspect walked into a theatre the orchestra stopped dead; the instruments broke off in the middle of a note. A deathly hush fell, and the suspect knew he was beaten.

The ordeal had lasted a long time, and he had stood it well. One more hour of it and sanity would have departed. There was no knowing what further terrors the detectives had in store for him. He wasn't to know their last card had been declared. Rather than face more tortures on these, or any other lines, he would give himself up to the police.

And that is what he did. He walked out of the theatre and to the nearest police-station and confessed. America's detective force thus achieved one more notable success with the questionable aid of the third degree.

Mental Torture.

The foregoing well illustrates how the old method of obtaining confession from incriminated or suspected persons by physical torture has given place—in America and France especially—to a refined process of mental torture. It has become a more or less recognised dodge for securing confession or compelling one individual to implicate another.

It does not go so far as open threats or intimidation, or it might be considered illegal. It is all contrived in such cunning, underhand ways that the ends of Justice are achieved by methods which the Law does not openly acknowledge, but which nevertheless are as effective as the methods formerly practised by the dreaded Inquisition.

The barest thread of suspicion was sufficient to move the officers of the Inquisition to effect an arrest. They never delayed nor troubled to resort to anything approaching the third degree, for

they did not trouble to give their courts even a semblance of legality. The methods then of an American detective would have been considered much too slow.

All who were taken before the Inquisitors were presumed to be guilty, and the judge himself performed not the functions of an unbiased third part, as it were, but actually took upon himself the role of accuser.

That sort of thing would never be tolerated to the same extent now in any court in any country, though in the United States and France the methods of counsel for the prosecution—like the terrorising methods of the practitioners of the third degree—are not in every instance such as we are accustomed to in this country.

Voluntary Confession.

For instance, in the countries previously mentioned the great effort of the prosecution is directed to extracting—by wheedling or surprise tactics—a confession from the accused. Neither open threats nor artful intimidation is used in court, however, or the proceedings would be held to be illegal.

But everything is done to get that confession, either before the trial or during it; once it is obtained, the case is in the hands of the prosecution. Not so in England, where the law on this point provides that the confession of someone incriminated can be used in evidence against him only if it is given of his own free will—absolutely voluntarily.

The law of England definitely lays down that a person is not to be made to incriminate himself. The moment he is taken into custody he is cautioned that whatever he may say will be taken down and used in evidence against him—practically a warning not to convict himself, but to leave that to others.

It is safe to say that third degree methods would never be tolerated in this country, where even a genuine confession of guilt is not admissible in evidence when it is the result of a threat or an inducement held out by anyone in authority, whether that person be a magistrate, prosecutor, police constable, or detective.

In America, by the way, the everyday name for the third degree is "grilling." They speak of an accused man as being grilled—and it seems to be an appropriate word, for the ordeal can be hardly less trying than if he were grilled in a sort of ordeal by fire.

The earlier system of third degree as practised in the States had quite as much



As the haunted suspect entered the theatre, the orchestra stopped dead. A deathly hush fell, and the suspect knew he was beaten.

connection with physical torture as our own ancient devices for extracting confession.

And in consequence the third degree was, and still is, of as little real use as the old rack and thumbscrew business. The evidence secured by its means usually is quite unreliable, for under torture any sort of confession is likely to be made in the hopes of release from the present agony.

Recently there was reported in the United States an instance of absolutely wasted effort on the part of practitioners of the third degree. It was in connection with the murder of a young girl, on Long Island.

For some obscure reason, the suspicion of the police fell on a young boy who was half-witted. The police got to work on him, using the clumsiest devices of the third degree—that is, physical rather than mental torture and intimidation. They questioned the poor idiot-boy until he was utterly bewildered. And when they had nearly badgered him to death in that fashion he was taken to where his presumed victim lay.

There he was made to undergo an ordeal of sheer terror, which quickly culminated in full confession. The boy said just what the police wanted him to say.

It was as complete an admittance of guilt as was ever laid before a judge and jury. It would have been, that is, had the practitioners of the third degree had time to lay the signed confession before the powers-that-be. Something startling happened to prevent them.

This was nothing less than fresh evidence, which some "interfering" person brought to the notice of the police, which proved, beyond any possibility of doubt, that the idiot-boy who had made that beautifully complete confession was not even near the scene of the crime when it was committed!

Thus does the third degree prove its own utter worthlessness in practically every instance. How long it will continue as a recognised police method in the enlightened United States cannot be guessed.

Sufficient has been said of it to show unmistakably how unworthy is the wretched system of the great policeman who first introduced it into America, the late Superintendent Byrnes, who also showed the New York police force—of which he was a shining member—the expert use of "stool pigeons," by which picturesque phrase is meant the police method of using one thief to trap another.

From All Quarters.

"Details, Please!"

One of the least easy tasks with which a policeman often finds himself confronted is to describe a person in detail.

It is notably difficult to remember small, distinctive points about a person that would serve to identify him, and the chief of the New York Police, Commissioner Enright, has found it necessary to issue a pamphlet on this subject to his numerous staff.

It is on account of "frequent laxity and disregard of distinctive details" in police reports that he has had this article distributed. The title of it is: "How to Describe Persons and Property Wanted."

"When obtaining a description," he exhorts his constables, "cover as many of the points mentioned in this pamphlet as you can."

Whiskers, for instance, can be of the goatie variety, or the Vandye, straight, rounded, chin-whiskers, and various other shapes.

Moustaches, too, differ greatly, and a little care given to the description will often prove very valuable. Moustaches, according

to the police chief, should be described with a view to shape, colour, and condition; short, flowing, long-pointed ends, stubby, turned-up, and several other varieties he instances as being of some assistance to the policeman in making out his description of a wanted man.

Any physical peculiarity, however small, should be looked out for and noted. The way of walking, for instance, has more than once been the means of identifying a criminal when he has been facially disguised.

The voice, too, can often be described; the way of wearing eyeglasses, if any; the twitching of the features, the way of carrying a cane, the hands. All these points, if observed with an experienced eye, would serve to distinguish a person from a hundred others.

Commissioner Enright also points out the necessity for noting scars or marks of any description; knock-knees, pigeon-toes, cauliflower ears, moles, missing or gold teeth, amputated fingers, etc.

And the same thing applies to stolen property. "Give the minutest details," he

instructs the police, "when describing watches, automobiles, or any other articles."

Overtime—Unpaid.

Two painters, engaged at their trade in a bank in New York, had a very unpleasant experience one night a short time ago.

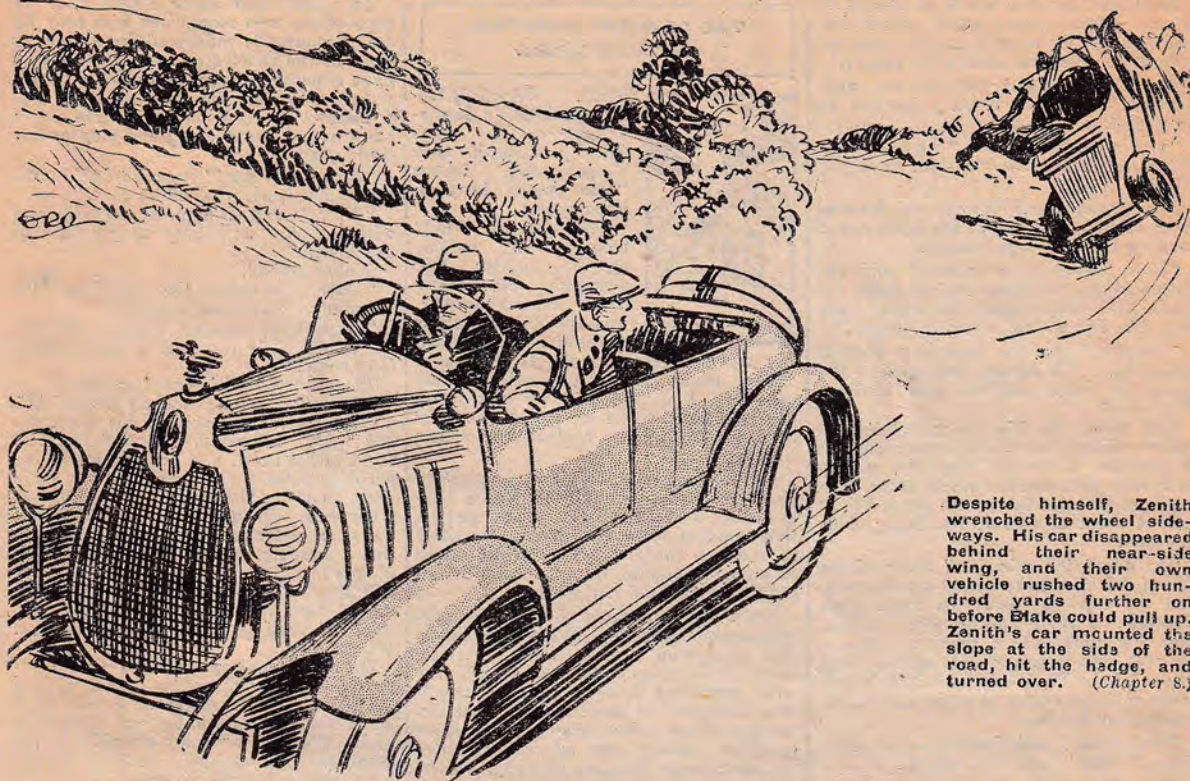
They were working in the vault of the bank, and when their day's work was finished and they packed up to go home, found that they were alone in the building, and had no means of getting out.

The bank clerks and other employees, who were in the habit of leaving the bank at four o'clock, had forgotten the two painters still at work, and had locked them in.

After a time they succeeded in forcing open a door, only to find themselves up against another and much stronger door.

Next they did some more shouting, and eventually they were rewarded by hearing the heavy tread of a policeman, who assisted them out of the bank.

Their joy was short-lived, however, for the policeman took them under arrest, believing them, quite naturally, to be burglars. It was only after some more hours of captivity, this time in the police-station, and the arrival of one of the bank officials, that they were set free, and could go home to their well-earned repose.



Despite himself, Zenith wrenched the wheel sideways. His car disappeared behind their near-side wing, and their own vehicle rushed two hundred yards further on before Blake could pull up. Zenith's car mounted the slope at the side of the road, hit the hedge, and turned over. (Chapter 8.)

The MAN in STEEL

(Continued from page 10.)

Before he turned in for the night, he opened the pillbox wherein lay the crumpled bullet which had momentarily shaken Inspector Coutts in his self-esteem, and beside it placed a second bullet which he had found between the summer-house and the lawn.

The second was a revolver-bullet of the bore used by Tinker, and it was telescoped exactly as the first had been.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. At Dead of Night.



ALTHOUGH a scientific man and immersed in scientific pursuits, Professor Lanesmere had done himself pretty well. Having no lack of means, he had employed a staff of four servants living within the house, one of whom was a butler named Grenoble.

This unfortunate man, Grenoble, was destined to play a small but important part in the mystery of the Man in Steel; and his "call" took place about thirty minutes after Sexton Blake had resigned himself to sleep.

Strangely enough, Grenoble had slept through the excitement of the ghost-hunt. Even the pistol-shots had failed to rouse him. Yet a noise so minute that for a long time he did not recognise it for a noise at all, had the power to rouse him, and send him out on a fateful errand.

He awoke, conscious that something was wrong.

A peculiar, intermittent vibration, felt rather than heard, caused him to get out of bed and stand in his nightshirt, wondering, his brow puckered with thought.

It resembled a rush of wind in the chimney, but had a clockwork regularity.

Something caused him to place his hand upon the chimney-breast, and he found that it was very hot indeed.

"Fire!"

The fears of a well-trained servant impelled him to give the alarm. But, being anxious not to startle the household unnecessarily, and, above all, not to frighten his mistress, he decided to investigate further on his own responsibility.

Obviously, the danger, if danger there were, came from the room below.

He slipped out and descended the stairs.

The room below was the study which had been used by his late employer, and which he rarely entered.

No hint of the ghostly visitation had reached his ears, or he might have feared to enter. As it was, he had a good look round.

There was no sign of fire. Only here the rushing sound was much stronger, and here again the chimney-breast was hot to the touch.

Where, then, could it be, this fire which he could hear and feel, but not get a sight of?

Anxious, and possessed of curiosity, Grenoble quietly opened the french doors from the dining-room; and, dressed only in overcoat and slippers over his night attire, stepped out upon the lawn.

His surmise had been justified. One of the chimneys was belching smoke tinged with flame. Somewhere within the house was a fire much too big for safety.

But where? He had strictly observed his duty of seeing that all fires were

burning low before going to bed. Of course, one of their visitors might have made up a big fire for some reason, but the situation of the chimney ruled this out.

He set to work to trace the position of the room from which the chimney came; and, so doing, was astonished to observe a dull red glow coming from the side of the house.

He hurried thither, and, with redoubled astonishment, found that the red glow came from a window where he had supposed no window to be.

The aperture was screened by a hanging mass of ivy, and was so encrusted by dirt as to resemble in colour the wall to which it belonged.

He moved the ivy aside, still believing that the window might belong to some little-used cupboard or larder, of which the rambling, old-fashioned house contained many.

Thereafter, petrified by what he saw, Grenoble remained motionless.

The small, bare room had been fitted as a smith's forge, and a man whom Grenoble did not know was working a mechanical bellows, which caused the rushing sound that he had heard.

The man was clad in a suit of armour, and, as it appeared in the light of the fire, blood red.

His face was of the same sanguine hue. This was strange enough. But what held Grenoble spellbound with horror, was his eyes. When, presently, in response to some small sound made by the unhappy butler, he turned and faced the window, the full truth of his deficiency was manifest.

The man had no pupils to his eyes. His open lids exposed two vacant orbs!

At the same moment, suddenly, silently, a crushing hand seized the butler's arm.

If it were possible for a strong man to die with fear, Grenoble would have died then.

As it was, he was bereft of speech or action. The second hand, which immediately closed over his mouth, was unnecessary. He was sick with dread.

The man in armour reached out, and, without an effort, lifted Grenoble in through the window.

"If you make a sound," he said, in a wonderful deep voice, "I shall have you killed!"

The second man followed, and the two of them stood looking at the butler as if he were some strange animal.

"It is Lanesmere's butler," said the second man. "I think it's all right. If Blake had been about, he would have been the one to make this discovery."

"I agree," said the first, in a tone of authority. "I agree, Starlight. We ought to have masked that window, that's all."

And then, to his great relief, the butler noticed that the first man was not so strange, after all. He was merely an albino, that was the whole truth. The pupils of his eyes being red, the red light robbed them of colour, rendering them invisible.

"In about ten minutes," resumed the albino, "I shall have tested the formula, and we can get away to meet Herr Detmold. I shall not be sorry, either. This masquerade as a medieval ghost—my only safe means of visiting the forge where I have Professor Lanesmere's own books and apparatus to assist me—is becoming intolerable."

"And then," said the man called Starlight, "what about this fellow?"

The albino did not answer, and the mind of Grenoble was obsessed by fear. Something—perhaps the matter-of-fact way in which the albino had talked of having him killed—made him suspect that the latter set no value upon human life.

He was right. The albino, not valuing his own life, was disposed to prize the lives of others at less than nothing. As for consequences, the albino's freedom was forfeit already, and to him freedom was life. A man cannot lose more than his all. The albino cared nothing for consequences.

Of a truth, Grenoble had reason to be afraid.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. On Secret Service.



MRS. BARDELL—Sexton Blake's house-keeper—would occasionally remark that Blake and Tinker "was partial to alcoholic sports."

The good lady meant, of course, aquatic sports; and although her statement, taken literally, was about as wrong as it could be, her meaning was perfectly correct. If Blake and Tinker could get at a fair-sized patch of water, you had only to visit it on any morning when it wasn't actually freezing, to find the said aquatic sports in progress.

As it happened, within a hundred yards of Lanesmere House was a lake of spring water, deep and broad, and on the morning after the events described in the last chapter, both the detectives managed to tumble into the same before Sylvia's household had arisen.

From the lake came shouts of delight and mighty splashing. Blake and Tinker had discovered a new game. At the brink of the deep water was a high tree with spreading boughs easy to climb. One climbed the tree—rather painfully, because of bare feet—crawled, still more painfully, along one of the topmost boughs; then, hanging thereby, swung outwards and upwards.

The joke was, that a terrific muscular effort was necessary if the acrobat was to miss the lower boughs in his descent, and this hurling of the body outwards prevented anything like a decent dive. Hence the shouts of delight and derision.

Although at straight diving Blake would have beaten his assistant without difficulty—swallow-diving anything up to one hundred feet with splendid ease and finish—at this acrobatic stunt Tinker's smaller bulk gave him a decided advantage, and he was more than delighted to find that the efforts of his beloved guv'nor were even clumsier than his own.

To those who knew Blake only by reputation, who recognised him only by the photographs published from time to time in the illustrated papers, he would have appeared incapable of such a boyish water-frolic. But the great detective was a believer in concentration. He could work as few could work, and play as few could play.

"Some guv'nor!" was Tinker's estimate, and it may be left at that.

"Now," said Blake, at length, and with regret, "we'll have to get back to the house."

Tinker sighed.

"Race you across the lake," he said hopefully. "Just for a final."

"Right-ho!" agreed Blake, smiling. "I'll do it. My trudgeon to your crawl. Go ahead!"

They started with one impulse.

Instantly Tinker stretched himself out on the surface, stabbing his forearms left-right, left-right, immediately in front of his head, and beating the water with his pointed feet behind him. Only once, in every ten strokes, as regular as clockwork, did he twist his head sideways, in order to snatch a breath. He was a moving, a swiftly moving, cloud of spray.

Blake, on the other hand, swam well out of the water, hurling himself forward by long powerful strokes of each arm in turn.

He was handicapped by a stroke admittedly slower than the crawl; but he did have the advantage of seeing what his adversary was doing, an advantage which Tinker could not afford, and his great strength enabled him to go all out for a greater length of time.

The match was a good one. Half way across, Blake was doing all he knew, and still Tinker was gaining.

The lad was two lengths ahead, when Blake heard a hail, and, turning, saw the gardener from Lanesmere waving and shouting excitedly.

Perceiving that this was something more than a call to breakfast, he ducked, changed his own stroke into a crawl, and within twenty yards headed Tinker off.

"What's matter!" choked Tinker, gasping.

"Back!" said Blake. "We're wanted! Something's happened!"

And, little more distressed than at the moment of the start, he threshed his way over the surface in a reverse direction.

As the reader may anticipate, the gardener's excitement concerned the disappearance of Grenoble.

The door of the butler's room had been found open, and his clothes lying upon a chair. The butler himself had disappeared.

This the gardener told Blake with hysterical incoherence, and the detective, pulling on a few clothes, hurried beside him up to the house.

His inquiries soon elicited the additional facts that the french doors had been found open, and that the butler's overcoat and slippers were missing from their accustomed places.

The truth of Grenoble's midnight venture became obvious. The butler had had his suspicions aroused by something which he saw or heard. He had gone out to investigate, and had been prevented from returning.

The gardener's melodramatic suggestion that the lake should be dragged at once was not well received by Sexton Blake.

"Don't you see," he said to the man, "that you are alarming your mistress unnecessarily? Get back to your potting-shed, and leave me to find Grenoble."

He called the bloodhound, Pedro, who was engaged in burying a bone, without any respect for the gardener's hyacinths,

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and, giving him a sniff at the butler's waistcoat, set him to the trail.

The dog walked straight out of the house, round the wing which had been sacred to Professor Lanesmere, and stopped dead in front of what appeared to be a blank wall.

Blake followed.

"What window is this?" he asked, lifting a heavy curtain of tangled ivy which effectively hid the cracked and grimy panes. "Which room does it lead to?"

Then, as no answer was forthcoming, he prised open the sash and threw his leg over the sill.

It was a small bare room containing a furnace and a number of crucibles. On the floor lay the figure of a man—Grenoble, insensible or dead.

"Grenoble is here," he said, returning to the window. "You had better go away, Miss Lanesmere. We are going to get him out."

"I will," promised the girl, who had arrived unseen. "But tell me—I must know! Is he dead?"

"I don't know," said Blake. "I don't think so. We must hope for the best."

They carried the unfortunate butler into his bed-room, and Blake made a brief examination.

"No," he diagnosed at length. "He is not dead, and I don't think he will die. He is suffering, however, from concussion of the brain. He has received a heavy blow. We cannot expect a return to consciousness for some hours, possibly days. Keep him without nourishment, and get ice for his head. You and I, Tinker, will watch him turn and turn about. If he becomes delirious, we must take careful note of what he says. He knows something, and what he knows—unless I am much mistaken—may be of inestimable value to us—and to others."

An hour later, Tinker, who had been taking the first watch, handed his master a slip of paper on which was written shorthand notes of the disconnected phrases which had come from Grenoble's pallid lips.

Blake read every word twice.

"Formula — Starlight — albino — Detmold," he picked upon. "Those four words are charged with meaning. The rest is nonsense. What arouses my curiosity most at present is the word Detmold. Who, or what, is Detmold?"

He went to the telephone.

"Service," he murmured, "2A."

2A was the great mind of the British Secret Service. His precise, well-ordered brain contained information about every one and everything.

"I am number eleven," said Blake, when the quiet "Yes" at the other end of the line told him that he was through. "I want to ask a question. Who, or what, is Detmold?"

"The name of a person?"

"I think so. I don't know."

"Ah! There's a Detmold on the China Station. Gambler. Clever, but dissolute. There's a Detmold on the Admiralty. Designer, inventor. Extreme Socialist, but a patriot. Sound, I think. Then—ah, yes, there is that thorn in our side, Herr Detmold, of the German Embassy, Secret Royalist. Brilliant intriguer. Unscrupulous. Then there's Number Sixty-Seven of ours. Louise Detmold, works with Julia Fortune. Above suspicion, I think. Have I found you what you want?"

"Not sure. Think so!" snapped Blake. And then:

"See here, No. 2A, put three men on the German Embassy. Our old friend Zenith—Zenith the Albino—may visit there. He will come disguised, of course, but he must not get in. I will

repeat that." And the detective repeated every word. "It is vital," he resumed, "that Zenith does not enter. Can't tell you more. Working in the dark myself. Will you do it?"

He waited only to hear the quiet: "Yes" at the other end, before snatching cap and overcoat from a hall-hatstand and shouting for Tinker.

"Miss Lanesmere," he said to his hostess, who met him on his way out. "I am sorry, but I must have Tinker. You must get a trained nurse for Grenoble, and, in the meantime, your housekeeper must manage. Further, I must ask you to lend me your car. It is, if my conclusions are right, a matter of international importance."

"I will," said the girl readily, "of course. Do as you like with it."

"But," she continued, "before you leave, tell me one thing. Is my—Mr. Ross—" She swayed. "I can't say it."

"Is your sweetheart guilty of wilful murder?" said Blake. "That is the question, is it not? The answer is in the negative."

"If you can prove that," flared the girl, "why let him stay in prison?"

"I did not say that I could prove that," returned Blake mildly. "There is only one man can prove it."

"And who is he?"

"Derek Ross himself."

The detectives hurried out, and the well-known engine noises of her late father's car came to her ears.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER. In at the Death.



DURING the earlier part of that eventful journey, Tinker was oppressed with forebodings.

Of Blake's discoveries he knew little; but the detective's few words had informed him that the situation was very grave, and he did not need telling that they were in pursuit of their old enemy

Zenith, and that Zenith had had a big start.

As was to be expected, they saw nothing of the people they pursued; but, at the top of a steep hill just outside Heathfield, they came upon a couple of mechanics who were acting as a breakdown gang.

"Hallo!" said Blake, pulling up. "I am a detective. I am following a man with pink eyes, driving a car with Dunlop Magnum tyres. Your tow has Dunlop Magnum tyres, I see. Now, what about the man?"

"Down in the village, sir," they told him. "Came in three hours ago, and been raising heaven and earth to get a car ever since. If you're quick, you'll find him there."

Their last words were almost lost in a rush of wind, as Blake opened out on the down-grade.

He certainly lost no time.

Tinker was an excellent driver himself, and his nerves were cast-iron; but he could not help wondering what would happen if they hit anything on the way down the hill.

At the bottom was an arched bridge, where a shallow stream crossed the roadway. Blake's car took-off from the upslope, and cleared thirty or forty feet before touching ground. In less than one minute, with a terrific grinding of brakes, they drew up before a small country inn which boasted a garage alongside.

Tinker knew exactly what was expected of him.

Before the car had stopped, he jumped clear and ran into the garage.

A man who was cleaning a derelict motor-bicycle turned at his entrance.

"Man with pink eyes," said the lad rapidly. "Here ten minutes ago."

"Ten seconds," said the man slowly.

He walked to the open door, and pointed to a yellow ribbon of road climbing a distant hill.

"There's your man," he said, and pointed out a dark black spot which climbed the hill as a fly climbs a wall. "Knows how to drive a car, that chap, even—"

Tinker waved Blake to get under way, and ran for his life to get on the car as it gathered speed.

It was still early morning, and the roads were comparatively empty. This was fortunate, for nothing would have persuaded Blake to slow down. Happening to lift his head clear of the wind-screen, Tinker had his cheeks distended by the air-pressure caused by the air entering his slightly opened mouth.

"Nearly sixty," he said to himself. "My hat, we are moving! If Zenith can do better than this, he's on a good bus."

It was ten minutes before they sighted the fugitive car again, and then it was obvious that theirs was the speedier vehicle.

"We've got 'em whacked!" Tinker shouted.

But Blake merely nodded. Zenith was not an easy man to round up, and the issues of this struggle were so tremendous that he dared not triumph yet.

The fugitive car had disappeared behind a hill-top, and when they arrived thereat it had vanished.

They could see over a mile of road. It seemed impossible that Zenith should have covered a mile in that short time. Yet there seemed to be no turning, and the fugitive car could not turn into a balloon and fly over the deep chalk cutting which formed its sides.

Taking risks, as he had all along, Blake continued at the same great speed. If the car was still in front of them they would soon find out. If not—well, they would find out just the same. They dropped into the valley like a swift bird driven before the wind.

And then, when it was too late to slacken speed, they discovered that the road had a concealed turning on the other slope, and that Zenith had pulled his car into the same.

More than that, he had used the steep slope of the down to gain a speed almost as great as their own, and was driving towards them.

It was both murderous and suicidal.

If he achieved his intention, which, plainly enough, was to effect a collision, it was difficult to see how any of the occupants of the two cars could escape with their lives.

Blake tipped the wind-screen, and handed Tinker an automatic.

"Fire at Zenith's hands," he instructed.

Needless to say, Zenith was at the wheel of the oncoming car, and his head was enveloped in the casque belonging to the strange armour he had worn when he crossed Lanesmere's lawn.

His long, muscular fingers clutched

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upon the leathern-covered rim of his driving-wheel, were just visible, and the lad staked the lives of them both on a hit.

Bang!

His first shot ripped the leather of the rim.

The cars were within fifty yards.

Bang!

The second was a bull.

Despite himself, Zenith wrenched the wheel sideways. His car disappeared behind their near-side wing, and their own vehicle rushed two hundred yards further on, before Blake could pull up.

Tinker looked back just in time to see the spill.

Zenith's car mounted the chalk slope beside the road, hit the hedge at the top, turned over, very slowly, as it seemed, and rolled over and over back to the road.

"Good heavens!" muttered the lad, appalled at the tragedy.

"That was a good shot," said Blake. "Get back quickly."

He sprang from the car, and, followed by Tinker, ran back to where the wreck was lying.

It had already burst into flames. Near by, badly hurt, was the man called Starlight.

Of Zenith the Albino there was no sign.

Together they managed to lever the burning coachwork clear of the road, but did not find what they fully expected—the mutilated body of the master-crook.

Incredible as it was, Zenith had survived and made his get-away in the few seconds when their attention had been distracted.

"Get this man to our car," said Blake, "and drop him at a hospital. After that, drive full speed to Whitehall, see 2A, and arrange for a watch on the embassy he knows about. At all costs, Zenith and Detmold must be prevented from meeting."

"And what about you, guv'nor?"

"I'm following Zenith," said Blake, and climbed the chalk slope towards the hedge.

The trail was easy.

First a trace of blood upon the thick-set hedge—probably caused by Zenith's damaged fingers—then the tracks of his narrow boot upon the soft ground, limping.

Half-way across the first meadow was a chalk-pit, and near that a kiln, one of those ill-constructed but sufficiently effective appliances which are used by anyone who wishes to burn lime under royalty of the landowner.

Zenith's tracks led to the kiln, and in the heated darkness of the gallery surrounding the furnace, Blake found him.

More ghastly than ever, and with the fingers of his left hand bound in a blood-soaked handkerchief, the crook was standing with his back against an abutment. Apparently he could go no further. He was a rat—no, not a rat, a tiger—caught in a trap.

But he was ready, as ever, with his brilliant, mirthless smile.

"I always supposed," he murmured, "that you, my very dear Sexton Blake, would be in at the death. And so it is!"

Blake watched him closely.

As the reader will remember, he had given his automatic to Tinker, and was now unarmed. If Zenith was possessed of any sort of firearm, Blake's position was perilous indeed.

"What I want, and what I am going to have," he said slowly, "is the formula which you stole from Lanesmere House. After that, we will settle accounts, if you please!"

"I do please," replied the albino. "I have it here." And he touched his breast. "It goes with me into the quicklime—with me—and you!"

With his astonishing quickness, he whipped out a small pocket-pistol and fired—twice.

Both bullets hit Blake in the breast.

The albino was a perfect shot with a pistol. At that range he could have hit any button on Blake's coat a dozen times in succession.

"Farewell, Blake!" he said. "I take you with me to the Land of Shadows. There is a saying that 'to know is to forgive.' I wonder whether, when, among the dead, all knowledge is yours, you will find it in your heart to forgive?"

"That," said Blake, "I hope not to discover for some considerable time."

"But," said the albino, astonished, "I shot you twice through the body. Are you made of iron?"

"No," returned Blake; "but my waistcoat is."

He drew back his jacket and revealed a corselet of plate-armour.

"You will now perceive," continued Blake, "that Lanesmere made not one but two sets of this wonderful bullet-proof armour. For several days I have been wearing the corselet of the second set beneath my clothes. For the rest, that pistol of yours is double-barrelled. Both barrels are empty. You are my prisoner."

"If that is the case," challenged the albino, "come and take me."

He turned and disappeared.

Following him, the detective discovered that the kiln had a second opening immediately behind where the crook had been standing, and that Zenith was again awaiting him, this time on the brink of the chalk-pit, where it dropped forty feet sheer into opaque water, like a painted smear on the green of the lush grass below.

"You will perceive," continued Zenith, "that I am resigned to die, but resolved that you shall come with me. I know you. You will not shrink from attacking me here. I am not in great fettle just now—broken ribs, or something—but I cannot see how you can avoid joining my sensational double-dive into that small patch of water."

"If the water is deep we shall drown—if it is shallow we shall smash. There is nothing so consoling as a certainty."

"As for the formula, those who find our bodies will not understand it. The secret will die with you and me—the men who had brains enough to suspect its existence."

He took a half-sheet of notepaper from his pocket.

"Here it is," he gibed, "the only copy in the world. Come and get it!"

In one matter the albino was right. Blake did not hesitate to attack.

But he did it with all the circumspection in his power. To die with Zenith—that arch-enemy of society—was doubtless an heroic death, a dramatic finish to his career; but he had an idea that it would be finer to collar Zenith and go on living.

He walked slowly to within hitting distance, and drove in a quick, hard lead with the left.

It was not with the deliberate object of knocking the albino backwards to his doom, although even such an idea might have been pardoned, in the circumstances.

Blake's idea was: "The albino will throw up his right arm to guard; I shall snatch at his wrist and draw him away from the brink."

But Blake knew the albino well

enough to expect a counter-move equally dangerous.

And he wasn't disappointed.

Instead of guarding, the albino ducked. The weight behind Blake's punch brought him forward, and Zenith wound his sinewy arms around the detective's body.

For an eternity of seconds they reeled on the extreme edge of the pit. Then Blake's weight began to tell, and, although he could not loosen the albino's clasp, he gained a foot or two towards safety.

Blake was very near triumph then. Zenith, injured and tired out, might perhaps have been captured and got to a prison.

But Fate, perversely kind to the malefactor, took a sudden and unexpected part in the battle. The under-cut cliff of chalk failed under their moving weight. They knew that they were falling. Blake heard Zenith laugh. And then—oblivion.

Zenith came to himself within a wood of pine-trees.

He was alone and standing on his feet against a tree. His clothing was drenched and chalky. He was shivering with cold.

"Where is the pit?" he questioned of himself. "Where is Sexton Blake? How did I get here?"

The pit was, if he had known it, only a hundred yards beyond the pine-wood. Sexton Blake lay on the edge of it, half in and half out of the water. The albino had staggered into the wood while yet half-conscious, his superb vitality triumphing over his exhaustion.

"If," said Zenith at length, "I am still alive"—a fact of which he was not quite certain—"I will get along to Detmold, sell him the formula, and lose myself in South America for a month or two. That is," he continued slowly, "if I can get to Detmold."

He moved away from the tree, and instantly fell in a heap.

"This won't do," he muttered. "If I fall about too much I shall get one of my broken ribs through a lung."

He broke open a waterproof packet of waxed paper. It contained two cigars rank with opium and a number of fuses. Then, lying flat on his back, and staring with distended pupils at the blue sky, he smoked slowly.

Little by little the world took on an unearthly beauty. The pain he had suffered from fingers, side, and head was replaced by comfort and consciousness of power. The pine-needles were rose-petals and the air was wine.

Later he would pay for this by a mood of black depression, as a doper always must pay, and with interest. But now the drug was doing its work. He was filled by new vigour of body and brain.

He rose after a while, walked steadily out of the wood, and found a man on the far side hoeing turnips.

"I have fallen in a pond," he explained, "and I want a gentleman in London to send a car for me—a car and other things. If you will go down to the village and send a wire for me I will give you a pound."

The man agreed willingly, and, tearing a dry page from his notebook, Zenith scribbled:

"Have got formula (stop) send car and gear as arranged (stop) asleep bracken top, Heathfield Hill."

This telegraphic message he addressed to Charles Detmold, at a well-known London club. Then, taking the risk that the wire would reach its destination, he turned across the fields towards Heathfield.

It might be that the messenger would fail him, or that, instead of Detmold's agent, a couple of policemen would keep the appointment so made. He risked that. There was no alternative.

At the top of Heathfield Hill there was another small wood, filled with bracken and heather. He had noticed it when his car broke down earlier in the day.

Once there he smoked the second cigar, and allowed the opium to have its way with his tired brain.

The butt of the cigar, fallen from his nerveless mouth, sent a trickle of odorous smoke through the green fronds of his earthy bed. The sun climbed high above the trees. The tired and wounded body of the albino remained immobile, his soul wandered in the Elysian Fields.

THE NINTH CHAPTER. "The Fate of Nations."



EARLY in the afternoon of that same day a large car came from the direction of Charing Cross, and halted before a certain foreign Embassy near the Duke of York's steps, Westminster.

From the car descended an old gentleman, so bent and enfeebled that he had to use a stick to support his faltering steps.

Two quietly-dressed men, who were standing near the gate, stepped forward to bar his way. But the chauffeur and the footman, both big men, opposed their intention.

A scuffle took place, during which two more strangers seized the old gentleman by the elbows and hurried him aside.

Instantly from nowhere, as it seemed, more quietly-dressed and purposeful men surrounded him, so that the two or three manservants who had run out from the house clearly saw that rescue of the old man was out of the question.

While matters stood thus, the open car waiting forlornly before the open door, while the servants from the empty hall harassed the strangers who seemed bent upon questioning the old gentleman, a young man, with the dark skin and tinted glasses of a Hindoo student, stepped out of the apparently empty car and walked slowly into the house.

Whereat one of the strangers said a single word—it was not a polite word—the remainder of the quietly-dressed men looked in the same direction, and the old gentleman found himself at liberty to go where he pleased without further question.

No. 2A had some good men on his staff, but Zenith the Albino was more than a match for them.

The Hindoo student, who, as the reader will conjecture, was Zenith himself, walked up the broad stairs, and, without ceremony, entered a large room on the first floor.

The tall, blonde man who turned at his entry was Detmold, whom Zenith had last met at dinner when the albino had so narrowly escaped arrest.

"Well," he snapped impatiently, "have you got it?"

"A little less urgency, if you don't mind," drawled Zenith, with characteristic impudence. "I am tired."

"But you must tell me. I can't wait. Ach, himmel, on it depends the fate of nations!"



The manservant crumpled the formula into a ball, and tossed it from the open window. Then he ducked quickly as Detmold's bullet smashed a picture which occupied the place where his head had been. (Chapter 9.)

"I know," returned Zenith wearily. "But what is the fate of nations to me? I am tired, I tell you."

Detmold folded his arms in an attitude which he supposed to be Napoleonic.

"You shall answer me now! You will. Yes. Because I demand it. The metal has been tried. It is all that you claim. In these few hours it has been analysed, and so far, as you predicted, we have failed to make it. There is some subtle alloy which eludes us. It is necessary that we have the formula. Have you got it?"

"Remain calm," said Zenith.

"I am calm—perfectly calm."

"Certainly you are. I only ask that you remain so. Give me a cigarette."

Instead of complying, the official pressed a hidden button, and a big, wooden-faced manservant walked into the room.

Zenith smiled as one smiles at the bravado of a child.

"Listen to me!" he said. "I have got the formula."

"Ah!"

"But if your agreeable watchdog here hits me over the head your chance of finding it is nil."

"Oh, yes, I am quite prepared to agree that you know all about cryptograms and secret hiding-places; but, believe me, I, on my side, am not without knowledge. Much better call him off, Detmold, and trade with me like the tradesman that you are."

Detmold thought quickly. He believed that, if they searched Zenith, they would come upon the formula. But they might not. Zenith was a very clever individual, and he did not bluff with an empty gun. The money—the few thousands which he would have to pay for the secret—was as nothing to its value.

He abandoned his aggression and became fawning in his politeness.

Of course, Monsieur Zenith must not be hurried. Naturally, monsieur was tired. Here was the cigarette. He hoped that the brand would meet with his esteemed guest's approval.

"Thanks!"

Zenith smoked appreciatively for a few moments. Then:

"I don't think we fixed a price," said the master-crook.

"No."

Detmold opened a safe and withdrew a wad of notes—British Treasury notes of small denomination. There were two bundles of five hundred pounds each.

"We're not going to quibble about a halfpenny," he said. "Here is one thousand pounds English."

Zenith stuffed the thick bundles into his jacket pockets.

"Thanks," he said, "that will do for ready money. Now give me an order for twenty thousand on the Credit Lyonnais."

"Twenty thousand?"

"Yes. I am glad you are not going to quibble. I was afraid you were; and, after all, it is only a waste of time."

"But twenty thousand! My dear sir, my good sir—"

"I am afraid I cannot claim to be good," said the albino, "but I am certainly dear. Also I would like to catch the five o'clock train to Southampton."

"In talking so glibly about Southampton," said Detmold, anxious to change the subject and give himself time to think, "you are reckoning without a mutual friend of ours, named Sexton Blake."

"I am," replied Zenith, "and for a very good reason. I have grounds for believing that Mr. Blake—may his soul rest!—is lying at or near the bottom of

THE UNION JACK 2

Readers Who
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anxiously for the second appearance of "The Black Eagle" will have to wait no longer than next Thursday.

The first—and, so far, only—story in which this unique figure has featured was published about a year ago. This strange character must have made a lasting impression, for since that time many "U. J." readers have written asking for another Black Eagle yarn.

Well, we are always out to oblige, and here it is. Book it up now. Ask for a specially reserved copy for next Thursday. We haven't the space here to hint at the plot of it, but when we say it's even better than the first yarn, that's all you'll want to know.

It is a typical tip-topper—the usual "U. J." fare.

Look out for this cover.

The SECRET of
THE BOTTLE!

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An hour or so afterwards he personally escorted the albino to an exit from the embassy of which even the police were unaware.

Number 2A expressed his approbation in characteristic fashion.

"Is that Number Eleven?" he asked over the telephone, and being told that it was Number Eleven—known to the world as Sexton Blake, he said:

"I am satisfied, Number Eleven."

And that was all.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.
The How and Why.

SHORTLY after his arrest, Derek Ross was brought before a magistrate and remanded.

During the time which elapsed between his remand and the trial, a certain amount of friction was noticeable between Sexton Blake and Inspector Coutts.

For one thing, the counsel for the defence

would not allow his client to see the private detective, and Blake, very rightly, attributed this fact to the influence of the inspector.

As Blake had said, their points of view were entirely different. The inspector argued:

"Ross is guilty. It is my business to prove it, and to prevent anybody proving otherwise."

Blake was merely out for justice.

As Sylvia Lanesmere, dressed in black and heavily veiled, listened to the case for the prosecution on the first day of the trial, she became almost convinced of her lover's guilt.

It was positively and completely damning. The law agents for the Crown do not make statements incapable of proof—not in a court of law, anyway—and the facts which were arraigned against Ross seemed incapable of any explanation which would save his neck.

Professor Lanesmere had forbidden Ross' marriage with Sylvia. There had been more than one quarrel between the two men, with regard to the matter. Ross was a hot-tempered Irishman, and he had uttered vague threats, or statements which could be construed into threats, several times over. The Crown had witnesses to prove it.

In face of the fact that Ross had deposed to being at his house the whole night of the crime, the Crown had witnesses to prove that he was out for several hours on that night.

Inspector Coutts would prove that a thumb-print which was found upon the barrel of the weapon which fired the fatal shot was the thumb-print of the prisoner, and that a cast taken of a footprint found near the body was exactly similar to that of a footprint made by one of Ross' boots.

As these fateful revelations were made one by one Sylvia divined that public opinion was turning against her lover. She could almost hear the vultures in the public parts of the court whisper one to the other:

"He will hang! He will hang!"

But hers was a faithful heart. To her faith in her lover was joined faith in the great and genial personality of Sexton Blake.

Blake was there in the court. He had been given a seat among the witnesses for the defence, and her hopes were

an excessively unpleasant chalk-pit in Sussex."

"Dead? Sexton Blake dead?"

"I believe so. Necessity, alas! knows no law, and I fear I must add that I hope so. But we are wandering from the more agreeable subject of my—ah—fee."

He turned, and, observing that the wooden-faced manservant was still in the room, added:

"Would you be so good as to call off your dog? I have taken a dislike to him."

Detmold did not comply. He could imagine circumstances where his servant would be extremely useful.

"But twenty thousand," he said. "Come now, I will give you ten. Absolutely my last offer. If that is not good enough, return my thousand pounds and sell your secret elsewhere—if the police give you a chance."

Zenith sighed. This childish haggling was so much waste of time.

"My price is twenty thousand," he repeated, "at present. In sixty seconds it will be twenty-five thousand; and, just in case you have any idea of handing me over to the police, remember how much I know."

"I agree to your terms," said Detmold quickly, recollecting several illegal transactions of his in which Zenith had a hand.

"Good! Give me the order on the Credit Lyonnais. If it is dishonoured, I will see to it that you are dishonoured, also."

Detmold who had really done an excellent stroke of business, wrote and signed the required order, endorsing it with a code word which would ensure instant payment to bearer.

"And now," he said, "the formula."

Zenith drew a half-sheet of notepaper from his pocket. His hint of a cipher had been so much bluff.

"Here it is," he said. "I have played straight with you. It is the only copy in existence, and no living person has seen it but myself. It is, as you perceive, too complicated to be memorised."

He placed the formula before Det-

mold; but as the other extended his hand to pick it up, the manservant anticipated him.

"What does this mean?" said Detmold sharply.

"It means," said the manservant, "that the deal is off."

He crumpled the formula into a ball and tossed it from the open window. One of the quietly dressed men who were waiting below caught it and hurried away.

Then the manservant ducked quickly. Detmold's bullet smashed a picture which occupied the place where his head had been, and then Detmold's revolver followed the formula.

"You see," explained the man, "Zenith's ruse got him into this building all right; but it also got your servants out of the building. We collared one, and I did a little quick-change work in one of our cars which has been fitted with a make-up set. I am Sexton Blake, very much at your service."

He turned to the albino.

"As," he said, "I am not possessed of an extradition warrant, I am not able to deal with you as I should like. You will, of course, have realised that, being in a foreign Embassy, you are supposed to be on foreign soil. But the formula is on its way to those who will look after it."

Zenith was never more worthy of admiration than in defeat. And now he was more than defeated. He was ruined.

Nevertheless, he complimented Sexton Blake with a trifle of added elegance to make his compliment convincing.

"My very dear Blake," he enthused, "I cannot tell you how much I admire your readiness. That impersonation was a masterpiece. Certainly, I did not know the original, but our friend here was most utterly deceived. Weren't you, Detmold? Say yes, like a man."

But Detmold was no sportsman. He took it badly.

Had he dared he would forthwith have betrayed Zenith to the police; but Zenith knew too much; he did not dare.

centred upon him and his revelations. If he failed her—

"But," she told herself illogically, "he won't. He won't!"

The counsel for the defence was a wise man. He might have opened with a telling speech of several hours, and made a great show of building up his client's defence. Instead he merely declared that there were two sides to every question, and called his first witness, Mr. Sexton Blake.

Sexton Blake was sworn; and, intently watched by all the crowded court, who realised by now that something out of the ordinary was coming, went through the usual ritual.

He was a private detective of Baker Street, London. He had been engaged by Miss Sylvia Lanesmere to investigate the circumstances of her father's death. He had visited Lanesmere House on such-and-such a date. The result of his investigation was as follows.

Here, being invited to tell the story in his own way, he dropped into narrative, and continued:

"At first, I agreed with my friend, Inspector Courtts, that Ross was guilty of murder. The evidence seemed overwhelming. Then I was fortunate enough to find a rifle-bullet near the scene of the tragedy, such a bullet as might have been fired by the weapon produced in the court here, and it was telescoped in a very peculiar fashion."

Here Blake produced the bullet, which was handed to the judge.

"I knew that the bullet which killed Professor Lanesmere had left a perfectly clean wound, both on entering and leaving the skull of the victim, and it seemed to me that, if this was indeed the fatal bullet, its condition needed explanation.

"I had to admit that there were explanations consistent with the theories of the police—for instance, after passing through the head of the victim, this bullet might have hit a stone. There was no stone visible in its neighbourhood, but, still, it was a possibility.

"Then Miss Lanesmere told me that she had been frightened by the appearance of a man in complete armour, whom she took to be the ghost of her late father, for the reason that he possessed such a suit of armour, and had been known to assume it.

"This was a second fact requiring explanation.

"On that same night, at about eleven-thirty, I myself saw the man in steel crossing her lawn, and my assistant, being somewhat rattled"—here the detective smiled at a well-bred lad in the body of the court—"fired at him with an automatic pistol.

"He fired two bullets, which I have here, and which I should like to submit for the attention of the court. They are telescoped exactly as is the one previously produced, a very interesting circumstance.

"As the wearer of this singular costume had taken pains, by painting his armour with phosphorescent pigment, and by performing a clever painting trick, which consisted, I believe, in quickly wrapping his luminous armour in a dark cloth, to persuade observers that there was something supernatural in his appearance; as, moreover, he had run a considerable risk to visit Lanesmere House, it appeared to me that his business there must be both felonious and important.

"On the next morning we found that Grenoble, the butler, had disappeared; and, tracking him by means of a bloodhound, we found him seriously injured in a small room.

"This small room was an annexe of

which even Miss Lanesmere did not know the existence. We have since discovered that it communicated with Professor Lanesmere's study by means of a secret door, and that the professor had used it as a forge.

"The injured man, in his delirium, uttered words which gave me the clue to these extraordinary happenings. The words were three.

"First, there was the name of a man which I will ask permission to write down; second, the name of Zenith—generally known as Zenith the Albino—a notorious criminal, still, unhappily, at large; and, third, the word 'formula.'

"It must be remembered that the professor specialised in ballistics and metallurgy, and that he had had in his possession a suit of armour which, as I can witness, and as I have since proved, was not penetrable by a bullet.

"I concluded, I think with justice, that the man who took such risks to visit Lanesmere House, and was, as Grenoble will testify, the criminal Zenith, came to secure the formula for bullet-proof metal.

"This, my lord, is a theory which the court must accept or reject. It is, I fear, incapable of proof.

LOOK OUT FOR THESE SOON!—

CONFEDERATION

George Marsden

PLUMMER

Mlle. YVONNE

Other "old favourites" are being arranged for in accordance with readers' expressed wishes.

"Upon this, my mind reverted to the bullet which I had found at the scene of the crime. It was crushed as if it had come in contact with bullet-proof armour.

"Was the professor wearing bullet-proof armour at the time of his death; and, if so, how should one account for his destruction?

"I will ask you to remember the nature of his injury. The bullet entered the eye, and passed out at the back of the skull.

"It struck me as a possibility that the unfortunate man had omitted to drop his visor, and that the neglect had cost him his life.

"As for evidence that the professor was wearing the armour at the moment of his death, Inspector Courtts will tell us that, in taking casts of the footmarks about the body, he came upon some of a strange shape, and which, as I have since convinced him, belonged to the said armour.

"From this point I theorise; but I will ask the court to bear with me.

"Professor Lanesmere had invented bullet-proof armour, but he had not performed the final and most convincing

test of its resistance—to wear it under rifle-fire.

"He was prepared to wear the armour himself, but he needed a confederate to fire the shot.

"What more natural than to approach the man on whom he had greatest claim—the man who desired to be his son-in-law?

"He approaches Ross, and arranges a secret meeting, late at night, under sworn secrecy. He is to cross a certain field, and the youth is to fire at him with a rifle.

"The experiment is tried, the weapon is fired, and the professor falls.

"Ross approaches, and finds, to his horror, that he has killed his man.

"He remembers angry words which have passed between them, and, seeing the danger of his position, gives way to panic. He returns home, and, when questioned, denies that he has been absent therefrom.

"In the meantime, the suit of bullet-proof armour has been taken from the professor's body, and the one circumstance which might have saved Ross is lacking.

"I imagine that the professor was not alone. That, secretly, certain representatives of a foreign Government were witnesses of the test, and that it was these people who removed the armour. But of this I have no evidence. I can only assume that the flattened bullet dropped out unnoticed from the inside of the helmet when the armour was taken off the body.

"Representatives of the British Armaments Committee will tell the court that the armour was worthless—except as a curiosity—without the formula for its manufacture, and this will account for the further visits to Lanesmere House which took place, and which furnished a great deal of the information I have been able to give."

At this point, the judge asked a question—a question which was in the minds of all the court:

"I should like you to tell us, Mr. Blake, unless the question is indiscreet, and as a matter of national interest, whether the formula is in the possession of this country."

"It is, my lord."

"That is good news, Mr. Blake!"

The private detective was cross-examined by the counsel for the prosecution, and stood down.

Thereafter, the counsel for the defence made his delayed speech, and ended by asking Derek Ross to go into the witness-box.

It appeared that Professor Lanesmere had induced the young man, who was a Catholic, to swear upon Holy Writ that he would divulge nothing of the circumstances of the test, and that it was this oath which had caused him to fear an inquiry.

Otherwise, Ross's evidence agreed entirely with that of Sexton Blake.

Two days later, at the conclusion of that thorough sifting which is a necessity of English law, Ross stepped, a free man, into a car which was awaiting him.

Inside the car was Sylvia Lanesmere, and their last act, before driving away, was to shake hands with Sexton Blake and Tinker.

"Don't forget," said the young man, "we expect you both at the wedding—and may Heaven bless you both!"

"I shan't forget, either," whispered Sylvia Lanesmere, "that Sexton Blake has given you to me!"

Which was no more than the truth.

THE END.



(Continued from page 2.)

A moment later the motor-boat vanished with a gurgling squelch beneath the still waters of the lagoon.

Dripping from head to foot, the four reached the cliff base, and, a little breathless after their swim, dragged themselves up on to it. Here, after a short halt for discussion, they began to pick their way cautiously along in the shadow of the high bluffs.

While the yacht's anchor rattled noisily out, they clambered slowly over rocks and down through water-washed gullies, finding their way with difficulty in the semi-darkness, and at last reached what seemed to be a jutting-off point in the narrow ledge that was their pathway.

A boat had put off from the Semiramis, and was rowing swiftly in to the lee of cliffs. The point for which it was making lay but a short distance ahead of the fugitives, and, as a matter of precaution, Forrest halted his friends.

"Wait!" he counselled, eyeing the boat keenly. "If we move about we may be spotted. Every sound carries under these cliffs; they give off echoes like a fountain squirts water. Besides, when we see where those blighters land, and what they do when they get ashore, it may give us a pointer as to our own movements. I—"

He broke off suddenly in amazement as his gaze changed towards the shelf of rock for which the Semiramis' boat was steering.

It was the same ledge as that whence the motor-boat had set out. Projecting farther from under the cliffs, it was bathed in moonlight.

On it stood a giant figure, signalling frantically to the oncoming ship's boat.

Yet another miracle had happened that night!

The form on the rock shelf was Nixon Scurr!

There was no mistaking the gross outlines of his great frame.

Yes, by a miracle the millionaire had escaped death. He still lived, and his salvation spelt doom to the fugitives.

This Forrest realised in the twinkling of an eye, and the thought sent a cold shiver down his spine.

But outwardly he gave no sign.

"I shouldn't wonder if that hasn't torn it," was his phlegmatic observation.

Presently the boat drew in at the natural quayside, an officer landed, and Scurr staggered up to him. The two figures showed up plainly in the moonlight, and the fugitives could see how Scurr supported himself on the other's shoulders.

For a time the two stood talking, and as they talked, Scurr seemed to recover himself. His old dynamic brutality returned, his old force of will, his old masterfulness.

Before long his hand was withdrawn from the officer's shoulder; the millionaire required it to gesticulate, to thump it emphatically into the open palm of his left hand.

Scurr was giving orders—peremptory orders. That they had to do with the fugitives, and with an attempt to cope with the situation inland there could be no doubt.

Presently the officer turned, signed to his men, and stepped down into the boat. Scurr followed, whereupon two of the crew sprang forward to assist him. But the millionaire waved them off with a peremptory gesture, and clambered down by himself. A moment later, and it was pulling back to the yacht.

"Gone to get reinforcements," Forrest observed, watching the little craft as it was rowed swiftly back across the moonlit lagoon. "But they won't be long coming. We've got to jump to it!"

There could be little doubt as to what Scurr meant to do. Uncertain how things fared with his hirelings inland, he was fetching a strongly-armed party from the yacht.

Then he would march across the cliffs, taking some path known only to himself and his men, fall upon the rebels, and deal with them after the savage way of his nature.

That Scurr would show scant mercy was almost a foregone conclusion. What did it matter to him if he slaughtered the unfortunates whom he had caused to be dragged to the island? He could easily get more by the same methods, and a harsh example would serve his future purposes well.

Forrest and his companions, anxiously searching for some way back over the cliffs, shivered with apprehension, though rather for the fate of their fellow "slaves" than for themselves.

"Our only chance is to get back to the bungalow town, or what is left of it," Forrest declared. "If we can rally the others we may be able to put up a fight against Scurr and his crowd. If the fellows will only fight, if they'll only take our orders, we may be able to drive Scurr from the island. Then it won't take me long to get that wireless going, and we'll have a cruiser here in a few days."

"Yes, but first we've got to find the path!" Joan objected.

"Well, there must be one," Forrest answered. "We can't go back the way we came, for the bridge is broken. And that tunnel under the cliffs won't do—for one thing there won't be enough diving-suits."

"We'd have to go through it one at a time, and that 'ud take too long. And then there's another thing. We don't know who'd be waiting to receive us at the other end. It 'ud be a trap—and one I'm not walking into."

"Perhaps Signor Dingley here, know something?" Curci suggested, turning to glance at the Cockney.

But Dingley was not very helpful.

He had never had anything to do with bringing prisoners or stores into the island, he said. He had heard of some hoist up the cliffs, and believed it lay to the farther end of the lagoon, but he could not be sure just where it lay, or how it worked.

In only one respect was he definite. There was a hoist of some kind, and Scurr had used it to bring in the heavier stores—a fact that was sufficiently obvious to Forrest, since neither the submerged tunnel nor the path across the cascade were under any circumstances possible for the transport of heavy stuff such as he had seen on the island—for example, the plant in the power-house.

But to find this hoist was more easily said than done.

The cliff base along the lagoon was long, and the shelf of rocks within the shadow of the steep was rough and broken at intervals.

Several times the party had to take to the water, conscious that when they did so they ran the risk of meeting sharks. But none of these creatures materialised, and at length the end of the shelf was reached in safety.

But while they hunted for the hoist of which Dingley had spoken, things were stirring aboard the yacht. Sounds of bustle and confusion with which the cliffs played strange tricks, echoed dully across the lagoon.

At times the thunder of the surf drowned everything; then, with unexpected suddenness, the roar of the reefs would vanish, to be replaced by utter silence, or by the noise of orders bawled aboard the Semiramis, or the rattle of hawser chains.

"Gosh alive!"

Dingley gave a sharp exclamation, and at the same time went plunging forward heavily on to his face.

"What's the matter?"

Forrest hurried forward anxiously, Curci at his heels.

"This—dern it!"

The Cockney struggled up, repressing a barrage of expletives with difficulty.

He held out a cable-end that, lying on the ground, had tripped him up in the uncertain light.

"Half a minute—"

Forrest caught hold of the cable, and, following its sinuous trail, found himself at the foot of the cliffs. But the cable went upwards into the air, vanishing in the gloom aloft where the engineer's eyes could not follow.

"The hoist!" He backed away, triumph in his eyes. "We've found it. This must be the place where Scurr hauls up his stuff."

"Sure!" Dingley gazed down at the cable with indignant eyes. "I come near to bustin' me blinkin' neck over the thing."

"Bother your neck!" Forrest considered the cable and its direction for a moment. "If it saves ours, it's more to the point, I reckon. Let's see—"

And he fumbled about in the semi-darkness, which, owing to some vagary of the cliffs, borrowed but little light from the moon.

"How the blazes do they wind this thing up?" he queried, after an instant.

"From the top, o' course!" Dingley answered; he was still aggrieved owing to his fall.

Forrest scanned the shelf quickly; then, satisfied that no winding-gear existed below, shrugged.

"I'll have to climb for it," he announced. "Stay here, you chaps—and you, too, Joan. I'll haul you up when I reach the top."

Since he had already divested himself of his jacket, further preparation was unnecessary. Catching hold of the steel cable, he lugged himself upwards, and, ascending laboriously, what of his wet clothes, presently vanished in the darkness overhead.

Below, the two men and the girl watched his dim figure disappear; then they turned to scan the yacht and the lagoon anxiously.

An alarming sight greeted their gaze.

Four boats had put off from the Semiramis, their launching unnoticed in the

excitement consequent upon Forrest's discovery.

Crammed with men, they were making straight for the point where the hoist lay!

A HERCULEAN TASK.



"THANK goodness!"

After what seemed time everlasting, Forrest finished his dizzy climb, and dragged himself breathless to the top of the cliffs.

He had gone up and ever up; it had looked as though the ascent would never end; as though the cable reached to the very sky itself.

Tiny steel strands, sticking out here and there, had cut his hands cruelly. The long thread of metal had swayed and rocked as he went up it, and sometimes his feet had touched the cliff face, at others he had swung crazily in mid-air.

But he had managed the climb, and this was all he thought of as he paused momentarily to recover his breath on the wind-swept cliff-top.

After a little, he looked downwards into the lagoon.

Four hundred feet, if it were an inch, that drop, he calculated. Some climb! And against time, too! Well, he'd done it, and that was all there was to it.

It did not occur to him to consider that few men could have achieved the ascent at all; and still fewer after so gruelling an experience as he had had that night.

But then, Forrest was innately modest, even to himself.

Leaving the brink, he looked around him hastily, saw some electrically-driven gear housed in a low shed, and tested it. But the motor refused to start. It was then that he remembered the cause.

The current was off from the power-station, and up to the present, as was now evident, Scurr's allies had not succeeded in restarting it.

The engineer smiled to himself. He recollected the havoc he had played with Scurr's switchboard. It would take an expert some time to get things functioning properly again.

All the same, the absence of "juice" was a nuisance, since it prevented him from running the winding gear. Still, the matter could not be helped now.

He could not have foreseen the present contingency when he set to work to mess up the plant; nor, if he had foreseen it, could he have acted otherwise than he had done, for back there at the power-house the main object in view had been to neutralise Scurr's death fence.

He quickly left the useless power-winch, and turned his attention to the possible existence of an auxiliary workable by hand. Probably there was such a thing; and, in point of fact, when he came to investigate, there was.

Carefully he inspected the hand-gear, seeing that the pawls were well greased and in order. Then, seizing upon the winch-lever, he ran a few yards of cable out of the drum.

Everything was in order, he found, so, without further ado, he sent the drum spinning, feeding cable outwards. Letting the drum run free, he went to the brink and watched while the long steel

rope went clattering noisily down the cliff-face.

It was not the same cable as that up which he had climbed. The power and hand winches were fitted, as was natural, with separate coils, and he now saw how well, after all, his plan to wreck the power-house had worked out.

It was inconceivable that Scurr's minions should have deliberately left that cable out loose, dangling to the shore below. Indeed, at the time of his ascent he had wondered how on earth the cable came to be there.

But now he saw the reason. Someone had been operating the winch at the moment when the power ceased; and, the winch run out, it was impossible to wind the cable in again for want of "juice."

So, but for the mess-up at the power-house, that cable would not have been there at all, his ascent would have been out of the question, and he would therefore not be standing here working any winch, hand or otherwise.

Consequently, he no longer regretted the immovability of the electric hoist. Everything had panned out for the best.

With a rattle the cable reached the end of its travel. Turning to the drum, he saw by a mark made on the steel thread-work that the wire had run out to its useful limit. So, making a funnel of his hands, he shouted with all his might to the trio below, telling them to hook on.

The noise, most likely, would reach the yacht, but that could not be helped. He dared not face another journey up the cable—an unavoidable sequel were he to descend and issue instructions to his friends at close quarters.

Human flesh and blood would not

(Continued on page 28.)

MUST BE WON! £500 MUST BE WON! REMARKABLE FOOTBALL OFFER.

Ten Results Only—No Goals Required—No Entrance Fee—Open to Scottish and Irish Readers.

Here you have a coupon containing **TEN** matches to be played on **SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13th**, and **£500** will be paid for the correct or most nearly correct forecast of the results of all these matches. All that competitors have to do is to strike out, **IN INK**, the names of the teams they think will lose. If, in the opinion of the competitor, any match, or matches, will be drawn, the names of both teams should be left untouched.

Coupons, which must **NOT** be enclosed in envelopes containing efforts in other competitions, must be addressed to:

FOOTBALL COMPETITION No. 2.

Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C. 4.

and must reach that address not later than **FIRST POST** on **FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 12th**.

RULES WHICH MUST BE STRICTLY ADHERED TO.

1. All forecasts must be made on coupons taken from this journal, or from any of the issues of the journals which contain the announcement of the competition.
2. Any alteration or mutilation of the coupon will disqualify the effort. When more than one effort is submitted coupons must not be pinned or in any other way fastened together.
3. If any match, or matches, on the coupon should be abandoned, or full time is not played for any reason, such match, or matches, will not be taken into consideration in the adjudication.
4. In the event of ties, the prize will be divided, but no competitor will be awarded more than one share of the prize.
5. No correspondence will be allowed, nor will interviews be granted.
6. The Editor reserves the right to disqualify any coupon for what, in his opinion, is good and sufficient reason, and it is a distinct condition of entry that the Editor's decision shall be accepted as final and legally binding in all matters concerning this competition.
7. All entries must be sent through the post, and any received after **FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 12th**, will be disqualified. No responsibility can be accepted for any effort, or efforts, lost, mislaid, or delayed. Proof of posting will not be accepted as proof of delivery. Unstamped or insufficiently stamped efforts will be refused.

This competition is run in conjunction with "Answers," "Family Journal," "Home Companion," "Home Stories," "Women's World," "Boys' Realm," "Football and Sports Favourite," "Sports Budget," "The Champion," and "All Sports Weekly."

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Football Competition No. 2.

Date of Matches, **SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13th, 1924.**

Closing Date, **FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 12th, 1924.**

BIRMINGHAM	v. CARDIFF CITY
BURNLEY	v. BLACKBURN RVRs.
LIVERPOOL	v. MANCHESTER CITY
NEWCASTLE UTD.	v. ARSENAL
CRYSTAL PALACE	v. HULL CITY
PORT VALE	v. MIDDLESBROUGH
MILLWALL	v. PLYMOUTH ARGYLE
SWANSEA TOWN	v. MERTHYR TOWN
ROCHDALE	v. DARLINGTON
SOUTHPORT	v. LINCOLN CITY

I enter Football Competition No. 2 in accordance with the Rules and Conditions as announced, and agree to accept the Editor's decision as final and legally binding.

Name

Address

2



(Continued from page 27.)

stand such a double strain, besides which, the time occupied by such tactics could not be spared. Things were far too dangerous for that.

A faint but answering hail came up on the night breeze. Cing's voice, the thought. They had heard, and would act for themselves.

A moment later the cable shook slightly; someone was tampering with the lower end. The trio were slinging themselves on to it.

Good!

He turned towards the winch-handle, about to commence hauling, when a sudden crackle of rifle-shots broke out in the "silent" lagoon below, and Forrest sprang to the cliff edge, where he peered down anxiously.

Four boats, evidently from the yacht, were close inshore. The rifle-fire came from them.

In his intentness upon the winch he had hitherto failed to mark their passage across the lagoon, but that they were firing at the trio on the rock-shelf he did not need to be told.

Another volley spluttered out beneath, and Forrest waited for no more. Springing to the winch, he flung himself upon the lever, bearing upon it with all his might.

He must take a chance that his friends were well "aboard" at the lower end of

the cable. Speed, and speed alone could now effect anything.

So he laboured like a Trojan at the winch-lever, sweating and straining to wind the cable in with the least possible delay.

But the winch was low-g geared, for the purpose of tackling heavy loads. To force the machine at speed through such a low ratio gearing was terribly exhausting, and the engineer, not daring to spare himself, swung the winch-handle till his heart nearly stopped, and the veins stood out like blue whipcord upon his sweating forehead.

Half-fainting under his task, he laboured on, straining and swaying, breathless and sick. Only his indomitable will-power kept him going. Under stress of emergency he achieved once more that night another miracle.

Joan to fall into the hands of those brutes!

Never! If he fell dead when the last yard of cable ran in—never! And he worked as he had never worked before.

And all the while rifles cracked below incessantly.

Scurr's men were shooting at the trio suspended at the end of that frail cable—a cable that travelled with monotonous slowness up the cliff-face despite all his efforts, all his agony of body and soul.

Redoubling his efforts, he strained afresh upon the lever.

An automaton, continuing to function mechanically when the mind had almost ceased to think, he clung to that length of twisted steel rod, staggering against it, gripping it, wrenching it, while his heart nigh burst beneath his shirt, his breath came in short, dreadful gasps, and the perspiration streamed off his brow in a cascade that literally blinded him.

Then, as through a veil of mist, a voice reached him.

It was Joan's—he just managed to realise that.

Joan—calling?

What was it? Where was she? What did she want?

Ah, the winch—the cable! Those beasts—below—raving, blood-lusting beasts! Molloy's devils!

He remembered now! And he toiled frenziedly at the winch as he recognised that his friends were but a few yards below—that the last dread moments of his superhuman task had come.

The shots had ceased. That was because Joan, Cerei and Dingley were out of range from the lagoon. They must be but just under the cliff edge. They—

"We're all right, Harry! Stick it!"

Joan's voice, breathing encouragement, drifted loud and clear up out of the depths—depths into which the tortured engineer could not see as he cranked the winding gear upon which depended her salvation.

But he knew from the sound of her voice that his guess had been correct. Joan and his companions were almost at the end of their long trip upwards. They were on the cable end, and safe.

And at this his brain began suddenly to function coherently once more.

Another turn—perhaps a dozen—two dozen—and then—

"And very nice, too!"

An evil voice sounded suddenly in his ear, and he felt something cold and hard pressed against his temple.

"Stop that, you—"

At the harsh command, he dropped the lever, and, swaying on his feet, lurched stupidly round to face the speaker.

(Another tense and gripping instalment will be waiting for you next week—if you've got a copy on order!)

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