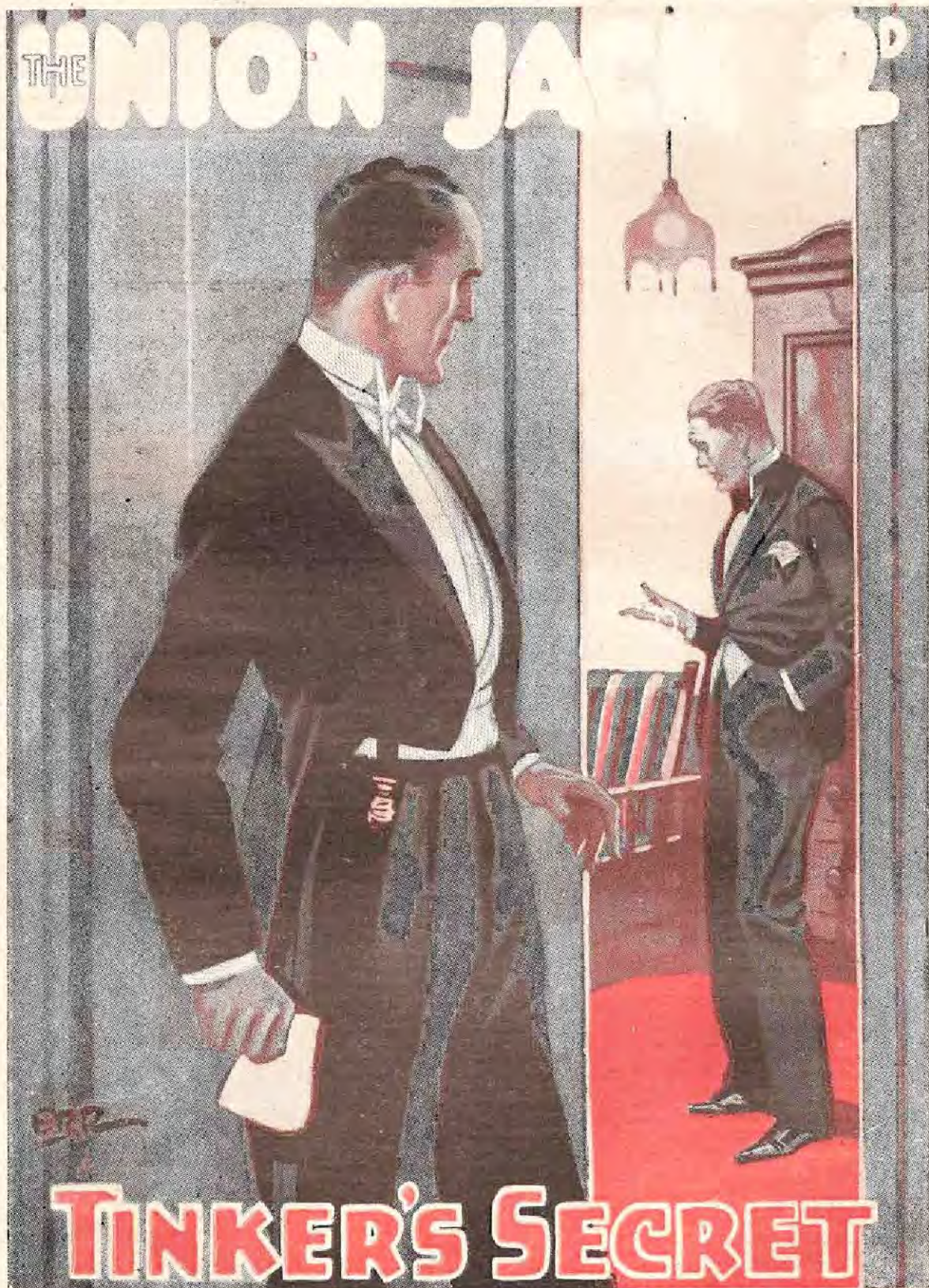


YOU may win **FIVE HUNDRED!** (See page 27.)

THE UNION JACK



TINKER'S SECRET

—the **FIRST** of a Powerful **NEW SERIES**, featuring
TINKER, SEXTON BLAKE and **NIRVANA the Dancer.**



(CONCLUDING INSTALMENT.)

"WE sail to-morrow morning," his lordship announced.

His Excellency the Governor.



Blood was startled. "And Colonel Bishop?" he asked.

"He becomes your affair. You are now the governor. You will deal with him as you think proper on his return. Hang him from his own yard-arm. He deserves it."

"Isn't the task a trifle invidious?" wondered Blood.

"Very well. I'll leave a letter for him. I hope he'll like it."

Captain Blood took up his duties at once. There was much to be done to place Port Royal in a proper state of defence, after what had happened there. He made an inspection of the ruined fort, and issued instructions for the work upon it, which was to be started immediately. Next he ordered the careening of the three French vessels that they

might be rendered seaworthy once more. Finally, with the sanction of Lord Willoughby, he marshalled his buccaneers and surrendered them one-fifth of the captured treasure, leaving it to their choice thereafter either to depart or to enrol themselves in the service of King William.

A score of them elected to remain, and amongst these were Jeremy Pitt, Ogle, and Dyke, whose outlawry, like Blood's, had come to an end with the downfall of King James. They were—saving old Wolverstone, who had been left behind at Cartagena—the only survivors of that band of rebels-convict who had left Barbadoes over three years ago in the Cinco Llagas.

On the following morning, whilst Van der Kuylen's fleet was making finally ready for sea, Blood sat in the spacious white-washed room that was the governor's office, when Major Mallard brought him word that Bishop's homing squadron was in sight.

"That is very well," said Blood. "I am glad he comes before Lord Willoughby's departure. The orders, major, are that you place him under arrest the moment he steps ashore. Then bring him to me. A moment." He wrote a hurried note. "That to Lord Willoughby aboard Admiral Van der Kuylen's flagship."

Major Mallard saluted and departed. Peter Blood sat back in his chair and stared at the ceiling, frowning. Time moved on. Came a tap at the door, and an elderly negro slave presented himself. Would his excellency receive Miss Bishop?

His excellency changed colour. He sat quite still, staring at the negro a moment, conscious that his pulses were drumming in a manner wholly unusual to them. Then quietly he assented.

He rose when she entered, and if he was not as pale as she was, it is because his tan dissembled it. For a moment there was silence between them, as they stood looking each at the other. Then she moved forward, and began at last to speak, haltingly, in an unsteady voice, amazing in one usually so calm and deliberate.

"I—I—Major Mallard has just told me—"

"Major Mallard exceeded his duty," said Blood, and because of the effort he made to steady his voice it sounded harsh and unduly loud.

He saw her start, and stop, and instantly made amends.

"You alarm yourself without reason, Miss Bishop. Whatever may lie between me and your uncle, you may be sure that I shall not follow the example he has set me. I shall not abuse my position to prosecute a private vengeance. On the contrary, I shall abuse it to protect him. Lord Willoughby's recommendation to me is that I shall treat him without mercy. My own intention is to send him back to his plantation in Barbadoes."

She came slowly forward now.

"I—I am glad that you will do that. Glad above all for your own sake."

She held out her hand to him.

He considered it critically. Then he bowed over it.

"I'll not presume to take it in the hand of a thief and a pirate," said he bitterly.

"You are no longer that," she said, and strove to smile.

(Continued on page 26.)

A WORD from YOUR EDITOR

MY DEAR READERS,—You now have, as you will perceive, the final and satisfying instalment of "Captain Blood," wherein everything ends happily as good stories should, and the gallant captain falls finally on his feet as Governor of Jamaica—much to the consternation of the colonel—and two fond hearts are united.

It has been a great yarn, "Captain Blood." We know that you have enjoyed it hugely, for we can estimate the cordiality of its reception by the paeon of praise it has brought forth in the shape of letters from so many of you. Also, you have had the chance to see the story on the screen—another of the "U. J.'s" stunts which has been acceptable as it has been opportune.

The story itself has, in the natural course of things, come to an end; but the film version of it is still running, and the producers of it assure me that it will continue to do so for many months to come.

It has already been exhibited in all the big centres—repeatedly, in many cases—and the probability is that nearly everyone who has read the yarn in these pages, and who is within reach of a cinema where it has been shown has also seen Sabatini's masterpiece in picture form.

To those who have not we can only give one piece of advice—go and see it if the chance comes your way.

UNION JACK serials, come to think of it, form a goodly procession. "The Wire Devils," by Frank Packard—an author as eminent as Sabatini in his own field—"The Atom-Snasher," "The Mystery of the Marshes," "Slave Island," and "Treasure Island," by Robert Louis Stevenson, are some that come to mind. In spite of the excellence of these yarns, however, we have decided to discontinue publishing a serial for a while, and instead to provide stories of Sexton Blake at a much greater length than has been possible hitherto.

The main reason for this is that it is often difficult to include a serial instalment of satisfactory length without sacrificing other and even more popular features of an already packed paper. The instalments, one feels, are sometimes tantalisingly short. This is unfortunately inevitable.

Therefore, rather than the continuity of good serial stories should be too often broken, we have decided on the somewhat bold step of doing without a serial at all, on the principle of "what one never has, one never misses."

We believe this step will meet with general approval, and, in fact, be most

generally welcomed. For, instead of on a perhaps too-short serial chapter, your interest will be focused on the extra-long and continuous Sexton Blake stories, which are rounded off and complete in each issue.

Moreover, apart from the usual Supplement, of course, which is always a fund of gripping and interesting reading, there will be a corner devoted every week to a new feature, "The Round Table."

This, as its title implies, is a page of mutual interest to all of us, where we can meet and discuss the more personal side of our paper, just as if we were seated on terms of perfect equality at the traditional Round Table.

I want you—*you* personally—to come in on the conference. Let me have *YOUR* views; they're as good as anybody's, and if they're of general interest I'll print them. Now we have the space to spare for it, let us, as editor and readers, get together a bit. Come in and help me run the paper; good as is the "U. J.," we'll make it even better between us.

My address is: The Editor, UNION JACK, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4. Write and say what you have been intending to all this time, but have postponed, before you lose the impulse—and the address.

YOUR EDITOR.

TINKER'S SECRET

We are confident that these stories of TINKER and NIRVANA, of which this is the first, are going to be a huge success. We think they are going to rival our earlier yarns of Yvonne and Sexton Blake for popularity. The intense human interest of them, and the dramatic power of the author's situations as the adventures of the street-waif dancer develop, will win a place in your hearts equalled only by the exploits of Yvonne, which, incidentally, are by the same writer as these tales of Nirvana. We would very much like you to write and tell us what you think of the first two: (See page 25.)

PROLOGUE.

A Page from the Past.



ON a dreary November evening when the home-going crowds were jamming and pushing through the driving rain to snatch any possible particle of shelter in the dripping buses and trams which crawled slowly along the slippery streets in the City, a young lad of some nine or ten years of age, very poorly clad, without either umbrella or overcoat to keep off the storm, made his way past the Three Nuns Hotel, at Aldgate, and crossed the road towards the brightly-lit entrance to the Underground Railway, which hadn't been opened many months at the time of the events which are here narrated.

He made his way along to the doorway of an empty building, where an older youth stood sheltering from the driving rain, while he cried the evening editions of the papers, of which he had a good-sized pile heaped up on an empty box in the doorway. As the younger boy reached the shelter the other took up a dozen or so of the damp journals and passed them to him.

"A juicy night, kid," he said. "Got your cover?"

"Yes," answered the boy, and took from beneath his tightly-buttoned jacket a piece of cheap black oilcloth. This he placed over the papers, to keep them as dry as was possible on a night when the dampness seemed to soak through to one's very marrow.

"My aunt! Why didn't cha put it over yerself?" queried the other in surprise.

"Because," answered the little fellow simply, "it would have got wet, and that would have been bad for the papers. My customers wouldn't like it."

"Well, you are a funny kid," remarked the youth, who seemed to be a sort of "merchant" in a small way—to the extent at least that he was the source of supply of papers to half a dozen boys younger than himself. "Anyways, it ain't no skin off my teeth. Same old stand, I suppose?"

The little fellow nodded.

"Yes. As soon as I sell off this lot I'm going to clear, Dodger. I got a cold and don't feel up to it."

"Leave it alone, then, kid, for to-night. You needn't worry about the coin. That'll be all right until you make it up."

"No, thanks; I'll sell off this lot."

With that the younger tucked the parcel under his arm and ran back past the Underground entrance until he reached a sheltered spot at the far side. There he took up his usual stand, and as he did so raised his fresh young voice above the lash of the rain and the noise of wheels and footsteps.

Nor did he lack for custom. He had been on that stand for some months past and had built up quite a little clientele of his own. Even among those tired and harassed workers who surged past, there were several who came to recognise the cheerful countenance of the little fellow who stood near the Underground, and to have a word for him as they stopped to buy of his stock.



As for him, he had a bright reply and a cheerful grin for each and all, and, being sharp even among that breed known as the London street urchin, than which there is none sharper, he was never at a loss in the sort of repartee which passed current in that part of London.

But if one had been watching him closely, one might have seen that, when he was not actually handing out his papers and pocketing the coins, or giving change, his cries were almost mechanical on this night; and that, instead of keeping his eager young gaze fixed on the passers-by, he kept looking again and again towards a dark corner opposite him.

And a careful observer would have seen his eyes light up as two closely wrapped figures appeared out of the storm and stood for a few moments close to the kerb. The boy kept staring at them so intently that an impatient passer-by, after snapping at him twice for a paper, finally jerked one from under his arm and dropped his penny on the ground.

The touch against his arm and the tinkle of the coin roused the boy. He turned to mutter an apology, but the man was gone. And then a rush of half a dozen persons took all his time, and all his papers as well. As he handed out the last one and dropped the coppers in his pocket he stood shifting from one foot to the other as if undecided just what to do.

Ordinarily he would have returned to his friend the "Dodger" for a further supply of papers; but he had only told the truth when he had said to that worthy that he would not stay on the stand long that evening, owing to the cold which was playing havoc with him. As a matter of fact, a child of his age with a proper home and proper parents would have been put to bed long ago and a doctor would have been called, for the little fellow's temperature was high and a little more exposure would lay him low in the grip of something worse than a plain cold.

But he had no home of that sort to go to. All the home he knew at that period of his life was a little garret room which he rented from a good soul down Wapping way—a woman whose husband was a porter at Smithfield Market, and who had little motherly care to spare from her own brood of nine for the lone wee lodger.

Yet it was not the papers, or the cold which set him coughing in terrible spasms, that was causing the lad's hesitancy. All the time he kept his eyes fixed on the two figures on the opposite side of the road, and once his blue lips moved as if he were talking to himself. As a matter of fact, he was, and if one could have caught the words one would have heard:

"It's got to stop somehow. She's a—devil, she is, that girl!"

The epithet was meant for the taller of the two figures, and if one had been standing close to the pair one might have seen, if their coat-collars had been turned down, in stead of up, that the taller was a girl of not more than sixteen or seventeen years of age, and with classic, beautiful features that would have charmed a Raphael. The other figure was even smaller than the little paper-seller who was watching the pair so closely; and if the elder girl was beautiful, the face of the other was that of an angel.

The boy had seen it in the early morning with the pure sun on it, and he knew. He had studied the face of the elder, and when he said she was a "devil" he had hit the truth exactly.

Who they were—where they came from—the boy didn't know. But he did know that the sight of the smaller girl had made a very deep impression upon him, and in a shy sort of way he had appointed himself her cavalier. And he knew that it was time she had some other guidance than that of the sister, for that was the relationship, as he was aware.

For a matter of three weeks or so the pair had been coming to that corner, and always at the rush hour of the day or evening. The boy had watched them closely at first, wondering what they could want; and then, one day, his pinched little face had grown as grim as that of an old man, for he saw with a sharp horror the reason.

It was in the middle of a busy day when he learned the truth. He had been standing—watching them—as usual when he saw the elder girl leave the younger at the kerb and plunge into the hurrying throngs. At first the boy had kept his eyes fixed on the child, keeping a distant guard over her, as it were, and he did not notice just what the sister was doing.

But when she came hurrying back, and after showing something to the younger, dragged her away, the boy, wise to all the street tricks of every type of London crook, grew suspicious. It took him just three days to secure actual proof that the elder girl was a most adept pick-pocket, and from that time forth he had watched them with a growing anxiety.

No casual passer-by would ever pause to wonder whether that little waif of the streets had a soul or not. Destiny had elected that a grey-eyed, kindly-faced man who was yet to enter his life would be the first to make that discovery. But, waif though he was, there was a clear flame burning within the boy—a flame that came from the gentle mother he had never known. He had never known anything else but the streets; he could not remember when he had not fended for himself; and yet, though he had lived and run with all the riff-raff that the street life knows, he was as clean, as unsullied, as if he had been hemmed in by loving care from his earliest days.

And this child of the streets—this little paper-selling waif was the only person in the whole great City of London who was troubled about the fate of the soul of that golden-haired little girl who stood that dreary wet night on the opposite kerb.

He was still watching the pair when he gave a gasp that turned into a fit of coughing as he saw the child detach herself from the older girl and start across the wet, crowded street alone.

It was the first time she had done this; instinct told the boy what it meant. Up to then her part had been to watch and to learn; in the hovel where they lived it was probable, he thought, that she would practise the art of pocket-picking as assiduously as any luckier little girl should practise her music or drawing, though, heaven knows, the boy knew nothing of either.

But he knew London and its streets, and as the child slipped across in front of skidding buses, as she dodged in under the heads of great dray horses, he started along towards her, his heart beating fast with some feeling which he could not explain. Then he was caught in a

crush at the entrance to the Underground, and by the time he had succeeded in worming his way clear he could see the little girl no longer. But suddenly he caught sight of her again—and as he did so his heart stood still.

In one part of the Underground structure was, at that time, a cigar stand, and as the boy spied the little girl he saw that she was sidling along close to that stand, where a very stout man was bending over the counter, obviously having some difficulty in selecting some tobacco. He was so big that his paunch pressed against the edge of the counter, leaving an appreciable distance between his knees and the front panels of the stand.

Into this space the little girl insinuated her tiny form, and then the horrified boy saw one hand steal upwards beneath the loose hanging coat.

It seemed to hover there for a second or so, and it was just then that the man seemed as if he must have felt something touch him, for he moved back a little and half-glanced down.

The child was completely concealed by the loose skirt of his raincoat, and he moved inwards again, thinking no doubt that he had imagined the contact.

But the little girl had already done her work. As he pressed in against the counter she slid out from under his coat and sped towards the edge of the kerb. The boy forthwith started after her, and the strange chase kept on right across the crowded road until the girl gained the kerb on the far side.

It is a wonder that one or both were not trampled underfoot by one of the great dray horses or crushed beneath one of the roaring buses; but the special Power that looks after the London street urchin was with them, and they reached the other side almost together.

There the little girl began to run towards her sister, who was now coming to meet her. The boy, however, ran faster, and before the two met he had overtaken the child. He caught her by the wrist and whirled her round. She gave a cry of terror until she saw it was only a little boy who held her; then she flew into a fury. But the boy held his ground and panted:

"Hey! You mustn't do that sort of thing! Give it here, and I'll give it back to the bloke you pinched it from. If you're caught at this game—"

What the little girl would have said or done is impossible to say. She had no chance, for just then the sister came rushing up, and struck the boy with a heavy hand, accompanying it with a vicious imprecation.

"Steal from the child, would you!" she screamed. "Lucky for her I was watching! Get out—clear off, you gutter scum, or I'll open your face!"

But the boy did not obey. He scarcely looked at her. He was still gazing at the little girl, but as another heavy blow struck him on the ear he staggered back. The elder girl tried to drag the child away, but the boy clung on.

Then, as they heard a deep voice rasping: "Now then, what's all this?" they broke away.

The boy, in that last moment, managed to force the child's fingers open and transfer to his own hand what she held.

The elder girl made some reply to the constable, and she hurried off, dragging the frightened child at her heels. As for the boy, he collected himself and grinned at the constable, for he knew him well enough. And the constable knew the boy—knew him to be a cheerful little fellow who was well-liked.

"It's all right, bobby," he said cheerfully. "Just a little argument with the ladies." And before the constable could

ANSWERS
Every Saturday—PRICE 2

question him further he had plunged headlong into the traffic.

Nor did that constable dream for a single moment that the boy was absolutely filled with terror that he should learn the truth. If he had, and if he had discovered that the boy was at that moment clutching a gold watch and chain, which were, incidentally, worth something like a hundred guineas, the matter might have had a very different ending.

But he knew nothing of all that, so, after watching the urchin for a few seconds, marvelling how he managed to dodge the vehicles, he walked on.

As for the boy, he made his way as quickly as possible back to the cigar-stand. He had hoped to be in time to overtake the fat man whose pocket had been picked, but he was gone, and the lad had to wait some minutes before he could get a word with the young man behind the counter.

He knew this youth quite well, for he supplied him with an evening paper regularly, and had often paused to have a word with him when business was slack. So he came straight to the point.

"There was a big fat man 'ere a few minutes ago," he said. "Which way did 'e go?"

The tobacconist pointed towards the people who were hurrying into the Underground.

"Down there. Why?"

"J'yer know 'im?"

"Yes. He stops here almost every evening for his baccy. Why?"

"Sure yer know the bloke I mean?"

"Well, he's the only fat man I recollect being here during the last half-hour."

"What's 'is name? 'Simportant!"

"I don't know, son, but I see him nearly every evening. What's the game? What do you want of the big buffer? Looking for a change of jobs?"

"No, on'y 'e dropped something, and I want to give it 'im back."

"Well, he's gone to his train. But he'll be along here to-morrow evening as usual, I fancy. Come round then."

But the boy hesitated. He wanted to get rid of the thing which was burning into his very flesh. And the young clerk, being both observant and kind-hearted, said:

"If it's worrying you to take care of it, son, give it to me, and I'll see he gets it to-morrow night or the next, when he turns up."

"Oh, will yer? Thanks! You're a sport!"

With that the little fellow passed over what he was clutching, and as the eyes of the clerk fell on it they goggled in amazement.

"Where on earth did you find this?" he stuttered; but he found himself speaking to the empty air, for the boy was already speeding away.

Neither of them knew that the two sisters had been standing in the shadow across the street, watching what was happening; they did not know that the hard eyes of the elder were glistening with an awful fury; they did not know that when she had uttered a terrible oath and dragged the little girl down a side street, that the child turned upon the elder and attacked her like a panther cub, shrieking and tearing at her with a strength that was amazing in one of her years and size.

They knew nothing of that, and knew not of the terrible beating which the child received that night before she was



The boy was still trying to drag the younger girl away when another blow struck him on the ear. Then a deep voice rasped: "Now then, what's all this?"

(See page 4.)

thrown on her bed of rags and straw supperless.

It was part of the hardening process that never fails, or is supposed never to fail, and either of the two would have been helpless to do anything if he had known, so it was as well for their peace of mind that they were in ignorance of it all.

As for the paper-seller, he went along to the "Dodger," and soon settled the little account he had with that person. Then he said good-night, and sped off into the rain, seeking a little fishshop of which he knew, where he could get a snack before making his weary way home.

It was another three weeks before the boy came again to the corner by the Three Nuns, at Aldgate.

The Dodger thought he had disappeared, just like so many London waifs disappear, and another lad now had the pitch which he had occupied.

But that worried the previous owner not at all, for he informed the Dodger, with characteristic light-heartedness that he had decided to go in for something else. He had been very ill indeed, and while he was recovering from the effects of that rainy night and fighting a slow fight against the miserable conditions of his unearned-for existence—but he did not put it that way to the Dodger—he had made up his mind to tackle some-

thing different—something that would pay better, for choice.

And yet the Dodger noticed, with some surprise and suspicion, he was to be seen hanging about the vicinity of his old pitch, and always during the rush hours his eyes would search and search in the direction of the opposite corner, where the beautiful pale "devil" and her golden-haired little sister used to stand, but where they came no more.

November merged into December. December dragged along until it was nearing Christmas. And then, after more than a fortnight's watching, the boy hurried away one night and never came back.

That ragged little newsboy, who had braved the wrath of one pickpocket and done his best to save the soul of another, and who, despite the temptations of a life of sordid poverty, had just naturally done the honest thing in relinquishing a valuable watch, was known to his acquaintances—for he had no real friends—as Tinker.

And as Tinker he was yet destined to be more widely known, when he became the friend and protégé of Sexton Blake.

But at the time of the incident of the rain-swept night at Aldgate Sexton Blake was unknown to him, as he was equally unknown to thousands of others who were to hear the fame of his exploits that were yet to be.

End of Prologue.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
"The Sailors."

MR. SEXTON BLAKE and his young assistant, Tinker, strolled out of the grill-room for their hats and coats.

Blake was in full evening dress, and Tinker in a dinner-jacket, for it was, with them, what Tinker termed "a night out."

After their very satisfying dinner at the Cosmos to see one item on the bill there of which all London seemed to be talking.

In their opera-hats and silk-lined overcoats the pair from Baker Street made an interesting-looking couple as they passed through the crowded foyer of the Venetia, and on out into Piccadilly, where, as usual, Blake had a word for Kelly, the giant commissionaire at the entrance.

As the Cosmos is situated in Piccadilly Circus, they did not bother with a taxi, but elected to walk the short distance. Although it was a chilly night in late October, it was fine and dry enough, and the fresh air was bracing after the heat and jazz din of the grill-room.

Blake had been able to secure a small box for their evening, and they half expected to be joined by two guests a little later on—a gentleman and his son from the North, who were in London for a few days, the former being both a client and a friend of Blake. They were dining with other friends, but expected to be able to come on later; hence Blake's reason for securing a box.

The Cosmos is one of those great London theatres which has had a chequered career. Originally built for the legitimate drama, it changed hands frequently over a period of some years, housing, at one time or another, every type of entertainment, from grand opera and musical comedy to music-hall turns and travel films.

At the time referred to it was one of a chain of houses in the control of one of the best-known theatrical producers, and was being used as a medium to try out a somewhat new type of entertain-

ment—a sort of high-class variety show, containing "turns" by world-famous stars.

The particular item which was attracting Blake and Tinker, and which had made a wonderful hit in the brief fortnight during which it had been on was a sort of tabloid ballet called "The Sailors," which, according to every report, was a miracle of wonderful dancing.

The theme of the thing was simple enough, the representation being a disreputable harbour cafe in Marseilles, a rendezvous of sailors of every nationality while in that port. In this instance the characters consisted of one girl—the wonderful dancer who had become the rage in London—and three men, the latter representing sailors on an evening ashore, and each one desperately in love with the girl.

One sailor was French, one American, and one Spanish, and in order to please them the girl, after a somewhat thin bit of dialogue, danced with each in turn. If her super-jazzing with the American was a miracle of rhythm, her wild fandango, which ended in a blend of the tango, maxixe, and Brazilian with the Spaniard, was enthralling. But the crazy, brutal, bewildering apache dance that wound up the scene was a culmination of every conceivable passion which only a perfect master of the spirit of the dance can reveal.

Not for many, many years had any dancer swept London off its feet as had Nirvana—the girl who was dancing in this little tabloid ballet at the Cosmos. In one short fortnight she had become the rage. The oldest first-nighters of a past generation likened the furor she had created to something which had not been seen since the days of the amazing "Jersey Lily," with the possible exception of the twinkling Gaby.

Therefore, considering the premium at which seats were being held, Blake and Tinker could consider themselves lucky at securing a box, and since the great Nirvana was not to come on until after the interval, they settled down to enjoy the other items which filled in the bill up to then.

At the interval they made their way, like nearly everyone else, to the big promenade refreshment foyer which was such a feature of the Cosmos; and on their return to the box were agreeably surprised to find that Sir William Chadwin, Blake's cotton magnate friend from the north, and his son had arrived. The latter was a youth about Tinker's age, and the two were soon deeply interested in discussing the latest sports gossip while Blake and the baronet talked of other matters.

But as soon as the lights went down and the curtain rose for the ballet, when the orchestra switched off from the piece it had been playing to the first lively strains which preceded the entrance of the girl, everyone ceased talking and centred his or her attention on the stage.

The mise en scene was typical of that of any waterfront cafe in Marseilles. Indeed, so faithfully portrayed was it that Tinker whispered to young Billie Chadwin that he thought it must be the Cafe Cigogne, moved bodily from its usual spot where he and Blake had patronised it many a time.

There was the usual metal-topped bar, back of which stood a buxom woman who was supposed to be the patronne. A few tables and chairs were scattered about, and at these sat several supers in the characters of the regular habitués of the place. On shelves behind the bar were rows of bottles containing liquids of various colours, and in the centre of

these the inevitable brightly-polished coffee-urn from which the steam was pouring out.

A frowsy-looking garcon, wearing the short black alpaca jacket and white apron of his kind, moved about taking the orders. On the walls was the list of prices which the French law demands shall be exhibited in every cafe; each panel was painted with various scenes showing the life of the bird (cigogne-stork) from which the cafe had taken its name; and on a table at one side were the thick, folding draughts-boards and the red volumes of the "Bottin Directory," without which no French cafe can be called complete.

Those various attentions to detail, together with the white-lettered signs announcing that the place served the best of coffee, light beer as well as dark beer, every variety of aperitif, and was famous for its plat du jour, created immediately the exact atmosphere required for what was to follow.

It scarcely needed the natural touch of two of the clients sprawling close to the women who were with them, an arm round the shoulder, and now and then kissing without embarrassment—as one may see in any French cafe—nor the occasional roars for the garcon, the bon jour, m'sieu-m'dame of the patronne, nor the occasional workman in baggy corduroy trousers who lounged in to demand a packet of caporal cigarettes or petis gris tobacco, to bring the thing right up to the point which was the exact moment for the three sailors, who were supposed to be ashore for the evening, to roll in arm-in-arm.

Each was dressed according to his country, and as they lurched down at a table just inside the door they attempted to carry on a conversation in a mixture of French, English, and Spanish, which was wonderfully cleverly done, and which threw the audience into spasms of amusement.

Despite the passion each possessed for the girl—who had not yet put in an appearance—they seemed friendly enough and were quarrelling in a mild, muddled way over who should give the order to the garcon, when the door swung open again and in came the girl.

Instantly the orchestra changed over once more, and there arose screams of recognition and welcome from all the habitués as the girl walked in, her head held high, her red lips pouting disdainfully, and her graceful body swaying to her movement as sinuously as the cobra on evil bent might glide through soft lush jungle.

And she was beautiful!

Her hair, parted in the centre from the forehead back, rippled down on each side of her exquisitely-shaped little head in waves of what seemed, literally, spun gold, being gathered at the back in one great thick braid which hung almost to her knees.

Her eyes were violet woodland pools, whose shores were shaded by deeply-fringed lashes which brushed her cheeks as she glanced downwards in pretended disdain; her features were small and perfectly formed, her mouth of the sort which has dragged many and many a man to perdition.

Her throat was a perfect white column, the smooth girlish lines of which swept out in utter grace to her white shoulders. Her body was all that beauty and perfect rhythm of movement could express, and the limbs were beautiful in their soft curves, unspoiled by the suggestion of muscles like those of so many dancers.

As she paused for a moment to survey the audience, she seemed the actual

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incarnation of beauty of form and feature and movement—a trinity which is so rarely collected into one entity, and, in that moment, the most critical could but believe that she was, as rumour said, barely sixteen years of age.

Then the orchestra switched over again as she made an almost imperceptible gesture with her hand, and the actual ballet was begun. All three sailors had risen to their feet, and in half-drunken pantomime were begging her for her favours. She had already started to dance, a light little movement in which she twinkled about them, mocking them one moment and smiling encouragement the next.

Thus it went, until, as part of the theme, the three sailors began to quarrel in earnest, and then, as she twinkled round and round them, the girl sang that she would bestow her favours upon him who could dance best with her.

At this the orchestra plunged into a lilting jazz, and the one who represented the American sailor swept the girl into a dance which held the audience breathless until the end. The applause rose from every part of the house, but even before it died away the girl had been whirled into the arms of the Spanish sailor, and there followed every lilt and turn of the most seductive dances which the hot blood of Andalusia, the dreamy songs of Brazil and the savage emotion of the Argentine pampas have blended into those exotic movements which make the pulses race as one is carried along through shadowy aisles where the heavy scent of jungle blooms seem to beat upon one's senses and wicked eyes lure one while soft arms reach out to drag one back into caves of eternal twilight.

No prima donna at Covent Garden could have desired a greater storm of applause than followed when the girl slipped from the arms of her partner and into those of the French sailor. And yet she seemed utterly oblivious to it all. She did not once glance towards the house, nor pause to make acknowledgment.

She whirled into the apache dance, and from the first movements which usually pass as that intricate composition, the thing mounted and mounted into a wild culmination of utter abandon that literally lifted the audience to its feet.

The very roof seemed to tremble as the thunders of applause swept up in wave upon wave.

And in the box where Sexton Blake sat, it was the same as everywhere else. Sir William Chadwin was shouting himself hoarse as he pounded his palms together. The youth, Billie, was making as much noise as he could, and Blake had entirely let himself go, and was clapping mightily.

Every living soul in that audience was acting like a crazy person for the time being with the exception of one, and he was unobserved as he sat in the shadow, his eyes fastened, like one in a hypnotic trance, on the golden-haired girl who now stood bowing her thanks to her frenzied audience.

That single exception was Tinker. And, as the girl glanced towards the box, her eyes encountered his.

As they did so, the mechanical little half-smile which had been hovering on her red lips vanished. Her shadowy eyes seemed to darken a little in a sort of puzzled pucker, as she gazed at the lad's face.

Then the curtain came swishing down, and up again, and down, until she had answered three insistent calls; then she

was gone for good as the lights went up again.

Sexton Blake turned round with a smile to speak to his companions.

As he did so his gaze fell on Tinker, and he bent forward quickly on seeing the lad stumble to his feet, his face as white as chalk as he reached upwards for his hat.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. After the Show—A Sensation.



"WHAT is it, my lad?"

"Nothing, guv'nor, nothing," answered Tinker, in a mumble.

"Feel a little bit rotten—be all right soon. Going to get some air."

And with that, before Blake, or either Sir William or Billie, could question him further, Tinker was gone.

Out in the foyer, which was now almost deserted, save for a few loudly-dressed women, who were lounging about, Tinker sank into a low seat near the door, where a cold current of air was coming in. And there he sat staring straight before him, his eyes far, far away, as he struggled with something that was going round and round in his brain like a squirrel in a wheel-cage.

Suddenly he shot to his feet and, turning, hurried through the big swing-doors to the street. He made to his left until he came to the corner of the building alongside which ran a narrow alley, with but a single light half-way down to pierce the gloom. Tinker turned down this and strode on until he reached the next corner of the theatre building, which brought him to the back. There, a little way along, was another light and an open doorway, with, above it, the sign: "Stage Entrance."

The door was not quite closed, and Tinker pushed it open. As he stepped inside, he saw a little old man seated behind a wicket, and before opening up any conversation with this individual, Tinker took the precaution to push a ten-shilling note in through the opening in the wicket. Then he bent close and said:

"Has Nirvana gone yet?"

The doorkeeper pocketed the note, shaking his head at the same time.

"Not yet—but there ain't any use in waiting for her," he answered. "She has nothing to say to people at the stage-door, young man."

Tinker nodded, and said no more. He backed out into the alley, and took up his stand there. He knew that the ballet which he had just witnessed was on the bill only once during the evening, and he figured that the dancer should be leaving soon. As for what the doorkeeper had said about her having nothing to do with people who hung about the stage-door, that didn't worry Tinker. He had no desire to speak to her; but he was determined to get a closer look at her if possible.

While he was waiting, a big limousine drew in at the kerb at the far end of the alley towards the back, and a few moments later the door swung open. Tinker had a glimpse of the old doorkeeper bowing obsequiously, and then a young woman emerged.

It was not the person he was looking

for, however, but, nevertheless, he studied her face keenly as she paused for a moment or so directly where the light fell on it. She turned a pair of cold eyes on him, and then as she withdrew her gaze shrugged slightly. She was richly dressed, and was wearing an elegantly-fashioned sable coat. Then she spoke to someone behind her, stepping into the alley as she did so.

It was then Tinker caught sight of her companion, and as he did so something within him gave a leap.

It was Nirvana, the dancer, and as she stood beneath the light over the door, he strained forward eagerly to miss no single detail of her features. Like the other girl, she glanced at him, not disdainfully, but with complete indifference; then she, too, stepped into the alley, and the two hurried along towards the waiting car.

Tinker half made as if to follow, when, changing his mind, and with his face wearing a very thoughtful expression, made his way back to the front of the theatre.

He returned to the box, where he found that Blake and the others were getting ready to leave, as there was only one more item on the bill, and that did not promise to be of much interest. Blake shot a keen look at the lad as he entered, but the colour had returned to Tinker's cheeks now, and, in answer to Blake's question, he forced a smile, and said he felt better.

"We are going on to a charity ball with Sir William and Billie," went on Blake. "Do you feel up to it, young 'un?"

"Yes, guv'nor; I'm all right now. Where is it?"

"At the Duchess of Rayland's, in Berkeley Square."

"I'd like it first-rate, guv'nor, if Billie is keen on it. If not, he and I can do something else while you and Sir William go on."

But Billie thought he would like to see a big charity ball, of which he had so often read, with the result that it was decided that all four should go. On leaving the theatre, they walked along as far as the Venetia, where Blake hired a big private, closed car. They drove on to Berkeley Square, Sir William having no less than six tickets for the affair, and found themselves arriving in the very midst of the crush.

After leaving their things in the cloak-room, they pushed a way through to the ball-room, and then on to the buffet, where they idled about for half an hour or more before word was passed along that an event of considerable importance was about to take place. So they finished off their sandwiches and drinks, and crowded along with everyone else, to find the place jammed.

At one end of the ball-room was a low dais, where were sitting the Duchess of Rayland and several other patronesses of the affair, which was in aid of one of the charities which was a particular hobby of the duchess. Each dowager was in full evening-dress, and each seemed to have put on a goodly portion of her jewels, with the result that this whole corner of the room was literally ablaze with gems.

As they took their places at one side, Blake cast an eye about the room, and as he did so spotted half a dozen men whom he knew at once to be private detectives—a precaution which he inwardly approved of when he looked at the blazing coronets and pendants, necklaces and rings and stomachers exhibited by those who sat on the dais.

Being a public affair to the extent

that anyone might go who cared to invest half-a-guinea and don evening clothes of some sort, Blake knew that the chances were there was more than one crook present on the alert to bring off a coup if opportunity offered.

But he gave no further thought to that phase of it just then, for the handsome, white-haired Duchess of Rayland was standing by her chair with one hand raised for quiet, and, instantly, the great room was hushed.

In a rather weak but very pleasant little speech she thanked her guests for turning up in such numbers in support of the charity which she had at heart, and announced for their benefit that the total sum by which it would benefit would run to just over a thousand pounds, all of which would be used for the purposes of the charity, as she and her friends were personally defraying all expenses in connection with the ball.

The finish of the announcement was greeted by a round of polite hand-clapping; then the duchess raised her hand again.

"Just one more brief announcement," she said, smiling upon them. "Before general dancing is resumed, I have a pleasant little surprise in store for you. I have been fortunate enough to secure the services for to-night of someone who will entertain you for a few minutes, and I am sure you will all find it something worth watching."

"It is the wonderful Nirvana. She will dance something of her own for you; and, in order that she may have a setting as near as possible to what she wishes, I am having the lights lowered. I will ask you to be good enough to stand well back, and give her as much room as possible in the centre of the floor."

At this the duchess sat down again, and an excited hum broke out all over the room at the prospect of seeing the dancer about whom everyone was raving. Blake and Sir William clapped lightly in the general round of applause, while young Billie hopped about with excitement; for, in a harmless "calf" way, he had fallen head-over-heels in love with Nirvana.

No one heard the quick breath between Tinker's teeth as he heard the announcement, and no one saw that in the whole room he was almost the only one who did not applaud.

Then, as the duchess waved her hand towards some invisible person at the other end of the room, the lights suddenly went out in cluster after cluster until there was just one group left burning near the door which led out to the hall—that and a single blue light just behind the dais. It was just there that heavy dark blue curtains were now drawn aside, and out on to the dais, and then down to the floor of the ball-room, stepped Nirvana.

If she had been lovely in the ballet at the Cosmo she was even more so now in the type of costume she had chosen for the entertainment of the guests.

At the theatre she had been dressed in a regulation ballet costume which was suited to the theme of the piece.

But now she came swaying down the room to the strains of a dreamy waltz, her lithe, sinuous body faintly visible in every line through the folds of some sort of filmy white drapery which billowed ever so gently and fell about her as the white petals of the passion orchid expand and close and expand again just before they scatter in a scented shower among the outstretched, thirsty tentacles of the serpent vine.

Dead silence reigned while she con-

tinued to dance; but when she floated back towards the dais, and then just as the last strains of the music died away, disappeared behind the curtains behind the dais, the spell was broken, and the lights went up in a perfect hurricane of applause.

There was no encore. Though the guests begged again and again for the wonderful dancer to show herself at least, the curtains remained drawn, and at last the duchess shook her head, as if to say that it would be useless to hope. Then the orchestra broke into a jazz, and gradually the floor filled.

Blake, Sir William, Billie, and Tinker had been standing about half-way down the room, and now, as the dancers began to crowd past, they moved back towards the wall. Sir William made some suggestion about returning to the buffet, but Blake did not hear him, for he was gazing fixedly towards the dais where the duchess and the other dowager sat.

As a man came hurriedly from that direction, Blake murmured an apology to the baronet, and moved across to intercept the other, who was, he saw, young Lord Boscon, a relative of the Duchess of Rayland, and apparently one of her aides for the evening. He swung round sharply as Blake touched his arm; then, as he recognised whom it was, his face cleared.

"Oh, it's you, Mr. Blake! How are you? Sorry, but I can't stop now."

But Blake still held his sleeve.

"Just a moment, please," he said.

"Am I correct in surmising that something is wrong? If so, I should be glad to be of any assistance possible."

For the first time the young peer seemed to remember Blake's profession.

"By Jove!" he muttered. "Stupid of me! Didn't think. You are the very man, Mr. Blake! Come along with me, will you?"

"At once."

Blake signed to Sir William that he would return soon, and then followed the young man through the ball-room to the large hall beyond. There, Lord Boscon gave hurried orders for the doors to be closed, and not opened without express permission from the duchess or himself.

Following that, he despatched a footman to pass on word to the private detectives that they were wanted in the library. Then he took Blake's arm and led him to that apartment.

As soon as they were inside he closed the door and turned a grave countenance upon the detective.

"A most unfortunate and very serious thing has happened, Mr. Blake," he said hurriedly. "I don't know yet just what steps to take. During the last twenty minutes her Grace, my aunt, has lost her diamond necklace!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Diamonds—and Pearls.



Duchess of Rayland was wearing. It had been that, together with the other

glittering array of jewels which were displayed on the dais, that caused him first to reflect that there might be more than one pair of eyes among the guests which would fill with longing and calculation at the sight.

Like most of the more famous family jewels, Blake knew that particular necklace quite well. He had, in fact, handled it on one occasion, and he had a good recollection of most of the stones on the string. It was, in fact, something more than just a necklace, for, from between the two largest diamonds—a wonderfully matched pair of stones—a magnificent oval-shaped, diamond-studded pendant hung which could be detached at will.

But on this occasion the duchess had worn it as well, and as he heard the startling announcement, Blake's professional mind dwelt fleetingly on the enormous money value of the piece, aside from its worth as an historical heirloom.

Before he could make any reply to the young peer there came a tap at the door, and a moment later four men filed into the room. They were four of the half-dozen or so private detectives who had been engaged for the evening, and whose purpose in being there Blake had spotted a few minutes after entering the ball-room.

They were one and all ex-Scotland Yard men, with most of whom Blake had a personal acquaintance, and as they saw him with Lord Boscon they saluted him. "Now, gentlemen, gather close, if you please," said the young man briskly. "A most unfortunate thing has happened, and there is no time to be lost." Then he told them what he had already told Blake.

"We must make a move of some sort at once, and I want your suggestions. Perhaps Mr. Blake can assist us?"

"What about the doors?" put in one of the detectives.

"Already attended to," answered Lord Boscon curtly. "I am not a detective, gentlemen, neither am I a fool. That was the first thing that occurred to me. No one will pass out without my express permission."

"And yet you cannot arrest something over five hundred guests," remarked Blake, as he took out his cigarette-case.

"Quite right, Mr. Blake. That is just the deuce of it. But it certainly looks as if the necklace has been stolen. And, unless the thief has managed to get away within the last quarter of an hour or so, he or she must still be in the house. Now, to make things as brief as possible, I will tell you as much as I or anyone else knows."

"Half an hour ago, and even less than that, the necklace was quite safe. Her Grace is quite positive on that point, and what she says can be depended upon to be so. It was just after Nirvana danced that she missed it. And it looks as if it was while that dance was in progress that it was taken."

"Her Grace's first thought was, of course, that it had slipped off. But we have already made a thorough search all about that part of the room, and there were no signs of it. She remembers that just after the finish of the dance quite a number of the guests crowded very close to the dais in their anxiety to get a last glimpse of Nirvana, and she is of opinion that it must have been taken from about her throat under cover of that confusion."

"Immediately on learning what had happened—I was close at hand, and she called me to her at once—I assisted in the search; but as soon as I suspected that it had been stolen I hurried out at once to give orders for the doors to be closed and no one permitted to pass out."

BLAKE, who, back in the ball-room, had noticed signs of commotion in the vicinity of the dais, and guessed that something of a disturbing nature had occurred, had not bargained for anything as startling as this.

He had, of course, seen the magnificent necklace which the

It was then I met Mr. Sexton Blake and asked him to assist me. Now, gentlemen, what suggestions?"

"It will have to be a search," said one of the private detectives, and his companions agreed.

But Lord Boscon shook his head.

"That would be all right among a small private party, but not in this instance. Good heavens, there would be a riot if we suggested that every guest must be searched. There are probably a few crooks among them, but the great majority are perfectly respectable citizens, and they cannot be asked to undergo that indignity. Besides, it would take all night to get through such a number." A thing with which they were forced to agree when they thought of it in that light. It was then that Blake removed his cigarette and said,

"There is one thing we might try, Lord Boscon. It comes to my mind from an experience I once had in New York."

"What is it, Mr. Blake?"

"On that occasion it was a large private party, and the hostess did not wish to give offence to any one of the number. Her first care was to do just what you have done this evening—to close all means of exit. Then she had the guests assembled and informed them what had happened.

"She stated that she proposed having them collect about a very large table, which would be placed in the centre of the ball-room floor, and all the lights would be turned out for exactly one minute. During that minute if any person among the guests had in his or her possession the article which had been stolen—in this case it was a brooch—they would have the opportunity of tossing it on to the table in the darkness, and nothing more would be said. All the guests were agreed to this course, and the experiment was tried."

"And did it succeed?" asked the young peer as Blake paused.

"It did. I was standing quite close to the edge of the table when the lights went out. Someone—I forget whom—had been detailed to count up to sixty in a measured tone which all could hear. He was about half-way through when there was a tinkling sound as if something had been thrown on to the table. But the counting did not stop, nor were the lights turned up until sixty had been reached. Then the lights were flashed on, and, sure enough, lying on the table was the brooch."

"I like that idea, Mr. Blake. But how could it be applied here? Something must be done soon, for some of the guests will be wanting to go soon, and an explanation of the closed door must be given."

"It will be more difficult in a case of this kind, but I think there is a way. A table is out of the question, but a large rug might be placed in the centre of the ball-room. The guests could be informed what had happened—the announcement might be made by her Grace, who could simply say that a necklace was missing, and that an opportunity was to be given to the person who had it in his or her possession to throw it on to the rug."

"I do not think a full minute would be necessary—say, half a minute, and you, for instance, could call off the seconds. If the necklace is not on the rug when the lights are turned on again, then the only thing I can suggest is that the guests are given the chance of submitting voluntarily to a search. It will take a long time, but there is no other way if the thief is to be discovered—that is presuming he is still in the house."

"What do you gentlemen think of Mr.



It was Nirvana, the dancer; and as she stood beneath the light of the door, Tinker strained forward eagerly to miss no single detail of her features. She glanced at him, but with complete indifference.

(See page 7.)

Blake's suggestion?" asked Lord Boscon, turning to the four private detectives.

They nodded in agreement, and one, acting as spokesman for the others, said:

"We might try it, my lord. If it fails then, as Mr. Blake says, the only thing is to ask everyone to submit to a search. If the threat of the police is held out, then I think there won't be any trouble over that part of it."

Lord Boscon nodded.

"It is a most unfortunate contretemps, but it can't be helped. My aunt is deeply grieved over it; but that necklace must be recovered if it is in the house. It is worth, gentlemen, a very large sum of money."

"Now, I shall go through to my aunt at once, and make this suggestion to her. I shall ask you, Mr. Blake, to come with me. You other gentlemen will please get hold of your colleagues and tell them what is about to be done. You might see that everyone is rounded up into the ball-room, and have a look in the different cloak-rooms as well. Everyone, mind you, must be there—that is, with the exception of the servants, with whom we can deal later. Now, come along, please; there is no time to be lost."

From that things moved swiftly.

While the private detectives sought their colleagues, and spread out as a guard to keep an eye on every door on the ground floor, Lord Boscon and Blake returned to the dais, where they found the Duchess of Rayland and her most intimate friends still greatly exercised over the very serious loss which her Grace had suffered.

So carefully had they concealed their

outward manner, however, that not one of the dancers who were passing in a steady stream, seemed to have the slightest suspicion of what had occurred.

In a few words Lord Boscon told his aunt what Sexton Blake had suggested, and her Grace immediately approved of it. She beckoned Blake close to her and said:

"I am obliged to you, Mr. Blake, for lending us your counsel and assistance. You can understand how I feel about this unfortunate business. If it were a piece of less value or importance which was missing I should suffer the loss rather than upset the good people who have been kind enough to come and help my charity. But I think we shall try what you have suggested."

"It can do no harm, your Grace," answered Blake. "I think, if you would just speak to them in the words you have used to me they would understand. At least, those who matter would, and the very few who might take umbrage are not to be considered. I see that Lord Boscon is ready, so, with your permission, I shall speak to the leader of the band and ask him to cease playing."

The duchess nodded her acquiescence, and Blake stepped across to the alcove where the band was seated and requested the leader to cease, as her Grace had an announcement to make. When the dance broke off in the middle it naturally caused all the dancers to turn in that direction to discover the reason. It was then that the duchess rose, and, standing close to the edge of the dais, she held up her hand and made her little speech. It was just a brief statement that a valuable

necklace had disappeared, and that there was reason to believe that it had been stolen. She did not mention that it was her own. Then she expressed her deep regret that such a thing had occurred, and appealed to their sympathy and understanding, finishing by informing them of what steps were about to be taken in order to give the person who might have it a chance to return it.

When she had finished there was a general murmur among the guests, and it is to be said that the great majority were entirely in sympathy with her. Then a big Persian carpet was thrown along the centre of the ball-room floor by four footmen.

"Please, everyone, gather as close to the edge of that rug as possible," announced the duchess. "In a few moments all the lights are going to be turned out, and will remain so for a full half-minute. The seconds will be called slowly and distinctly by Mr. Sexton Blake, whom you see standing beside me. Those who do not know that gentleman personally will know him by repute, and it is at his suggestion that this means should be taken to give the person who may have the necklace an opportunity of returning it. Now I think we are ready."

With those words the duchess lifted her hand, and instantly the butler, who had been put in charge of the switch-board controlling all the lights, pushed up the main switch. Immediately the whole place was plunged in darkness, and there followed a nervous sort of shifting of the body of guests, and here and there a smothered scream from some nervous woman.

But these sounds died away as Sexton Blake, standing on the dais, began to count the moments slowly and distinctly. "One—two—three—four," and so on, timing each one as near to the beat of a second as possible.

Into the teens he went, and then he reached the twenties.

"Twenty-seven—twenty-eight—twenty-nine—thirty!"

"Lights, please!"

At the words the butler at the far end pulled down the switch, and instantly the place was brilliant with light. For a few moments everyone stood blinking under the glare, but straining their eyes to see what might be on the Persian rug.

Sexton Blake stepped down from the dais, walked slowly across the rug until he was close to the spot where the object lay. He bent down and picked it up, and then strode back to the dais. After one glance at it the duchess glanced swiftly at Blake.

"But—but I don't understand, Mr. Blake. This is not—not—"

Blake was looking at what she held—a beautiful rope of pearls which must have been worth a fortune; then his eyes met hers.

"It is certainly not the piece which we hoped to recover, your Grace," he said slowly. "But it seems that another must have been the victim of a theft as well this evening. It is vastly different from the result we hoped for; and now I think the only thing to do is to put before them the alternative which was spoken of."

The duchess was just about to answer when an agitated woman, who had been pushing her way through the crowd, reached the dais.

"My pearls!" she gasped. "I did not miss them until now. How did you know I had lost my necklace? Oh, may I see it, your Grace?"

Her husband—a well-known City man—joined her at that moment, and when both had identified the necklace as their

property, the duchess handed it over to them, Blake having signified that there could be no objection.

Unexpected pearls had materialised out of the darkness—but where were the expected diamonds?

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. After the Ball.



WHILE Blake had been engaged on the matters just related, Tinker had been left with Sir William Chadwin and Billie.

After a little, the baronet saw someone he knew, and moved away, leaving the two young fellows together. Billie was all for making a fresh assault on the buffet; but Tinker, who had scented something was up from the manner in which Blake had gone off with Lord Boscon, suggested that they remained where they were for the time being.

It had come as a complete surprise to Tinker to find that Nirvana was to dance. All the time when the lights were lowered, and her slim, supple form was bending and swaying about the floor, the lad had stood quite motionless, watching her with eyes that saw literally nothing else.

He did not realise anything else in his surroundings until she had disappeared behind the curtains, and even then he acted like one in a trance as he responded mechanically to Billie's enthusiasm.

Once in her course round the room Nirvana had come very close to where Tinker stood, and it then seemed to him that her eyes had met and held his, had fixed on his as if they would command him, and he experienced something like an actual physical shock when at last he could see hers no longer in the gloom.

But he had forced that from his mind when he saw Blake return and walk along to the dais. Tinker watched while his master talked to the duchess, and when he saw Blake go across to speak to the band leader, he knew something was about to happen.

He was not greatly surprised when he heard what the duchess said, and when the lights went out he stood perfectly still, trying to catch the slightest sound that might indicate if the necklace was being thrown on to the rug or not.

But in the thick pile of the Persian carpet it made no sound, and Tinker was as surprised as anyone else when, on the lights going up again, he saw what seemed to be a heap of pearls lying near the centre.

When Blake walked over and picked up the pearls, taking it back to the dais, Tinker caught little Billie Chadwin by the sleeve and dragged him along in the same direction. By dint of worming his way in and under, he managed to get close to the dais by the time the duchess was ready to make her next announcement. He tried to catch Blake's eye, but failed; and then, as he brought his head round slowly, he found himself looking straight into the eyes of Nirvana, the dancer, who was standing so close to him that her arm touched his, and the scent of her perfume drifted up into his nostrils.

She was looking straight at him, and then suddenly she smiled—just the merest parting of the lips; and while

Tinker stood staring stupidly she slipped away. The next he saw of her was at the back of the dais, and he watched her while the duchess made her speech.

Her Grace deplored the necessity of doing what she asked each guest to submit to, but when she made it plain that even her closest friends among the dowagers on the dais insisted that they, too, should be searched, the pill was swallowed with more good temper than it might otherwise have been.

Then Sexton Blake stepped forward, and added that all the gentlemen would please file out through the hall to the drawing-room opposite the ball-room, while the ladies were requested to pass up the staircase to the two large rooms on the first floor. As he finished, two of the dowagers rose and stepped off the dais, announcing that they would lead the way, and in a very few minutes the whole body of guests was in motion.

But Tinker still stuck close to the dais, for he wanted a word with Blake. And just then Blake caught his eye. He beckoned to Tinker, and when the lad managed to get close, he said.

"Stick by me, my lad. I shall need you in the searching. Lord Boscon and I are going to take charge of it. If you can get hold of Sir William, better bring him along, too; and, of course, Billie."

Tinker was nodding his understanding, and about to answer, when suddenly Nirvana stepped on to the dais, and, making a slight curtsy to the duchess, spoke to her.

Close as he was, Tinker could not help but hear what she said. It was not much, only that she begged that the duchess would permit her to go up and submit among the first to be searched as it was imperative that she should get away. It had been a long evening for her, and she was very tired.

Her Grace answered at once that a search in her case was not necessary, as she was dancing when the theft occurred; but if she would not mind it would be, perhaps, better if she underwent a search like all the others. Nirvana insisted, too, that she wished this, and then the duchess put her in the care of one of her friends, who was on her way up.

Tinker watched her while she passed out a side door. Just before she disappeared she again found his eyes, and they seemed to be filled with some meaning which the lad could not fathom.

Blake joined Tinker and Billie at this juncture, and the three pushed a way along to a door near the dais which would allow them to get into the hall through the morning-room to the drawing-room, where the search was to take place.

But even as far down the hall as that the guests had crowded until they filled almost every available space, and the three were still trying to force a way through when, as they passed the bottom of a small secondary staircase, Tinker happened to glance up and saw Nirvana coming down, preceded by a footman and accompanied by the same older girl he had seen leave the Cosmos Theatre with her.

As he reached the ground floor the footman kept apologising, asking for "Gangway, please!" as he piloted his charges towards the back of the hall. They had already submitted to a search, Tinker opined, and were being taken down to the basement so that they could leave by the door in the area-way.

He saw Nirvana pause as she reached
(Continued on page 19.)

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Police Problems of the Far East

Part Six.—Mob Frenzy—and Opium.

China was civilised before Britain had finished with woad as a style of "clothing." Yet it is still swamped with superstition, which gives rise to crime, presenting a knotty problem for the police out there.

IN the intervals of the Eastern police being occupied by the problems I have described—and many others—their attention is diverted by another kind of distraction, which takes them all their time to handle when it occurs, which it does erratically.

It is a sort of epidemic that comes unexpectedly, sweeps over the whole native community, and then subsides as suddenly as it began. But while it lasts, it means extra patrols, late duty, and little rest. This odd sort of Far Eastern police problem is the recurrence of racial scares, or panics.

Once a native scare gets started—and it starts from most trivial and unexplained things, sweeping on in hysteria till mobs are fighting or fear-mad—every other police duty must be dropped until peace is restored.

Superstition accounts for some panics. Both the Malays and Chinese are subject to evil eye and spirit scares. A Chinese may be found running like mad, until he drops from exhaustion, and will explain a devil was after him.

Indians, too, have their susceptibilities. At certain periods of the year, the time of religious festivals, they are more than touchy, and incidents between Moslems and Hindus may easily blossom out into riots.

There is even friction between the Moslem League and the All-Islam Alliance—the local Mohammedan lights, and the followers of the world-propaganda body that has its head in Egypt.

In short, amongst a mixed populace, one race may tread on the toes of another in some accidental way that leads to an astonishing flare-up.

There was an affair while I was out East apparently started by a Chinese in a frenzy of devil-obsession. He ran helter-skelter, raving, into a Malay house, possibly for refuge, or, maybe, blindly, after dusk.

One of the Malays there was "latah," that is, suffering from a curious nervous affliction peculiar to Malays. The form it takes is jerky movements on being startled, and helpless movements in imitation of whatever fixes their attention.

The "latah" Malay was "set off" by the terror-stricken Chinese, and reproduced his antics and his terror.

If anything, this intensified this unfortunate's mad fit that devils were after him, and when he burst out, squawking and squealing, and pursued by the Malay, who unconsciously and helplessly mimicked him, he blundered into other dwellings.

More natives became added to the original couple—panic-stricken Chinese and other "latah" Malays—until a



*The terrible, emaciating effects
of opium smoking are very
apparent here.*

growing group zig-zagged along the streets in a crazy, spinning career, racing and shrieking, and gathering more and still more recruits as it went. Finally it was nothing less than a raving mob.

I do not know with what to compare this sort of contagious frenzy, apparently reasonless, unless to some of the curious seizures of hysteria that rarely occur over here when people get over-excited in religious revival meetings.

This one ended with riot, and there were two reasons for it: (1) The Chinese thought the Malays had bewitched their countryman, and put the devils after him, and therefore went for the Malays; and (2) the Malays thought the Chinese had, by design and intent, sent their people "latah," and went for the Chinese.

THOUGH the Indians settled in these parts are inoffensive, the other Asiatics there—Chinese, Javanese, Arabs, and Malays—look upon them with a suspicion which, not openly shown, sometimes breaks out in trouble of queer origin and odd form.

When the natives get worked up to an actual row, through smouldering trouble they have nursed to themselves, there is an ugly business to quell.

Attacked, the Pathans and Sikhs can fend well for themselves. They are pluckier fighters than the others; they form the watchmen and guards of the estates and buildings around, and are apt to lord it over the others. They are few in number as compared with the other Asiatics, whose tactics, once they get alight, is to swamp them by the weight of a mob.

The Chinese may bring an antipathy against these from their own country. Near the Treaty Ports, the police used are almost entirely Indian Sikhs, who keep order with a very firm hand.

Another fact accounting for the general would-if-I-dare readiness to "heave a brick" at the Indians is the origin of a large number of them in these parts, due to the discharges from a convict settlement. Singapore, Penang, and Malacca were once used as convict stations for India, first by the East India Company, and later by the Indian Government.

Those extraordinarily cunning monsters, the Thugs, who beguiled and strangled victims for blood lust, and could boast of a thousand victims per man, and the Dacoits, too, were sent to Singapore and Malacca from Bengal, with felons from Bombay, Madras, Ceylon, and Burma.

With a very free ticket-of-leave system, these became mingled in the local population, intermarried, and were the progenitors of a great number of the Indians there now.

So it may well be that there is a nervous attitude to the descendants of Thugs and Dacoits, with an inclination to put down most of the unexplained ills to subtle devilries arising from them.

There are periodic dust-ups between Indians and Chinese. One arose from an idea that Indians were poisoning water and food during a typhoid epidemic.

One of the things from which a police chief out East prays to be spared is a rice famine, when bedlam breaks loose. The worst were in 1900 and 1921, but there were narrow escapes in the Federated States last year.

Rice is the mainstay of all the Easterners, the sole food of the coolie class.

The earlier famine was due to floods in Siam, where the biggest supply comes

from, and in China. The second was due to partial spoiling of crops from similar causes; but the huge rise in price was due to a Chinese and Japanese "corner" on the rice market.

Unfortunately, the planters and mining companies (who are the big employers of natives in the Settlements and Malay States) did not foresee the rise, and continued their practice of buying from week to week in ordinary market for their needs.

The big estates and mines far from a town had the practice of running their own stores, from which they supplied food for their labour at practically cost price. Labour has to be looked after, or it could not be obtained.

The same thing applied with the town merchants. The result was that when there was a shortage and the price soared, the native could not afford to buy enough to live. Employers raised wages to meet it, but could not pay beyond a certain point. Many places in consequence had to shut down.

Natives raided merchants and warehouses, and the idea spread that they were being robbed and starved by intent.

Robberies, and attacks on those thought to have hoarded rice, were wholesale, both in the towns and up-country.

The police had a terrible time keeping order among the maddened and famished people. The Government did what it could, in buying up whatever kind of rice was available—even damaged and bruised stocks, meant for chemical works—and distributing it. The authorities even went to the point of commandeering private stocks at market valuation and rationing it out.

YET another periodic scare that is difficult to explain is the head-hunting myth. It is supposed to arise from a superstition deep and obscurely rooted in the East that when big building works are started, such as bridges, dams, or great public offices, the ground spirits have to be propitiated by human sacrifices for the success of the work.

Usually, these head-hunting scares, which happen every few years, coincide with some big Government building or engineering works. The last one in the Straits was in 1924, when the foundations of an immense post-office had been started on the rock of Singapore Harbour, and another big engineering work was in progress to dam a great cup of hill-valleys near Johore for water supply.

The Chinese first started the scare with wild rumours of decapitations of men in public places, and by refusing to send their children to school lest they should be kidnapped for human sacrifice.

Local newspapers were fuddled with letters from all sorts of English-speaking Chinese, ranging from shopkeepers to public men.

Starting in a minor key, asking merely for security measures, and alleging disappearances, these letters became strident, accusing the police of apathy. The newspapers, fearing a panic, showed the letters to the police chiefs, but withheld publication.

One native-owned paper blew the smoulder into a blaze by publishing a list of names and addresses of alleged vanished persons and children, and protests from correspondents that "the police would take no notice of cases reported," suggesting the Government was deliberately collecting material for human sacrifice to the ground spirits.

There followed eight mobbings of

Indians in one day. Two of them were harmless Tamils, who were beaten to death. Six other Indians caught separately were hounded by mad mobs in the streets and half-killed.

This flare was fed by a rumour that same night that a Chinese had been decapitated in full view in the Telok Ayer Market. The "news" ran round with lightning speed, and was reported from a dozen sources. Hot on its heels next day was another—that a native driver of a car had been attacked and spirited away, and the car overturned and burnt.

The editor responsible for the native-owned paper was called before the High Commissioner to substantiate the alarms he had published. A stern police warning was issued of penalties for spreading unfounded reports disturbing the peace, requiring any reports to be notified to the police immediately. For the next few days matters were lively, and the natives in high tension.

WHETHER or not some of these "hates" are started for political reasons I cannot say, but there is, usually at all events, a curious sequel. It was pointed out to me by an influential Malay. He mentioned the coincidence that opium smuggling was usually rampant at the time of such scares. By looking up records, and comparing notes with an official, I verified this observation.

Whether opportunity was taken of the business of the police in a scare to get the stuff through—for these gentry were capable of creating a diversion of the kind for their needs—is not clear.

The opium smuggling problem is a complex one, and to give a clear idea of it I will touch on some of the conditions of the authorised supply.

Opium smoking and the supply of the drug itself is allowed and licensed by the Government in these parts, in much the same way as intoxicants and public-houses are allowed and licensed in the British Isles.

With rare exceptions the Chinese, wherever he is, cannot do without his opium. Though harmful to the white man, the use of it is ingrained in the Chinese by generations of users, and in moderate consumption has no serious effects—no more than whisky or beer in moderation in the European.

British authorities cannot debar opium from the Chinese in the Settlements, for their labour could not keep fit in malarious districts or damp mines without it. But what is a comfort to the Chinese is a disaster to the European.

The Government of the Settlements alone imports the raw opium, as a monopoly, prepares it for consumption, puts it up in packets for sale, and supplies it to licensed dealers. This control not only provides a close check on opium consumption, but brings a high revenue that pays nearly half our Government expenses.

The price is artificially fixed very high for a double reason—to make the habit expensive and discourage excess, and to get revenue and pay for preventive work.

Because of the artificially high price, selling prohibited opium is a very paying game. You see, it is not a case of opium being forbidden, and of working a concealed introduction of the drug into the country at huge risks. It is a case of merely underselling the Government, and this can be done at a big profit. In a way, the Government supply helps the illegal traffickers.

There are heavy penalties for seizures, but smuggling is very difficult to discover except in cases of bulk importations. There is a continual leakage of illegal opium in small lots through the country.

BIG seizures have been made by the harbour police, working in touch with the Monopolies Department, on German, Dutch, Norwegian, and Chinese vessels—more often in the small tonnage craft of the "tramp" kind—from time to time. It seems very hard work for the small staff of the harbour police, however, with their scanty resources in launches.

In some cases captures have been made by watching a boat after it has been docked, and observing the conduct of those who come ashore.

This applied to the Traubmeker, a German barque, where a man was spotted climbing over to slip ashore almost before the port officers had examined her papers. He was not interfered with, but followed.

He was observed to make direct for the town, as if he well knew his way about, and go to a bar, from which presently a boy was sent on a message.

The boy went to a store. After some time the seaman was joined by an Eurasian. They remained in the bar till dusk, when the two went together to the riverside and boarded one of the junks with which, with other small craft, the mouth of the river is crowded. They were there some time.

The Eurasian went back and walked to the Recreation Club, while by dark the seaman left in a small boat and rejoined the steamer.

A young assistant-superintendent of police was hastily communicated with. He at once collected a search party and boarded the vessel. He forbade any member of the crew to leave till permitted. The skipper was made to muster all hands on the after-deck, where they were put under a guard. The rest of the party searched the boat from bridge to bottom—a wearisome business.

In this case the discovery was made that lashed and stowed hammocks were stuffed with raw opium. This led to a more probing examination, which resulted in a big quantity, sewn in oilskin and wrapped in tarpaulin, being found under boarding near the bilge water.

THE other way illicit opium is profitably traded is—though hard to believe—through the Government licensees themselves. The official retail packets are put up in bamboo husk spalls by hand, containing a few pinches—three "hoon" being about seventeen grains—of the prepared stuff. This wrapping is chosen because it is difficult to open without breaking. Perforations are made in the fastening to make it difficult to use again without detection.

Despite this, there is a regular business in buying up these wrappings, from which the infinite patience and ingenuity of the Asiatic manages to extract the contents without much damage.

The receptacles are refilled with contraband opium, and supplied at a cheap rate to bona-fide licensed opium retailers.

Occasionally, tampering with tubes is detected on inspection, but the European staff available for this is too small and busy to watch systematically, while the native officials cannot always be relied on.

One of the richest clues for detection of illicit sale or preparation is when more than the ordinary number of "Chandu-sodden" coolies are observed, as was pointed out to me by a police specialist.

The white man who is a seasoned Easterner cannot mistake the appearance of the native who has been smoking heavily over a long bout. To produce this effect by means of legal opium costs more than a coolie's pay.

Isolated instances prove nothing, probably due to a lucky gamble. Where

there is a preponderance of inert and dreamy-dazed coolies a reason can be sought. This points to the sale of "loose" opium, not the "refilled" sale, since this only gives the licensee extra profit by rogues, and is not cheaper to the consumer. Captures of the loose opium traders are made by shadowing touts who canvass labour gangs and shops for orders.

Occasionally grog-shops and native food hawkers are found handling the refilled variety and selling under official rates, as "safer" than the looser.

There is always the excuse that it is a private supply for friends' convenience, bought from a licensee. There is the registration of purchase. But this does not clear a small man found with a big supply of the costly stuff.

THE work of the harbour police and preventive boats has been simplified of late by the Smyrna fire disaster. Smyrna was the outlet for the Asia Minor supply, and warehouses run by Greeks were destroyed or taken over by Turks. It has also been aided by the stopping of the Indian and Burma export, through British discouragement, since 1914. Despite diplomatic denials, it is known that China has been extending opium growing, and it is from China most of the contraband stuff comes, and hence watch is kept on vessels on return trips from Chinese ports.

Because of this some go straight to Penang, and the opium is transhipped to Chinese coastal vessels, passenger or cargo. Passengers from Penang boats have their luggage strictly searched for this reason on landing in Singapore.

I remember the amazing indignation of a Chinese dignitary, actually an official member of an anti-smuggling committee, who had his baggage opened on deck and thoroughly searched by a "Chinting" (a native inspection official).

What is pernicious in opium consump-



A Chinese coolie enjoying a puff at the opium pipe, on a Chinese junk on the Upper Yangtze River. Note the appliances by his side.

[Photogr. Topical.]

tion in our Settlements is the use of the "dross," or ash, which, owing to the high cost of legal opium, is collected and prepared for smoking again, or sometimes swallowed.

This ash is noxious stuff with a high percentage of the drugs atropine and heroin.

Our authorities try to stop the danger by buying back the dross at quite high prices from dealers, and requiring them to return it. But the stuff is difficult to keep track of, and a lot goes astray.

This leads to yet another illicit drug

industry, and incidentally a further Far Eastern police problem. But these, as I have attempted to convey in these articles, are legion, and there is no space to deal even perfunctorily with the problem of lost dross.

There is one outstanding phase of this fascinating subject yet to be dealt with, however—the traffic in arms. Gun-running is a very prolific source of anxiety to the European police east of Suez, and I will attempt to give something of an idea of this evil next week, in the concluding article of this series.

Cameos of Chinatown

No. 5.

THE RING.

TWO rooms in a riverside tenement have Limehouse Lill and her man. You'll know the rooms; they've got window-boxes that show the broad leaves of geraniums.

For Limehouse Lill is different from the rest. To begin with, she's straight. Her man isn't. That's one of the reasons the East End knows him as Slimy Sam. About as straight as a corkscrew is Sam.

But Lill knows not that her Sam is a crook. Probably because she loves him. Don't ask me why. Thinks Sam as innocent as a plaster saint. He isn't. But he's just about as brittle as a plaster saint so far as his moral stamina is concerned.

Sam has quite a few weaknesses. Beer, for one. Gambling for another. And as to this, a yarn of Chinatown will show.

Limehouse Lill didn't know anything about Sam's gambling. That's where the ring came in.

From Lill's front room window it is possible to sling a bad egg into the window of Ah Fang's lodgings opposite. I say a bad egg, because that is what Lill used when Ah Fang, "way opposite, got fresh and started making kissing noises with those lemon lips of his.

Lill had no ear for music of that sort; she liked Sam too much.

But yellow men who live in Limehouse do not exactly quit the love trail. The bland Ah Fang staged a come-back. He tried it out across the few yards of river-scented air between his window and the one where the geraniums struggled to survive.

Remembering Lill's marksmanship and his dislike of eggs, Ah Fang kept his head under cover while he thrust his hand through the window, holding something which sparkled and glittered.

"Fol you, my lil sugar-plum!" he piped.

Lill saw and gasped. Ah Fang put it down to her joy at sight of such a present. So he followed his arm with his head, and then gently pitched the ring into Lill's room. Lill caught it and vanished. The window slammed.

Ah Fang chalked himself up a point in the love game.

He might have saved himself the trouble had he seen how Lill was taking things. She was staring hard at the ring, which she had recognised as one which Sam had presented to her on their engagement. A dread suspicion was hammering for entry into her brain.

Fearfully she rummaged in the depths of the room's single cupboard until she found a stocking, in the heel of which was a box. She opened it, and revealed—nothing!

Then Lill sat down and cried. That box had contained the few trinkets she possessed. And they were gone. Sam must have sold them. He had. Gambling needs money.

So Lill stopped crying, and started to think. And she thought of Yeng Ho who

lived with Ah Fang, and who made nightly voyages to a certain house in the Causeway. He would be leaving soon. Limehouse Lill put on a shawl, in which she completely enveloped her head.

And some time later, when little Yeng Ho pattered off to the Causeway, the woman with the shawl followed in his wake. She was close on his heels when he ambled through the back shop of one Mah Fo, dope dealer, white slave trafficker, and the hub of the gambling ring in Chinatown.

Lill got through to an underground room where men and women were playing faro and fan-tan. There she watched until she saw that, when a player finished his cash, he crossed to where Yeng Ho sat. And Yeng Ho was jingling a bagful of coins, which Yeng paid out in exchange for the most varied of personal adornments—rings, tiepins, pocket-cases, lockets.

Nimble witted is Limehouse Lill. She saw through it quicker than it takes a Chin to twirl an opium pill on the end of a yen-hok.

Ah Fang was the unofficial pawnbroker and moneylender of Chinatown. When faro and fan-tan took all the gambler had, he could get more money by hawking some valuable to Ah Fang's agent, the little Yeng Ho.

So Limehouse Lill found how and why her ring had gone.

All this I learnt when the police raided the den on Lill's tip.

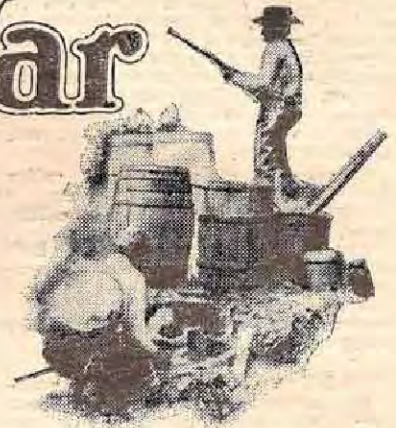
She did it to save her man. Poor Limehouse Lill! Sam promptly found another gaming joint. He's at it again.

The Rum War

PART FIVE.

AT GRIPS WITH THE MOONSHINERS.

The catching of moonshiners is anything but a picnic. They are hard cases, wonderful shots, and act their belief that the American Government is a persecuting tyrant.



IN a sense, America has always had a rum war.

Long before the coming of Prohibition, the United States Government was fighting the people who made whisky and other spirits illegally, thus avoiding payment of the tax on distilled liquors.

It is fighting them still, in the same fashion that it has done for a hundred years. But, now that spirits are more than ever taboo, the fight is intensified to an enormous degree.

The manufacture of home-made whisky is held, by certain communities, to be something in the nature of a birthright. They regard interference with their traditional distilling as a persecution. Governments who get a revenue out of distillers, and keep prices of spirits high and sales low, do not appeal to them.

The chief of these communities are to be found in the more out-of-the-way parts of Ireland, and in certain districts of America. The Southern States of Kentucky and Tennessee hold most of them, but Alabama and Georgia are not without them, either. Isolated cases of illicit distilling are, of course, often reported from other places—there was one in the East End of London quite recently—but in the places mentioned the making of "moonshine" whisky is a regular occupation with quite large numbers of people.

Why it is called moonshine whisky is rather hard to say, unless the term has something to do with night-work, and hints at the necessary secrecy being obtained by working under the moon's pale beam. If this is the case, it is something of a misnomer, for in the Southern States already named the stuff is made, and all the work done, by broad daylight.

The moonshiners, as they are called, have a far better protection against discovery than mere darkness. Their homes—and their illicit stills—are set in the midst of wild, inaccessible mountain country, and shrouded in thick woods. Also, in these latter days of Uncle Sam's embarrassing interest in their activities, these natural defences are made doubly sure by various systems of alarms and signals in case of danger.

Federal Prohibition Chief Adkins, whose job it was to cope with the moonshiners, once gave details of a case in which his own attempts to round up a party of them were hindered.

He and his assistants were working amongst the mountains of Lincoln County, and had received word from a local man—a "spotter"—that a group of moonshiners had their headquarters on a certain high mountain.

The officials journeyed to the mountain, and saw, perched at the very top, a small hut. There was no way up to it save over exposed stretches of rocky ground, on which they would be in full view of anybody who happened to be in the hut, so, as there was nothing else for it, they commenced the ascent.

About half-way up the clanging of a bell broke out.

"WE finally arrived at the top," reported Chief Adkins, "and found an old woman living there. She had sounded the alarm. We asked why she had sounded the bell, and she replied it was to call the hands to dinner.

"No one came to dinner; but in a rocky gulch far down the other side of the mountain, secreted beside an ice-cold spring, we located a fifty-gallon still and several gallons of mash."

This naive and rather humorous system of alarm-bells, he found, was common to that part of the country. Observation-posts, such as the one described, are stationed at all high points of vantage near illegal whisky-stills, and bells are rung whenever a stranger is seen approaching.

A stranger, in that wild and sparsely populated country, is naturally assumed to be someone whose business it is to

interfere with the local industry—and usually that assumption is quite correct. It must appeal mightily to the sense of humour of the watchers to assure the Preventive men, with tongues in cheek and guileless faces, that the bell was rung to call the men home to dinner, or some such excuse, well knowing—and knowing that the Preventive men knew, too—that the bell had sent the moonshiners scattering for their hiding-places in the woods.

After being tricked thus openly, it can afford the whisky-sleuths but second-rate satisfaction to smash up the stills and other apparatus when found, instead of to catch the men themselves in the act.

NOT that the catching of moonshiners is anything of a picnic. Far from it. The folk of these parts are really "hard cases"; they are desperate, and armed to a man. Their mountain training makes them wonderful shots, and they never hesitate to use their rifles and shot-guns on the body of a Revenue officer, if cornered, especially in view of their soul-deep conviction that they have a perfect right to make whisky if they want to. Their fathers made it, and their fathers' fathers. They have been brought up in the creed that the Government is a persecuting tyrant.

Moreover, the moonshiners look the part. In the mass they are far from prepossessing, and, living on the outskirts of civilisation as they do, the niceties of city ways in the matter of clothes and appearance do not worry them.

Battered hats of straw or felt, a shirt, and a pair of trousers hitched up with a belt, is about all the clothing they find necessary in their warm climate down south. Sometimes they possess boots; often they don't. And their garments, such as they are, are soiled and tattered. The only thing about a moonshiner which is spick and span is his rifle or shot-gun, and that is never out of hand-reach.



"What's yer business, stranger?" would be the prompt challenge of this Georgia moonshiner, as he sits, with gun ready, in the shadow of his still.

Our picture gives a good idea of one of these gentry, a native of Georgia, old in the trade of the whisky-still, sitting on guard alongside his apparatus.

Despite their rough ways and uncouth exterior, these men of the southern mountains are marvellously loyal to one another. The Southern States is the region of feuds, but even lifelong enemies will drop their hereditary quarrels and band together against the common enemy, the Revenue man.

There is a tale, dating from pre-Prohibition days, of one of them who threw away his life rather than allow an associate to walk into danger.

It was a man named Gus Heddon who, caught one day in the very act of working at his still, was held up at the pistol's point by a couple of Revenue men. Before the situation could develop further the moonshiner saw one of the local men coming along the path that led to the shack where the raid was taking place. Moreover, the two officials saw him, too.

"Raise a shout, and I'll shoot!" warned one of them, keeping his pistol trained at the captive's head. The warning was no bluff; Gus Heddon knew that.

The man approaching was no great friend of his; indeed, they were members of enemy families, and his visit could have been in no amicable spirit. But he was a moonshiner, a local.

Gus shouted; the next instant he was dead.

THERE is only one person the moonshiner hates more than the Revenue man, and that is the spotter. And, truth to tell, he has good reason for hating him, for the spotter is the copper's nark of the mountains.

The work of ferreting out illicit stills is made especially difficult for the city-bred Government official because of the nature of the country over which he has to hunt for his captures. He has, in consequence, to rely for much of his information on the activities of local men who know the ground and who are willing to sell their own people for thirty pieces of silver.



Copper stills, taken from an underground "plant," with the tripod elevator used to hoist "moonshine" to the surface.

He does most of his work at night, does the spotter, and follows the clues his native woodsman lore points out. During the daytime, when the whisky-makers are at work, it would be dangerous to show himself, so he crawls into some safe hiding-place among the rocks and brushwood, and sleeps.

Should it ever be his misfortune to be discovered, by night or day, and to be recognised by the moonshiners for what he is, the spotter has to fight for his life.

His reports, taken to the Government men, are acted on by them, and the stills whose existence he has discovered are raided.

The whisky-making apparatus is, of course, carefully concealed by its owners, despite its bulk, but, because of one of the essentials for manufacturing the whisky there is always one tell-tale clue—a stream.

Whisky, as is perhaps generally known, is made from various grains—

maize or rye are generally used in the South—which, by various processes of steeping and boiling in water, produce a fermenting mixture called "mash."

This mixture is heated in a copper still, which is connected by means of a tube with a receiving-chamber into which the distilled liquor drops. To effect this, however, it is necessary to let the tube pass through a stream of cold water, and as the whisky-makers of the mountains haven't got water laid on from the main, they have to use Nature's supply at first hand. It is this which usually leads to their undoing.

Incidentally, it may be added, that this same water-clue has often been the undoing of moonshiners in the cities, for when illicit stills are suspected it is the practice of the detectives to obtain the aid of the waterworks officials at night, and listen by means of their special instruments to the sound of water running through the mains.

If this is continuous to any abnormal extent the main is again "tapped" at various points until the sound becomes stronger, and at last the actual house with the water running is located. Nearly all illicit stills in cities are located by this method.

IN one case—not down South this time, but as near New York as Rhode Island, especially elaborate arrangements were made to hide the existence of a large whisky-making plant.

The place was well removed from habitations, but was within easy reach of Bristol, Rhode Island, in the heart of the rum-running district. A large concrete chamber had been constructed below ground in a field, and the stills and other plant were installed in it.

The entrance to the underground retreat was by means of a hole in a stone wall, carefully screened by bushes.

A wooden tripod was used for lowering the bags of grain, and for hoisting the barrels of whisky that resulted. Everything was of the best in the matter of equipment, and it seemed that this subterranean fastness could go on producing "bootleg" for ever without being found out.

But it was found out—and the clue to it was that the Prohibition agents noticed that in wet weather a certain area of the field was always dry. This was, as they afterwards confirmed, due to the presence of the fires which heated the "mash" down below.



The largest still yet captured. It had a capacity of 2,000 gallons. On extreme right, Prohibition Director Simons. The others are "mourners."

(Photo: Keystone.)

The accompanying picture shows the apparatus which was raised to the surface by the "Dry Agents" in the raid which wiped out for ever the moonshiners' hopes of a fortune. A large quantity of liquor was confiscated, and the plant destroyed.

The Federal authorities, who are not only working the specialist districts of the South, but are paying due attention to the problem of illicit distilling in other States as well, have huge and constantly increasing captures to their credit.

The largest still ever confiscated was located at Waldorf, Maryland, and is shown in the illustration. It had a capacity of 2,000 gallons, and the bootleg whisky it was capable of producing would, at Prohibition prices, sell at sufficient profit to make a man rich in a month.

The plant in this case was owned by a syndicate, so it is not possible to say how much the respective shareholders made out of it. But in another instance,

arrested on a charge of having been working three illicit stills in her house, the evidence being in the stills themselves and a large quantity of the finished product. The size of the apparatus indicated that about fifty gallons could be made every day.

It should be added that not only was Mrs. B—the first woman in the United States to be taken on this charge, but that she was actually the leader and brains of the enterprise.

It is in "the good old Southern States" that the good work goes on most briskly, however. The zealous servants of Uncle Sam have been busy down there, and have found good scope for their activity.

In Alabama more than 5,000 stills have been accounted for; in Tennessee over 4,000, and in Kentucky and Louisiana nearly 3,000 and 2,000, respectively. In one year only—1924—no less than 2,000 were captured in the State of Georgia, together with eighteen thousand gallons of whisky and nearly

FROM ALL QUARTERS.

A FALSE REPORT.

Boys will be boys. The latest diversion of these energetic young animals is somewhat ingenious and amusing—till it is found out.

This is how it was played: A motorist was speeding along a quiet country road, when he heard a loud bang.

"Huh! Tyre gone!" he muttered disgustedly, as he applied the brakes and pulled up with a jerk. Alighting from the car, he proceeded to find out which tyre it was that had let him down.

Strangely enough, however, all tyres were sound. Everything else seemed all right, too, so the puzzled driver resumed his seat and hurried on.

He forgot all about the mystery of the unburst tyre till the next day, when he happened to be driving with a friend and the thing occurred again in precisely the same way.

This time, however, the passenger, looking back along the road was lucky enough to see the cause of the startling report.

What he saw was a small boy, hiding behind a hedge, with a grin of fiendish delight on his face, clutching a toy pistol. It was the firing of this weapon, which exactly imitated the bursting of a tyre, that had been causing so many mysterious annoyances to motorists in the district, and, incidentally, much joy to the owner.

A BANDIT ON THE DOLE.

A would-be bandit in San Francisco had the shock of his life the other day.

He was walking along a dark street, looking for a likely person from whom to extract a fat wallet, when he noticed Mrs. Colby. She looked prosperous.

"Stop!" snarled the robber. "Out with your purse, before you get a bullet!"

"Nothing of the kind!" replied the undaunted lady. "I shall certainly not give up my purse. A dollar is quite enough for you." With which remark the good lady calmly dipped into her purse, took out the said dollar, and handed it out to the gunman.

So staggered was he by the daringness of this victim who flouted him so calmly that the bandit meekly took the dollar, allowing the lady to go her way unmolested.

CONVICTS OFFER A REWARD.

Inmates of the State prison at Rockland, Maine, U.S.A., surprised the governor of that institution recently by offering a reward for the capture of a prisoner who had escaped from there.

The man who made his getaway was a "trusty," one of those men who, under the new system of prison reform in that State, was allowed certain privileges.

His comrades were so incensed at the escape, which reflected on their own honour, and which might result in the curtailment of these humane prison rules, that they subscribed between themselves the sum of one hundred dollars, and offered it as a reward for the recapture of the culprit.

The prison governor was so surprised and pleased at this move on the part of the convicts he ruled, and their evident sincerity about the affair, that he himself offered a further hundred dollars for the return of the missing man.

A FEW FIGURES.

Statistics are usually dull, and nobody can visualise exactly what a million means, but in spite of these twin facts, here are a few figures in connection with Prohibition in the United States.

Most of them have a string of noughts trailing after, and though the size of the colossal totals may be hard to grasp, it is plain enough that the effort to stamp out liquor smuggling in America is no twopenny-halfpenny affair.

ARRESTS for violation of Volstead laws during three years (1922-24)	177,000
SENTENCES passed aggregate, in years, nearly	7,000
FINES during 1922-24 dollars	18,000,000
HAVIEST PENALTY in any one case was 21 years' imprisonment and fine of dollars	21,000
PAYMENT to the U.S. Treasury by Prohibition authorities in one year only (1923) amounted to dollars	5,000,000
COST AND PROFIT on a case of Scotch whisky:—	
Delivered on ship in English port	£ 2 10 0
Freight, insurance, etc.	10 0
Sold to rum-runners off coast for	4 10 0
Profit to shipper	1 10 0
Cost in inland towns, to consumer	12 0 0
LIQUOR SEIZED during three years (1922-24) galls.	39,000,000
MOTOR CARS seized during the year 1924	5,314
BOATS SEIZED from bootleggers during 1924, over	500
VALUED at dollars	15,500,000
PRISONERS taken	2,000
SPENT by U.S. government to stop smuggling during year 1924 dollars	22,500,000
MONEY seized by Prohibition unit during 5 years (1920-24) dollars	47,000,000

where a still was raided down in Kentucky which had a daily output of only 225 gallons, it was estimated that the half-dozen owners cleared up thirty thousand dollars in two weeks—£1,000 each.

This still was operated under the guise of a summer camp, and was situated in a cottage only a hundred yards or so from a main highway, along which there is constant motor traffic.

Prohibition agents themselves had passed the place scores of times, and must have been very surprised when "from information received," they raided the innocent-looking cottage and found it almost entirely filled with distilling plant.

DESPITE danger of arrest, women are sometimes found sharing the excitements and profits of moonshining. And, in these days of feminism, one need not be surprised to find that women even sometimes lead the men at their own game.

A moonshining clean-up at Springfield, Massachusetts, revealed the fact that a Mrs. Vittoria B— was the leading spirit in the venture. With her husband and two other men she was

2,000,000 gallons of the "mash" from which it is made.

Figures are rather hard to grasp, and don't convey much, anyway; but the ones we have quoted will at least show that the forces of Prohibition have not been idle. The value of the plant and the liquor taken in this one branch of the rum war alone must run into millions of pounds.

The votaries of Volstead are in earnest. In spite of danger, difficulty, and discouragement from without, and the insidious cancer of graft and corruption from within, they are making headway.

The campaign has been speeded up. The war against the Demon Rum is a war to the death. It has often been said that Prohibition is making the United States a nation of drunkards, and that her people will never be made dry.

Perhaps, and perhaps not. Only the future can say. Meantime, if perseverance and patience can achieve it, the Eighteenth Amendment will no longer be more honoured in the breach than the observance, and a feat of legislation will be achieved such as has never been seen in the world before.

THE END.

A POLICEMAN'S PROBLEMS

By S. T. James.



A "copper" can't please everybody, any more than the rest of us, but many of life's little perplexities for him arise from trying to.

THE policeman employed in the Provinces has a task that is full of pitfalls.

To see him upon his beat, resplendent in a good uniform, and to know that his pay averages £4 weekly, is to imagine the job a sinecure. Disadvantages such as night duty and bad weather, and the monotony of touring a fixed number of streets, seem trifling.

Yet a peep behind the scenes would cure many an aspirant of his longings, and would kill the envy of many a thousand.

The old song says that "taking one consideration with another, the bobby's job is not a happy one." Thirty years ago every provincial policeman would agree very emphatically.

In those days physique was all that

approved by his superiors, and in due course he stood in the witness-box repeating his evidence.

To the general astonishment, the magistrate read him quite a homily upon his "duty." "Your job is to prevent such things happening, not to watch them happen and then prosecute!" the magistrate observed.

Yet it is obvious, surely, that if the police are for preventive purposes only, the wrongdoer can go ahead with impunity, knowing that he will never be convicted even if he is occasionally thwarted.

Pleasing the magistrates is at times a little difficult. Some few occupants of the bench have been known to show prejudice against police evidence. One such individual had before him an offender charged with stealing a pair of new boots. Looking very wise, this modern Solomon exhorted the police-officer to be very careful indeed in answering questions.

"Now, my man, think well!" he urged impressively. "Did the defendant take off his old boots before he put the new boots on?"

It took the court usher quite a time to restore order, but it took the magistrate much longer to live down the ridicule his question brought him.

ANOTHER magistrate in a South Yorkshire town is well known for his prejudice against the police, and for his inconsistency in dealing with them.

His house stood in extensive grounds, and while he was away a constable was supplied with keys, and instructed to examine the place if anything suspicious was noticed.

On the night before that on which the owner was due back, Robert saw a light upon the ground floor at about 2 a.m. Scenting a capture, he moved cautiously inside. The light was switched off; someone in stockinged feet appeared for a moment silhouetted in the dining-room doorway.

Robert grappled promptly, and for a time there was a "rough house." Then, victorious at last, the policeman switched on his own electric torch and saw the white, furious face of the magistrate!

The row was tremendous, and for a time Robert seemed likely to lose his job. The house owner had returned a day early, and the burden of his complaint was that the policeman should have challenged him instead of attacking.

Two years later, the same policeman saw a suspicious light in the same house; instead of making cautious investigations, he strode to the front door

and challenged. Out went the light, and from a room above someone inquired as to what was "the matter." Investigation showed that the house had been burgled very thoroughly, and that the miscreant had escaped through the window whilst the policeman was knocking at the door!

"You should have grabbed him while there was a chance!" the magistrate wailed.

One of the most unpleasant tasks with which a young policeman can be confronted is that of touring the doss-houses of city slums. This is done at night, and is both depressing and dangerous. The officer reads out to his men names and descriptions of people who are "wanted," and then a search party of two or three is selected.



"... exhorted the police officer to be very careful indeed."

mattered—brains were discounted. In consequence, most policemen found themselves bullied and downtrodden, the scapegoat of all kinds of malpractice. They were poorly paid and heavily worked, and were often expected to take unreasonable risks.

To-day, the standard of educational ability is much higher. The police are given better prospects and better treatment. Gone for ever are the times when a constable on point duty dared not hold up the carriages of the wealthy lest the influence of the occupants be used against him.

To combine the prevention and detection of crime in a manner satisfactory to superior officers, to the public, and to the magistrates, is by no means a simple task.

A few weeks ago, a provincial policeman witnessed a breach of the licensing laws. His report of the incident was



"... saw a suspicious light."

Entering the filthy, rickety places, the policeman meets scores, perhaps hundreds of the dregs of humanity; men and women alike, lost to all sense of decency and self-respect. An arrest is hazardous; these people are like cornered rats, and will fight, mob-like, with bottles and sticks.

Nor is identification without its risks. In a Yorkshire town a youthful officer found a man who in every way resembled a notorious jewel thief; the most conclusive evidence was that of an old scar, two inches long, above the left eye. He arrested this man, only to find later on that the real thief had been caught elsewhere.

Advised by a shady solicitor, the man with the scar threatened to commence an action for damages, and it was in an effort to obtain the solicitor's preliminary fees that he came definitely to grief.

He was seen late one night in suspicious circumstances, and though he

carried neither bag nor bundle, his figure had changed remarkably. Instead of being slim, he was bulky to the point of awkwardness.

When stripped, he was found to be wearing eight stolen shirts, one on top of another, whilst from his pockets a nice assortment of watches and rings was produced.

He had robbed a pawnshop, intending to start an action against the police with the money obtained from his "fence."

Every policeman is at times confronted with problems that would tax the brains of a Sexton Blake. Fortunately, mistakes are proportionately rare, but there have been such.

One poor woman who was arrested as drunk and locked up died in the cells, when a visit to the surgery might have saved her life.

She had been found staggering along the streets, reeking of spirits, and admitted having just emerged from a public-house.

At the inquest it was explained that the woman called at the tavern for a little brandy, complaining that she felt ill. Most of the brandy was spilled down her blouse, and on emerging from the public-house, almost helpless, she would naturally smell strongly of the spirits.

Medical testimony showed that the policeman's mistake was not unnatural, but the unfortunate affair gave emphasis to the necessity for very great care in dealing with an apparently obvious case.

A POLICEMAN'S duty can be very unpleasant at times. There was a young officer in Derbyshire who seemed bound to get on. He was clever, industrious, and sober; a deacon of the local Presbyterian church. Yet there came a night when he found his own minister the worse for drink and had to choose between duty and his church.

He preferred his duty, but the ensuing scandal ruined the church and did irreparable damage amongst the youth of the neighbourhood. The minister had been immensely popular and well respected, and this was his first lapse, but it cost him reputation and position. Many people said openly that the policeman, like Nelson, should have turned his blind eye on the scene.

Promptitude of action is essential to the successful policeman, yet there must be coupled with it shrewdness and sound judgment. All sorts of tales are told by all sorts of people, and to distinguish the true from the false is not always easy. No policeman likes to discover a mare's nest, yet often he has to risk this for the sake of a probable case.

For instance, a horse and trap had been stolen in Leeds one day. To a Sheffield policeman next day there came a servant-girl who said that this outfit was to be found in the stable of a slum public-house near by. The thieves, however, were on the point of departure.

Calling the only colleague within reach, the policeman set off for the tavern indicated, and, sure enough, a horse and trap stood there, both answering the necessary description. Conscious, however, that scores of horses and traps looked just the same, the policeman decided to question the landlord before making trouble.

The landlord could not help, so the senior officer tackled the two "owners" of the trap—men with what the police call "six-month" faces, meaning that their visages were so evil as to pre-judge even a magistrate.

"I've a warrant for you!" the senior

officer remarked quietly, entering the bar. "Your horse and trap was stolen from Leeds yesterday."

Instantly the two thieves sprang up. One grabbed a beer-bottle, the other dived for a poker. Sizing up the situation, the policeman risked the biggest bluff of his life.

"Quite useless!" he asserted coldly. "The house is surrounded!"

For a few tense seconds doubt struggled with rage; then there walked into the room the second policeman, who had been outside, and who was growing uneasy.

The psychological effect of his entrance at that precise moment was overwhelming. The thieves submitted tamely to the handcuffs, and were in due course convicted.

At the trial, it transpired that they were well known "violence" men who had several times suffered imprisonment for assaulting the police!

The arresting of criminals is often a highly dangerous business. One officer followed his man to the top deck of a tramcar, and during the struggle that ensued, both combatants fell to the road below. The thief was underneath and suffered worst, but the officer was in hospital for months.

Occasionally the provincial policemen



wearing eight stolen shirts,
one on top of another.

have to usurp the functions of the detective, donning disguise. In one town recently half a dozen sturdy officers were dressed up as sandwich-board men, and in this outfit they paraded the streets for days in an effort to locate and check an epidemic of street-betting. The ruse succeeded admirably, too.

"Plain clothes" policemen are not uncommon in the North. They parade the streets and make various inquiries upon their special "beat," without the drawbacks associated with the blue uniform. A uniform often frightens many people into silence, and much additional information can sometimes be obtained by an officer in private dress.

There is, of course, a humorous as well as a tragic side to the policeman's life. The "crank" who complains of Anarchists and Bolsheviks, of Red Plots and undiscovered murders, grows comical when well known.

The young and nervous policeman, new to night duty, is also funny to his experienced colleagues. Usually they contrive to pull his leg very effectively, and a popular method is to put him on a beat where there is a donkey at large.

The noises sometimes made by a donkey during the still hours are appalling—only those who have heard them can appreciate the effect.

Law Talks.—No. 42.

The Law of Lodgers.

THE tenant of a house, or part of a house, who puts a few sticks of furniture into a room and lets it as a furnished apartment frequently manages to rake in more profit that way than does his landlord. The unfortunate lodger has to pay far more than he can afford, probably, for that "furnished" accommodation; and mostly he puts up with it because he thinks he has no redress.

There has been a brisk succession of prosecutions in the courts lately with this furnished rooms ramp, and magistrates have shown much practical sympathy with the oppressed lodgers. The swindling tenants have been compelled to reduce their charges to something nearer a reasonable amount, and in many cases to refund some of the extorted cash.

The magistrate has the power to fix a fair rent, which is usually based on what might be taken as a normal profit plus twenty-five per cent. Many landlords and tenants letting furnished rooms have hitherto imagined that the Rents Restriction Act of 1920 did not in the least concern them. They have forgotten, or perhaps never heard of, Section Nine, which limits the excess profit as mentioned above.

A lodger in an unfurnished room escapes much of the protection afforded to ordinary lodgers by the Rents Restriction Act if he receives attendance. The charlady whisks a duster around his room, and the tenant, or landlady, sends him up an early morning cup of tea.

Unlike the lodger who neither gets attendance nor uses the "owner's" furniture, he can be told to clear out at any time. The entirely independent and self-supporting lodger cannot thus be turned out. A court order is necessary to effect his removal if he doesn't want to quit, and all sorts of explanations have to be entered into before that court order can be obtained.

If he overlooks the little matter of the rent, the unfurnished and unattended lodger's goods and chattels may be distrained on to the amount owing. They stand in the same danger also when his landlord, who is a tenant only, gets in arrears with his rent. The real landlord puts the brokers in, and if the amount owing to him is sufficiently large, everything in the house may be seized.

Which is extremely hard on the lodger, or sub-tenant, who has kept his rent paid up to date. So the law shelters him to the extent of upholding his claim for the return of the furniture seized. The lodger must apply to the brokers in writing, stating all details, giving a list of his own furniture, and producing proof that his own rent is paid up to date.

His furniture must then be returned immediately. But if any of his rent is owing, his landlord's landlord is fully entitled to keep back some of the goods to level up the general debt.

Many difficulties that crop up in the ordinary way between lodger and landlord or tenant might never occur if some agreement were entered into from the beginning. The matter of notice to quit, for example. In the absence of any agreement, the general rule is that a week's notice must be given when the rent is paid weekly, and a month's when paid monthly. The week's notice can legally take effect from any day of the week, irrespective of whether the lodger took his rooms on a Friday or a Monday.

TINKER'S SECRET

(Continued from page 10.)

the foot of the stairs and glance up and down the hall. Then suddenly her eyes fell on him, and as they did so Tinker could almost have believed that they expressed a quick relief. At any rate, she held his gaze for a few moments, and then, ignoring the pathway the footman was clearing, she pressed deliberately along towards where Tinker stood. Blake, trying to force a passage in another direction, did not see her, and Tinker could not understand what her purpose could be until she was close to him.

Then, as she was close beside him, she yielded a little to the swaying of the crowd until she was forced in close against the lad.

"Come to the Cosmos again," she breathed.

With that, she slipped away, the footman having seen her step aside and made another passage for her. Then she was gone, and Tinker tried to push along in Blake's wake.

It was just then that he dived his hand into the pocket of his dinner-jacket, searching for his handkerchief.

His fingers encountered a pair of gloves which he had thrust in there early in the evening; then, beneath the gloves, they encountered something hard.

Now, Tinker knew that there should be nothing else in that pocket but the gloves and a handkerchief. Therefore he was puzzled as to what the hard object could be, and as his fingers rubbed over it he grew still more intrigued; for he could not make out what it was.

He was on the point of pulling it out to see, when the press suddenly eased in front of him, and lurched through a doorway into the morning-room.

Blake shot out a request for him and Billie to hurry, and strode along towards the door which would give them admittance to the drawing-room, where they should already have taken up their posts.

The room was quite empty, but for a footman on duty just inside the door by which they had entered; so, as they crossed to the other portal, Tinker brought out the object which he had felt in his pocket.

He held it up while he walked, and then, as he saw what it was, a cold chill shot down his spine.

He thrust the thing hurriedly back into his pocket, and could not resist turning his head to see if the footman had noticed.

But that person had his back turned, and Blake and Billie, both being in front of him, had noticed nothing.

Tinker's eyes were very serious as he entered the brilliantly-lit drawing-room where, behind a large screen at one end, the male guests were passing, while Lord Boscon and two of the private detectives touched their pockets or, as in most cases, looked on while each man turned the pocket out.

The search could not be very thorough under such conditions, and none knew that better than Blake. He had hoped that the first attempt in the ball-room would bring the necklace to

light, but while it had revealed the startling fact that there had been another theft, the mystery of the disappearance of the diamond string belonging to the duchess was as great as ever.

Most of the men took the thing in good part, although there were some, mostly grumpy old fellows, who took umbrage at what they termed an indignity. There were one or two, as well, who displayed obvious nervousness when the hands of the detectives touched them, and here and there Blake's keen eyes spotted a suspicious character who should never have been permitted to enter the house. In this instance, he signed to the detectives to do the searching, but the time passed, and the line of guests grew shorter and shorter, with no sign of the necklace.

It was late when it was over. Naturally the whole business had upset any idea of continuing the ball, and as each guest was released from the drawing-room he got his hat and coat as quickly as possible, and, if he had escorted wife, or daughter, or any other lady, he sought her out and departed; if he had come alone he passed out immediately.

Then came the turn of the servants, which was as abortive as the other had been, and, finally, the searchers themselves—the private detectives, Blake and Tinker, and even Lord Boscon submitted. But this was more or less a perfunctory patting of the pockets which revealed nothing, and then Blake made his way back to the ball-room where the Duchess of Rayland was seated alone, but for two intimate friends.

Blake expressed his deep regret that they had failed, and advised her Grace to place the matter in the hands of Scotland Yard without delay. She informed him that she would telephone before she retired; and then, looking at Blake, she said:

"Just what do you think, Mr. Blake? I would rather have your advice than that of Scotland Yard."

"It is a matter for Scotland Yard, your Grace," answered Blake earnestly. "No time should be lost in having the police net thrown out. It will be a most difficult matter for anyone to dispose of those diamonds, but, on the other hand, the first thing to do is to prevent them from being passed through a large number of hands. It is in that way that they will be lost sight of more quickly than in any other."

"As for my opinion, I do not know what to say, for I have formed nothing definite. It would seem that the thief must have managed to leave the house before the doors were closed. That there were thieves present to-night we know from the result of our first plan. If we had not acted as soon as we did the person who stole the rope of pearls from Mrs. Jevison would have stood a good chance of getting away with it; for it seems she did not notice her loss until she saw me pick the rope from the rug. It is a most regrettable affair, and I shall be happy to do anything in my power to assist in the recovery of the necklace."

"Thank you, Mr. Blake. Would you be willing to lend your aid to the Scotland Yard officials?"

"Certainly, your Grace, if they wish it."

"And I may tell them so?"

"Most assuredly."

"Thank you, Mr. Blake. I am indeed very grateful for all you have done to assist me to-night. Here comes Boscon now. I will ask him to tele-

phone to Scotland Yard, and he will probably communicate with you to-morrow. In the meantime, if anything does occur to you I know you will come or telephone."

"Your Grace can depend on that. I shall go over every point in my mind, and if I hit on something I shall get in touch with Lord Boscon at once."

She gave him her fingers and smiled pleasantly at Tinker and Bobbie. Then Blake retired, picking up Sir William in the hall, and in a few minutes all four were standing on the steps waiting while a footman whistled up their car.

They drove first to the hotel in the Strand where Sir William and his son were staying, and Blake made a provisional appointment for lunch with the baronet the next day. But he pleaded that it was too late to go in for any refreshment, so after saying good-night they drove on to Baker Street.

They were both pretty well fagged by the time they reached home, and as soon as they entered the consulting-room Blake said:

"You seem unusually quiet, my lad. I hope that attack you had at the theatre was nothing serious. Have you a temperature?"

"No, gov'nor," protested Tinker. "I am quite all right."

"Well, you had better turn in at once. It is past three o'clock. We will discuss to-night's affair in the morning."

"Right-ho, gov'nor. Good-night!"

"Good-night, young 'un! Turn in at once."

Tinker went along to his room, and as he entered his hand went once more to the side-pocket of his dinner-jacket. He switched on the second light over the high table, and, standing there, he bent his gaze over the object which he held.

In the meantime, Sexton Blake had thrown off his coat and hat and had seated himself at his desk to run over the envelopes which had come by the evening post. In doing so he caught sight of a telegram, which he tore open. It referred to a matter that needed an immediate answer, so he drew a block of telegram-forms towards him and wrote out a message.

"I'll tell the lad to get this off first thing," he muttered as he rose.

He passed out of the consulting-room and along in the direction of Tinker's bed-room. As he neared it he saw a slit of light, for the lad had not closed the door tightly, and, as is natural, the brightness attracted his gaze.

The footfall of his light-shod feet on the carpet of the corridor was noiseless. Blake had no intention to spy—or, indeed, any reason to do so. His eyes were merely turned casually towards the illuminated foot or so of space. He walked on past it, and his mouth was just opening to say "Good-night!" when he checked himself, startled and surprised—almost unbelieving of what he had seen in that one fleeting instant as he passed the door.

It had been but the vision of a flash—a view seen and cut off in less than a second by his passage across the space that made visible the room beyond. It was like the snapping of a camera's focal-plane shutter, a momentary sight, and then blackness.

And in that moment he had seen Tinker—his beloved, trusted assistant—standing under the glare of the electric light, with the diamond and sapphire pendant of the duchess' necklace in his hand!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. On Tinker's Trail.



It was certainly not a very lively pair which met at breakfast at Baker Street the morning after the Duchess of Rayland's charity ball.

Sexton Blake did not go to bed until after five o'clock, although Tinker did not know that. When he returned to the consulting-room after the disturbing glimpse he had had of Tinker's strange occupation, Blake filled his pipe and settled down to give some very serious thought to it all.

He was practically certain that the piece of jewellery which the lad had been examining was the pendant which had hung from the Duchess of Rayland's missing necklace, and he was both puzzled and concerned to know how it had come into Tinker's possession.

If it was that pendant, then why had Tinker said nothing about it? In what way could it possibly have fallen into his hands? Had he picked it up at the house in Berkeley Square, and, in the general confusion there, said or done nothing about it, only remembering it again when he got back to Baker Street? Did he know it was part of the missing necklace? Or did he think it was a separate piece of jewellery which someone else had lost?

Those and many other questions Blake asked himself as the silent hours of the night ticked past; but more than any of them he reiterated to himself:

"Why had Tinker said nothing to him—Blake—about it? Why was he treating the matter with such secrecy?"

Not for a single moment did Blake permit a doubt of the lad to enter his mind. He had been with him almost constantly ever since he was a little fellow, and not in a single instance had Blake known him to be aught than strictly upright and honest in every way and everything.

But the fact remained that the probabilities were the lad must know the pendant had formed part of the necklace, and in that case it was certainly very strange indeed that he had said nothing about it. They—Blake and he—had not exactly accepted a professional retainer in the case, but Blake had promised his aid, if it was required, which came to practically the same thing. And that promise included Tinker.

Yet he had seen the lad with his own eyes handling part of the missing property. Even if he tried to think that the lad had forgotten all about it until he began to turn out his pockets when undressing, that did not explain why he should say nothing about it, for he must have known, even when he was examining it, that Blake was still in the consulting-room.

Twist it and turn it and analyse it as he would, Blake could make nothing of it. And at last, when his pipe was long cold and the fire was long nothing but flaky cinders, he gave it up for the time being and went along to his dressing-room.

Nor did Blake say anything at breakfast. He had made up his mind to leave it to Tinker to speak first, and, when the meal passed without the lad saying a single word, the former uneasiness returned to Blake. He studied

the young fellow's face surreptitiously, and he knew every phase of it so well that it was not difficult for him to see that Tinker undoubtedly had something on his mind.

His eyes had deep shadows under them, as if he had scarcely slept; his movements were jerky and nervy; his whole manner distraught and absent; and when Blake spoke to him about one or two matters of routine duty, it was quite plain that Tinker had, literally, to force himself to attend to what Blake was saying.

They went along to the consulting-room together, and there Blake passed the lad the telegram which he had written out the previous night.

"I want you to go round to the post-office and get that off at once," he said casually. "Then return here, my lad, for I want you to take a hand with this morning's letters."

Tinker picked up a cap and put the telegram-form in his pocket. He started for the door, then, with his fingers on the handle, he hesitated and turned towards Blake.

"Will there be a great deal to do this morning, guv'nor?" he asked tentatively.

Blake, who was standing in front of his desk reading the financial page of one of the morning papers, did not look up.

"Not a great deal," he answered. "Why?"

"I was wondering if I could get away for an hour or so later in the morning."

"Of course! You know you have only to ask."

"I—I know that, guv'nor. Er—thanks. I'll come straight back."

With that Tinker was gone, and as he heard the street door close Blake walked to the window and looked out. He saw the lad hurrying along Baker Street. When he had lost sight of him he walked back to the desk, shaking his head.

"I don't—I can't understand it!" he muttered. "Not a word yet, and as jerky as could be over asking for an hour or so off, which he knows perfectly well he can take without asking. I don't like the look of things. That lad has something serious on his mind, and it grieves me that for the first time in the years he has been with me he does not give me his confidence."

"And that piece of jewellery. I wonder what he intends doing about that? It certainly must go back to the owner, but I shall say nothing yet. I believe in the lad utterly, and I will wait, but, at the same time, I shall watch him in order to guard him."

And as he settled down to open the morning letters Sexton Blake's eyes were very sombre, for he loved the boy like his own son, and he felt an odd and uneasy tugging at the heart that Tinker was in some sort of trouble, and would not come to him about it.

Tinker was back inside of twenty minutes, and, after announcing briefly that he had sent off the telegram, sat down at his desk and started in on the papers which Blake had laid there for him to attend to.

Thus they worked away for an hour or so, until Mrs. Bardell entered to announce that Inspector Thomas had called, and would Mr. Blake please see him at once?

Blake indicated that he would, and a few moments later the big genial inspector came in. He nodded to Tinker, and then drawing up a chair to Blake's desk, helped himself, as usual, to one of Blake's choice Portagas. Then he settled back.

"That affair at the Duchess of Rayland's," he said by way of a preliminary. "I understand from Lord Boscon that you can tell me something about it."

"Not more than he can tell you himself," responded Blake. "Are you in charge of it?"

"Yes. I have just come from there. I wish they had telephoned the Yard before they allowed all those people to get away last night. We should have seen that the search was thorough enough."

"You would have found it just as difficult as we found it," responded Blake. "There were more than five hundred people there, and practically all of them quite respectable citizens. They had paid their good money to assist a charity, and you can't treat a lot of people of that sort as if they were all suspected criminals."

"It is just one of those things that occur again and again—a big charity function to which anyone can gain admittance by paying for a ticket. And I don't mind saying that, personally, I saw three or four shady characters there last night, any one of whom would have risked a good deal to get possession of the necklace which is missing."

"Um!" grunted the inspector. "You are certain it was stolen, are you?"

"I am certain of nothing except that it is missing—that and a very valuable diamond and sapphire-studded pendant which was attached to it."

Blake paused on those words on the pretence of lighting a fresh cigarette, but he shot a look towards Tinker's desk, to find that the lad was bent low over his work. Yet behind his ears the skin had gone a dull red, and as he turned back to the inspector the former uneasiness returned fourfold to Blake.

"To save time," he resumed, "I will tell you all I know of the affair."

So he began, and related in careful detail all he knew of the unfortunate business. He finished with a description of the search to which the guests, with very few exceptions, had voluntarily submitted, adding in a louder tone for Tinker's benefit:

"That is all I know of it, inspector. But Tinker may be able to supplement the story in some way. Can you do so, my lad?"

"I am afraid not, guv'nor," answered Tinker, without turning round.

"Do you wish to ask any questions, inspector?" went on Blake.

"Not many. Have you any suspicious?"

"None that would be of any use to you."

"Those crooks you recognised? I suppose you saw that they were carefully searched?"

"I gave that my personal attention, and I can assure you that, at the time of searching, neither the necklace, nor any part of it, was on them."

"It looks as if the thief had managed to get away with the goods before the doors were locked," muttered the inspector. "If that is so, it is not going to be an easy matter to lay hands on it. One thing is certain—the stones can't be disposed of in this country. No fence would risk handling them. They are too well known."

"I agree with that, inspector, but I would not lose sight of the fact that there are two or three fences who would take on the business to the extent of finding a market abroad—on their own terms."

"Naturally. I fancy I can name the same fences you are referring to. It is a mystery, just the same, how it was stolen. As far as I can learn from Lord Boscon, it must have happened while that what's-her-name, the dancer, was dancing with the lights turned down. A fool business that sort of thing, anyway. I've always said so."

"I am inclined to think that Lord Boscon is right," agreed Blake equably. "It is quite certain that the diamonds

were around the duchess' neck before the lights went down, and it is equally certain that no sooner did they go up again than she discovered her loss. Ergo, they were stolen during those few minutes."

"But as I understand it, she was on a dais with some other ladies who were more or less intimate friends of hers. You can't very well suspect one of those ladies. And there was the queer business of another stolen necklace being picked up by you after that stunt of yours about putting the room in darkness. I'd like to know what bird had that in his pocket."

"If the truth were known I fancy we should find that it was one of the crooks to whom I have referred," answered Blake after a pause. "You see, when I suggested the stunt I asked the duchess just to say that a necklace was missing—thought to be stolen. She did not say it was hers, nor that it was a diamond necklace. The person who stole the rope pearls must have thought that was the necklace referred to, hence the breeze got up, so to say; he or she was probably only too glad of the chance to get rid of it in that way, so even if my stunt did not succeed in one way it did in another."

"I'm not jeering at that," granted the inspector. "I'm going on now to examine those private detectives who were on duty. A nice bunch they must be, to let a thing like that be pulled off right under their noses."

"Well, inspector, they are all ex-Scotland Yard men," remarked Blake with a smile.

"Um! Well, all I can say is that they have forgotten all they learned since they retired from the Yard," grumbled Thomas as he rose.

He breezed out after helping himself to two "spares" from Blake's box of Partagas, and when he was gone Blake turned back to his desk. Already he had dismissed the inspector's conversation from his mind with the exception of one part of it. That exception was the moment when he had said that perhaps Tinker could add something to what he had told the Scotland Yard man. And Tinker had said that he could not do so.

Blake was still pondering on that when the lad suddenly pushed back his chair and rose.

"I'll go along now, guv'nor, if I may?" he said.

"Very well, young 'un. Will you be back to lunch?"

"I—I don't know, sir! You are going to lunch with Sir William, aren't you?"

"I shall probably do so. Will you come on there?"

"Perhaps. But if I don't, I shall come straight back here."

"All right. It is private affairs, I take it?"

"Y-yes, guv'nor."

"Anything I can do to help you?" asked Blake casually. "Any advice you would like?"

Tinker shot a miserable look at Blake's averted face; then he stammered:

"N-no, thanks, guv'nor. It isn't very much."

"All right, my lad."

A quarter of an hour later Blake heard Tinker go along the hall. He did not come into the consulting-room, so Blake opened the door and called to him. As the lad turned back, looking confused, Blake noticed that he had changed into one of his smartest lounge suits, a dark grey affair, and his newest overcoat. He was wearing a bowler hat, and carrying a stick and a pair of grey suede gloves. For the details of his



Tinker's heels slid along the polished floor and shot from under him. They struck Brady's, and he and the crook crashed down together. (See page 24.)

toilet he had donned a silk shirt, and had, it was plain, taken the utmost care with his appearance.

Blake made no remark on this, but handed the lad a bank-book, together with a bundle of notes.

"I want you to stop at the bank on the way, Tinker," he said casually. "Make this deposit for me. You can give me the book later in the day."

"Very good, guv'nor!" answered Tinker, as he took the book and the notes.

His manner was stiff and unnatural, Blake observed. He was not his usual breezy self.

Then he started on again, and, looking from the window, Blake saw him hail a taxi in Baker Street.

No sooner had it disappeared than Sexton Blake dropped his leisurely manner and acted swiftly. He hurried along to his dressing-room and got into his overcoat. Then he snatched up his hat, gloves, and stick, and paused only long enough to call down to Mrs. Bardell that he would not be back for lunch.

He, too, secured a taxi in Baker Street and held a brief conversation with the driver. Then Blake entered the taxi and sat well back in one corner.

The vehicle made its way at a good speed into Oxford Street and drew into the kerb at a spot from which Blake could keep a surveillance of the door of the bank at which he had asked Tinker to call. And he was still sitting there when he saw the lad emerge and re-enter his own cab.

Blake's driver had been given his instructions carefully, so when Blake tapped on the front window he started

off, slowly at first, then rapidly increasing his speed as Tinker's taxi sped down Oxford Street.

At Oxford Circus the latter cab swung round to the left, and when Blake's vehicle also turned the corner Blake saw the other just drawing into the kerb in front of the theatre-ticket and messenger-office there. Blake's taxi kept straight on until it was past; then when Blake tapped again on the glass it drew in just a little before it came to the Langham.

From the little window in the back Blake could see Tinker enter the messenger office. The lad was inside only a few minutes, and then he came out again, and once more his cab started off. As before, Blake's driver shadowed it along, following it down Regent Street until both taxis turned into Piccadilly Circus.

In the Circus the leading cab drew in before the Cosmos Theatre, and just as they sped past Blake saw Tinker speak to the driver and cross the pavement to the box-office entrance. It did not seem likely to Blake that the lad could be going to book seats for the performance after having seen it the night before; and, that being so, he was puzzled to know what business Tinker could have there.

He was not trying to spy on Tinker. He had never concerned himself with the lad's private movements, for he had always had unlimited confidence in him. But Tinker's self-conscious, uncomfortable manner was disturbing, and on this particular morning he was determined to guard the boy from danger if he could, and for that reason he sat in his taxi until, a good quarter of an hour later, he saw Tinker emerge again.

This time he allowed the taxi to drive off without attempting to follow it, and as it disappeared up Piccadilly he muttered:

"Even if he was booking seats it wouldn't have taken him all that time. I'll go in and see if Taylor is there. He may have seen the lad inside."

With that Blake got out and told the driver to wait. He entered the theatre and sent in his card, after ascertaining that Mr. Taylor, one of the partners, was in his office. He was ushered in almost at once, and as the director shook hands he laughed.

"What!" he exclaimed. "This office seems popular with your firm this morning, Mr. Blake! Have you come on the same errand as Tinker?"

Blake hadn't the remotest notion what the other was referring to, but he smiled and nodded.

"He is gone, is he?" he asked carelessly.

"Yes—not five minutes ago. What is the big idea? You are not professionally interested in the lady, I hope? Or is it just a love-attack on your young man's part?"

"Just which one do you refer to?" asked Blake. "He has so many of these attacks."

"Why, the one whose address Tinker was so anxious to secure—Nirvana. That little lady is not mixed up in any criminal stuff I'll wager. It must be love."

"Hardly; not this time!" laughed Blake. "If I have missed Tinker I need not detain you. Do you know if he has gone on there?"

"I suppose so. I gave him her address, but I didn't dare do so until I telephoned to her if I might. We are under very strict orders about that, and this is the first time she has permitted it to be given."

"I'll try and overtake him then," murmured Blake. "I suppose there can be no objection to my knowing it. It will save time."

"Oh, no! I will give it to you. It's 34, Bantry Square."

"Thanks," rejoined Blake, as he jotted down the address. "I'll follow on."

"But seriously, Mr. Blake, there is nothing wrong, I hope?"

"Not a single thing that I know of," Blake reassured him; and a few moments later he was back in his taxi.

But he did not drive at once to the address which the director had given him. Instead, he went first to the messenger office near the Langham, and inquired for the manager. When that person put in an appearance Blake explained who he was, and then said:

"I just dropped in to make sure that my assistant had sent off a message this morning. He should have been here about half an hour ago. Would you mind looking in your book?"

"I shall do so at once, Mr. Blake." With that the manager opened a book, and after studying several entries came back to Blake, bringing the book with him. As it lay in front of him Blake could read the names upside down.

The inverted words seemed to leap at him and fix his attention. For one of the addresses was that of the Duchess of Rayland.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. Tinker's Appeal.



IN the meantime, Tinker had driven on to the address which he had managed to get from the director of the Cosmos.

It had been quite true, as that gentleman had told Blake, that he was under the strictest orders that Mademoiselle Nirvana's address was to be given to no one upon any pretext whatsoever. At first, therefore, he had flatly refused Tinker's request. But when the lad had kept on insisting, allowing the director to think, if he would, that, like scores of other young men about London, he was deeply infatuated with the dancer, the director had compromised by saying he would telephone to Nirvana and put his request before her.

To this Tinker had agreed, stipulating only that she should be told that someone to whom she had spoken the night before wished to call upon her.

With that he had retired to the waiting-room; and a few minutes later, the director, privately very much surprised that Nirvana had at once told him to

send the young man on, came in to tell Tinker that among all those who had begged for her address, he alone was being favoured with it.

Then Tinker had taken his departure—as Blake saw—and had driven straight on to Bantry Square, which is a quiet enclosure of small but exclusive houses just off Eaton Square. He decided not to keep his taxi waiting; so, after paying off the man, he mounted the steps and rang the bell. He did not know that, as he crossed the pavement, two pairs of eyes were watching him, and that, as he pressed the bell, one of the watchers said to the other:

"It is the same. You leave him to me. It will be all right."

A middle-aged woman, with a face as hard and forbidding as the head of a tomahawk, opened the door, and, in response to Tinker's inquiry, curtly bade him come in. She would inquire if Miss Nirvana would see him.

Tinker was shown into a back drawing-room, which was really more of a dance rehearsal-room than anything else.

The floor was of polished hardwood, artificially sprung, as he could tell when he walked across it. There were only three or four easy-chairs set about, and, with the exception of a wide, low divan, which was heaped high with silk cushions of every conceivable hue, in one corner, he could see only a grand piano, with a lot of music lying carelessly thrown on top of it. The windows were of the French sort, and opened into a small conservatory, which, at the moment, was ablaze with several varieties of exotic plants.

It was, he saw, the room where Nirvana probably rehearsed her work, and he had just time to realise this when the door opened and Nirvana herself came in.

Tinker looked at her as she closed the door and advanced towards him, smiling. His pulses seemed to miss several beats. If she had been beautiful on the stage at the Cosmos, if she had been a most seductive vision at the house in Berkeley Square, she was unbelievably delicious to look upon this morning.

Her hair lay in golden coils round each ear; her skin was as smooth, and delicate in hue as the petal of the blush rose; her lips needed no pigment; her eyes seemed an even deeper violet than they were at night. She was dressed in a simple morning frock of some silky stuff that came just below her knees, and as she smiled at him she looked indeed even less than the sixteen years with which rumour credited her.

She did not pause until she was close to Tinker. Then she held out both her hands, and as Tinker mechanically took them an acute thrill ran through him. His eyes were fixed on hers. For the time being he was literally hypnotised; it was only when she spoke that he was able to get a grip on himself.

"I have been expecting you ever since last night," she said softly. "I knew you would not fail me."

"Will—you sit down, please!" stammered Tinker. "I want to talk to you."

She let her eyes dwell on his for a few moments longer, and she laughed a tinkling little laugh and sank down on to the divan.

"Come and sit beside me," she murmured. "We can talk more comfortably. I want you to tell me where I have seen you before, because I know I have—somewhere. Your face is one which I know quite well, and yet I do not remember having ever known one who is a very famous detective."

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"I am not any such thing," protested Tinker, growing red. He thought she was mocking him. "I will sit here, if I may," he went on, taking a chair which faced her. "And I'll talk about where we met before, because that is why I am here this morning. But first I have something else to say."

She shot a quick sidelong glance at him, but did not speak. After a brief silence, during which he was struggling to find an opening, Tinker blurted:

"You must hand back that necklace to me!"

At the words the girl sat up straight, and her lids lowered as she stared at him in amazement.

"I must—must, you said, I think—what?" she demanded. "What do you mean by using such a word to me, and to what are you referring? Necklace? What do you mean?"

"You know very well what I mean," answered Tinker doggedly. "I mean the Duchess of Rayland's necklace."

The girl stared at him until he was crimson to the roots of his hair; but he held his ground.

"When I told you last night to inquire for me at the Cosmos, I was under the impression that you wished to know me," she said at last. "It is the first time I have ever permitted my address to be given to anyone. I do not know why I was fool enough to do so in your case. I did not dream that you would go to so much trouble for the purpose of insulting me. I shall be obliged if you will go at once."

With that she rose, and made as if to cross the room to the door. But Tinker was on his feet, too, hand outstretched.

"No," he said firmly, "you must not. You must hear what I have to say, and I shall not go until you hand back that necklace to me. It is for your own sake."

The girl had stopped. She was looking at him strangely. It was not the words that had made her do so, but the tone and the tenor of what he said. For a few moments her eyes were clouded, as if she were struggling to remember something; but then her manner changed swiftly, and she flushed with anger. Tinker did not give her a chance to speak, for he went on vehemently:

"You cannot deny what I say. You may think that I do not know the truth, but you are mistaken. I know exactly what happened last night."

The girl's nostrils quivered. She stepped so close that he could feel the warm breath of her against his cheek.

"You are monstrously clever!" she sneered. "Vous savez tout, is it not so? Is it not strange that your master ever finds it necessary to use his own brains at all? And what do you know, you who know all?"

Tinker flushed, but still held his ground. His serious young eyes were fixed on hers, and she must have been blind indeed if she had not read in them the honesty and earnestness of his purpose. But she continued to curl her little red lips at him as he went on:

"You can leave my gun nor out of it, please. When I say I know what happened last night I mean what I say. And, if you must know, I will tell you, although I had much rather it were left unsaid. If you will hand over the necklace I shall leave, and trouble you no further."

She laughed in his face.

"Still babbling about a necklace," she murmured, as if to a third person. "What an extraordinary young man it is! What can the creature be talking about?"

"I'll tell you, then, if you will have it!" exclaimed Tinker. "I know that it was you who took the Duchess of Rayland's necklace when you were dancing there last night. I—"

Smack, smack!

Twice she struck him with the flat of her hand, using all her strength. The palm caught the lad first on one cheek, then on the other. He staggered back from the force of it. The imprint showed plainly against his skin. But he did not remove his gaze from hers.

"You can do that again, if you wish," he said quietly; "but I will have my say, and I will prevent you from going any further with this thing."

The girl's breast was heaving, and her eyes blazing with passion. She did not answer. She stood there, as much held now by Tinker as he had been by her earlier in the interview.

"I said that you took the necklace when you were dancing, and I repeat it," he went on, not even troubling to protect himself if she should choose to strike again. "You took it when you had finished, to be more exact, when you crossed the dais to the curtains, and when everyone was crowding close to try and get you to come back. You would have got away, and the truth would probably never have been known if the duchess had not discovered her loss when she did."

"The doors were closed before you could leave, and, like everyone else, you had to submit to being searched. You were in a fix, and you picked on me as a way out. You had seen me at the Cosmos, and you thought that—like lots of other people—I was just infatuated with you. So you thought you could make use of me."

"You were clever enough. I'll admit that, for you dropped the necklace in my pocket without me even guessing that such a thing was there. What you felt like when, a little later, you saw Mr. Sexton Blake call me to him, I don't know."

"But you must have felt then that you had made a mistake—or taken a great risk. But you were equal to it all right. You were clever enough in getting close to me in the outer hall when you were free to go, and if the crowd hadn't been so great you would have succeeded in getting back the necklace without me ever suspecting the game you had been playing."

"But part of it must have caught in my pocket, and you had to pull it to get it free. You pulled it so hard, as a matter of fact, that you left the pendant behind. If it hadn't been for that I should not have known the truth although I thought I felt a slight tug at the time."

"Why you whispered to me, telling me to go to the Cosmos, I can't guess, unless it was that you wanted to find out how much of the truth I suspected. You must have had a pretty poor notion of my intelligence if you thought I wouldn't be able to fit the pieces together."

"I was anxious enough to see you again when I realised what had happened. It put me in a position where I have had to play a lone hand, and it is the first time in my life I have ever kept anything from Mr. Blake. But I made up my mind that I would give you a chance to hand it back. If you do so, I promise you it shall be returned at once to the Duchess of Rayland, and not a soul shall ever know the truth but you and me. Will you give it to me, please—Nirvana?"

The girl was still standing as straight as an arrow. She had not changed her expression all the time he had been speaking. But now the passion suddenly

died from her eyes and she laid a soft little hand on his arm.

"But why," she whispered—"why do you take up this attitude? Why should you interfere, even if I did do what you say? Your words are strange words to use. There is something about them that—"

"That rings familiar!" broke in Tinker eagerly. "And so there is, Nirvana! Don't you remember, years ago, when you were just a little girl, something that happened one evening in the East End of London? Don't you remember coming, night after night, to a corner opposite the Three Nuns Hotel with your sister?"

"Don't you recall one rainy night in the winter—it was the last night you ever came there—that you were sent across the street by your sister and took a watch and chain from the pocket of a man who was standing at the cigar counter there? Surely you remember that!"

"And can't you recollect the little newsboy who made you give it up? How angry you were with him? I gave it back, Nirvana, because I could not bear to see a little kid, like you were, learning that sort of thing."

"And then I never saw you again. I was ill after that, and when I came back to that part you were gone. I hung about Aldgate for three weeks or more, and then I gave it up."

"Last night at the Cosmos, when you came on to dance, I knew I had seen you somewhere before—that there had been something between us, and yet I was not dead certain until I saw you leave the stage door with your sister. I remembered her all right. She had changed little since then."

"But you, Nirvana—you and I have grown up. Surely you can't find any pleasure or gain in what you did last night? You are too—too good for that sort of thing, Nirvana. You are too—too beautiful. It was just wonderful the way you danced! Surely you cannot want for anything? You must have lots and lots of money now. So why did you do that?"

"I couldn't bear that you should be taught such things those years ago. And I can't stand it now. Give the necklace back to me, Nirvana, and I will return it. I promise you I'll say nothing to a soul, not even to Mr. Sexton Blake."

It was extraordinary, the change that had come over the girl while Tinker spoke of those far-off days in the East End of London. Her eyes had dilated until they were great violet pools, and, unconsciously, one hand was gripping his arm tightly. Her breath was coming and going spasmodically, and she was leaning towards the boy very, very tenderly.

In those moments something of the most subtle nature was quivering between them—something which put them in a little world apart, the dawn of a liking, an affection—no, something deeper, stronger than that.

What might have been the result of Tinker's plea had he held control of the situation another moment is hard to say; but just as his hand went over the girl's—just as his earnest grey eyes looked down into her misty violet ones—just when her lithe little body seemed to be swaying in towards him—

Crash!

In came the door with a bang against the wall.

In through the opening came a woman whose eyes were flashing venom as they took in the tableau.

Behind her was the flashily dressed figure of a man, and as his startled gaze

went from the woman—the girl he knew as Nirvana's sister—to her companion, he recognised him as "Flash" Brady, one of the smoothest diamond crooks at large.

In the same instant Nirvana sprang away from him, all signs of tenderness gone from her now as she laughed and laughed again.

"You are just in time, Marie!" she cried. "This young man has been entertaining me by making the most extraordinary demands!"

And again she went off into peals of mocking laughter.

As for Tinker, the sight of Flash Brady was enough to tell him that he had come to the right place.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. Tinker Wins Out!



FLASH BRADY deliberately closed and locked the door. Then he followed the girl, Marie, across the room until he was close to where Tinker and Nirvana had been standing.

Tinker had backed up towards the piano, and in that moment he was wishing he had removed his overcoat when he came in. Brady looked dangerous.

"So it is Sexton Blake's snitch!" he remarked, showing a gold tooth as his lips parted. "What has he been saying, Nirvana?"

Nirvana had stopped laughing now, and the curl of scorn had returned to her lips.

"He seems to be under the extraordinary impression that it was I who stole—stole, if you please—the Duchess of Rayland's necklace last night. And he is so kind and considerate that he promises to say nothing about it if I hand it over to him. That's all he has been saying."

"So?"

As Brady uttered the sibilant word he turned his snaky eyes on Tinker again.

RESULT OF FOOTBALL COMPETITION No. 2.

Matches played Saturday, September 12th, 1925.

£500 WON!

In this contest twenty-four competitors correctly forecast the results of all the matches on the coupon. The Prize of £500 has therefore been divided among the following:

W. Ayres, 55, North Road, Preston, Brighton, Sussex.
E. Baldwin, 1, College Road, Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol.
Fred. Bell, 117, Upper Brook Street, O-on-M, Manchester.
H. Bourn, 82, Chesterfield Gardens, Harringay, London, N.6.
Miss O. Brewer, Ashley House, Glastonbury, Som.
S. Cox, 4, Prescott Street, Walsall.
C. F. Dee, 40, Packington Road, South Acton, London, W.3.
A. Dunstan, 152, Canterbury Road, W. Groydon.
E. G. Foxton, Crosslea Terrace, Gildersome, near Leeds.
G. S. Hanney, 148, High Street, Penford, near Bristol.
T. S. Looney, Ballamenagh, Abbey Lands, Onchan, I.O.M.
Mrs. O. Mounty, No. 5, Redhill, near Bournemouth.

W. Nield, 14, Peel Street, Runcorn.
J. Nunn, "Trebarwith," St. Bennets Road, Priltwell, Essex.
Cecil A. Parkinson, 40, Broughton Road, Edinburgh.
E. W. Parham, Stoney Bridges, Axminster, Devon.
E. Rapley, 14, Underwood Road, Haslemere, Surrey.
W. I. Richards, 123, Berw Road, Pontypriid.
B. Smith, 159, Greston Houses, Globe Road, Bethnal Green, London, E.
G. A. Stavenport, 52, Hubert Road, Salford Oak, Birmingham.
E. Taylor, 410, Leach Lane, Sutton, St. Helens, Lancs.
Mrs. A. Williams, 14, Charleville Road, Rathmines, Dublin.
Harold Wilson, 151, Wigan Road, New Springs, Wigan, Lancs.
O. H. B. Wood, 722, Oldham Road, Bardsley, Ashton-under-Lyne

"What gave you such a strange impression as that?" he asked softly.

Tinker stared back at him.

"Don't try that stuff with me, Brady," he said, quietly enough. "I know you of old. If there had been any doubt about this necklace before, your presence in this house is enough to settle it. I know that Miss Nirvana took the necklace, and my offer to her still holds good—for the next few minutes. It lapses as soon as I leave this house, for then I shall take

immediate steps to acquaint the proper persons with the truth."

"So?" breathed Flash Brady again. The word came very calmly and very sinister.

Then, so quickly that Tinker was caught entirely unawares, he jumped. He had one hand at Tinker's throat, and was jamming his head against the sharp edge of the piano before the lad could make the slightest effort to defend himself. His heels shot from under him on the slippery floor, but instead of adding to Brady's advantage they did Tinker a service. The lad's feet struck Brady's, and the crook slid out on the polished wood so quickly that he was forced to let go his hold.

Tinker let himself slide until he bumped to the floor. Then he threw himself to one side, and came to his feet in a bound. He was just in time to meet Brady's second rush; this time the crook did not get the hold he was after.

Instead, he staggered back with a groan as Tinker drove in a terrific right to the body. Then, while Brady was lurching about, half-doubled up, Tinker followed up his advantage like a fighting whirlwind.

The two girls had fallen back as soon as Brady rushed in, and now they gave way, staring in tense silence. They saw to their amazement that the youth was driving the grown man from point to point at will.

He had forced him clear across to the opposite wall when Brady managed to recover, and with a curse jerked out a pistol. Tinker managed to get hold of his wrist before he could use it, and they went sliding along the polished floor, each using every trick to gain control of the weapon.

Now the elder girl broke into invective and advice. She rushed after them calling to Brady to get Tinker into a corner and she would settle him. She

FREE FOREIGN STAMPS!

A SPECIAL GIFT PACKET of Assorted FOREIGN STAMPS

will be enclosed in every copy of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY for four consecutive weeks, beginning next week.

No two packets will be exactly alike. In many of these packets will be rare stamps which could not be bought under a shilling each.

A chance like this may never occur again. Make sure of these gifts by placing your order in advance for the

NELSON LEE LIBRARY.

Every Wednesday—
TWO PENCE.



NIRVANA and TINKER

will appear AGAIN NEXT WEEK in the thrilling second episode of the new series.

This first yarn which you have just read will doubtless have given you an insight into the possibilities of the events that are to happen.

It is an epic struggle—a struggle on the one hand by Tinker, and on the other by Marie, the fiendish sister of the little dancer. Between them, torn alternately by either, Nirvana has yet to work out her own salvation.

Tinker's secret is a secret of his no longer. Sexton Blake shares it now, and, in the great detective's store of wisdom and human understanding the two youngsters have an ally which is going to steer them through the difficulties yet to come.

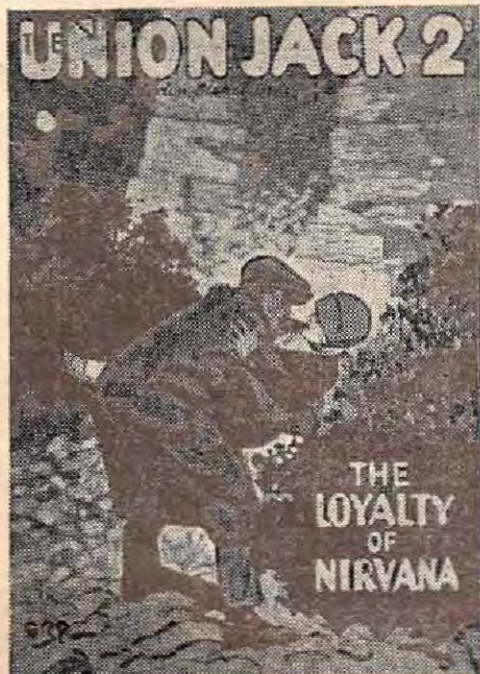
Sexton Blake and Yvonne were great; Tinker and Nirvana are going to be great, too! You must watch these announcements carefully, and miss none of them.

Nor are these yarns the only attractions on our list. Forthcoming stories include yarns of the Black Eagle, The Confederation, Zenith the Albino, and others of your old favourites, all in their turn as quickly as we can pass them along to you.

And remember, too, that our policy from now on is to do without the serial for awhile, and to publish extra-long Sexton Blake stories instead. Also, much more attention is going to be devoted to the Reader-and-Editor Page, so that you can air your grievances and sing your praises in public, and read what other correspondents think as well. In short—

LONGER STORIES—

NO SERIAL.



EPISODE TWO—

OUT NEXT WEEK!

had snatched up a large bronze statuette from the piano and was brandishing this above her head waiting for a chance to strike Tinker down.

Brady tried to do as she told him. He dragged Tinker after him until they banged into the wall near the door. Tinker, when he saw there was no help for it, allowed himself to go. Just as they approached the wall he shoved ahead with all his strength. The shock forced Brady to loosen his hold, and some instinct told Tinker to duck as he jerked back.

Well was it for him that he did so. The next second the heavy bronze struck the wall with terrific force, passing through the exact part of space where the lad's head had been a moment since.

Tinker drove in again on Brady like a fury. He sent in another terrific right to the solar plexus and followed this with a short hard left to the jaw.

"Flash" Brady was a crack shot with a pistol and a nasty customer with a knife. But he was no class as an exponent of the art of boxing, and under that second drive to the jaw he slumped to the floor at Tinker's feet.

Tinker whirled round just in time to catch the girl, Marie, as she flew at him like a tigress. He grabbed her by the shoulders and sent her whirling back along the slippery floor. Then he grabbed up the pistol from where it had fallen and knelt over Flash Brady.

Nirvana was standing a few yards away, her face as white as snow, except for two hectic spots in each cheek. She was staring at Tinker as if he were a strange animal. She did not even turn her head when Marie, recovering herself, broke into a string of feline invective at Tinker.

Tinker spoke to Marie through Nirvana.

"Keep away," he panted. "You'll get hurt if you don't. I mean it! And I'll do some real harm to Brady if you come on again."

At this point Nirvana put out a hand

towards her sister, and said something which Tinker did not catch. But the lad was in such an inward state that he did not even listen.

"You listen to me," he said, jabbing the barrel of the automatic into Brady's ribs, for the crook was showing signs of recovering. "I gave you a chance to hand over that necklace and you wouldn't take it. All right—we'll leave it at that."

"But when I go from here this crook goes with me, and he's good for not less than three years' penal, I can promise you. If you think you want that, take it. You'll find that instead of living here and dancing at the Cosmos you'll both be for it—and I'll see that you get it."

"I can fix this beastly crook Brady, and I'll do it; and I'll fix you, who call yourself Marie, at the same time."

Marie started to rush forward again but Nirvana caught her and spoke rapidly. The elder girl turned a pair of raging eyes upon the younger, and Tinker saw Nirvana shrink back. Her gaze swept his and then returned to Marie. She said something else in an urgent tone, and finally Marie nodded sullenly. Again Nirvana looked at Tinker.

"If I give you what you ask for, will you go?" she said icily.

"If you mean the necklace—yes," he answered curtly.

"Very well. I shall be back in a few minutes."

With that she left the room while the sister sank into a chair and glared with hot eyes at Tinker. But Tinker gave his entire attention to Flash Brady and only looked up again when Nirvana returned.

She held up a string of diamonds which Tinker had no difficulty in recognising as the one which had been stolen the night before.

"I'll give this to you," said Nirvana, "but you will keep the promise you made?"

"I'll use my own judgment about that—now," rejoined Tinker.

"You promised it!"

"That was different. You were only mocking me until you could turn this treacherous crook on to me."

Nirvana shrugged.

"Then we'll fight it to the finish," she said. "If you will go at once, I shall give you this. If not, then I shall do as my sister wishes."

"I'll tell you what I will do," said Tinker, after a moment. "Hand over the necklace and I'll go. I'll say nothing about you or your sister with regard to this necklace, but Flash Brady is different. I'll give him just twenty-four hours before I inform Scotland Yard."

"Agree to that, Flash," called Marie. "We can get round that easy enough."

Nirvana came closer and held out the necklace.

"Take it," she said, in a low, tense voice that scarcely reached Tinker's ears. "Take it and never come into my life again."

Tinker reached out his left hand and took it. Then, still keeping Flash Brady covered, he got to his feet and backed towards the door, keeping them held, he turned the key and opened the door. He inserted the key in the outside and, turning, glanced again at Nirvana.

She was standing watching him. Her eyes met his, and something of that former fleeting tenderness seemed to come into them. It was not until later that Tinker, in thinking about it, recalled that, as she was standing at that moment, her features were hidden from both Flash Brady and Marie.

Then he stepped out into the hall, closing and locking the door after him. A minute or so later he was in the street, walking along at a brisk pace towards Eaton Square on the look-out for a taxi.

"Go out of her life," he was muttering as he went along. "All right—I'll

do that quick enough! She wants to be crooked; she was only mocking me all the time. Yes, I'll keep out of her life all right."

But little did Tinker guess what was going on in Nirvana's mind at that moment, while Flash Brady and Marie abused her furiously. Nor did either of those young chips on the current of life dream how fate had been seized with a whim to take a hand in their affairs!

One thing that Tinker did not see as he emerged from the house. That was a taxi which drove swiftly out of the square as he appeared. Nor did he dream that in that taxi was Sexton Blake, who had been keeping a watch on number thirty-four for the past half-hour or so.

Blake had seen Flash Brady enter, and he had been tempted then to take a hand himself, but he had resolved to give Tinker a certain length of time to appear. And when he had seen the lad run down the steps unharmed, Blake had tapped on the window for the driver to go on.

He did not see his assistant again until his return to Baker Street late in the afternoon, after having lunched with Sir William Chadwin at his hotel in the Strand. When he walked in Tinker was at work at his desk.

"Anything important come up, young 'un?" he asked casually, as he laid his coat and hat across a chair.

Tinker was just about to reply when the telephone rang. Blake took off the receiver and carried on a conversation with—as Tinker could tell by the use of the name—Lord Boscon. Then Blake hung up the receiver and looked across at the lad.

"You will be interested to hear, Tinker," he said slowly, "that both the missing necklace and the pendant have been returned to the Duchess of Rayland. It seems that the pendant was left by a messenger boy just before midday and the necklace in the same way early this afternoon."

"I am glad to hear that, guv'nor," responded the lad interestedly.

Gone was the low-spiritedness of the morning. His old animation had returned, and the mention of the duchess' necklace now made his face light up eagerly, and not turn even more worried, as it had done when Inspector Thomas had questioned about it.

Blake waited a moment to see if Tinker would say any more; but he did not do so, and, with a little sigh, Blake turned to his desk.

He knew that in some way Tinker had come through a difficult and dangerous passage. The sight of Flash Brady had been enough to tell him that; but he still held his peace, disappointed that the lad did not confide in him, but convinced that he would one day do so, and he determined then that the lad should do it in his own good time. Meanwhile, he decided, it should be Tinker's secret.

The only other thing which Blake noticed which he suspected might have some bearing on the mystery, was an announcement in the papers of the following morning to the effect that a packed audience at the Cosmos had been greatly disappointed the previous evening by the non-appearance of Nirvana, the famous dancer. She was, so the report went, slightly indisposed.

But if Tinker saw the announcement, too, he gave no sign.

THE END.



(Continued from page 2.)

"Yet I owe no thanks to you that I am not," he answered. "I think there's no more to be said, unless it be to add the assurance that Lord Julian Wade has also nothing to apprehend from me. That, no doubt, will be the assurance that your peace of mind requires?"

"For your own sake—yes. But for your own sake only. I would not have you do anything mean or dishonouring." "Thief and pirate though I be?"

She clenched her hand, and made a little gesture of despair and impatience. "Will you never forgive me those words?"

"I'm finding it a trifle hard, I confess. But what does it matter, when all is said?"

Her clear hazel eyes considered him a moment wistfully. Then she put out her hand again.

"I am going, Captain Blood. Since you are so generous to my uncle, I shall be returning to Barbadoes with him. We are not like to meet again—ever. Is it impossible that we should part friends? Once I wronged you, I know. And I have said that I am sorry. Won't you—won't you say 'Good-bye'?"

He seemed to rouse himself, to shake off a mantle of deliberate harshness. He took the hand she proffered. Retaining it, he spoke, his eyes sombrely, wistfully considering her.

"You are returning to Barbadoes?" he said slowly. "Will Lord Julian be going with you?"

"Why do you ask me that?" she confronted him quite fearlessly.

"Sure now, didn't he give you my message, or did he bungle it?"

"No. He didn't bungle it. He gave it me in your own words. It touched me very deeply. It made me see clearly my error and my injustice. I owe it to you that I should say this by way of amend. I judged too harshly where it was a presumption to judge at all."

He was still holding her hand.

"And Lord Julian, then?" he asked, his eyes watching her, bright as sapphires in that copper-coloured face.

"Lord Julian will no doubt be going home to England. There is nothing more for him to do out here."

"But didn't he ask you to go with him?"

"He did. I forgive you the impertinence."

A wild hope leapt to life within him.

"And you? Glory be, ye'll not be telling me ye refused to become my lady, when—"

"Oh! You are insufferable!" She tore her hand free, and backed away from him. "I should not have come! Good-bye!"

She was speeding to the door. He sprang after her, and caught her. Her face flamed, and her eyes stabbed him like daggers.

"These are pirate's ways, I think! Release me!"

"Arabella!" he cried on a note of pleading. "Are ye meaning it? Must I release ye? Must I let ye go and never set eyes on ye again? Or will ye stay and make this exile endurable until we

(Continued on opposite page.)

THE GREAT VITAGRAPH FILM

of "CAPTAIN BLOOD" is showing at these
theatres on the dates mentioned

From Thursday, October 15th.

Bristol	Ashton Cinema
Whitstable	Picture House
Biggleswade	Empire
Penarth	Windsor
Dolbeith	Pavilion
Carlisle	Town Hall
Locherbie	Town Hall
Dwigg	Playhouse
Oxenden	Pioneer
Radcliffe	Picturedrome
Gravelly Hill, Erdington	Picture House

From Monday, October 19th.

St. Austell	Cinema
Egham	Gran Electric
Basingstoke	Electric Theatre
Huntingdon	Grand
Stevenage	Cinema
Bon	Tide Picture House
Clerkenwell	Globe
Heulow Station, Beds.	R.A.F. Camp Cinema
Bridgend	Palace
Anderson	Gaiety
Paisley	Rink Cinema
Bridgeton	Dalmarnock Pic- ture House
Larkhall	Public Hall
Chapelton	Palace
Rhos, Wrexham	Public Hall
Ballyclare	Cinema
Newton	Picture House
Oldbury	Grand
Coatville	Grand

From Thursday, October 22nd.

Deptford	Electric Palace
Portsmouth	Trafalgar
Brighton	Duke of York's
Haslemere	Empire Cinema
Treherbert	Gaiety
Govan	Elder Picture House
Broughty Ferry	Grand
Peebles	Burgh Cinema
Thurcroft	Cinema
Littleborough	Queen's Theatre
Cefn	Palace
Tullamore	C.Y.M.S. Cinema

From Monday, October 26th.

Sherborne	Palace
Lymington	Lyric
Crosshairs	Cinema
Perth	B.B. Cinema
Glasgow	Star
Leven	Regent
Buckhaven	Globe
Portadown	Picture House
Brierley Hill	Queen's
Coventry	Grand
Leicester	Imperial

From Thursday, October 29th.

Stoke Newington	Albion
Bryanston	Alpha
East Weymouth	Empire
Edinburgh	Picturedrome
Morpeth	Playhouse
Armagh	Picture House
Worlesley	Olympia
Lodgpool Road, Birmingham	Olympia
Leicester	Star

can go home together? Och, ye're crying now! What have I said to make ye cry, my dear?"

"I—I thought you'd never say it," she mocked him through her tears.

"Well, now, ye see there was Lord Julian, a fine figure of a—"

"There was never, never anybody but you, Peter."

They had, of course, a deal to say thereafter, so much indeed that they sat down to say it, whilst time sped on, and Governor Blood forgot the duties of his office. He had reached home at last. His Odyssey was ended.

And, meanwhile, Colonel Bishop's fleet had come to anchor, and the colonel had landed on the mole, a disgruntled man, to be disgruntled further yet. He was accompanied ashore by Lord Julian Wade.

A corporal's guard was drawn up to receive him, and in advance of this stood Major Mallard and two others who were unknown to the deputy-governor: one slight and elegant, the other big and brawny.

Major Mallard advanced.

"Colonel Bishop, I have orders to arrest you. Your sword, sir!"

Bishop stared, empurpling.

"What the devil— Arrest me, d'ye say? Arrest me?"

"By order of the Governor of Jamaica," said the elegant little man behind Major Mallard.

Bishop swung to him.

"The governor? Ye're mad!" He looked from one to the other. "I am the governor."

"You were," said the little man dryly. "But we've changed that in your absence. You're broke for abandoning your post without due cause, and there-

by imperilling the settlement over which you had charge. It's a serious matter, Colonel Bishop, as you may find. Considering that you held your office from the Government of King James, it is even possible that a charge of treason might lie against you. It rests with your successor entirely whether ye're hanged or not."

Bishop caught his breath, rapped out an oath, and then shaken by a sudden fear:

"Who the devil may you be?" he asked.

"I am Lord Willoughby, Governor-General of his Majesty's colonies in the West Indies. You were informed, I think, of my coming."

The remains of Bishop's anger fell from him like a cloak. He broke into a sweat of fear. Behind him Lord Julian looked on; his handsome face suddenly white and drawn.

"But, my lord," began the colonel.

"Sir, I am not concerned to hear your reasons," his lordship interrupted him harshly. "I am on the point of sailing and I have not the time. The governor will hear you, and no doubt deal justly by you."

He waved to Major Mallard, and Bishop, a crumpled, broken man, allowed himself to be led away.

To Lord Julian, who went with him, since none deterred him, Bishop expressed himself when presently he had sufficiently recovered.

"This is one more item to the account of that scoundrel Blood," he said, through his teeth. "My God, what a reckoning there will be when we meet!"

Major Mallard turned away his face that he might conceal his smile, and without further words led him a

prisoner to the governor's house, the house that so long had been Colonel Bishop's own residence. He was left to wait under guard in the hall, whilst Major Mallard went ahead to announce him.

Miss Bishop was still with Peter Blood when Major Mallard entered. His announcement startled them back to realities.

"You will be merciful with him. You will spare him all you can for my sake, Peter," she pleaded.

"To be sure I will," said Blood. "But I'm afraid the circumstances won't."

She effaced herself, escaping into the garden, and Major Mallard fetched the colonel.

"His excellency the governor will see you now," said he, and threw wide the door.

Colonel Bishop staggered in, and stood waiting.

At the table sat a man of whom nothing was visible but the top of a carefully curled black head. Then his head was raised, and a pair of blue eyes solemnly regarded the prisoner. Colonel Bishop made a noise in his throat, and paralysed by amazement, stared into the face of his Excellency the Deputy-Governor of Jamaica, which was the face of the man he had been hunting in Tortuga, to his present undoing.

The situation was best expressed to Lord Willoughby by Van der Kuylen as the pair stepped aboard the admiral's flagship.

"Id is fery boedigal!" he said, his blue eyes twinkling. "Cabdain Blood is fond of boedry—you remember de abble-blossoms. So? Ha, ha!"

THE END.

FIVE HUNDRED POUNDS— FOR TEN RESULTS—FREE!

SCOTTISH AND IRISH READERS MAY ENTER!

Five Hundred Pounds will be paid to the competitor whose forecast of the results of the ten matches on this coupon is correct, or most nearly correct.

The coupon contains ten matches to be played on **SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24th**, and

THE WAY TO WIN £500

is to strike out, **IN INK**, the names of those teams which you think will lose. If, in your opinion, any match or matches will be drawn, you should strike out the names of **BOTH** teams.

Coupons, which must not be enclosed with efforts in other competitions, must be addressed to:

"**UNION JACK**" FOOTBALL, No. 5.

7-9, Pilgrim Street, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.4. (Comp.).

and must reach that address not later than the first post on **FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23rd, 1925.**

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 competition offer.
 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 considered 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, neither 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 the first post on **FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23rd**, 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 offer is made in conjunction with "Family Journal," "Home Companion," "Woman's World," "Pictorial Magazine," "Boys' Realm," "Football and Sports Favourite," "Sports Budget," "Answers," and "All Sports Weekly." Employees of the proprietors of these journals are not eligible to compete.

You can use this coupon without cutting into story-matter.

U.J.

FOOTBALL COMPETITION No. 5.

Ten Matches played on **SATURDAY, OCT. 24th.**

Closing Date, **FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23rd, 1925.**

EVERTON	v. LEEDS UNITED
HUDDERSFIELD T.	v. NEWCASTLE UTD.
SUNDERLAND	v. BOLTON WANDERS.
BLACKPOOL	v. WOLVERH'PTON W.
BRADFORD CITY	v. OLDHAM ATH.
HULL CITY	v. MIDDLESBROUGH
NOTTS FOREST	v. SHEFFIELD WED.
PORT VALE	v. STOCKPORT CO.
SOUTHAMPTON	v. SWANSEA TOWN
WATFORD	v. BRISTOL ROVERS

I enter FOOTBALL COMPETITION No. 5 in accordance with the Rules and Conditions as announced, and agree to accept the Editor's decision as final and legally binding.

Name.....

Address

5

FOR SALE.

Sexton Blake Lib., odd Nos. between No. 2 and date, 22 all told.—J. Parkin, 27, The Mount, New Road, Chatham, Kent.

U.J., odd Nos. between 800-1,119, 100 all told. Sell, or will exchange for 4d. Libs.—C. Bryant, Preston, Bissett, Buckingham.

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