

SEXTON BLAKE *versus* WALDO

the Wonder Man. Complete detective-adventure thriller.



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By
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RED



A Story of Sexton Blake and Rupert Waldo. (Complete.)

Chapter 1.

The Haunted Man.

MOLINI'S RESTAURANT, in Shaftesbury Avenue, was a favourite haunt of Rupert Waldo's during the hot summer months; and on a particularly sultry August afternoon he found his usual corner cool and soothing. It was a relief to get out of the blazing hot sunshine, and the artificial breeze from a big electric fan was a passable imitation of the real thing.

It was tea-time, and although it may be difficult to believe that Waldo, the celebrated Wonder Man, was an addict to this beverage, it must be recorded that he seldom, if ever, went without his three cups.

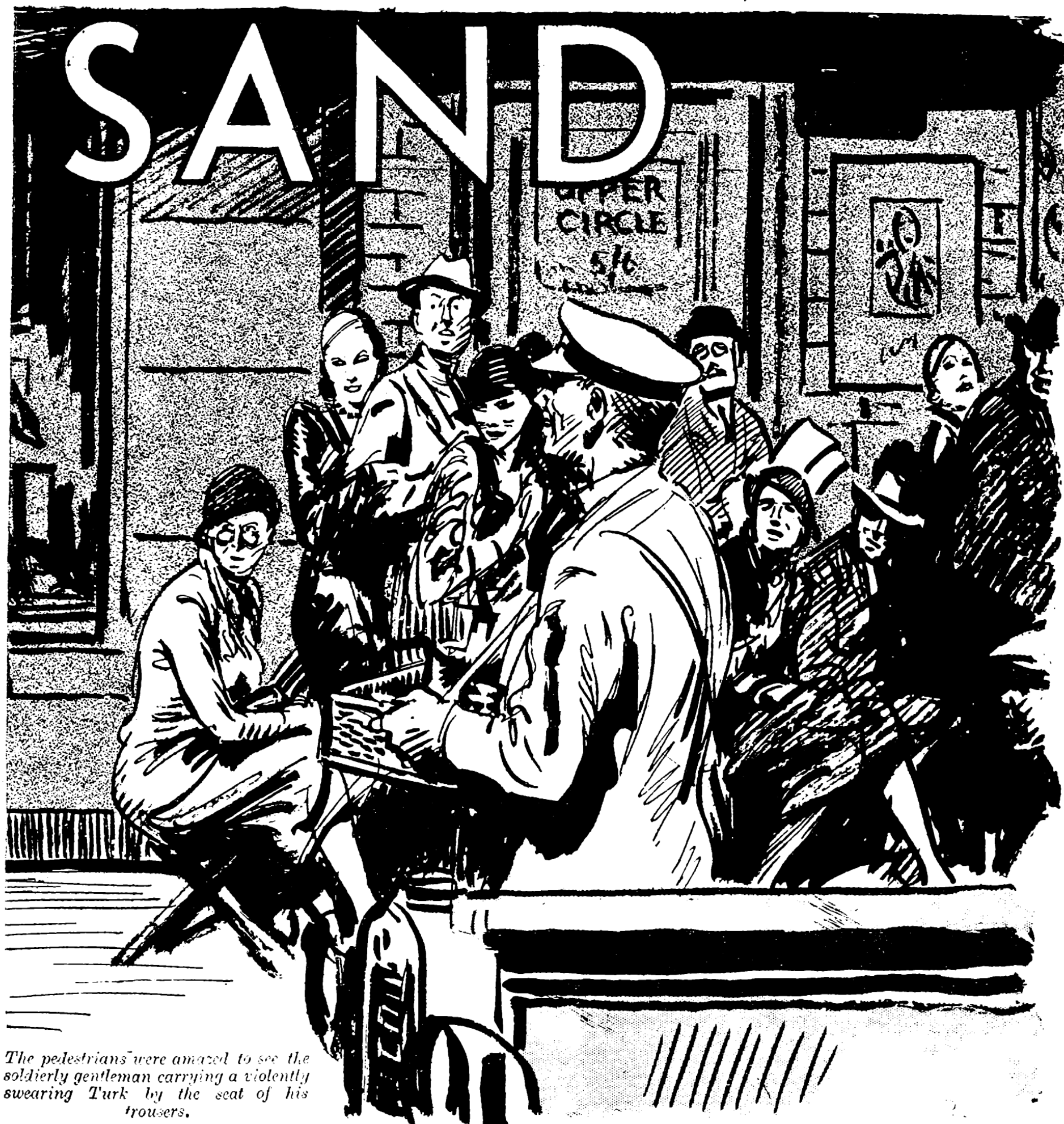
And tea at Molini's was exceptionally good. Furthermore, the restaurant was so eminently respectable, so exclusively select, that Waldo felt it was the one place in all London where he could be at peace. The more popular resorts, where alleged orchestras strove hard to curdle the tea, were anathema to him. Waldo was no glutton. He liked one thing at a time.

He took no particular notice of the man at the next table until this individual suddenly dropped his cup—fortunately, nearly empty—into his saucer with such force that both splintered to smithereens. He accompanied this action by half-rising to his feet and giving utterance to a choking cry.

Waldo looked at him with interest; and there was something about his lined features which struck a reminiscent chord. The man was badly startled; all the colour had drained from his face, and his eyes were full of mingled fear and hopelessness. And he was staring across the restaurant—staring fixedly.

Owing to the secluded nature of this particular corner, not many other people had noticed the incident. Many had heard the crash, of course, but they were far too polite to turn round and look. It has already been explained that Molini's was eminently respectable. Waldo, however, who was facing the body of the restaurant, was in the advantageous position of being able to see everybody who entered or left.

Seeking for an explanation of the phenomenon he found it at the first glance. A dark, sallow man had just



The pedestrians were amazed to see the soldierly gentleman carrying a violently swearing Turk by the seat of his trousers.

Waldo has a wonderful way with him. Typical was his treatment of the intrusive Turk . . . but even Waldo didn't realise that that same Turk was going to involve him in a case of murder. And if it hadn't been for Useful Eustace . . . but here's the whole story, so you can enjoy yourself.

entered, and he had not even sought a table. He was looking at Waldo's neighbour with a fixed, gloating expression of triumph. It was so palpable that the man was making himself conspicuous. Perhaps he realised this, for he abruptly turned aside, selected a small empty table, and sat down.

The other man slumped back into his own chair with a limpness which suggested partial collapse. Waldo had a queer feeling that he knew him. Perhaps that untidy-looking beard and moustache made a difference. Certainly, the texture of his skin told of long residence in the tropics.

It was when the unfortunate man slid grotesquely sideways that Waldo acted. The man's fingers clutched

feebly at the edge of the table, but there was not sufficient strength in them to obtain a grip; and he would certainly have finished up on the floor had not Waldo been on the spot.

"Rather a nasty shock, I fancy," he remarked gently. "Don't worry; we'll soon have you right. Take a sip of tea."

Deftly he poured some brandy out of his flask into a spare teacup, and the stranger revived instantly as he gulped down the liquor. But whether it was the liquor or Waldo's calmness which had this effect was not quite clear. At all events, the man was staring in wonder at his helper.

"I know you!" he said abruptly. "You're Waldo!"

"Hush! Remember where we are!" murmured the Wonder Man, with perfect composure. "You're quite right, Pemberton, but as one old pal to another, please remember that my name just at present is Bertram Lacey."

He assisted the man over to his own table, and out of the corner of his eye he noted that the dark-skinned individual, who appeared to be a Turk, had seen everything, and was slyly watching with ill-veiled satisfaction.

"Yes, I remembered you as soon as I looked into your face at close quarters," went on Waldo. "Ralph Pemberton, of Kentish Town. I don't think we've met for at least seventeen years."

Pemberton looked at him with a strange fire burning in his eyes.

"Of all the men in this world I wanted to meet this minute, you are the man, Waldo!" he whispered. "By Heaven, you're the one man who can help me!"

"I take it that Ali-Baba, yonder, is in some way connected with this sudden desire on your part for the companionship of a strong, silent man?" asked Waldo calmly. "A distinctly unpleasant gentleman, I should imagine. I don't like his manners in the least."

"You saw him, then?" muttered the other.

"If you were one of the Forty Thieves, and you had looted the Treasure Cave, he could not have given you a more basilisk look."

"It's amazing that you should say a thing like that!" exclaimed Pemberton, with a catch in his breath. "You cannot know the circumstances, and yet— Well, it doesn't matter. I shall feel better presently."

Waldo watched him with mild interest. The man was recovering, but he still looked terrified. He was getting his nerve back—mainly because of Waldo's presence.

They had never been friends. In the old days, before Waldo had become notorious for his extraordinary escapes from custody, he had known Pemberton as a young man who hovered on the brink of the underworld. He was not a crook, and the police in those days had had nothing against him. But he had consorted with crooks, and there was some evidence that he had a bad streak in him. He had once asked Waldo to take him into partnership, but Waldo had refused. For the Wonder Man always worked alone.

"Have some tea," said Waldo, passing a cup. "Yes, real tea, this time. And don't look so scared. That fellow isn't going to shoot you, is he?"

"He's found me!" muttered Pemberton.

"That seems pretty evident."

"Found me after these weeks," went on the man. "And only to-day I was congratulating myself that I'd given him the slip. For months he's haunted me—he's followed me from place to place. In London I thought I was safe. When I saw him coming in here I nearly died!"

Waldo made no comment. He was not asking for Pemberton's story, and he did not particularly want to hear it.

Pemberton suddenly gave his companion a sharp glance.

"You don't think I've done anything wrong, do you?" he asked abruptly.

"My dear chap, I don't think anything at all," replied Waldo. "Of course, if you had pinched— But I'm not inquisitive."

"You're wrong, man—absolutely wrong!" said Pemberton. "There's no question of my having pinched anything. That fellow is the thief—a cunning, lying blackguard! His name is Abdul Bey, and he's a Turk."

"Sugar?" said Waldo, offering the basin.

"He followed me to Smyrna, and then he tracked me to Constantinople," muttered Pemberton, without even seeing the tea or hearing Waldo's polite query. "I thought I had shaken him off there, but I was compelled to move on to Budapest and then to Vienna. Always he came—always he haunted me! Munich—Brussels—Paris! I could not escape him!"

"Evidently a persistent blighter," commented Waldo.

"In Paris I did manage to shake him off," went on Pemberton. "I took a train for the Riviera and fooled him. I doubled back, came on to London, and felt safe. I've even



taken a flat in Bayswater, and during these past two or three weeks I have had very little fear. And now he's here! He has hounded me down again!"

Waldo glanced down the restaurant, and saw that Abdul Bey was calmly partaking of tea and light refreshments, and reading a newspaper at the same time. Yet it was obvious enough that the Turkish gentleman was only keeping one eye on the newspaper. The other he reserved for Waldo's companion.

"And what do you propose that we should do?" asked Waldo.

"Get me out of here—out of this restaurant!" replied Pemberton feverishly. "Get me away somewhere— But you can't! He's certain to follow. There's no back way out of this restaurant, is there?"

"I imagine so—but I hardly think it is open to customers," replied Waldo.

"My dear fellow, don't be so excited. It will be easy enough to shake off this Turkish nuisance."

For some minutes Pemberton was silent, and Waldo pondered. The man could not be a Turkish police or detective officer, or he would have arrested Pemberton long ago. There was something deeper in it than that. He could not even be an ordinary crook, or Pemberton would have sought police protection.

"Listen!" said Pemberton suddenly.

Waldo found that the man was looking at him fixedly; and in his eyes there was a new expression. Almost a look of hope.

"Go ahead," said Waldo. "I'm listening."

"How are you situated just now?" went on Pemberton, lowering his voice to an eager whisper. "I mean, business? I've been away from England for many years, but I haven't forgotten your amazing capabilities."

"Business, at the moment, is slack," said Waldo carefully. "In fact, we are resting. In this sultry summer weather, work of any kind is a bore. And as we have small reserve funds— Well, let it go at that."

"I see—I see!" muttered Pemberton. "Then you are willing to come in with me—yes? I tried to persuade you once before. But this is different. The work is all done. You only need to help me in the disposal—" He looked round with sudden caution. "Can't we get out of here?" he complained. "We can't talk privately in a place like this."

"I fear that the eye of Ali-Baba worries you," said Waldo, with a faint sneer. "There's really no risk. We're more private here than in your own flat. Still, if you wish—"

"I do wish," whispered Pemberton. "I can't think properly with all these people round me—and with that infernal nigger watching every movement of my lips! I feel that he can understand all that I am saying—even though he cannot hear me."

"If he understood that last bit, he must be writhing, for Turks have a natural hatred of being called niggers," said Waldo. "Let us finish our tea sedately, and then we will make the next move."

"I will tell you this much," said Pemberton, leaning farther across the table. "There is a great treasure involved. Thousands of pounds for both of us—tens of thousands! I wanted it all for myself, but now I'm afraid. I'm scared stiff. I don't mind admitting it. You were always a cool card, Waldo. I always admired you tremendously. Help me in this business, and we'll split fifty-fifty."

"We'll talk of this later," said Waldo. "Where do you live?"

"No. 22, Parkside Mansions, Bayswater."

"Then go quietly home, and wait for me."

"But that's impossible," said Pemberton, in dismay. "Abdul Bey will follow me. He always follows!"

"He won't follow this time," promised Waldo. "You leave Mr. Abdul Bey to me. Don't worry at

all, but go home. You say that you have faith in me. Well, here's your chance to prove it."

His calmness, his quiet ease, had a soothing effect upon the shaken man. Already a tinge of colour was creeping back into Pemberton's face. Waldo kept an open mind, but he could not help inclining his sympathies towards the hunted man. Pemberton looked so haggard and forlorn. And Abdul Bey, with his insolent, gloating stare, was the very type of man Waldo instinctively loathed. If there was any right in this case, it was probably on Pemberton's side.

"You'll come—to the flat?" asked Pemberton eagerly.

"After I've dealt with Mr. Bey I'll be there," promised Waldo. "Let us make a definite appointment for seven o'clock. Mind you, I'm not agreeing to that fifty-fifty proposition—yet. I want to hear all the facts. If everything is open and straightforward I might be willing to lend you a hand; but before we go any farther, you'd better understand that I'm growing particular in my old age."

Pemberton stared.

"But—but I thought—" he began.

"You thought I was as crooked as Harry Lauder's pet walking-stick?" said Waldo. "I'm not. I don't care a snap of the fingers for the law, but there are certain jobs I won't touch."

"This one is all right!" exclaimed Pemberton anxiously. "On my word, I assure you it's clean. When you hear all the facts—"

"At seven o'clock," interrupted Waldo. "I'll be there prompt to the minute. Until then—don't worry about Ali-Baba."

Chapter 2.

The Hon. Eustace is Intrigued.

ALII-BABA, alias Abdul Bey, made haste to settle his score as soon as he saw that Ralph Pemberton was preparing to leave. There was something almost comic in his flurry. Waldo affected to be quite ignorant of the Turk's interest, and having casually shaken hands with Pemberton, he devoted all his attention to a small volume which he had taken from his pocket.

Yet he saw Abdul Bey cast a quick, searching glance in his direction before leaving. It was significant that Abdul Bey left the restaurant first; and even more significant that he hovered just outside the glass-topped doors, so that he could observe Pemberton's movements from without. All this told Waldo that Pemberton's story, so far, was true.

Clearly, Pemberton had managed to shake off his shadower in London, and the meeting in the restaurant had been accidental. Abdul Bey did not know where Pemberton was living, or he would not be hanging about with the obvious intention of following his man.

So far, so good. It was only necessary to prevent the Turk from trailing Pemberton and the situation would be "as you were." Abdul Bey would have again lost his man, and he wasn't likely to have a second lucky meeting. Such things don't happen twice, according to all the laws of average.

Pemberton was very nervous as he left. Waldo's inactivity worried him. He had expected something different.

When he got outside he looked up and down eagerly. But Abdul Bey was not in evidence. Shaftesbury Avenue, bathed in hot sunshine, was reeking with the mingled odours of



tar, petrol fumes, and dust. Buses and taxis were passing to and fro in endless streams.

"Hi!" shouted Pemberton, signalling to an empty taxi.

He did not notice the extremely elegant young man who was at that moment crossing the pavement towards Molini's door. But the extremely elegant young man, who was far more observant than he looked, saw Pemberton's haggard face and wild eyes—and was intrigued.

"No. 22, Parkside Mansions, Bayswater," said the haggard man, as he wrenched open the door of the taxi.

In all probability the Hon. Eustace Cavendish—for the elegant young man was none other than that noble-born sleuth—would have passed into the restaurant without any further thought. But just then a tall, lithe, well-dressed man emerged, and it was only by adroitly backing away that Eustace avoided a face-to-face encounter.

"Good gad!" said Eustace softly.

He had recognised Rupert Waldo. True, Waldo was not looking quite himself; he wore a simple but effective disguise, which gave him a trim, military appearance. But Eustace had received much training from the celebrated Mr. Sexton Blake, and he possessed the knack of seeing right through all but the most elaborate and thorough disguises. He knew Waldo on the instant—and he was not at all anxious to meet him.

He liked Waldo immensely. In some ways he admired Waldo. Unfortunately, Waldo was no longer straight, but was definitely against the law, and there were at least two warrants out against him. Hence Eustace's keen desire to avoid a meeting. For if he did meet him,

he would treat him as a friend, and that would be deucedly embarrassing. For he would be morally obliged to hand him over to the first policeman—always supposing that Waldo would consent to be handed over.

Apart from all this, the Hon. Eustace had spotted two remarkable things, and he was further intrigued. Firstly, a perfectly poisonous-looking blighter—a Moor, or a Syrian, or some such Oriental—had signalled to another taxi, with the obvious intention of following the haggard gent. Secondly, Waldo was legging it towards the Easterner so purposefully that Eustace reversed engines and hove to.

"This," he murmured, "is going to be worth watching."

He had a quick eye for anything unusual. Blake had found that out long ago. This noble son and heir of Lord Halstead was by way of being a brilliant detective. And Blake had been more than once amazed by his lightning rapidity of wit and powers of deduction.

"Just one moment!" said Waldo easily.

If Eustace had had any doubts, the voice would have dispelled them. Waldo was apt to be careless; he was rather indifferent to the activities of the police. His disguise was superficial, and he made no attempt whatever to alter his voice. Truth was, he didn't care. He was always more than a match for the police.

Abdul Bey stared round angrily. He would not have known that Waldo had addressed him but for the fact that there was a detaining hand—and a hand that felt like steel—on his arm.

"I cannot stay, sir!" said the Turk impatiently. "I do not know you. You will please let me go."

He saw Pemberton's taxi gliding away—and his own taxi had just drawn up against the kerb. Waldo inwardly smiled. The man's very panic was corroboration of his—Waldo's—theory. Abdul Bey was in complete ignorance of Pemberton's address—and now he was in a panic lest his quarry should get away.

"There's no hurry," said Waldo, with a disarming smile. "If you will only be reasonable—"

"You let me go, or I call police!" broke in Abdul Bey, his English suffering somewhat as his excitement increased. "I do not know you—"

"That's easily remedied," interrupted Waldo. "Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Bertram Lacey, and, at the moment, my chief aim in life is to prevent you from following my friend Pemberton's taxi."

Abdul Bey's jaw dropped. Waldo's calm bluntness took his breath away. Waldo saw no reason why he should hedge. Let the man know the truth, and have done with it. But he couldn't quite understand the sudden expression of relief which came into the Turk's eyes as he gave a last glance at Pemberton's departing cab.

"You let me go!" he said fiercely. "You have no right to hold me!"

"I believe you're right," agreed Waldo, nodding. "You could even

have me arrested for personal assault. But the fact remains that I'm going to keep you busy until Pemberton is well out of your reach. Perhaps I'm mixing in a quarrel that doesn't concern me, but I haven't liked the look of your face from the first. At close quarters, I like it even less."

"You insult me!" ejaculated the Turk furiously.

"One way of keeping you busy!" explained Waldo. "But as we can't wrangle here indefinitely, holding up the foot traffic, perhaps we'd better make a slight variation. Allow me, Mr. Bey."

He had seen that Pemberton's taxi was now quite out of sight, and with one characteristic heave he gripped the Turk's clothing at the back and obtained a convenient hold. At the same moment Abdul Bey was lifted clean off his feet, and the pedestrians were amazed to see this well-dressed, soldierly gentleman carrying a violently swearing Turk by the seat of his trousers as though he were a handbag.

People stopped and stared. Some smiled. Eustace grinned happily. Waldo was at his best when he was indulging in one of his strong-man stunts. Eustace had not hoped for anything so entertaining.

Waldo only took four paces. He reached the white stone front of a new building where there were any amount of sharp crevices in the stonework. With amazing agility, considering he had only one free hand, he climbed the face of the building like a spider, Abdul Bey still held in his other hand. The man's kicks and struggles were futile.

"Here we are!" said Waldo coolly.

His feat had caused people to stare in open bewilderment. It was almost uncanny. But Waldo had the strength of three ordinary men in that lithe, well-knit frame of his. And he could have earned his living, any day he liked, as an acrobat.

Hoisting Abdul Bey upwards with effortless ease, he hooked the unfortunate man's rear clothing on a sharp bronze ornamentation which jutted out from the face of the building fifteen feet above ground level.

With a leap, Waldo reached the pavement again, leaving Abdul Bey suspended overhead—his position extraordinarily precarious, for his summer suit was of thin material, and any violent movement would inevitably result in disaster.

"So-long, old man!" called Waldo, with a cheerful smile and a salute. "We may have the pleasure of meeting again sometime!"

He strolled away. People laughed outright. Evidently some kind of advertising stunt, or a wager, or something like that. Quite a few passers-by looked round for the movie cameras. Certainly nobody suspected the real truth, except perhaps Eustace Cavendish.

"Help!" shrieked Abdul Bey. "Police! Help me down!"

The Hon. Eustace waited. He had nothing particular to do just then—except indulge in tea—and he was prompted to hang about and see what happened. He had no desire to follow

Waldo. Better to forget that he had ever seen Waldo. He was a loyal citizen, and he possessed a conscience.

He elected to see what Mr. Bey would do—for his quick ears had caught the name. Eustace had been thinking. He knew that Mr. Bey had been intent upon following the haggard gentleman of the taxi. And it was fairly clear that Waldo's activities had been directed solely to the task of preventing the chase.

Nobody attempted to hinder Waldo's exit. The Wonder Man, cool and imperturbable, strolled off, donning his gloves as he did so. And he had vanished into a side turning and was well out of the picture by the time a heavily built police officer, attracted by the unusual commotion, arrived.

"Now, what's all this about?" asked the constable severely.

Nobody obliging him with an explanation, he gazed upwards.

"You there, sir!" he went on. "You ought to know that you can't do this sort of thing in the West End of London! You'll have to come down!"

"You fool! You dolt! You think I do this for the joke?" screamed Abdul Bey. "You get me down, or I fall!"

The policeman frowned.

"I shouldn't advise you to get abusive, sir!" he said coldly. "There are too many of these silly practical jokes nowadays. Unless you're careful, I shall have to charge you with causing an obstruction!"

A neighbouring shopkeeper, fortunately, appeared at this moment with a short ladder. He had seen the whole incident, and he thought that it was about time that somebody did something.

EUSTACE was vastly amused by the sight of the stolid constable mounting the ladder, and unhooking the furious Turk. Other police had arrived by this time, and they were having all their work cut out to keep the crowds back. Traffic in Shaftesbury Avenue was becoming positively congested. This ridiculous incident was creating chaos.

And the Hon. Eustace chuckled happily. What he liked about Waldo was the latter's simple, straight-to-the-point methods. This Bey chappie had to be detained sufficiently long for both the haggard lad and Waldo to vanish into the offing. And what better way than this? So simple! The work, without question, of a genius.

By the time Abdul Bey had reached the ground, and had spluttered out an incoherent explanation, ten or fifteen good minutes had elapsed. There was some talk of taking Mr. Bey to the police station, but at least he satisfied the constabulary that he was the victim of the joke. According to his story, a perfect stranger had yanked him off his feet and had hooked him on the wall. He had no idea why it was done, but he vouchsafed the suggestion that the fellow was stark, raving mad. All Englishmen were, he added.

And in the end he was allowed to

go—flustered, dishevelled, and the cynosure of all eyes. He made a bee-line for Leicester Square, glancing angrily round occasionally to find a number of inquisitive individuals—mostly small boys—hot on his trail, evidently in the optimistic hope of seeing him hung up on a wall again.

But Mr. Bey defeated them by dodging into the Empire, paying his two-and-fourpence, and vanishing into the interior of that celebrated picture theatre. The inquisitive ones, who were not of that class which can nonchalantly whack out two-and-fourpence, drifted disappointedly away. Only one individual persisted in hanging about.

The Hon. Eustace was hard to shake off. He twigged the wheeze in a moment. Sure enough, he had not waited more than five minutes before the expected happened. Mr. Bey, having taken his seat, almost immediately left it and went out again. He had given the public time to forget him. When he emerged into the blazing sunshine and heat, after the delightful coolness of the theatre, he attracted no particular attention.

But Eustace was on the spot. At least, he was on the other side of the road, studiously reading the racing results in an evening newspaper. It was no business of his what Mr. Bey did next; but for the fact that Waldo was mixed up in the affair, he would have taken no further action. But, as Eustace told himself, one never knew.

He was surprised by what actually happened.

For Abdul Bey crossed the square quite leisurely and took up a position in close proximity to a taxicab rank. First of all, however, he strolled past the taxis which were on the rank, and took casual note of the drivers, all of whom were within sight, either on their own cabs, or chatting near by.

Not four minutes elapsed before another taxi drifted in. The driver, an astonishingly stout man, with a red face and a massive moustache, climbed out of his seat, and the taxi resumed an even keel. Abdul Bey moved forward towards the taximan—and Eustace metaphorically whistled.

He knew that taximan in a moment. He was the driver of the cab which had carried off the haggard gentleman!

Here was an explanation of that look of relief which had suddenly come into Abdul Bey's eyes, and which Waldo had not understood. In fact, the Wonder Man's ruse, through no fault of his own, had failed. Abdul Bey was in a position to know the haggard man's destination.

For here was the taximan who had driven him! Eustace jumped to the truth at once. The Turkish chappie had not heard the address, but he had recognised the stout driver. Eustace knew him by sight, too. Anybody who frequents the West End gets to know these local characters by sight—if only subconsciously.

"Not so good!" murmured Eustace,

frowning. "The wind blows cold! Looks as though Waldo's wheeze has sprung a leak. I hate butting in; but it seems to me that something bright and juicy ought to be done!"

Abdul Bey was already in close conversation with the stout taximan, and there was a significant movement as the Turk's hand went into his pocket, came out, and transferred itself to the taximan's hand. Eustace caught the flash of currency notes. This information was worth big money, it seemed.

The conference did not last long. The taximan, with a wide grin on his red face, and with a flourishing twirl of his moustache, heaved himself into the driving seat. Mr. Bey entered the cab, and off it went.

"Oh, well!" said Eustace resignedly.

He managed to get another taxicab quickly enough, but he was unlucky at the first intersection. For Abdul Bey's taxi got across just before the policeman raised his commanding hand. There was quite a long delay, and after that any attempt to follow the first taxi was out of the question.

Eustace considered. It was any odds that Mr. Bey had gone to No. 22, Parkside Mansions, Bayswater. Any clump could arrive at that conclusion. But Eustace felt the need of expert advice.

"What shall I do now, guv'nor?" asked the driver, glancing round. "That first cab has gorn off out of sight!"

"Give it a miss in baulk, old dear!" replied Eustace. "And so that you shall not be cheated of your fare, steer the trusty chariot to Baker Street, to the northern end of that thoroughfare, on the right going from here. There Mr. Sexton Blake has his—"

"I know it, sir," said the driver, and slipped in his clutch.



"Now, what's all this about?" asked the constable severely. "You can't do this sort of thing in London."

Chapter 3. The Bequest.

SEXTON BLAKE was busy in his laboratory, conducting an important experiment—for the life of a man hinged on the result—when the Hon. Eustace arrived. So Eustace had to wait.

Tinker, who had been excluded from the laboratory, did his utmost to entertain the visitor, and Pedro improved the shining hour by rubbing himself against Eustace's immaculate trousers, and shedding thereon a considerable quantity of his coat. Fortunately, Eustace was unaware of this, or the amicable relations might have become somewhat strained.

"Well, Eustace! This is an unexpected honour!"

Blake, with the sleeves in his white laboratory coat rolled up, appeared in the doorway, drying his hands. The famous detective had an air of calm, serene contentment on his face.

"Is it all right, guv'nor?" asked Tinker eagerly.

"Entirely satisfactory," replied

Blake. "Just a little experiment, Eustace. You may have read of the case of Joshua Downley, now awaiting trial at the Old Bailey. The defence will be able to produce some startling evidence—and Downley is certain of acquittal."

"Thanks to you, old magician, I have no doubt!" said Eustace, nodding. "It's perfectly amazing what you can do in that evil-smelling lab. of yours with all those bally test-tubes and retorts and whatnots!"

"Is this a social call, or professional?"

"Well, both, I suppose," replied Eustace. "It's always jolly to drop in and beam upon the friendly faces. But I happen to have run across our dear old pal Waldo this afternoon. He doesn't know it, and I thought it discreet, in all the cires., not to clasp him round the neck and implant the friendly salute. Just a matter of policy."

"So Waldo is in London again?" mused Sexton Blake; and he helped himself to a cigarette. "Not that he ever left London, if it comes to that. Good man, Eustace! I'm always interested in that queer mixture of a

man. One of the best fellows breathing—as true as a die in most things, but with a supreme contempt for all man-made laws!"

"And none the worse for that, mark you," said Eustace stoutly. "Man-made laws, as a rule, are too frightfully asinine for words."

"Some of them are, perhaps, but that's not the correct legal attitude, Eustace," said Blake, with a smile. "You'll be telling me next that you approve of Waldo's criminal methods."

"Absolutely," replied Eustace coolly. "And you approve of them, too—only a lad in your position can't say so! Waldo may be a crook, but, rummily enough, he never does anything crooked. Not morally crooked."

"I hope we're not going to get into an argument," said Blake.

In order to nip this possibility in the bud, Eustace went into an account of what he had seen in Shaftesbury Avenue, and what had followed afterwards.

"If you were taking an evening off, I thought we might tootle over to Bayswater and give the park a treat," he concluded. "I take it that the park is in the middle distance,

or the flats wouldn't be called Parkside Mansions. I may be all wrong, of course, but I have a hunch that there's going to be a sticky to-do in that quarter. That Turkish blighter looked uncommonly murderous to me."

Sexton Blake was mildly amused—and slightly interested.

"These affairs seldom develop dramatically, Eustace, old man," he said gently. "Merely because a man looks murderous, there is no reason to suppose he intends murder. If Waldo wasn't mixed up in the case, I wouldn't bother to go. But, on the offchance of meeting him, I'll tootle along, as you call it. A breath of fresh air will do me good, after spending the whole afternoon in the laboratory."

S EVEN o'clock was just striking when Rupert Waldo entered the somewhat dingy foyer of Parkside Mansions. The porter, whose uniform was as dingy as the foyer, regarded the visitor indifferently.

"Upstairs, sir—second floor," he said monotonously, as he saw that Waldo was about to make an inquiry.

"So we have thought-readers on duty in these flats nowadays?" said Waldo, in mild astonishment. "Perhaps you'll be good enough to tell me, dear friend, how you knew that I wanted to see Mr. Pemberton?"

The porter was taken aback.

"Mr. Pemberton!" he ejaculated. "Sorry, sir—that'll be the third floor. First flat on the left when you get to the landing. No lifts in these flats, sir. We don't run to lifts."

"May I ask why you assumed that I required the second floor?"

"Oh, that's Mr. Bragganto's flat, sir—the artist chap," explained the

porter. "He's holding an exhibition of his paintings, and people have been up and down all day. Queer cattle, too, some of 'em. And need be, if they're going to see anything worth looking at in them paintings. I seen 'em," he added darkly. "And if my Bobby, who's only nine, couldn't paint something better with his left hand, I'd tan the hide off of him!"

"Ah, these modernist artists!" sighed Waldo. "They're very trying."

"Some of 'em ought to give up trying, sir—that's all I can say," commented the porter, who was evidently a bit of a wag.

He would have said a lot more if Waldo had waited to listen. But the Wonder Man excused himself and mounted the stairs. On the way up he passed a few specimens of the "queer cattle," and he was inclined to agree with the porter. The door of one of the second-floor flats stood wide open, and a medley of blah-blah voices floated out on to the landing. Waldo passed straight up to the third floor, where all was quiet.

He rang the bell of No. 22, and there was no response. He knocked loudly, and wondered. Then he suddenly bent nearer to the door, his ears on the stretch. Waldo's hearing was uncannily acute, and he fancied that he had heard something.

He knocked again—and this time there was no mistaking the nature of the answering sound. A low, feeble groan! It evidently came from some room deep in the flat, and no normal person would have heard it at all.

Waldo thought rapidly for no more than two seconds. He remembered Abdul Bey, and he wondered if he had arrived too late. With a quick movement he went to the balustrade and leaned over the well.

"Porter!" he called loudly.

A face suddenly appeared far below, staring upwards.

"Mr. Pemberton's in, sir," said the face. "You'd better knock hard—"

"Come up at once!" shouted Waldo. "I fancy there's something wrong in the flat. I believe that Mr. Pemberton has met with an accident."

He went back to the door and listened intently. But he caught no further sounds. Soon, the porter, a big man, arrived on the landing, puffing heavily and looking alarmed.

"I can't get any answer," said Waldo, whose main concern was to have a witness available who could stay to answer questions—which he could not. "Two minutes ago I fancied I heard a groan."

"Lor'!" puffed the porter. "That's always the danger of living alone in a flat. Maybe the gent has slipped down, or had a fit or something. 'E ain't been here long, and I never did think he looked strong."

He rang the bell violently, thundered on the door, and waited.

"Has Mr. Pemberton had any visitors this evening?" asked Waldo.

"You're the first one, sir."

"How can you be sure of that?"

"The first one who's asked for him, anyway," amended the porter. "Of course, I can't tell whether anybody walked straight in or not. Those people on the second floor have been keeping me pretty busy, asking all sorts of silly questions, and coming in and going out all day."

"Did you happen to see a dark-skinned gentleman—a Turk?"

"Lor' bless you, guv'nor, there's all sorts been up to that art exhibition!" said the porter, hammering again. "Niggers and Injuns, and I don't know who else. Might have been a stray Eskimo or two, for all I know. Couldn't expect me to keep track of 'em, could you?"

Waldo realised the difficulty. It was extraordinarily unfortunate that the futuristic Mr. Bragganto should have held his exhibition of paintings to-day. Ordinarily, no doubt, the porter would have remembered Abdul Bey if the latter had been in and out.

"It do look queer, sir," said the man at length. "I'd call the manager, only he ain't in the building at this time of the evening."

"Haven't you a pass-key?"

"Why, yes, sir—only I don't know as I'm justified in using it."

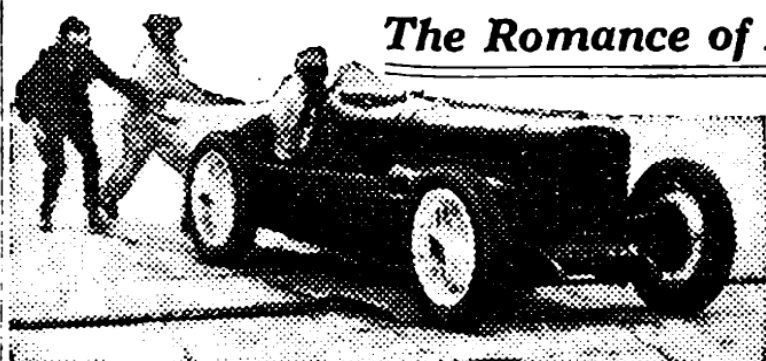
"Don't be a fool! Use it!"

And there was such authority in Waldo's voice that the porter hesitated no longer. He produced his key, opened the door, and cautiously entered.

"Mr. Pemberton!" he called, in a hoarse undertone.

Waldo pushed past him impatiently. This was no time for observing the proprieties. There was a long, dark passage, with two doors leading off it on the left, one door on the right, and another door at the end. They were all open, and Waldo passed straight through to the end, for his quick ears had caught a faint sound.

He took one look into the room as the porter tiptoed up behind him.



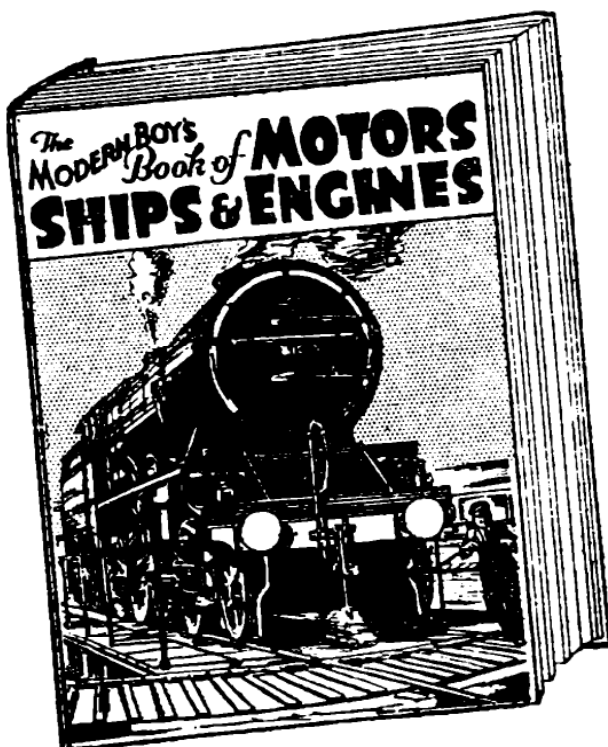
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"Better fetch a policeman—and call a doctor," he said quietly.

Ralph Pemberton was lying on the floor in a pool of blood, and he was breathing noisily, jerkily. There was a tinge of red froth on his lips, and his face was ghastly.

"Lor' help us!" muttered the porter, shaking all over. "What—what's happened to the poor gent? 'E ain't done himself in, has he?"

"He has been stabbed—and as there is no sign of the knife, it's pretty clear that he was murdered," replied Waldo grimly. "It's a thousand pities those infernal people on the floor below are having all those visitors. The murderer took advantage of that fact."

Suddenly Pemberton stirred, and his eyelids fluttered. He turned his gaze upon the two intruders, and even the porter could see that his eyes were already glazing.

"He stabbed me—in the back—ten minutes ago!" muttered the stricken man. "Perhaps it was half an hour ago, or—I don't remember. He's here still, searching—"

"What, the man who done it?" broke in the porter, looking round fearfully.

"Never mind!" snapped Waldo. "Go and ring up for a doctor—and fetch the first policeman you can find. But remember—the doctor first."

Waldo was thinking rapidly. There was no danger of him being involved in this stabbing affair, for the porter's evidence alone would make it clear that he had not been in the flat until long after the deed had been done. But it would be most inconvenient for Waldo if the police came and recognised him. He was a wanted man, and he hated any bother.

"Waldo! Is that you? Your voice—"

The words came in the merest whisper from the floor, and by now the porter had gone, moving quicker than he had moved for twenty years. Waldo went down on one knee and lifted the unfortunate man's head.

"Tough luck, Pemberton," he said compassionately. "I'm afraid Abdul Bey trailed you, after all. And I can't understand it, because I took special pains—"

"It wasn't your fault," whispered Pemberton. "He—he told me—Knew the taxi driver. I'm going, Waldo. Can't last many minutes. Well, I'm not sorry. I've been through hell these last weeks!"

"You'll pull round," said Waldo gently.

He forced some brandy between the dying man's lips, and the ebbing spark flickered anew.

"A fortune in jewels, Waldo!" he whispered eagerly. "They're yours—all yours now. I bequeath them to you. They're mine, I tell you—honestly mine. I didn't steal them in the first place. Can't tell you how I got them—too long. But they're mine. That cur Bey took them. He stabbed me and took them! He robbed me. And they're yours—I leave them to you."

"There's really no reason why you should do that—"

"Nobody else—not a soul!" breathed the dying man. "We were going fifty-fifty, anyway. You can dispose of them. You know how." The voice became even more incoherent and faint. "Diamonds—rubies—emeralds. They're wonderful, Waldo! Yours. Get them from that black-skinned robber. Don't let him get away with this—"

The voice trailed away altogether, and the chest heaved spasmodically, and more red froth came to the lips. Then, with a gentle sigh, the end came. Waldo took a deep breath.

"Poor devil!" he muttered, and his voice was hard.

He was thinking of that gloating Turk, and in that second he made up his mind to get possession of his bequest. He believed Ralph Pemberton's dying statement. Abdul Bey had committed the foul crime of stabbing this wretched man in the back—and he should pay!

Meanwhile, Waldo's position was becoming dangerous.

Only a few minutes had elapsed, but it was high time that he took his departure. To be found here by the police would be awkward. He would not be suspected of this crime, but he would be questioned, detained—and then recognised. There would be quite a spot of bother. And he couldn't be hindered by any such nonsense as that.

He believed Pemberton, and yet he didn't quite know what to think. The very fact that the man had not sought police protection proved that the jewels—if any really existed—were somehow illicit. Still, a detail like that wouldn't worry Waldo much—

His thoughts were suddenly interrupted. His preternaturally quick ears had caught the sound of a footstep on the stairs. And there was something stealthy, something secretive about that footstep. The porter or the doctor wouldn't walk like that.

Running to the outer door, Waldo peered on to the landing. Nobody was in sight. He leaned quickly over the balustrade—and then drew back with his lips tightly compressed. For he had seen Abdul Bey himself descending the last few stairs to the second floor!

"So that's how it was done," muttered Waldo, enlightened.

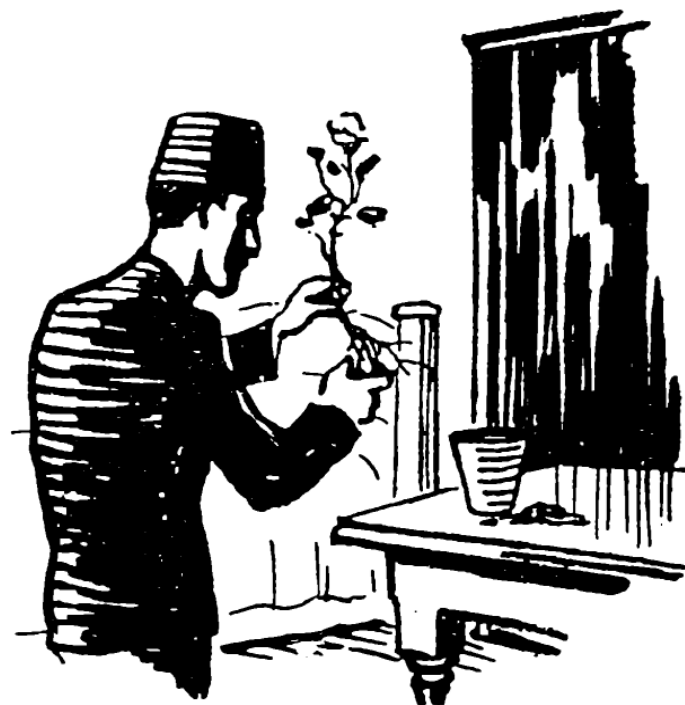
Here was a stroke of luck! Abdul Bey had got into Pemberton's flat, had killed his man and rifled his belongings, and had then slipped out and started downstairs. No doubt he had heard Waldo ascending, so he had been compelled to retrace his steps and mount to the fourth floor. There weren't any flats there, only box-rooms. And the startled Mr. Bey had lurked up there until he felt the coast was clear. Some people were going downstairs from the second-floor flat, and making a good deal of noise about it. Abdul Bey had seized his chance.

But when he left Parkside Mansions, confident that his getaway was a clean one, he had a man on his track who was ten times more dangerous to him than the entire personnel of Scotland Yard!

Chapter 4. Blood-red Sand.

A BREEZE had sprung up with the setting of the sun, and the evening turned out to be delightfully cool. Sexton Blake was glad enough to obtain the fresh air as he and the Hon. Eustace strolled along, skirting Kensington Gardens. Parkside Mansions were within view. They turned out to be old-fashioned and stuffy-looking.

Blake, if the truth must be told, had only come along to satisfy Eustace's whim—and to obtain the fresh air. He was not vastly interested in Eustace's story—for, after all, there wasn't a chance in a hundred that they would come across the one and only Rupert Waldo.



However, the detective suddenly changed. He became brisk, alert, and the keen light in his eyes caused Eustace to stare at him inquisitively. "Why the quick change act, old thing?" he asked. "Am I to assume that you have spotted something?"

"Look over there!" said Blake. Eustace looked. He saw a big, perspiring man in dingy uniform, evidently a flat porter, hurrying across the road, half-dragging a smaller man—and the latter was carrying a small black bag. Eustace's trained eye detected the professional cut of the man with the bag. "Good gad! A doctor!" he exclaimed.

"And it is clear enough that he is needed in a great hurry," said Blake. "It seems that your hunch was not so wide of the mark, after all. Look, Eustace! They're going straight into Parkside Mansions!"

Quickening their footsteps, Blake and Eustace followed, and when they got into the foyer of the mansions they heard the two men on the stairs.

"Like as not he's dead by now, sir!" came a strained, breathless voice. "Yes, the gent's with him—said the poor man was stabbed in the back—"

"What about the police?" came another voice.

"Fetched you first, sir," replied the porter. "You go in, and I'll hurry down again. Here we are, sir, this is the flat!"

Sexton Blake and Eustace ran up the stairs, two at a time. The second floor landing was quiet. Those people who had left the art exhibition

at the time of Abdul Bey's departure had evidently been the last of the visitors.

When Blake and Eustace arrived on the third floor, they found the door of No. 22 standing wide open. Blake walked straight in, and Eustace followed. They passed down the passage, and halted just within the sitting-room, at the end. The porter and the doctor were in the centre of the room, and the doctor was on his knees, beside the figure which lay on the floor.

"This man is dead!" said the doctor sharply.

"Well, I did my best, sir, didn't I?" asked the porter, in a defensive tone. "I fetched you as soon as I could."

"You spoke of another gentleman?"

"That's queer!" said the porter, looking round. "He was the gent who called on Mr. Pemberton, and couldn't get no answer. I left him here not five minutes ago. Maybe he went out for the police."

"That's probable enough," said the doctor, nodding. "Well, there's nothing I can do, I'm afraid. You'd better go down and fetch a policeman—"

He broke off as he caught sight of Sexton Blake and Eustace. The porter was staring at the intruders, too.

"You will pardon my butting in like this," said Blake quickly. "But my friend and I, seeing you entering in such agitation, thought that you might be in need of assistance."

"Then you are quite wrong, sir!" said the doctor curtly. "This is a matter for the police. I resent the unwarrantable intrusion of inquisitive busybodies!"

"Isn't that slightly blue round the edges?" asked Eustace, surveying the doctor mildly through his monocle. "This gentleman happens to be Mr. Blake—Mr. Sexton Blake!"

"Oh, really!" said the doctor, turning red. "That makes a big difference, of course. Pray accept my apologies, Mr. Blake. I was under the impression that you were mere passers-by."

"You were quite justified, doctor, in adopting the tone you did," said Blake. "However, since I am here, I take it that you will not object to my looking round? This is clearly a case of murder!"

He turned to the porter.

"You haven't notified the police yet?" he asked.

"No, sir. I thought it best to fetch a doctor first!"

"You were quite right," said Blake. "What is your name, by the way?"

"Williams, sir."

"Well, Williams, see if you can find a policeman, and bring him here," continued Blake. "Just a moment, though. You were speaking of a gentleman whom you left with this dead man? Can you tell me what he looked like?"

"Why, a well-dressed gent, sir—tall, biggish shoulders, with a military cut about him," said Williams. "Light-grey suit, as far

as I can remember. I can't understand why he didn't stay here until we got back."

"All right, Williams! You'd better fetch that policeman."

The porter hurried away, and Blake and Eustace exchanged a quick glance. Unquestionably, the man who had vanished was Rupert Waldo. The description fitted him exactly.

"This is a nasty thing to have happen, Mr. Blake!" said the doctor, with a click of his tongue. "By the way, my name is Ivory. I'm very pleased to meet you, sir, in spite of the tragic nature of the occasion. This poor man was stabbed in the back. I don't think death was instantaneous, but it was not long delayed!"

"No sign of a weapon," murmured Blake, as his quick eyes darted here and there. "Eustace, old man, you might take a look through the flat while I'm examining the body!"

"Oh, rather!" said Eustace briskly. "Any old thing!"

He twigged at once. Blake was expecting the police to arrive at any moment, and he wanted to obtain as much information as possible beforehand. For the police might not approve of his informal investigation.

There was no doubt that robbery

had been the motive for the crime; for the flat was completely ransacked. There were traces of frantic haste. Cupboards had been emptied, and the contents strewn over the floor. Wardrobes and drawers were in a state of disorder. There had been a big search. But there was nothing to show whether the search had been successful or not.

As Sexton Blake stepped close to the body he suddenly halted. The floor was of polished oak parquet, and the detective had felt something gritty under his shoe. His first thought was that some castor sugar had been spilt; but there was no sugar basin, or sugar sifter, near at hand. He could not see anything, but he went down on his knees, and bent very close to the polished floor.

"H'm!" he muttered, frowning. "This is queer!"

The doctor had elected to go to the door, to see if there was any sign of the police. Sexton Blake was alone—for Eustace was still prowling round the other rooms.

With a quick movement, Blake extracted a high-power lens from his pocket, and one glance at the





The porter was shaking all over. "What—what's happened to the poor gent?" "He has been stabbed," said Waldo.

substance on the floor added to his mystification.

It was sand—fine sand of a peculiar blood-red tinge. There was only an invisible sprinkling of it, but when Blake slipped an envelope from his pocket, and scooped some of the sand along the floor with the palm of his hand, it made a tiny heap. He pushed it into the envelope, and its blood-red nature was even more apparent.

"This might be useful," murmured Blake.

He carefully folded the envelope, and placed it in an inner pocket. Then, a thought striking him, he quickly felt in the dead man's pockets. He even examined Pemberton's clothing, using the lens as an aid. And once or twice he shook his head.

He would have enlarged the field of his investigation, but he heard voices on the stairs, and he quickly rose to his feet. The Hon. Eustace had just joined him when the porter

and the doctor came into the flat accompanied by a uniformed police-inspector and a constable.

"Evening, Mr. Blake," said the inspector, with a friendly nod. "I heard you were here."

"Yes, Marshall, I happened to be passing," said Blake, recognising the officer. "Hope you don't mind my intrusion?"

"Not a bit, sir," replied Inspector Marshall cheerfully. "Only too glad to have you on the spot. Mr. Lennard will be along soon, I hear, from the Yard. This is a murder case, I understand?"

"Yes, and a particularly vicious murder," said Blake. "The poor fellow was stabbed in the back. There are no signs of a struggle, and there is no weapon. Quite mysterious, by the look of it."

CHIEF INSPECTOR LENNARD, of the Yard, was on the spot with creditable promptitude, for he arrived almost at once. A swift Flying Squad car had whirled him over. He brought with him several subordinates, and the flat, in consequence, became somewhat congested.

"Well, upon my Sam!" ejaculated Lennard, as he saw Blake. "I thought

I was pretty quick on the job, and I'm darned if you're not here first! How in the name of mystery do you manage it?"

"Luck, I suppose, my dear Lennard," said Blake blandly. "You know my friend Cavendish, don't you? We happened to be passing the flats when we saw the doctor hurrying in."

Lennard looked at them suspiciously.

"Funny thing that you should 'happen' to pass just then, wasn't it?" he demanded. "You weren't expecting a murder to take place, by any chance?"

"If I had had any such expectation, Lennard, I should have done everything in my power to prevent the murder—and you know it," replied Blake. "I never saw the dead man before in my life, and I know nothing whatever about him. Does that satisfy you?"

Eustace noted, complacently, that Blake made no mention of his—Eustace's—part in the affair. For Eustace had half expected "something sticky," and Blake, to tell the truth, was angry with himself for not having paid more serious attention to his astute young friend's "hunch."

However, the detective consoled himself by the thought that he wasted no time. The murder had been committed about half-an-hour before Blake's arrival, so he could not have prevented it, no matter how frantically he had hurried.

Lennard set about his inquiries in the usual routine way; and it wasn't long before he pricked up his ears. He was questioning Williams, the porter, and Williams had been describing just how the grim discovery had been made.

"The poor gent wasn't dead then," said the porter. "He was pretty near his last gasp, though—"

"Hold on!" interrupted Lennard sharply. "Where is this other man?"

"The gent seems to have gone, sir," said the porter. "I thought he'd hopped out to fetch a policeman—while I was getting the doctor."

"You left him alone with the dying man?"

"Well, you ain't going to blame me for that, are you?" asked Williams. "What else was I to do? He said he was one of Mr. Pemberton's friends, and I wasn't to know that he'd slip off, was I?"

"What was this man like?"

Williams gave a fairly accurate description—which meant exactly nothing, for there were thousands of men in the streets of London who would answer to that description, and unless one knew precisely to whom it applied, Waldo was not in danger on that score.

"H'm! That's not much good!" grunted Lennard, as he made some notes. "Did this man give his name?"

"No, sir."

"He's an important witness, and it's perfectly infernal that he should have been allowed to slip away," said Lennard impatiently. "We don't even know who he is, and unless he comes forward we may never find him."

"I don't see that it matters much,

sir," said the porter, staring. "The gent didn't have nothing to do with the murder. He came up to the flat, couldn't get no answer to his ring, and called me. We entered together, and there was Mr. Pemberton lyin' on the floor, with a pool of blood near him. The gent was as innocent as I am."

"I'm not asking you for your opinion Williams," said the inspector gruffly. "Of course the gentleman was innocent. Who said anything else? But he's a friend of the dead man, and he might be able to give us valuable information. I can't understand why he went away. When you went to fetch the doctor, Pemberton was still alive, wasn't he?"

"Yes, sir," replied the porter. "I tried to telephone at first, but I couldn't get through, so I thought I'd run round—"

"Yes, yes—I understand," interrupted Lennard.

"Well, sir, Mr. Pemberton must have pegged out while I was away," went on Williams. "Like as not, he died in the other gent's arms. But it's no good asking me why the gent took himself off. Felt queer, per'aps—and I ain't sayin' I blame him. A thing like this is enough to make any man feel queer."

"Well, perhaps he'll come forward later," said Lennard. "We must hope so, anyway." He looked at Blake. "Have you any idea who that man was?" he asked bluntly.

"I did not even see him, Lennard," replied Sexton Blake, with a shrug.

"All the same, I bet you've got some ideas of your own," said the inspector. "But you always were blooming secretive."

Very little information could be obtained regarding the dead man. Barring the fact that his name was Ralph Pemberton, and that he had only rented the furnished flat for a period of three months, nothing could be discovered. The porter believed that he had come from somewhere abroad, but he couldn't be sure.

"You might find the sand useful as a clue, Lennard," said Blake casually. Lennard looked round sharply.

"Sand?" he repeated. "What sand?"

"Haven't you seen it?" asked Blake, politely raising his eyebrows. "I thought you had examined the body?"

"So I have—but there's no sand on it," said the inspector. "What a mysterious beggar you are, Blake! In any case, what do you mean? How could there be any sand here?"

"That's the puzzling part of it," said Sexton Blake dryly. "If you don't believe me, Lennard—listen."

He walked across the polished floor until he came near to the body, and then he gingerly trod on the parquet close to that grim pool of blood, and there was a faint crunching sound.

"Well, I'm hanged!" said the Yard man.

He went down on his knees at once, but after a brief examination of the sand he rose to his feet and shook his head.

"I don't think it means anything,"

he said. "This sand must have come off somebody's shoes."

"Not the dead man's," said Blake. "There's no trace of it on his shoes. Of course, the mysterious man who has vanished might have brought the sand with him—but it's doubtful. It's far more likely that the murderer left—"

"But, man alive, what's the good of it?" broke in Lennard impatiently. "You can't prove anything from a few grains of sand, can you?"

Blake was inwardly amused by the inspector's indifference. For Blake had already come to the conclusion that the red sand might turn out to be a vital clue. However, if Lennard preferred to ignore it, it was his own look-out.

An interesting fact came out just before Blake and Eustace left. Pemberton's finger-prints had been taken, and the impressions were rushed to the Yard. A telephone message came through to the effect that Pemberton had been through the hands of the police fifteen years earlier. He had served a twelve-months' stretch for embezzlement.

Nothing else was known against him. Since that lapse he had, so far as the police knew, been a model citizen. A harmless enough man. There was no complete record of him, however, for it was believed that he had spent the last ten or twelve years abroad.

Inspector Lennard soon came to the conclusion that the art exhibition on the floor below had been of vital use to the murderer. For he had been able to come and go, and nobody had taken any particular notice of him. The fact that the flats had no lift was another drawback.

"Anybody might have done the killing," said Lennard, with a shrug. "There were so many people coming for that confounded exhibition that the porter took no notice of anybody. The murderer could have walked up to the second floor, and then dodged up to the third without a soul knowing. He knocked, Pemberton opened the door, and—and there you are. It might have happened at any time between six and seven. Perhaps earlier. The way the flat is ransacked proves that the murderer stopped here a good time after he had done the stabbing. The question is, what did he pinch?"

But, in all the dead man's belongings, there was nothing to give the smallest clue to either the murderer or the motive for the crime.

Chapter 5.

Modern Magic.

SEXTON BLAKE was silent on the way back to Baker Street; and, arriving there, he remained thoughtful for some time. Finally, he requested the Hon. Eustace to again give full details of the Shaftesbury Avenue incident.

"You're undoubtedly right about the Turk," said Blake slowly. "Waldo was in Molini's with Pemberton, and Waldo volunteered to keep the Turk busy while Pemberton got

away. But neither Waldo nor Pemberton guessed that the Turk would recognise the taximan. That was the one flaw."

"Having recognised the taximan, the frightful blighter legged it to Parkside Mansions, got into the flat, and stuck his knife between Pemberton's ribs," nodded Eustace. "That's how I figure it out, old dear. Now, it seems to me that friend Waldo will soon get busy. I mean to say, I can't imagine that he'll let the Turk get away with it."

"This man Bey is presumably the murderer," said Sexton Blake. "But we mustn't take anything for granted, Eustace. There's really not an atom of proof. Well, we shall have to see what we can do."

He took the envelope from his pocket, and, opening it, allowed the sprinkling of sand to fall upon a plain sheet of white notepaper. Tinker, who had been listening interestedly, now looked at the sand in a puzzled way. Eustace bent over the table and shook his head.

"I'm all for picking up clues, and all that sort of thing," he remarked. "But, candidly, old boy, I can't see why you annexed this particular specimen. Sand, after all, is sand."

"Don't you notice anything striking about this sand?"

"Well, of course, it's rather rummily red," admitted Eustace. "But that's not important, is it? I've seen white sand and brown sand and red sand, and all sorts of shades in between. After all, what can you prove by a few grains of sand?"

"Perhaps you'll be surprised!" said Blake shortly.

He picked up the paper with great care, and holding it like a cup, so that none of the grains could escape, he went into the laboratory. Eustace and Tinker followed. Blake quickly got to work, and spread some of the sand grains on a microscope slide. Then he placed the slide in a position, and, sitting down at the instrument—which was a big, powerful one—he applied his eye. After one or two adjustments he gave his head an imperceptible nod.

"Just as I thought," he murmured. "To the trained eye, this sand is very characteristic."

He got up, and invited Eustace to take his place.

"This is really most frightfully jolly," said Eustace.

"I think it was very foolish of our friend Lennard to airily dismiss this sand as of no importance," said Blake. "I believe it will turn out to be a major clue—and one, perhaps, which will put a noose round the murderer's neck."

"Good gad!" ejaculated Eustace, staring. "You don't absolutely mean that?"

"Look at the sand," said Blake.

Eustace applied his eye to the instrument, and instantly he was fascinated. He knew what a microscope was, and he expected to see those grains of sand enlarged into miniature boulders. But he saw nothing of the kind. The objects under his eye were fascinatingly beautiful.

THE ROUND TABLE



The Editor Gets a Hand.

MOST of the letters which converge from all parts of the earth to my desk here in the Fleetway House fall into certain general types. There are the "I like such-and-such stories long ago, and I've been a 'U.J.' reader for umpteen years"; the "I suggest that you do so-and-so" types, and several others.

But I've just had one that is in a class by itself, and it gave me quite a thrill. Not only because of its uniqueness, either, as you'll see.

"Having read Sexton Blake in 2d. form and 4d. form for years, this is just a few lines from me (says Mr. N. Smith, of Park Crescent, Finchley, London, N. 3) to cheer you on the way.

"I think I take my hat off to editors! Countless readers, yet they have to please all the lot. What a job! Frankly, I don't envy you. It seems to me as if many readers lose sight of that fact. They seem to think that the paper is only for them, instead of for others as well.

"Personally, I think you do your job very well indeed. I think some of your readers should have a little thought for you. What a gigantic task you have of keeping millions of readers year in and year out—different shades of opinion, different ways of thinking. Yet they have all got to be kept interested.

"I know I couldn't do it! So here's luck to you in your difficult job every week. If you'd seen the 'S.B.'s' in places I've seen it, you'd know what a force it is for taking people out of themselves for an hour or two."

Well, I call that real handsome of you, N. Smith! It isn't often that the editor gets a hand (as the theatrical folk say), and, not being used to it, I'm covered in confusion and bashfulness accordingly.

The editor of a paper is, I imagine, rather like the author of a play. He conceives the whole thing and sets it going, and the players—like the writers of the stories in the paper—are the people who come before the public. But when the audience calls "Author!" and the playwright steps on to the stage, they see for

the first time the creator of the puppets which have come to life, and the individual responsible for their entertainment.

And usually, after the much more interesting characters of his fancy, they are disappointed in him. He usually murmurs his thanks and acknowledgments and retires into the concealment of the wings as soon as he gracefully can.

I think, after hearing about the much more interesting writers and artists of the "U.J.," you are likely to be corres-



MRS.
BARDELL
Says:—

(in her
own quaint
way)

"That there insolence man called to-day. Wanted me to take out a prophecy, but I told 'im 'is premiers were too high."

"Mr. Blake is often encaged with them there comical pursuits in his idolatory."

"A contract formed on poor Bardell's eye through bein' ejaculated from a public house, so he became a totalisator."

The above Bardellisms were sent in by the following readers respectively, and Ten Shillings has been sent to each of them. E. Evershed, Billingshurst, Sussex; Thomas Tinley, Rostrevor, co. Down, Ireland; D. Mansen, 18, Oxford Avenue, Wimbledon.

pondingly disappointed in the editor. In comparison, I am merely equivalent to "Wigs by Clarkson."

So, being unused to the spotlight, I also will retire gracefully into the wings. But before going, I want to thank everybody who has had, without expressing them, much the same sentiments about the editor's job, and to thank Reader Smith in particular, who has put them on paper.

While I am here, I will say that it makes me really bucked to know that the "U.J." policy has the support of such an enthusiastic bunch of followers, and that—in the language of the local tradesman—we exist to serve you. Our terms are moderate, and families are waited on weekly with the world's best 'tec tales. We therefore await the pleasure of your continued patronage, and your esteemed orders will be attended to with promptness and dispatch—especially orders in advance."

NOW let's hear what some of the others have got to say:

"... 'Aerial Gold,' one of the finest I have read. Was glad to see the C.C. yarns back again. They can't be beat. Give us more of Zenith and Waldo."—C. H. Allison, 12th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C.

Zenith and Waldo now available, as per request, and more to come. Also another Gilbert ("Aerial Gold") Chester yarn. Title: "The Death Insurance Policy."

"The 'From Information Received' section of the good old 'U.J.' always interests me. They say Truth is stranger than Fiction, and I have never yet read (excellent as the 'U.J.' stories are) of such ingenious wheezes."—Fred W. Skeet, Gamble Street, Nottingham.

Yes, so it is; but Fiction is no stranger to Truth at times.

"... I have read your paper for five years, and have never yet found a dull story."—E. Bennett, Bridge Foot, Boston.

Here's hoping Sexton Blake won't fail you for another five years!

"I would like you to get one of your best artists to draw a coloured picture (about the size of the cover) of Sexton Blake, Tinker, and Pedro, and forward it to me. I enclose 2d. stamp to pay postage."—E. Baldock, Molesworth Street, New Plymouth, New Zealand.

Sorry, but the 2d. stamp wouldn't be enough even for the postage.

"... and I can tell you I was jolly glad to receive a personal eply. The heading on your writing paper is jolly well done, and my brother, who is a showcard designer in a big city store, was loud in his praise for it."—Joseph H. Galt, Roseneath Street, Clifton Hill, Melbourne.

Your Editor

He saw a number of crystalline grains of quartz, sparkling and scintillating; he saw a large amount of water-worn fragments of bright red coral. Indeed, it was these coral grains which gave the sand its characteristic colour. More remarkable still, however, were the perfect shells. They were not distinguishable from the sand grains with the naked eye; but here, under the microscope, their real nature could be seen. Some of them were of the delicacy of blown Venetian glass; others were like fine porcelain.

"I say!" ejaculated Eustace breathlessly. "This is absolutely marvellous! Like a bally miracle!"

"Buck up, and let me have a look,"

said Tinker, who was bubbling with impatience.

"One at a time, old thing," said Eustace. "I suppose this red stuff is coral? But I'm dashed if I can understand these ripping little shells. I'd no idea there were any shells so small."

"They are Foraminifera," explained Blake.

Eustace jerked his head back from the microscope, and Tinker seized the opportunity to take his place.

"They're which?" said Eustace blankly.

"Foraminifera."

"Well, of course, if you say so, I'll believe it," said Eustace politely. "I know how frightfully well up you are in these scientific matters. But what

is a foreign ifra? Are there any English ifras, by the way?"

"You're not at all funny, Eustace," said Blake severely. "You know perfectly well that I said Foraminifera. In other words, you have been looking at infinitesimally small shells from the deep-sea bed—in fact, from the floor of the Eastern Mediterranean."

Tinker looked round from the microscope.

"But isn't that extraordinary, guv'nor?" he asked. "We could understand ordinary sand being on the floor of a man's flat. But how do you account for deep-sea sand?"

"I may be able to account for it—and if I can, we shall be well on the track of the murderer," replied Sexton Blake calmly. "At the moment

(Continued on page 16.)

From Information Received

OUR WEEKLY BUDGET OF ARTICLES
NEWS ITEMS CONCERNING CRIME
DETECTIVE WORK IN ALL VARIETIES
FROM ALL ANGLES.

The watch-house in Upper Thames Street, which is described in this article. The notice on the wall giving its history, quoted below, can be seen, and also the little niche at pavement level where the watchman kept his bell.

At foot of this page is shown the St. Sepulchre's watch-house, from which the watchman exhorted condemned prisoners at Newgate, opposite, to repentance.

BUILT nearly two hundred and fifty years later—in 1791—but more prominent amongst London's landmarks and of more historical interest, is the structure just outside St. Sepulchre's Church in Holborn. It is directly across the road from what is now the Central Criminal Court, otherwise the Old Bailey, but what was then Newgate Prison. The watchman announcer's duties here were complicated by the fact that, on the eve of hangings from Newgate (the victims were usually not executed at the prison, but dragged to Hyde Park Corner, two miles away) he had to shout a dirge for the alleged benefit of the condemned, urging them to watch and pray.

And, by way of intimating the approximate length of time available, the regulation time signal, as the modern B.B.C. would say, was superimposed on the dirge. The closing lines of this Be-Prepared exhortation went like this:

"And when St. Sepulchre's bell to-morrow tolls,
The Lord have mercy on your souls.
Past three o'clock."

Within a few hundred yards of St. Sepulchre's there is another watch-house, all the more interesting in that it is the headquarters of a watchman who actually functions in the ancient manner, even in 1932. It is at the entrance to Ely Place, Holborn, which territory is the property of the Bishops of Ely, and technically not part of London at all. The gates enclosing the cul-de-sac of Ely Place are always closed at night to signify this, and the

THERE aren't many of them left in London now. Like many another survival of the so-called good old times, the ancient watch-houses are gradually disappearing. And when the last of them goes, it's doubtful whether one Londoner in a thousand will notice the fact; as it is, the hurrying multitudes pass them daily without seeing these ancient links with law and order.

WHILE LONDON SLEPT

—the old-time watchman did his spell of duty in the forerunner of the modern police phone-box.

And of those who do give them a passing glance, a smaller percentage still could tell you what connection, if any, they had with London's police.

As a fact, they were the old-time equivalent to the modern police station; they sheltered the men of the watch, and they immured overnight prisoners pending a hearing before the magistrate on the morrow. And, incidentally, they are strongly built of stone for the reason—amongst others—that they couldn't be pushed over.

The smooth-working organisation, composed of many men and much mechanism, which is the Metropolitan Police Force of to-day, is the result of slow centuries of growth and development. Way back in history, when the attempt was first made to police London streets—and they, by the way, were probably the first in modern cities to have such protection—the job was, for some inscrutable reason, given to old and feeble men who were no match for even an apprentice footpad.

They were the old watchmen, or "Charlies" as they were called. Their job was to go around their "ward" or beat, armed with their rattle for giving the alarm in case of need, and a lantern to light them through the otherwise unlighted tunnels of gloom which, by day, were the narrow City streets. At intervals they would reassure the wakeful citizens—and awaken the sleeping ones—with a sort of combined time signal and weather report: "Twelve o'clock and a fine night," or whatever was appropriate to the occasion. These old men were furnished with portable wooden huts rather like those

used by road-repair men to-day; and naturally, especially when it was not a fine night—they often sat dozing in their boxes and let time signals slide.

Then it was the young bloods, the Bright Young People of the period, got a bit of fun and frolic by pushing over box, watchman and all. It was great sport, but it did not increase the dignity of the law.

SO that, when improvements were duly made in police matters, better and bigger boxes were built—of stone, and designed, moreover, with cells to accommodate the night's captures. Less decrepit watchmen were appointed, and the old rattles were abolished in favour of loud-ringing handbells.

Formerly, even as recently as ten or twenty years ago, there were many of these houses for the watch dotted about London, but before the march of progress they are falling one by one. The latest to go was that attached to St. John's Church, opposite Waterloo Station. In its later days it was hardly recognisable as an ancient monument, however, for the changing hand of time had transformed it into an eating-house. It was demolished early last year.

Quite a number of these watch-houses were built near churches, by the way, for a reason which is fully set forth on the one which still stands in Upper Thames Street. It was the watch-house of the now vanished All-Hallows-the-Less Church, but is now connected with licensed premises, and adjoins a public house. A notice painted on it states:

In the year 1557 this watch-house was erected to guard the graves from the unwelcome attention of the body snatchers. The exterior of this building remains exactly the same as it was when first built. At the pavement level you will notice a small arched recess where the watchman kept his bell. In addition to guarding the burial ground of All-Hallows-the-Less adjoining this watch-house, it was the watchman's duty to perambulate the neighbourhood at night and call on the citizens to put out their fires and lights.

Below this are two more notices, by way of postscript to the interested sightseer:

 Site of All-Hallows-the-Less.
Saloon Bar 



watchman calls the hours in the old-time way.

Probably what is the only other surviving watch-house in London is hidden down a little passage just off the Strand, just opposite the church of St. Mary-le-Strand, a curious, bridge-like building which only those in search of it would find, or only those in the know would recognise for what it was.

These few are the lone survivors of dozens. Opposite the front porch of St. Giles in the Fields, near the present-day Oxford Street, there was the Roundhouse—so called because, like many of these watch-houses, it was circular in plan. It held many prisoners in its time, but most famous was the notorious Jack Sheppard, who forthwith escaped from its upper-story cell as he did from most of the others he was confined in.

Demolished in 1690, this was replaced by another in the middle of the roadway in Holborn—probably the cause of a bit of traffic congestion even in those days. But that, too, has of course been demolished since, as has the one at Islington Green and many more.

The visitor to London may do well to step a little out of his way to have a look at any of these old relics that still stand; and even, be it said, the Londoner as well. He is notoriously indifferent to "the sights," but he may as well be in time to see these ancient memorials of the forerunners of London's modern police before they, too, fall beneath the scythe of Time.



CROOKS are crooks; in the eyes of the law they are all law-breakers. But from the human standpoint they have their degrees of crookedness. Some we may hate, others fear; others, again, we may merely despise. It depends on the kind of crime they specialise in. But there is at least one kind of lawbreaker whose wrongdoing can give us a laugh.

COM-EDIANS OF CRIME

When a crook falls for the lure of a title, he becomes entertainment value as well as news.

We all admire nerve, and the man who can carry off some brazen imposture—pull everybody's leg and get away with it—gets guffaws from the gallery even if he gets a jolt from the judge. Sometimes it's hardly a crime at all: merely a sort of mad, notoriety-seeking prank. And even when the stigma of false pretences comes into it there's still a lingering grin left.

Take the case of H.R.H. the Emir of Kurdistan, Prince Zerdecheno, Prince Mohammed Pacha II—otherwise Jay Bronson, the trousers-presser. This humble worker in London's East End came all over royalty-complex as far back as 1923, and at intervals since that time has bobbed up into the news of Britain, America, and the Continent; and, moreover, sampled the gaols of those places.

He first stepped into the spotlight's glare when he decided to abandon pressing trousers in the East End and start impressing hotel managers in the West End. He appeared at the exclusive Savoy Hotel, announced with portentous magnificence that his ancestors were the Pharaohs of Ancient Egypt, demanded the best suite of rooms in the place, and signed himself with a flourish in the visitors' book as Zerdecheno Mohammed Saide Kalelo, Prince of Kurdistan.

The royal suite he occupied was costing six guineas a day, but after a while he lost caste with the Savoy's servitors by being overcome with a wave of economy and moving into a mere fifteen-shillings-a-day apartment. But he didn't have the price for this, either, and left the hotel without the impressive grandeur of his entry into it. In short, he faded away quietly without paying his bill—and much the same thing happened at the Hyde Park Hotel also.

Six months in Wormwood Scrubs was the outcome of this little jaunt, but it didn't cure him. He became the Emir of Kurdistan at Nice, on the French Riviera, some time later, and, consequently, an inmate of a French prison for another six months' spell.

This was the result of another attack of royalty fever. He had cut a fine dash with gorgeous uniforms and a chestful of decorations, and had almost overawed the local population by his regal progress along the Promenade des Anglais mounted on a splendid charger, amongst other magnificences. But the police discounted his glory when they scooped him in on a charge of illegally wearing French decorations and being in possession of a faked passport.

Life was one long lark, alternating with prison cells, for the many-titled Emir. He sampled the gaols of London, Paris, Nice, Berlin, Vienna and other European cities, and was hunted out of America as an undesirable more than once. Still, while he was there he made things hum. His titles and royal condescension put him in the A1 class for the mammas of Society, and debutantes with dollars in prospect were almost thrown at him. In Hollywood, too, he got his stuff across, and many of the film stars of the day were taken in by his kingly style and his impressive wardrobe. Among others, Norma Talmadge allowed herself to be photographed with him.

But a New York newspaper got on his trail, and soon his royal reputation went pop. The Federal authorities hustled him out of the States, and for a time he was carried about the world in various ships because the countries where they touched wouldn't have him. Finally, he found



"... regal progress along the Promenade."

harbourage in France in 1925—a bad investment for the Republic, as it turned out, for his escapade at Nice some time afterwards was the sequel, and they had the bother and expense of clapping him into a cell.



A SECOND medal-flaunting malefactor was the man who called himself the Earl of Caithness. His weakness was a liking for a naval uniform, which he wore in and out of season, and with two and a half rows of ribbons across his chest



"His naval cap bore the badge of the Royal Air Force."

signifying the decorations he had presumably won.

Another weakness—in a different way—was that he didn't know as much about naval uniforms as he might have done. When he was arrested his naval cap bore the badge of the Royal Air Force. This rather discounted his claim of having been a captain in both the British and American Navies.

He was made a member of various clubs in England, and lectured to the other members on the workings of the Ku Klux Klan, of which he claimed to be a high official.

His little game blew up when he was found guilty of offences under the Aliens Order and of being in possession of firearms and narcotics—for which fines totalling eighty pounds were imposed—and he languished in Oxford Gaol pending deportation.

Then there was the Laird of Drumblair, who took a large mansion in Aberdeenshire and for over a year entertained British and American guests of social prominence, and even had the nerve to invite other guests staying at Balmoral Castle to join his parties.

His game was to charge his guests sixty pounds a month in advance for their entertainment and for the reflected glory of associating with the member of such an old and distinguished family, and to obtain unlimited credit from the local tradespeople—whose bills, of course, were naturally never paid from the multiples of sixty pounds which the bogus laird received. And, so far from him being of distinguished family, all he had done was to borrow a well-known name and use it without the knowledge of its rightful owner. Actually he was the son of a labourer.

The police took an interest in him when the tradesmen kicked, and his brief hour of glorious life ended with a detective's hand on his shoulder.

Criminal history is peppered with the records of rogues who have somehow got a fat living out of a snobbery-appeal or a brazen personality, even before the time of the classic Captain of Kopenick, who, in 1906, accompanied by a couple of grenadiers with fixed bayonets, entered the office of the mayor of that German town and arrested him.

When the grenadiers had marched off to the guard-house with their prisoner, the alleged captain—who was in reality a cobbler and an ex-convict—helped himself to a large sum of the municipal funds and promptly disappeared.

Another of these comedians of crime was Otto Stephane, who, amongst other things, had the nerve to confer the Belgian Military Medal to a general at a big parade of troops at Coblenz.

But we shall have more room for the story of Otto next week.

(Continued from page 13.)

it seems very incongruous that there should be deep-sea shells on the floor of a West End flat."

Eustace regarded him with open admiration.

"The rummy thing is, you had a suspicion of this before you shoved the stuff under the mike," he remarked. "But how did you know?"

"Even to the naked eye there is a difference," explained Blake. "But I could not be sure until I had made this test. The study of sand is quite fascinating; there are so many hundreds of varieties, and all of them are different, and all characteristic. Most Foraminifera, for example, is silvery to the naked eye—and coral is not always red, as you no doubt know. But there are certain spots of the Eastern Mediterranean where there is this peculiar tint."

"I'm not denying it," said Eustace. "But how in the name of all that's queer did such sand get into Pemberton's flat?"

"There may be a very simple explanation."

"Simple to you, perhaps, old magician—but dashed puzzling to me."

Blake sat down, and smilingly lit a cigarette.

"You know what a sponge is, Eustace, don't you?" he asked dryly.

"Oh, rather! I use one in the tub every morning."

"Have you ever troubled to wonder what a sponge actually is, and where it comes from?"

"Honestly, old boy, I can't say that I have."

"Well, I'll tell you," said Blake. "A sponge is really a living sea creature; the lowly animal known as Porifera. They generally occur in colonies, and the best of them come from the deep sea bed of the Eastern Mediterranean."

"Well, I'm dashed!" exclaimed Eustace, in astonishment. "I mean to say, I really *am* dashed!"

"Now, sand of the kind that you have seen under the microscope is contained in large quantities in Turkey sponges," proceeded Blake. "The sponges themselves are obtained, generally, by diving. All the sand is not removed before the sponges are packed into cases, and shipped. Thus, you will find that the London warehouses, where sponges are unpacked, are mostly ankle-deep in sand. And the men employed in these warehouses are never rid of the stuff. Their clothing becomes saturated with the sand; it gets into every nook and crevice. It fills their pockets, unless they are careful."

"Poor blighters!" said Eustace sympathetically. "I mean, what a beastly gritty existence!"

Tinker suddenly leaned forward.

"I'm beginning to get you now, guv'nor!" he said eagerly. "That man that Waldo was after is a Turk, isn't he? And if he should prove to be connected with a sponge warehouse—and that doesn't seem at all unlikely—it's pretty good evidence that it was he who dropped that sand in Pemberton's flat."

"My theory is that the sand was shaken out of the murderer's clothing

when he struck the fatal blow," said Blake quietly. "Such a blow was necessarily violent—a hard, forcible thrust. Even if the man had removed all the outer sand, there would still be some in the cloth. That jerk would be sufficient to free a number of grains. Or it may even have been in the brim of his hat. And if there was even a brief struggle—"

"I suppose Pemberton himself wasn't connected with a sponge factory?" asked Eustace.

"I think not. I examined his clothing very carefully," replied Blake. "There was no trace of sand on him—or in any other part of the flat. No; the sand came from the murderer, and it dropped to the floor during the death struggle, or when the fatal blow was struck. So you see how important it is, Eustace, to pick up every clue and thoroughly examine it."

"Modern magic!" declared Eustace, with open-eyed admiration. "From that bit of grit on the floor you have practically established the fact that the murderer is employed in a bally sponge warehouse! And as there can't be many sponge warehouses in London, it ought to be pretty easy to trace the blighter."

"That," replied Blake, nodding, "is exactly what I was thinking."

Chapter 6.

Refined Torture.

ABDUL BEY, his pocket bulging with loot, and a blood-stained knife hidden away in a secret pocket, travelled by motor-bus from Bayswater to Charing Cross.

Mr. Bey was happy. The fact that he had fatally stabbed a man in the back little more than half an hour earlier did not trouble his conscience in the least. He was built that way. His Eastern temperament allowed him to regard the killing of a man with indifference. Besides, Pemberton happened to be not the first man he had killed. In his own country, and in various Eastern ports, he had made quite a practice of getting rid of his enemies by this convenient expedient.

Moreover, Abdul Bey had been chasing Pemberton across Europe for so many weeks that he had grown thoroughly tired of the chase; and his feelings now were entirely complacent. In his pocket he held the prize for which he had so long hunted.

It is true that Mr. Bey had a wholesome respect for English law. Murder, in London, was a very different proposition from murder in, say, Port Said. Different, in so far as the murderer was concerned. But Abdul Bey was a man of really extraordinary conceit. In his own opinion, there was no man in the whole wide world quite so clever as he. And he laughed at the very idea of the police getting on his track.

He had taken care to enter the flats in company with two Indian gentlemen with turbans and a bearded, noisy Russian, all of whom were

bound for the art exhibition. Mr. Bey had joined that little party, and no questions had been asked.

He knew that the porter had not even glanced at him. It was from the friendly taxi driver that he had learned of the art exhibition, for that stout individual had heard something about it when he had driven Pemberton home.

On the second floor, Abdul Bey had hung back whilst the others had entered the open doorway. They had not missed him—and thus he had slipped up to the third floor, had tapped on the door of No. 22, and had been admitted by Pemberton.

It had been clear to Abdul Bey then that Pemberton had been expecting somebody else; but he had not had time to close the door. Abdul Bey had forced his way in. The rest had been quite easy. Later, Abdul Bey had left the flat in similar circumstances; the only hitch was that somebody had called at No. 22 before he could escape, and he had been obliged to mount to the fourth floor. But he was perfectly easy in mind now. He had got away, and he had not left a finger-print or a clue of any kind.

It was while he was getting off the bus at Charing Cross that some of the conceit was knocked out of him. He was on the top deck, and as he turned towards the stairway he saw a well-dressed, military-looking man near by. And Mr. Bey uttered something Turkish, and probably profane, under his breath. For this was the man who had hooked him on to that building in Shaftesbury Avenue!

"And how did you find Bayswater this evening?" asked Waldo genially.

Panic seized Abdul Bey. His complacency oozed out of every pore. For Waldo's reference to Bayswater terrified him. He fairly ran down the bus steps, and fell, rather than jumped, off the vehicle. Not until he was thirty yards away did he venture to glance back—and by now he was aware that people were looking at him curiously.

He tried to grip himself. The military-looking man was nowhere in sight. Probably he was still on the bus. With quick, frightened eyes, Abdul Bey searched among the people who thronged the pavements. No, the man wasn't there.

Abdul Bey walked on. He turned up the Strand and slackened his pace. If only he could reach his hotel—

He halted. Waldo was coming straight towards him!

"A word of advice, Mr. Bey," said Waldo gently, as he came up. "There are lots of pickpockets about here. You can't be too careful—especially when you are carrying such valuables."

Then, with a nod, Waldo passed. Abdul Bey gulped. He was, in fact, panic-stricken. He had never met with anybody like Waldo before. Waldo's methods were unique. The rascally Turk was already convinced that Waldo knew everything—only, for some remarkable reason, this military man was taking no action. It was only necessary for him to call a policeman, and—



Waldo lifted the plant out of the pot. In the loose earth were rubies, emeralds, diamonds.

Abdul Bey ran. He was past the stage when he cared what people thought of him. He ran as though he had a train to catch.

"Taxi, sir?"

An enterprising taximan, mistaking Abdul Bey's hurry, drew in towards the kerb.

"Yes, yes!" panted the Turk. "You will take me to—to Oxford Circus—quick! I have to catch the train!"

"Ain't you made a mistake, guv'nor?" asked the cabby. "There's no trains at Oxford Circus, except Toobs."

"You fool! Would you argue?" shrieked Mr. Bey. "You take me!"

"Op in!" said the taximan. "You're paying the fare!"

The cab moved off, and Abdul Bey, peering through the little window in the rear, was relieved to see that no other taxi was palpably following. At Oxford Circus he gave the cabby fresh directions. They went as far as Marble Arch, and then skirting the park, reached Piccadilly, and doubled back. Finally, Abdul Bey was set down on the Embankment, near Villiers Street. He paid his fare, and walked. He was feeling calmer now. He had been watching taxis until his

eyes ached, and he was quite certain that no such vehicle had followed his own.

He arrived at the small private hotel where he had a room. It was a cheap hotel, for Mr. Bey's funds were very low. He walked in, went to the desk, and obtained his key. He went up to his room on the fourth floor, and not until he was inside, and the door was locked, did he feel really safe.

He sat down in a chair and wiped his brow. Who was that mysterious man? Some friend of Pemberton—and somebody who had elected to interest himself in Pemberton's affairs! Mr. Bey was beginning to appreciate what Pemberton's emotions must have been like—for now the tables were turned. The hunter was being hunted. It was not a pleasant experience. Moreover, there was something about Waldo which frightened Mr. Bey exceedingly. He could not easily forget that Shaftesbury Avenue incident.

Pulling himself together, he emptied his pockets, and his self-complacency returned; his greedy eyes devoured the wonderful gems which now lay spread out upon the table. Presently, he collected them together, and sought round for a hiding place. It was far too risky for him to carry

them on his person. He would get out of London as quickly as possible, but he couldn't go immediately. He needed cash. He might be able to turn one of those gems into ready money—but it would be risky. No, he would have to think of some other way. Meanwhile, the loot must be hidden.

There was an exotic-looking Oriental plant on the drab sideboard, and its gay flowers gave the dull room a touch of bright colour. Abdul Bey, it must be explained, was passionately fond of flowers. Even murderers like nice things. He had paid good money for that plant.

Now, gently lifting the plant by its stem, he removed it from the glazed pot, and the earth came out with it. Mr. Bey's eyes gleamed with satisfaction. He loosened some of the bottom earth, and then he buried the gems amongst it, finally replacing the plant.

It was a good spot. Nobody would think of looking there. If it came to that, there was nobody to look. The hotel people knew that he was poor and— His thoughts came to a jarring halt. He had moved near to the window, and he was looking down into the street. And there, leaning nonchalantly against a lamp-post, and glancing reflectively upwards, was the military-looking stranger!

Before Abdul Bey could back away from the window, Waldo actually waved a cheery hand. It was a stupendous shock for the Turk, for, until then, he had believed that he had shaken Waldo off. His first impulse was to rush to the plant, and dig out the gems. Then he recovered himself. They were far safer there.

But what should he do? He could not move out of the hotel without this man following him—and Waldo knew much. It was as clear as daylight to Mr. Bey that Waldo was deliberately taking a leaf out of his own book. He was giving him some of his own medicine. And his object was to reduce Mr. Bey to the condition Ralph Pemberton had been in. It was a kind of refined torture.

And Abdul Bey, trembling, felt that he was trapped. He dare not go to the police for protection. In the first place, he could not breathe a single word about those jewels. Then there was the affair at Parkside Mansions. No, no, he could not go to the police.

Surely there was somebody who could help him? Somebody who could attend to this shadower and draw him off—

A name came into Abdul Bey's mind. Blake—Sexton Blake! He was a well-known detective in London. His name was known throughout Europe, and even into Asia. But Mr. Bey, like many other people of his class, believed that Blake was just the ordinary kind of private inquiry agent and none too scrupulous. A super agent, certainly, but his very profession forbade him to be too particular. As long as his clients paid him well, he would not ask awkward questions. Such was the delusion under which Mr. Bey suffered. Yes, Blake was the man. Blake would do it.

But there was a snag. Blake would require money. He was a private detective, and therefore a blood-sucker. All private detectives were blood-suckers. Most of them were little better than glorified black-mailers. Well, Blake wouldn't black-mail him; he wouldn't tell Blake too much. But he would certainly require money.

The Turk thought for some moments, then, quickly going to the plant, he removed it and took out one diamond. He dusted the soil from it and placed it in his waistcoat pocket.

Then he went out, locked his room, and hurried downstairs. Emerging into the twilight he almost bumped into Rupert Waldo.

"Well, well!" said Waldo, with a charming smile. "How we do run into one another, Mr. Bey! I am wondering if we could go somewhere for a quiet chat?"

"I do not know you!" almost screamed Abdul Bey. "You are the nuisance! I will have you arrested if you pester me!"

He ran fast, and Waldo shrugged his shoulders. Abdul Bey was lucky enough to obtain a taxi at once, and he drove straight to Baker Street. Again, he convinced himself that no other taxi was following. Yet he had a strange, positive conviction that Waldo was still on his track.

Arriving at Baker Street, he dismissed the taxi, and a minute later he was being ushered into Sexton Blake's presence.

A strange situation, indeed!

For Blake was searching for a Turk, the murderer of Ralph Pemberton; and here was the self-same Turk coming to Blake for protection!

Chapter 7.

Blake Buys a Saw.

IF Abdul Bey had known that Blake had been at Parkside Mansions that evening he would have sought out some other detective—and possibly one of the type he required.

But he had no notion that Sexton Blake was already interested in the case; and his arrogance and conceit were such that he felt himself perfectly safe from suspicion as regards the murder.

The Hon. Eustace had lingered, and was still in Blake's rooms; but he discreetly made himself scarce when he heard that a client was on the scene.

"You are Mr. Blake?" asked Abdul Bey, his dark eyes full of inquiry as he found himself alone with Blake. "It is good. You are the private detective, yes? I need you."

His English was excellent. He had worked for many years amongst Englishmen, and there was very little trace of accent.

Sexton Blake regarded him politely—yet, inwardly, the detective was astonished. This man had given his correct name, and he was undoubtedly a Turk. It was amazing that he should come to Blake—if, indeed, he were really the murderer of Ralph Pemberton. Blake had never had quite the same experience.

"In what way, Mr. Bey, can I be of assistance to you?" he asked evenly.

"I understand that you are careful, Mr. Blake," said Abdul Bey. "The word, I think, is 'discreet.' Yes. I can talk in confidence?"

"Certainly," said Blake.

"I am a poor man, sir, and I cannot offer you money," continued Abdul Bey glibly. "I am in much trouble. A man follows me, pesters me, and I think he threatens to take my life."

"Then, surely, it would be better for you to go to the police?"

"That I cannot do, Mr. Blake," said the other. "The police would ask awkward questions. You, I believe, are always—discreet. This man, he has wronged me deeply. It is a personal matter, and I hope you will not press me to go into the details. But look. You shall see that I do not come to you empty-handed."

He fumbled in his waistcoat pocket, and then placed the diamond on Blake's desk.

"Pick it up," he invited. "You know something of diamonds?"

Blake took the stone and saw that it was of excellent quality. Quite small, but worth a good bit.

"Rid me of this accursed man, and that diamond is yours!" said Abdul Bey eagerly. "I offer it to you instead of money."

Blake passed it back.

"I do not accept my fee before my work is accomplished, Mr. Bey," he said gently. "If I am able to serve you, and I serve you well, then we will talk of recompense. Now, sir, you must be somewhat more explicit. Who is this man?"

"I do not know his name," replied Abdul Bey cautiously. "But I can tell you that he has shadowed me for days. This much I can disclose," he went on, lowering his voice. "I am the agent of a big Turkish engineering firm, and I am in London for the business of negotiating a big contract. You follow me?"

Blake followed him exactly, for a cunning light had come into Abdul Bey's eyes, and Blake was something of a thought reader. Mr. Bey, discovering that Blake required no advance fees, was already changing his story.

"Go on," said the detective.

"When I said, just now, that I am a poor man, I told you of the pose I am adopting in London," continued Abdul Bey. "It is necessary that my true identity should not be known—or my real purpose. But this man is a spy, paid by a rival Turkish firm which seeks to obtain the great contract." He spread his hands. "You will see that I am not permitted to go into closer details, Mr. Blake. Indeed, I have said too much already."

"I only want you to help me. This man, he bothers me. You will see to it that he is kept away from me, yes? He knows that I have important papers and he seeks to obtain them. Even at this minute, I believe he is waiting outside in the street. Wherever I go, he follows. If you can successfully keep him away, it is all I ask."

It was a feeble enough story—an obvious lie from beginning to end. It was just an indication of Abdul Bey's overwhelming conceit. He judged all men by his own standards, and he took it for granted that Sexton Blake, for money (or for the diamond), would serve him and ask no questions.

"Let us get this clear," said the detective. "You do not want to go to the police, Mr. Bey, because you are afraid

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that your mission in London will become known to your rivals?"

"Yes, yes," agreed Abdul Bey, far too readily.

"And this spy haunts you?" continued Blake. "He is even outside at this very moment. You want me to keep him away from you? But we must have something more definite. Am I to understand that you desire to secretly leave—to get away from London whilst I am dealing with this spy?"

Mr. Bey thought rapidly.

"No, no—oh, no!" he said, looking up. "I do not intend to leave London."

Again his answer was too eager.

"Then what are your intentions?" asked Blake.

"I only require you to protect me from this man until my negotiations are completed," said the Turk. "After that it will not matter. The contract will be signed and sealed. Say, within two days. You will attend to this spy for two days, yes? You will watch me, protect me, and act as a guard. That is what I require. You do this satisfactorily, and your reward will be big."

"Where are you staying in London, Mr. Bey?" asked Sexton Blake, pulling a writing-pad towards him.

"At Castleton's Hotel, in Charing Cross," replied the Turk, knowing that a lie would not serve him here. "It is but a poor hotel. A blind, you understand?"

"I see," nodded Blake. "Well, Mr. Bey, I suggest that you walk home at once—back to your hotel. If this man is really shadowing you, I shall see him."

"You will follow?" asked Abdul Bey eagerly.

"That is my plan. I will follow, and if I see this man devoting too much attention to you, I will use some of my own particular methods." Blake rose to his feet. "Leave the rest to me, Mr. Bey. But I feel that I should warn you that if I find that you have lied to me—pardon my bluntness—and if you are engaged in some unlawful project, I shall not hesitate to act as I think fit."

Abdul Bey spread his hands and grinned.

"I quite understand," he said, in his oiliest manner. "You must protect yourself, yes? But all is well. You keep this man from me, and you ask no questions. You are very discreet, Mr. Blake. I am obliged."

He was ushered out, and two minutes later Blake himself walked unobtrusively down Baker Street. He was rather intrigued. It was quite clear that Abdul Bey was terrified of the "unknown" man who was shadowing him. And Blake could appreciate his terror.

For the Turk had that murder on his conscience—and he feared, no doubt, that Waldo meant to take vengeance. Hence Mr. Bey's reluctance to go to the police.

As for Blake himself, he was glad enough of this opportunity to get into touch with Rupert Waldo. Unquestionably, the "unknown man" was Waldo himself. And here was Blake's chance to meet the Wonder Man and have a quiet heart-to-heart talk with him. For Blake, like Eustace, had a liking for Waldo, and he did not want Waldo to get himself into an unnecessary mess.

But Blake's chief emotion was one of astonishment at the amazing effrontery of Abdul Bey. He also appreciated that Abdul Bey took him to be a common and none too scrupulous inquiry agent. In any other circumstances Blake would have curtly declined the commission;

in fact, he would have told Mr. Bey to go to the devil.

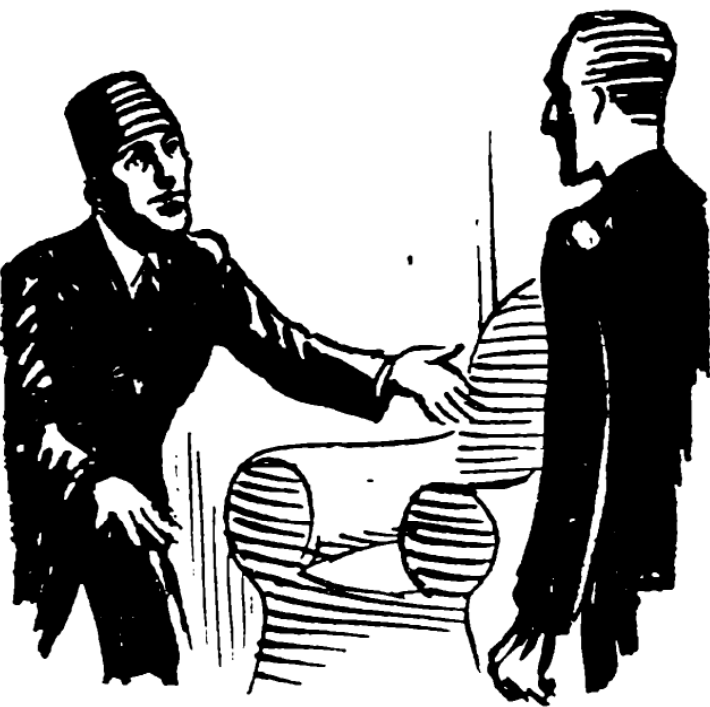
But the situation was such that he badly wanted to see just what would happen. Moreover, there was Waldo.

And at the moment Rupert Waldo was shadowing Abdul Bey in a very novel manner. Blake knew well enough that Waldo could have kept his eye on his man without giving himself away. But Waldo was walking along not four paces in Mr. Bey's rear, and it was his intention, apparently, to harass Mr. Bey to the full extent of his power.

Once or twice the Turk glanced behind him, and his expression was full of vindictive hatred. This time Waldo affected to be totally unaware of the man.

Thus the comedy continued for some distance. Having walked into Oxford Street, Abdul Bey proceeded down that famous thoroughfare for some distance, then he crossed the road, and cut off into some quiet, secluded side streets. And it was in one of these that Blake, quickening his pace, came up with Waldo.

"Don't you think this farce has gone far enough, Waldo?" asked the detec-



tive reproachfully. "You're above this kind of nonsense. What is your idea of shadowing your man in this preposterous fashion?"

Waldo turned and grinned.

"I knew you were after me, of course, Blake," he said coolly. "Well, how are you? It's a pleasure to meet you again—and in such a friendly way, too! You won't call a policeman, will you?"

"What do you know of Abdul Bey?"

"I take it that his nibs has been to you for protection?" laughed Waldo. "What a fool! I didn't want you to butt into this affair, Blake. I can assure you that it is quite a personal matter. I know more about Abdul Bey than I would care to tell you—and I mean to deal with him in my own way. But I can tell you this much—he is about as much use in this world as a rattle-snake!"

They stood in the quiet road, looking straight at one another. Blake casually placed a hand on a neighbouring railing, and Waldo grinned.

"Your idea, I take it, is to detain me here talking whilst Mr. Bey clears off?" he asked coolly. "Surely you're not falling for that cur's bunkum?"

"Never mind Mr. Bey," said Blake. "I am more interested in you than I am in him. Why are you mixed up in this unsavoury affair, Waldo? I know a lot more than you think."

"Well, if it's all the same to you, I'd rather resume this chat later on—after I have performed a little spot of work which calls in no uncertain voice," said

Waldo. "You don't mind, Blake, do you? I hate tearing myself away. And, in just the same way, I hate making a mug out of you. But you really must permit me to settle this case in my own inimitable way."

And, with a cheery salute, Waldo walked off.

"Look here, Waldo, if you think——"

Blake came to an abrupt halt, and at the same moment he saw that Waldo had glanced round and was grinning. The detective had attempted to lift his hand from the railings, and was attracted by a metallic clink and a strange tugging at his wrist.

"What the devil——" he began.

"Sorry, old man; I couldn't resist the temptation!" came Waldo's voice.

Blake stared at his wrist almost unbelievably. There was a handcuff round it, and the other handcuff was securely fastened round a two-inch iron railing! The famous detective, in fact, was immovably handcuffed to the railings!

In spite of his anger and amazement, Blake quickly whipped out a handcuff key—only to find that it would not fit. These bracelets were of an American pattern, entirely different from the regulation British police type. There was nothing to be done. Another man, perhaps, would have raved in his fury.

But Blake, after the first shock of annoyance, laughed outright. It was a rueful enough laugh, but he could appreciate a clever move when it was made.

But how in the world Waldo had put that handcuff round his wrist without him being aware of the fact was a mystery.

Blake knew that Waldo was a brilliant magician—that his sleight-of-hand tricks were almost beyond belief. But never had he suspected that he would become one of Waldo's victims.

"Constable!" called Blake suddenly.

He had heard the unmistakable tread of a police officer; and a moment later a constable moved across the road and regarded him with some suspicion.

"Was that you calling, sir?" he asked.

"It was," said Blake. "I want you to do something about this." He indicated his manacled wrist. "I don't think your key will be any good. Would you mind going to the nearest ironmonger's and buying me a hacksaw? Here is the money." And he felt in his trousers pocket with his free hand, and produced some silver.

The astonished officer opened his eyes wider, and his suspicions deepened.

"You'll have to explain this, sir!" he said darkly. "I shall require your name and address, and——"

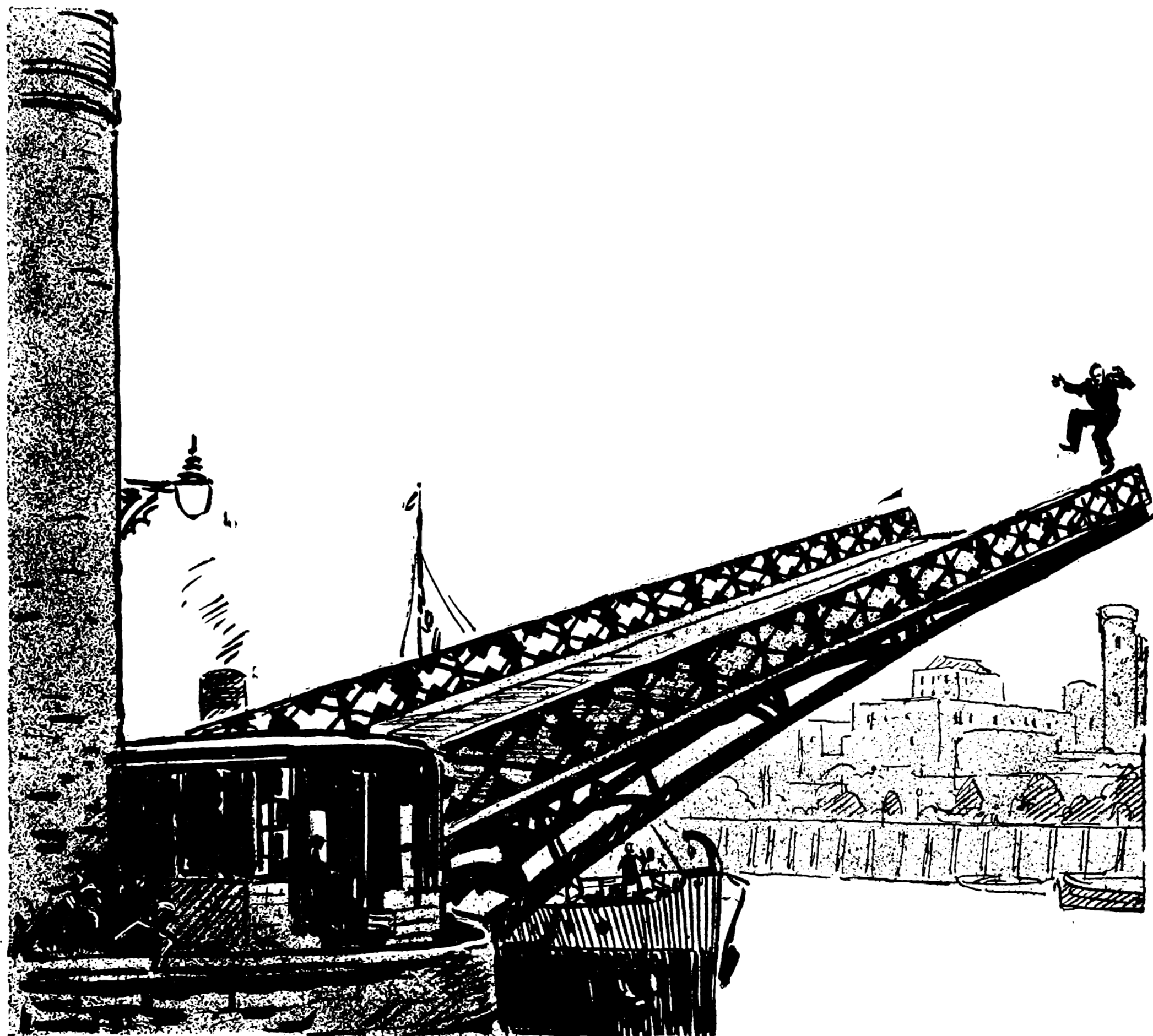
"My name is Sexton Blake, and I live in Baker Street."

"Now, there's no call for you to get funny!" said the policeman sharply. "This looks fishy to me, and I don't want any of your—Why, bless me—I'm sorry, Mr. Blake!"

He had taken a closer look at the manacled man, and he had recognised him.

"It's only a foolish practical joke," explained Blake, with a smile. "I was chatting here with a friend of mine, and he played this trick on me. I suppose he thought it was funny. And I was fool enough to be caught napping."

The policeman made haste to go for the saw. And Sexton Blake grimly told himself that one of his first missions in life, henceforth, would be to get even with Rupert Waldo.



Chapter 8.

The Heir Takes Charge.

WHEN Abdul Bey made the discovery that the shadower was no longer on his trail he gloated with triumph. He gave Blake no credit; he considered that this happy result of his visit to Baker Street was entirely due to his own sagacity.

Blake had merely done as he had been told. He was just a hireling. And the rascally Turk chuckled contemptuously as he told himself that he would be well out of London by the morrow. Somehow or other, he would get away. His first move, in any case, was to reach Castleton's Hotel, and shift into different quarters.

Yes, he would go to the suburbs—some distant spot, like Cricklewood, or Golders Green, or Croydon. Croydon might be best. It was near the big aerodrome, and he would be able to get out of the country. His passport was in order, and he would have no trouble with the authorities. As for that business at Parkside Mansions, Abdul Bey shrugged his shoulders. He hadn't left a clue. He was safe. He could move about with impunity—particularly now that Pemberton's unexpected friend had been dealt with by Blake.

Thinking thus, Mr. Bey reached his

hotel and went straight up to his room. He had said nothing to the clerk about moving out. Better not to. He could easily slip out later on, and say nothing. His bill was paid, anyway, so there would be no inquiries. And, somehow or other, he would raise some cash on the morrow.

But for the moment the one thing was to quit.

Abdul Bey frowned. Somebody was at the door, tapping. One of the hotel people, no doubt. He went to the door impatiently, and flung it open.

On the threshold stood Rupert Waldo.

"I thought," said Waldo, "that it would be better, all things considered, to have a show-down, Mr. Bey."

He walked in, and gently closed the door behind him. With a savage, animal-like cry, Abdul Bey's right hand leapt to his clothing, and a knife flashed.

Exactly what happened after that Mr. Bey did not quite know. But he found himself on the other side of the room, and it seemed to him that his arm was broken. The knife lay on the floor.

"You may do that sort of thing to Mr. Pemberton, my friend—but not to me," said Waldo curtly. "Another move out of you, and I'll get really rough. You murderous rat! You won't get much of a run for your

Waldo raced up the ascending bascule, Blake in pursuit. At the end was already an eight-foot gap between the rising halves. Waldo hunched himself, leapt.

money, so I'll take no action. I'm here with a different object."

Abdul Bey watched him with eyes that burned evilly.

"Blake said he would attend to you!" he muttered.

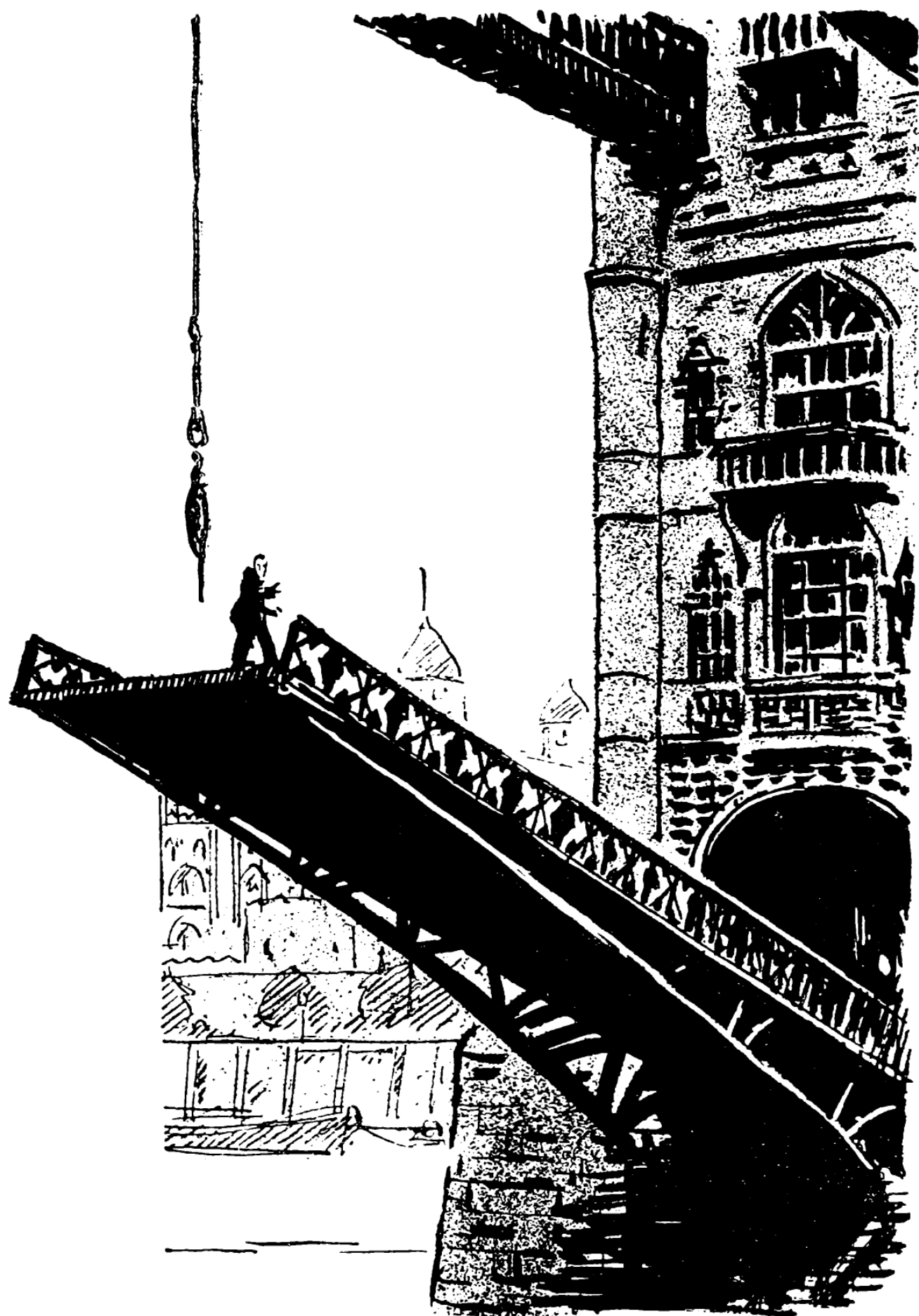
"We all make mistakes," replied Waldo. "Blake made a mistake. I've been giving you some of your own medicine, you skunk, and now I'm going to take my legacy."

"You take nothing!" shrieked Abdul Bey, his rage getting the better of his discretion. "I will call the police!"

"Call away!" said Waldo. "When they come, shall I tell them that you were at Parkside Mansions, Bayswater, this evening? Shall I tell them that you went into Pemberton's flat, and that you stabbed Pemberton in the back, like the cowardly, murderous snake you are?"

The Turk, trembling with fright, cowered back.

"It is a lie!" he panted. "I was not



there! Who are you? You are like the devil, always hounding me!"

"Well, you ought to know—the devil is your greatest pal, I should imagine," said Waldo contemptuously. "To tell you the truth, Mr. Bey, I hate talking to you. Your voice makes me sick. So you won't mind keeping quiet, will you?"

He had seen the stealthy, sidling movement of the Turk; but before Abdul Bey could reach for the knife which lay where it had fallen, Waldo was upon him. The Wonder Man treated his victim effortlessly. Abdul Bey was a normally strong man, but he was like an infant in Waldo's uncanny grip.

With one hand, Waldo forced him into a chair, and held him tightly. With the other he grabbed a number of cigarettes from the table, and calmly stuffed them into the Turk's mouth. And while Mr. Bey was endeavouring to get rid of this novel gag, Waldo slipped some strong cords round him, and bound him to the chair. Finally he tied the tablecloth round Abdul Bey's face.

"Now, that's better," said Waldo calmly. "We can talk peacefully and amicably now—for it will be one-sided, and we can't enter into any unpleasant argument. I'm not going to stay here long, Mr. Bey. All I want is the loot you lifted from Pemberton's flat."

He was purposely looking round the

room as he said this, and his head was averted from Abdul Bey. But Waldo was no fool. There was a mirror in the room, and in that mirror he saw the Turk's eyes shift fearfully across to a side table. It was the hint for which Waldo had fished.

"The stuff is here—for the simple reason that you haven't had a chance to get rid of it," he continued, moving round the room. "And a brilliantly clever man like you, Mr. Bey, would not put such valuable property in a drawer, or a cupboard. You're far too smart. This table looks promising."

He reached for the plant, with its exotic flowers. At the moment Waldo was not suspicious of the plant, but the sudden gurgling noise which came from Abdul Bey gave him another clue.

"Well, well!" he said pleasantly. "So that's it! For a really brilliant man you have done badly."

With a jerk he lifted the plant out of the pot, and a quick fumble with his fingers in the loose earth at the bottom satisfied him.

Laughing softly to himself, he carried the pot to the centre table, and here he turned the pot upside down, and soon he was picking the wonderful gems out of the loose earth. Even Waldo was astonished. There were rubies—flawless, blood-red rubies—emeralds of the finest colour, diamonds, pearls. It was a fabulous collection, and all the while Abdul Bey was straining at his bonds, choking with demoniacal rage.

Waldo was puzzled. He wondered

how this splendid stuff had come into Ralph Pemberton's possession, for he quite believed Pemberton's dying statement that there had been no robbery. Yet it was strange that such a glorious collection should not be known.

Waldo had made a habit of keeping his eye on things generally for years. He had seen no report of any missing jewels of this quality. Certainly they had not been stolen in the ordinary way; they were not being searched for by the police.

Waldo pocketed the loot contentedly. Yes, Pemberton had been right. He would know how to dispose of this stuff. He knew of certain channels. It would be fairly easy. And he would have money to burn for months to come.

"Now, there's one thing I want you to clearly understand," said Waldo, turning to the helpless man. "Before Pemberton died—you neglected to finish him off quickly—he assured me, almost with his last breath, that these gems had come into his possession honestly. At least, he did not steal them. He bequeathed them to me. Therefore, Bey, they are mine. There is only one thief in this room—and you are he. I am taking my own property—property which was left me by Ralph Pemberton, deceased."

He removed the tablecloth from his victim's face, and cut through the ropes.

"You can get up now," he said curtly. "I'm not afraid that you will complain to the police. For your own part, you can feel safe from me. You killed Pemberton, but it is for the law to get you—not for me to hand you over to the law."

In saying this, Rupert Waldo was not exactly truthful. Abdul Bey was such a cur that he would have taken great pleasure in handing him over to the police—to pay the penalty for that dastardly murder. But Waldo knew that Sexton Blake was on the job—and Waldo had more than an idea that Blake would get his man. Well, Waldo had the loot, so Blake was welcome to the murderer. A fair division of the spoils.

Before Abdul Bey could get completely free from the cut bonds, Waldo had reached the door and was gone. He passed out of the hotel without being challenged, and walked away into the gloom of the calm August night.

He looked about him cautiously and carefully, but even his watchful attention failed to see the shadowy figure which followed in his footsteps.

WITHIN the space of five hectic minutes Abdul Bey used up every known swear-word in his own language. His Oriental temperament got the better of his judgment. He was in a blind, passionate fury.

All his work for nothing! All these weeks of trailing, of plotting, of planning. He had hounded Ralph Pemberton from town to town, and from country to country. At last he had found him—he had even killed him—and now an absolute stranger had made off with the loot!

Growing tired of hurling his invectives at the thin air, Abdul Bey rushed out of the room, and tore down the stairs, and streaked out into the street. With the last shilling of ready money in his pocket, he hired a taxi and went to Baker Street.

Arriving there, he hammered on the door, rang the bell, and his fury, if anything, was even more wild.

Mrs. Bardell, in fact, afterwards declared that she had putrefaction of the heart for three immortal days; and that the fumigated gent was like a raving madman out of the profane asylum.

No sooner had she opened the door than Abdul Bey whirled past her, ran upstairs, and burst violently into Blake's privacy.

"Fool! Imbecile! Blunderer!" he screamed. "You have failed, and I have been robbed!"

Sexton Blake, who had not long been back after the handcuffing incident, and who was at the telephone, looked round unemotionally.

"You appear to have a grievance, Mr. Bey," he said, his voice maddeningly calm.

"I engage you to protect me—and you fail!" panted Abdul Bey, gesticulating wildly. "I pay you nothing! I finish with you! That man, he follows me in spite of your promise, and he robs me. You are the fool and the dolt!"

He was so carried away with himself that he raved on until he became incoherent. Blake was interested. So Waldo had been to this man's rooms and he had robbed him—there wasn't the slightest doubt that Waldo had taken the loot which Abdul Bey, in his turn, had lifted from Pemberton. Blake not only wondered what that loot was, but he was determined to get hold of it.

"Go back to your hotel, Mr. Bey, and calm down," he said, when the Turk had exhausted himself. "I may see you again—"

"Never!" interrupted Abdul Bey. "Bah! With you, I finish!"

"You may have finished with me, but I don't think I have finished with you," retorted Sexton Blake. "You may wonder why I don't take you by the scruff of your neck and kick you out into the street. I don't usually allow men of your type to burst into my rooms and abuse me. But later on, perhaps, you will understand."

Something in Blake's tone, more than in the uttered words, had such a sobering effect upon Abdul Bey that he slunk out without another word. Having reached the street, he became afraid. Nothing on earth could have prevented him from flaring out as he had done. It was his temper, and he had never been able to control it.

But he was sorry now—as he had often been sorry in the past. He knew that he had blundered. Before long panic seized him.

Chapter 9.

The Reason Why.

TINKER regarded Sexton Blake in open-eyed wonder.

"But I can't get it, guv'nor!" he said. "Why did you let that filthy Oriental abuse you like that?"

"Well, in the first place, I realised that I failed him—and, in a way, I deserved censure," said Blake calmly. "But there was another reason, Tinker. Mr. Bey will not be in a position to abuse anybody—soon. I thought I would let him have his fling. Moreover, he was quite informative. You'd better run downstairs, now, and tell Mrs. Bardell that we're not murdered."

As soon as Tinker had gone, Blake turned back to the telephone. He had been busy during the past half-hour. He had been putting through all sorts of careful inquiries.

This time he got into touch with a certain Mr. Wilmot, and, having had an earnest conversation with Mr. Wilmot, he fixed an appointment with that gentleman. The place was Scotland Yard; the time, in half an hour.

Blake and Mr. Wilmot arrived at the entrance of the Criminal Investigation Department almost at the same minute;

and, together, they went in. They found Chief Detective-Inspector Lennard awaiting them in his office—and there was also present no less a person than the Deputy Commissioner himself.

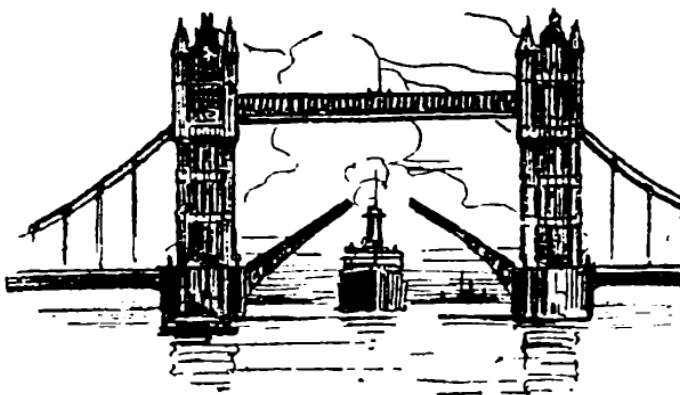
"Mr. Lennard tells me that this interview is urgent, so I thought I'd look in," said the Deputy. "Something to do with that Bayswater murder, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Blake. "I may be able to give you some information."

"We shall be glad of it, I can assure you," growled Lennard. "Frankly, we haven't a clue."

"There, Lennard, you must permit me to correct you," said Blake. "You have a clue—for I pointed it out to you myself."

"Indeed!" said the Deputy, with a



sharp look from one man to the other. "What, exactly, do you mean, Mr. Blake?"

"If you're referring to that infernal sand, I wish you wouldn't make those jokes here," said the chief inspector, somewhat testily. "You remember, sir," he went on, turning to the Deputy. "I told you all about it. Mr. Blake seemed to think that the sand might be of some use."

"I must confess," said the Deputy Commissioner, "that I agree with the inspector. For the life of me, Mr. Blake, I cannot see how that sand could have told us anything."

"Well, it may surprise you to learn that it has told me the name of the murderer—and if you can hurry up with a search warrant I can take you to the man's hotel, and it's any odds that you will nab him without much trouble," said Sexton Blake calmly.

The Yard officers regarded him with open-eyed wonder and incredulity.

"When you've done talking in riddles, perhaps you'll explain," grunted Lennard.

"Well, first of all, let me introduce Mr. James Wilmot, senior partner of the firm of Wilmot and Stevens, sponge importers," said Blake.

Mr. Wilmot bowed, and the others gracefully acknowledged him.

"I'll explain in a few words," went on Blake. "That sand, under the microscope, proved to be a very unusual kind of sand—in fact, red coral sand, mingled with Foraminifera, from the bed of the Eastern Mediterranean. In other words, deep-sea sand, such as is frequently found in the sponge fisheries."

"You amaze me!" said the Deputy.

Blake went into details, and his audience listened fascinatedly.

"Now, it was apparent to me, after an examination of Pemberton's clothing, that the sand could not have dropped from him," continued Blake. "It was just possible that it was brought into the flat by the stranger who vanished. By the way, have you been able to trace that man yet?"

"No," said the inspector. "We can't get a smell of him."

"Well, I don't think he's very important," said Blake. "Just an acquaintance of Pemberton, it seems, and as he couldn't be in any way connected with the murder, I shouldn't worry about him, if I were you. Well, as I was saying, it was odds on that the

deep-sea sand was brought into the flat by the murderer, before the arrival of the porter and this unknown."

"But people don't go about with sand all over them!" protested Lennard impatiently.

"They do if they work in sponge warehouses," retorted Blake. "They brush most of it off when they leave after the day's work—but the sand grains become absorbed into the material of their clothes. It was my theory that the few grains of sand dropped out of the murderer's clothing when he delivered the fatal dagger thrust. I should not have noticed the sand but for the fact that the floor was of polished parquet. I felt it under my shoe. And that led to the discovery. You must understand that the quantity of sand was quite trifling—a mere filmy sprinkling, invisible to the naked eye until one got down to within a few inches of the floor. Even then, the stuff was difficult to see until I had scraped some together."

"I quite understand," said the Deputy. "But even now I don't know how you arrived at your other conclusions."

"It seemed to me to be the obvious thing to search for a man who is employed in a sponge warehouse," said Sexton Blake. "I have been making very careful inquiries. There are not many sponge warehouses in London—not many, that is to say, which would answer the purposes of my inquiry. Well, after a few failures, I got in touch with Mr. Wilmot."

Mr. Wilmot coughed.

"I can only tell you, gentlemen, that a rather superior looking man, a Turk, sought employment with us a fortnight ago," he said. "I soon found that Mr. Abdul, as this man called himself, was an expert. He was no ordinary labourer—although he sought a labourer's job. He knew the sponge business from A to Z, and he gave me to understand that he was rather up against things in London, and had come to a sponge warehouse as it was the only business he really knew. I gave him a job, and he turned out to be a valuable man. I know that he lives at Castleton's Hotel, at Charing Cross, and that he is endeavouring to raise enough money to get back to his native country."

"I can further tell you," said Blake, "that this man—Abdul Bey, to give him his full name—came to me for protection."

"The deuce he did!" exclaimed the Deputy sharply.

"He told me a story of a man being on his track, with intent to murder and to rob him," continued Blake. "Now, without making any definite statement, I suggest that the man on Abdul Bey's track was the man who entered Pemberton's flat. The circumstances are entirely suspicious. Abdul Bey, according to Mr. Wilmot, and according to his own story, was trying to raise money to get back to his own native country. Yet he comes to me appealing for help, because he has something of extreme value to protect. And on the day of the murder he was absent from work."

"Undoubtedly, Mr. Blake, we are extremely obliged to you for your information, and we won't laugh at your methods again," said the Deputy Commissioner warmly. "That sand clue was remarkably valuable."

Blake had not strictly adhered to the truth, but he felt justified in varying it a trifle in order to convince the Scotland Yard officials. The main thing was to get a warrant out for Abdul Bey's arrest. For Blake, at least,

was positively convinced of the man's guilt.

"The thing I can't understand is why Abdul Bey should have come to you, Blake," said Lennard, shaking his head. "If he is really the murderer, he wouldn't have done a thing like that. It's inconceivable."

"Not to a man of Abdul Bey's conceit," replied Blake quietly. "Moreover, from what he said, he mistook me for a different type of detective. In the circumstances, I thought it unwise to enlighten him. Let me add that he offered me a diamond worth anything between eighty and a hundred pounds as an inducement to protect him. This, you will see, is corroboration of Mr. Wilmot's story to the effect that Abdul Bey was short of ready money."

"A valuable diamond!" exclaimed Lennard keenly. "And he was living in a mouldy hotel; and only this evening Pemberton was murdered, and his rooms ransacked! Yes, it's beginning to look like the real thing."

A warrant was soon forthcoming. Mr. Wilmot, whose services were no longer required, was glad enough to take himself off home. He had done his bit.

Five minutes later a Flying Squad car set out from the Yard. It contained Chief Inspector Lennard, Sexton Blake, and four plain-clothes detectives.

Arriving at Castleton's Hotel, they learned that Mr. Abdul Bey had not yet come in. He had left more than an hour earlier in an extraordinary flurry, but he had said nothing about leaving for good. His baggage was still upstairs in his room.

Lennard produced his warrant, and the manager—a foreigner—very flustered, allowed the detectives to go up.

"You are wrong, gentlemen—indeed you are wrong!" he urged. "Mr. Bey is not a criminal. He is a quiet man; he works hard and he never gives trouble."

"Never mind that," said Lennard. "If Mr. Bey comes in while we're upstairs, don't say anything to him."

The inspector gave a significant glance to one of his men, and the latter, understanding, took his seat on the somewhat dingy lounge in the hotel foyer.

The others went upstairs with Lennard and Blake. A master key opened the door for them, and they entered.

"Hallo!" said Lennard, as soon as he had switched on the light.

The appearance of the room was significant. There was not a great deal of disorder, but on the table there was a flamboyant-looking Oriental plant, lying crookedly on its side. The table itself was strewn with earth.

Blake, quickly casting his glance around, saw the cut ropes on and about one of the chairs—and Blake, at least, read the story.

Waldo had been here, and Waldo had roped his man up, and had then pocketed the loot. Here was the explanation of Abdul Bey's insane fury.

"This looks fishy," said Lennard, staring round. "Why is this plant on the table and all the earth strewn about? Seems to me that there was something hidden in the flowerpot, eh? Somebody's been here before us. Either that, or the bird took fright and flew away."

"This might interest you, Lennard," said Blake.

He indicated something on the floor, and the chief inspector quickly bent down, with an intake of breath. The

object he picked up was a long-bladed Oriental dagger.

"By the Lord Harry!" ejaculated the inspector.

He took the dagger under the light—and there, on the blade, were unmistakable traces of fresh blood.

"Blake, old man, I apologise," said Lennard handsomely. "I was several kinds of a crass fool not to take your tip. I might have obtained all the credit for this capture. Without a doubt, this is the weapon that killed Pemberton."

He frowned suddenly, as though he had thought of something; then an excited light leapt into his eyes.

"By thunder!" he exclaimed. "I remember now! A report came in earlier this evening about a man being found in Shaftesbury Avenue hanging on to the face of a building, fifteen or twenty feet from the pavement. He was a Turk of some kind. I was just wondering whether he could be this same fellow."

"I was wondering if you had heard of that incident, Lennard," said Blake.

"I thought nothing of it at the time; I took it for granted that somebody had been playing a fool practical joke," went on Lennard. "There was talk of some man climbing the face of the building and lifting that Turk with one hand. An extraordinary feat of strength. Reminded me of that beggar Waldo. You know how strong—"

Again Lennard paused, and this time the excitement in his eyes was much greater. He slapped his thigh violently.

"Upon my Sam!" he gasped. "Waldo! It fits! Waldo was the military-looking man who called at Pemberton's flat; Waldo was the man who has been on Abdul Bey's track; and if was Waldo who came here, roped the Turk up in that chair, and looted the flowerpot!"

"The machinery is working at last, Lennard," said Blake gently. "I was beginning to fear that the interior of your cranium had become permanently rusted."

"You knew it all the while, then?" ejaculated the inspector blankly.

"I knew nothing at first, but I soon came to certain conclusions," admitted Blake. "Moreover, I had definite information, but I wasn't going to say anything about Waldo. I knew he wasn't mixed up with the murder, and—"

Blake suddenly broke off and lifted up a warning hand. He had heard a creak on the stairs. In a moment he crossed the room and switched off the light.

"Quiet, everybody! If this is the man, let him come in. We may surprise him into a confession."

They waited breathlessly. A key sounded in the lock, the door was pushed open, and somebody entered. Not until he had closed the door did he switch on the light—and there stood Abdul Bey, a sorry caricature of his former self. His face was scrubby, his shoulders drooped, and evidently he had been walking about the streets for an hour or so—thinking, scheming, planning.

Now he drew himself up rigid, and stark fear leapt into his eyes.

"You are Abdul Bey?" rapped out the inspector, closing in upon him.

"What—what are you doing in my room?" gasped the Turk.

He suddenly caught sight of Blake, and his eyes shone beadily like a snake's.

"You!" he snarled.

"I told you, Mr. Bey, that we should probably meet again," said Sexton Blake grimly.

"I'm going to arrest you, Abdul Bey, for the wilful murder of Ralph Pemberton," said the chief inspector, in a crisp, formal voice. "And it is my duty to warn you—"

"No, you shan't take me!" screamed the Oriental.

He struggled like a maniac for some minutes, and the other detectives leapt to the chief inspector's assistance. Between them they subdued the infuriated man's struggles. Then, suddenly, dramatically, Abdul Bey collapsed on the floor in a weeping, wailing, cringing heap.

"I killed him—yes!" he sobbed. "The dog—the jackal! He cheated me—and I killed him!"

"You're not obliged to say this," warned Lennard sharply.

"You think it makes any difference—now?" moaned Abdul Bey. "I have lost the jewels, and now you arrest me. I know your law. You shall know the truth—and then you will know that I was not to blame." His voice became eager. "Pemberton, he cheated me, I tell you. I will tell you everything."

THE story came out jerkily, sometimes incoherently. But Sexton Blake and Inspector Lennard were able to piece it together, and make sense of it.


In some ways it proved surprising.

It seemed that Ralph Pemberton had for some years lived in the Eastern Mediterranean as the English representative of a sponge firm. His work was directly connected with the fisheries. Some months earlier, a native sponge-diver had accidentally located a small wreck. And, saying nothing to his fellow divers, he had penetrated the wreck—and had found some wonderful gems.

This man, an ignorant native, had taken the gems to Pemberton, and Pemberton, who was naturally inclined to be crooked—although he had been living straight for many years—had paid the man to keep silent, and had bought the jewels for trifling sums. After that, the same diver had smuggled more and more jewels up from the wreck during the course of weeks. There wasn't any doubt that the wreck was the remains of a small private yacht which had once belonged to the celebrated Prince Ahmed Hamid, who was one of the Turkish leaders during the Great War, and who had since proved himself to be a great statesman, and a friend of England.

During the War, however, Prince Ahmed had fled from the Allies when grave danger threatened, and he had prepared to put to sea in his yacht. At the last moment, however, he had been detained, and the yacht had gone without him, carrying his wife, and two of his children. The yacht had never been heard of again, and it had been assumed that the vessel had struck a stray mine, and had gone to the bottom.

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Clearly, the native diver had accidentally hit upon the wreck, and Ralph Pemberton knew that if he revealed the secret, not only the Turkish Government, but Prince Ahmed himself, would claim the hoard. Pemberton felt that it was a case of "findings keepings."

But Abdul Bey, the Turkish manager of the sponge fishery, in some way got to know of what was going on. Instead of informing the authorities, he faced Pemberton, and demanded his share. But Pemberton refused, and, realising that it would be dangerous to remain, he slipped away. Abdul Bey followed him, chasing him right across Europe to secure the loot.

The rest was no news to Sexton Blake. In London, Abdul Bey thought that he had lost Pemberton for good—and Pemberton himself had been afraid to dispose of the jewels. Quite by accident, the pair had met again that day—some weeks after Abdul Bey, his money gone, had been compelled to seek work in a sponge warehouse. The Turk had attempted to make no truce with Pemberton this time—he had killed the man, and taken the prize. And Abdul Bey seemed to think he had done the right thing; to his warped mentality it appeared that he was the wronged man.

WELL, it's pretty clear now," said Lennard, after the collapsed prisoner had been taken away. "Our old friend Waldo has grabbed the booty."

"But he won't keep it, Lennard," said Blake, a hard note creeping into his voice. "I've no doubt that Pemberton asked him to accept the jewels—and I think that it is equally certain that Waldo does not know the real ownership of them."

"Would he care?" asked Lennard doubtfully.

"I think so," replied Blake. "That stuff must be restored to Prince Ahmed. It is common knowledge that his Highness is living almost in poverty nowadays. It is right that he should have his own property."

But when Sexton Blake went out that night after Rupert Waldo, he was not thinking so much of Prince Ahmed Hamid. The great detective was not going to let Waldo score off him if he could possibly help it!

Chapter 10.

Waldo Does His Stuff.

AS soon as Sexton Blake arrived back at Baker Street he found the Hon. Eustace Cavendish, agog with excitement, awaiting him.

"Well, Useful Eustace, have you anything to report?" asked Blake briskly.

"I rather think the game is going well, old thing," replied Eustace. "I followed your instructions when that blighter Abdul Bey left, and I kept you in sight. And I soon twigged that you were well and truly on the track of our mutual pal, Waldo."

"Yes, Waldo knew that I was following him—but he did not know that you were following me," nodded Blake. "That, I think, is where we scored, Eustace."

"Where you scored, you mean," corrected Eustace. "I mean to say, it was your priceless idea. I was most poisonously cut up when I saw you handcuffed to that bally railing, but I couldn't do anything. I was compelled to leg it after Waldo, and he hasn't

the faintest notion that I was tailing him. I fancy that is the correct word. Unless you would prefer shadowing, or pursuing, or, perhaps, dogging. I tailed him to that moth-eaten hotel, and then I did a spot of waiting. After a bit Waldo trotted out, looking as pleased as a kid with two ice-creams. He got on a bus, so I chartered a taxi, of sorts—and I can assure you it was of sorts—and we proceeded merrily to the wilds of Streatham. The eagle eye having spotted Waldo alighting from the red chariot, I dispensed with the taxi, and did a certain amount of Red Indian stuff. Anyhow, I tailed the bird to a quiet, respectable boarding-house on the edge of Streatham Common."

"You have done well, Eustace," said Blake approvingly. "Waldo, I suppose, is still there?"

"Well, it seemed quiet for the night, so I thought I'd better scoot straight back and report," replied Eustace. "I don't know whether you're going over the top to-night, but if you are, I decidedly want to be in the binge."

"You shall, Eustace," promised Blake. "We'll go out to Streatham without delay—in the Grey Panther. An immediate interview with Waldo is imperative."

They were soon off, Tinker accompanying them. Blake felt it advisable to keep this part of the investigation strictly to himself. There was no reason for the police to be brought in—if at all. A quiet talk with Waldo might make all the difference.

During the swift run across London, in which the Grey Panther fairly ate up the miles, none of the three spoke much. Each was busy with his own thoughts as to what would be the Wonder Man's reception.

Leaving the Grey Panther in a quiet side street, with Tinker in charge, Blake and Eustace walked to the big houses facing the common, and Eustace indicated a large, imposing looking place.

"That's the joint!" he murmured. "I don't exactly know how we're going to surround the chappie, but I dare say you'll think of something. I mean to say, to do the job thoroughly we need about five hundred men. You know what Waldo is."

They were walking up to the main gateway, and Blake cast a quick glance at the rakish-looking sports car which was standing, with the engine ticking over, just against the kerb. And at that very moment a lithe, active figure emerged from the gateway and leapt into the car.

"Very thoughtful of you, Eustace," came Waldo's cheerful voice. "Sorry I can't stay—and you don't know how I hate disappointing you. If you had come ten minutes earlier you would have found me indoors."

Blake leaped forward.

"Waldo," he said urgently, "don't be a fool! You don't understand! Abdul Bey has been arrested—"

"Glad to hear it!"

"And those jewels you took from him—"

"Are mine."

"Confound you, Waldo! You don't realise—"

"Pemberton bequeathed them to me—and they're mine!" protested Waldo. "Now, look here, Blake, we're not going to quarrel over this. Awfully sorry, but I shall have to bid you good-bye!"

He gave Blake a heave which sent the detective flying backwards; at the same moment he revved up the engine, engaged gears, and jerked the clutch home. The car fairly leapt forward.

Blake inserted two fingers into his mouth, emitted a long, peculiarly shrill blast.

"Good gad!" ejaculated Eustace, clapping a hand to his near-side ear.

Blake was racing like mad, and a second later the Grey Panther came shooting out of a side turning.

Blake leapt upon the footboard, with Eustace in his rear. In another moment Blake was in the driving-seat, and the chase had begun.

"Crumbs, guv'nor!" gasped Tinker. "What's happened?"

"That racing car in front—Waldo's in it!" rapped out Blake. "He's making a getaway, and we've got to overtake him!"

"The Grey Panther will do it!" said Tinker confidently.

SOUTH LONDON had seldom witnessed anything like that sensational car chase.

The Grey Panther, by special permission of Scotland Yard, was fitted with a Flying Squad siren, and the point-duty policemen cleared the traffic like magic as they heard that urgent note. It was advantageous to Waldo, too, for the traffic was generally cleared in time for the passage of his own car.

A superb driver at all times, Waldo now excelled himself. He revelled in this hectic chase; and the car under him was a supercharged racer. Fast as the Grey Panther flew, Waldo's car managed to maintain a lead.

With roaring engines and screaming tyres, the two automobiles tore through Brixton, then on to Kennington—the Elephant and Castle—and Waldo's intention, evidently, was to shoot across and make for Westminster Bridge.

But owing to a confusion of police signals, and a jam of motor-buses and trams, there was no clear way through. Waldo swung the wheel of his car sharply, and the vehicle tilted up on two wheels and almost overturned. By miraculously skilful driving, he maintained control and slewed off, skidding dizzily, into New Kent Road. The Grey Panther gained a slight advantage here, for as the two cars tore along again, Blake was hard upon Waldo's rear bumpers.

Like a meteor the leading car shot across the intersection of Great Dover Street and Old Kent Road. It missed the back of a motor-bus by inches, slithered round, and then screamed along Tower Bridge Road.

It seemed only a matter of seconds before the Tower Bridge itself loomed ahead. Blake, at the wheel of the Grey Panther, was right behind.

Suddenly lights gleamed ahead, and a bell clanged—a warning sound and significant.

"We've got him!" exclaimed Blake exultantly.

For he knew what that bell meant. The bridge was closed—the great bascules were going up to allow a steamer to pass!

With shrieking brakes, Waldo's car pulled up, and Blake, with the uncanny skill of a Malcolm Campbell, avoided ramming into Waldo's rear.

"Better call it a day, Waldo!" sang out Blake, as he leapt from the driving-seat.

"Some hopes!" retorted Waldo lightly.

While speaking, he ran forward, leapt over the rope that was stretched across the roadway to hold up the traffic, and the next moment, to Blake's chagrin, he was racing up the

slowly ascending bascule. Shouts sounded from some of the onlookers, and there was a sudden wave of excitement.

Sexton Blake did not hesitate for a moment. Like a hare he went after Waldo—for he knew that any delay, even a fraction of a second, might spell defeat. Already those bascules were becoming steep.

Waldo ran with incredible speed; he seemed to streak up the constantly increasing slope.

And when he arrived at the end there was an eight-foot jump dividing this bascule from the other, which was rising in a corresponding way.

"So long, Blake!" yelled Waldo.

He was seen by the amazed onlookers to hunch himself up; he gathered himself together—and leapt. It was one of the most amazing feats which even Rupert Waldo had ever performed.

His figure was seen in silhouette against the sky-line; it soared outwards and upwards in a magnificent arc. The force behind that jump was incredibly powerful.

A great gasp went up when it was seen that Waldo, as though by a miracle, reached the opposite bascule. For a second he hovered on the edge, then he recovered his balance, and went slithering down to the other side. He was safe—he had put that gap, which widened every instant, between himself and Sexton Blake.

But the great detective was not yet done!

Blake was not jealous of Waldo's feat, but here was a chance for him to emulate the Wonder Man. Racing up the rising bascule, he had arrived at the top only a second or two after Waldo had taken his leap. Blake was not mad enough to follow in the same way.

But the detective had seen something—a rope which dangled down from the great superstructure of the bridge. Some repairs were being done, evidently, and that rope, although dangling, was well above the level of

passing traffic. It was only within Blake's reach because he was at the top of the rapidly rising bascule.

Sexton Blake took a chance. Launching himself outwards and upwards, he clutched at the rope. He obtained a grip, and Tinker and the Hon. Eustace, watching, held their breath.

The force of Blake's swing sent him plunging outwards and forwards. There was just a chance that the swing would send him hurtling against the opposite rising bascule, but that was one of the risks Blake had to take.

His luck was in. The forward swing carried him safely over the top edge of the bascule, and his feet slithered against the sharp slope of the roadway. He let go, and went slithering down. And, owing to the brilliantly rapid manœuvre, he was only a few seconds after his quarry.

Blake shot down, and he saw Waldo just below him, picking himself up. Like a rocket Blake launched himself forward, and the tackle he made was worthy of any Rugger International. They both rolled over and over, and Blake was astonished to find the Wonder Man limp beneath him.

Owing to Waldo's peculiar make-up he felt no pain; but he was as human as any other man, and a crack on the head was apt momentarily to stun him as it would stun anybody else.

With lightning fingers Blake went through Waldo's pockets, and at a second search he gripped a well-filled canvas bag. The contents rattled within—hard objects, wrapped in tissue paper.

"Here, what's the meaning of this?" demanded a constable sternly, as he came running up.

Other men were coming, too. But before Sexton Blake could give any explanation Waldo suddenly leapt to his feet. He staggered for a moment, but there was a smile on his face.

"You win, Blake!" he muttered. "You generally do, don't you?"

And, before anybody could stop him, he rose in a flying jump, and vanished over the parapet of the bridge. From

far below, a few tense seconds later, came a dull splash.

And Rupert Waldo was gone.

THE next day Sexton Blake attended the Turkish Embassy, and here he handed the jewel collection over to some very grateful officials. It might be aptly mentioned here that Sexton Blake now possesses a very handsome scarfpin, containing a great ruby—a present from Prince Ahmed Hamid.

The final touch came that day, however, some hours after Blake's visit to the Embassy. The detective had returned to Baker Street, and was chatting with the Hon. Eustace, who had dropped in to discuss the previous day's excitement, and to hear the latest news.

And who should arrive, quite openly and cheerfully, but Rupert Waldo himself. He walked in without being announced, and Blake fairly leapt to his feet.

"I'm not staying, Blake!" said Waldo coolly. "I just dropped in to give you—this!"

And he placed a very fine emerald on the table.

"You overlooked it last night," explained the Wonder Man. "I thought about keeping it for myself—just so that I shouldn't be left quite out in the cold. But I have been reading the evening papers, and I now realise that Pember-ton was a fairly low thief. I wouldn't like anybody to think that I come within the same category."

"In any case, I should have had the devil's own job to get rid of it—after all this publicity!" he added blandly. "Well, so-long, Blake—be good, Eustace!"

And, with the utmost calm, Rupert Waldo walked out. Sexton Blake and Eustace heard him leisurely descending the stairs. They went to the window, and they saw him just as leisurely strolling down Baker Street.

"That cheery lad is one hundred per cent!" declared the Hon. Eustace.

THE END.



THE ambulance containing Blake drove off, its gong clanging.

Coutts squeezed himself into the waiting taxi alongside Reynolds and their prisoner.

"Scotland Yard!" he barked at the driver, mopping his forehead. "Tough luck on Blake," he added ruefully. "This may put him out of action for weeks—just when he need him most."

"About this accident to him—" began Sergeant Reynolds.

"Accident be darned!" snapped the inspector. "The Confederati worked the whole thing. Don't you realise—great heavens, what's the matter with Martin?"

Simon Martin, who sat between them, had fallen limply back in his seat, his face livid, his eyes rolling. The man was fighting for his breath while flecks of foam appeared at the corners of his mouth.

"He's dying!" Coutts declared. "Tell the driver to pull up at the nearest doctor's!"

With an effort Martin pulled himself erect.

"It's no use—you're too late!" he gasped painfully. "I'm a goner! You can't get me to the Yard alive—they—they poisoned me!"

"Poisoned you?" Coutts stared at the man incredulously. "Who poisoned you?"

"The doctor from that ambulance—that stuff he gave me—he's one of Smith's men—croaked me—croaked—." He toppled forward to the floor of the taxi.

"Poisoned!" said Coutts dully. "That ambulance—the Confederation! And they've got Sexton Blake now as well!"

From "THE SQUEALER."

The Criminals' Confederation has returned to England. The exact location of its headquarters are unknown to Blake and the police. The Confederation's safety—indeed, its survival—depend on that location remaining unknown. But there is one man who knows; who is willing to tell. Simon Martin, the squealer. Next week, in one of the most spell-binding of the series yet, you're going to read what happened when he squealed. It's excitement all the way; a treat for you next Thursday, but—have you ordered? (Newsagents hate telling customers they're sold out; and it's a nuisance for the customer, too!)

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THE services of Mr. Albert Campion have gladly been accepted by Sir Percival Gyrth to prevent an anonymous ring of collectors, whose great wealth is a cover for the unscrupulous agents and methods they use, from stealing the famous Gyrth Chalice.

The Chalice is a priceless heirloom which has been kept in a secret room of the Tower, Sanctuary village, since Saxon times. The efforts of the unknown agents are redoubled with the approach of young Val Gyrth's twenty-fifth birthday when, as the male heir, he will be initiated into the secret room and the ceremony of the Chalice.

Campion, aided by Val and Penelope Gyrth, as also by the American Professor Cairey and his daughter Beth, has been able to solve one mystery. In a copse, where Sir Percival's sister was found dead from fright, they trap Mrs. Munsey, the local witch, garbed in all the hideous raiment of medieval witchcraft.

The old woman's half-wit son lets out that his mother was instructed to frighten Lady Di by a person named "Daisy." This can be no other but Mrs. Shannon, one of the most notable figures of the county, renowned for her domineering manner and her skill with horses.

Anxious to learn how the coming ceremony of the Chalice will affect the problem of its protection, Campion discusses the procedure with Penelope.

The Moran Trick.

THERE won't be any elaborate celebrations, partly because we haven't got much money, and also partly because of poor Aunt Di," said Penelope.

"Of course," she went on, "I dare say you think father has been rather curious about this whole terrible business—the way he's kept out of it all—but you can't possibly understand about him if you don't realise that he is a man with something on his mind.

"I mean," she added, dropping her voice, "I wouldn't say this to anyone but you, but the secret absorbs him. Even when he thought the Cup was missing it didn't seem to rouse him to frenzy. You do follow me? That's why he's so odd and reserved and we see so little of him."

She paused and looked at Campion

appealingly. The young man with the pale face and absent air turned to her.

"I'm not nearly the mutt I look," he said mildly.

A wave of understanding passed over her face.

"I believe you and father are pretty thick," she said. "Usually he loathes strangers. Do you know, you're quite the most remarkable person I've ever met?"

She looked up at him with all the admiration of her age showing in her young face.

"No vamping me," said Mr. Campion nervously. "My sister—her what married the squire—would be ashamed of you!"

"That's all right," said Penny cheerfully. "I haven't got any designs on you. I think Val and Beth are heading for the altar, though. Val seemed to have got over his anti-woman complex with a vengeance last time I saw him."

"You'll be a danger," said Mr. Campion, "in a few years' time. I'll come and sit at the back of the church when you're married and weep violently among all the old maids. I always think a picturesque figure of that sort helps a wedding so. Don't you?"

Penny was not to be diverted from the matter in hand.

"You've got something on your mind," she said.

She linked her arm through his with charming friendliness.

"In the words of my favourite authoress: 'Is it a woman, my boy? Or aren't you used to late hours?'"

To her surprise he stopped dead and faced her.

"My child," he said, with great solemnity, "in the words of the rottenest actor I ever heard on mortal stage: 'The man who raises his hand against a woman save in the way of kindness is not worthy of the name.' Which is to say: 'Don't knock the lady on the head, daddy, or the policeman will take you away.' This is the most darned awkward situation I've ever been in in my life."

Penny laughed, not realising the significance beneath the frivolous words.

"I should give it her," she said, "whoever she is. I'll stand by you."

Mr. Campion permitted himself a dubious smile.

"I wonder if you would?" he murmured.

ERE, wake up, sir. Inspector Stanislaus Oates, 'imself and personal, on the phone. Now we shall 'ave a chance of seein' that lovely dressin'-gown o' yours. I've bin wondering when that was comin' out."

Mr. Lugg put his head round the door of his master's room and spoke with heavy jocularly. "'E's bin ringin' you all day," he added, assuming a certain amount of truculence to hide his apprehension. "There's a couple o' telegrams waitin'. But I didn't like to rouse yer. Let 'im 'ave 'is beauty sleep, that's what I said."

Mr. Campion bounded out of bed, looking oddly rakish in the afternoon light. "Good heavens!" he said. "What's the time?"

"Calm yerself—calm yerself! 'Alt-past four." Mr. Lugg came forward, bearing a chastely coloured silk dressing-gown. "Pull yerself together. You remind me o' Buster Keaton when you're 'alf awake. Brush yer 'air before yer go down. There's a lady 'elp what's taken my fancy 'anging on to the phone."

Mr. Campion bound the dressing-gown girdle tightly round his willowy form and snatched up his spectacles.

"What's this about phoning all day?" he said. "If this is true, I'll sack you, Lugg."

"I've got to keep you alive. My job depends on it," observed his valet sententiously. "Staying out all night ghost 'untin' ain't done you no good. You look like an 'arf warmed corpse as it is. That's right—knock me about!" he added, as Mr. Campion brushed past him and pattered down the stairs to the side hall where the phone was situated.

The chubby little servant girl, evidently a captive to the charms of Mr. Lugg, was clinging to the receiver, which she relinquished to Campion.

She stood back and would have remained at a respectful distance, if by no means out of earshot, had not Mr. Lugg waved her majestically kitchenwards.

"Hallo!" said a faint voice at the far end of the crackling wire. "Is that you? At last. I was on the point of coming to you. I'm terribly sorry, old boy, but they've got it."

Mr. Lugg remained silent for some moments, but in response to a sharp query from the other end of the phone he said weakly. "Oh, yes, I can hear you all right. What do you want—congratulations?"

"Go easy!" came the distant voice imploringly. "It was a most ingenious stunt. You'd have been sunk yourself. About two o'clock this morning a whole pack of drunks got hauled into Bottle Street Station, and about thirty of their friends arrived at the same time. There was a terrific fight, and the man on duty on your doorstep joined in, like a mutt. In the confusion someone must have peeped up your stairs and raided the flat. I've been trying to get on to you ever since. What have you been doing? Dabbling in the dew?"

In spite of the lightness of his tone, it was evident to Mr. Lugg that his old friend was desperately worried. "We're doing all we can," came the voice, "and some more. Can you give us a line?"

"Half a minute," said Mr. Lugg. "What about young Hercules?"

"Oh, Gyrth? That's half the trouble," whispered the distant voice. "They knocked him on the head, of course, but the moment our man on the roof dropped through the skylight he pulled himself together and shot down after his property. Frankly, we can't find him. There was a free fight going on in the street, you see, and you know what a hopeless place it is. We've rounded up the usuals, but they don't seem to know anything. We've got a dozen or so of the rowdies, too. Cleaver men, most of 'em. Have you got anything we can go on?"

Mr. Lugg considered. He was now fully awake.

"Have you got a pen there?" he said. "Listen! There's two whiz-boys, Darky Farrell and a little sheeny called Diver. They may or may not be concerned, but I've seen them in the business. Oh, you've got them, have you? Well, put them through it. Then there's Natty Johnson, of course. The only other person I can think of is Fingers Hawkins, the Riverside one. How's that?"

"A nasty little list." The far-away voice spoke with feeling. "Right-ho! Leave it to us. You'll stay there, will you? I'll ring you if anything happens. We're pretty sick up here, of course. They're a hot lot; all race-gang people, I notice."

"That had occurred to me," said Mr. Lugg. "Don't get your head bashed in for my sake. Oh, and I say, Stanislaus—kiss that bobby on the door for me!"

He replaced the receiver and turned wearily away from the instrument, to come face to face with his aide, the sight of whom seemed to fill him with sudden wrath.

"Now you've done it!" he said. "If we muck this whole thing up it'll be directly due to your old-hen complex. Bah! Go and keep mushrooms!"

Mr. Lugg remained unabashed.

"You've mixed us up with a nice set, 'aven't yer?" he said. "I've known

ticket-o'-leave men who'd blush to 'ear themselves associated with them names you've mentioned over the phone. Fight with razors and broken bottles, they do. It's the class o' the thing I object to. No one can call me a snob—not recly—but a gent 'as to draw 'is line somewhere."

But for once Mr. Lugg was not mollified by this attitude.

"Put on a bath, get out the car, find a map, and go and lose yourself!" he said, and stalked off upstairs, leaving



Mr. Lugg speechless and startled out of his usual gloomy truculence.

A LITTLE over an hour later, Penny, seated by herself in the spacious faded drawing-room whose broad lattice-paned windows overlooked the drive, was somewhat surprised to hear the door of her father's room across the hall close softly, and to see Mr. Lugg in a motoring coat and hatless run down the steps from the open front door, and climbing into his car which stood waiting for him, hurtle off down the drive at an alarming speed.

She had imagined that he would have been down shortly to take tea with her, and she was just about to put her pride in her pocket and ring for Lugg and information, when Branch appeared carrying a bulky envelope on a salver.

"Mr. Lugg was wishful for me to give you this, miss," he said, and withdrew.

With her curiosity considerably piqued, Penny tore open the stout manilla and shook its contents out upon the Chesterfield beside her. To her astonishment there lay disclosed upon the faded brocade a folded sheet of paper, another envelope, and a small bag made of cheap red silk. The paper was closely written in broad, distinctive writing:

Dear Penny:—

I have gone to pay a friendly call to show off my new suit. I may be so welcome that they won't want to part with me, so don't expect me until you see me. I leave Lugg with you as a sort of keepsake. Three meals a day, my dear, and no alcohol.

I wonder if you would mind giving him the enclosed note, which I have stuck down to show my ill-breeding. No doubt he will show it to you. But I don't want him to have it until I am safely on my journey, since he is trained to follow a car. The rather garish bag, which you will see is not

made to open, contains, as far as I know, a portion of the beard of a very old friend of mine (a prophet in a small way). That is for Lugg, too.

Remember your promise, which only holds good while I'm alive, of course. Don't get the wind-up whatever happens. If in doubt, apply to the professor, who is a mine of information and the best sort in the world.

Such element weather we are having for the time of year, are we not? "The face is but the guinea's stamp, The heart's the heart for a' that."

Believe me, Sincerely yours, W. Shakespeare. (Bill, to you.)

The girl sat turning the paper over on her knees until Branch re-entered with the tea-wagon. But although she was burning with curiosity, it was not until a good half-hour had elapsed that she sent for Lugg.

Colonel Gyrth never took tea, and she was still alone when the door opened to admit the troubled and portly figure of Mr. Lugg's other ego.

The big man had a horror of the drawing-room, which he crossed as though the floor were unsteady.

"Yes, miss!" he said suspiciously.

Penny handed him the envelope in silence. He seized upon it greedily, and, quite forgetting all Branch's training of the past few days, tore it open and began to read, holding the paper very close to his little bright eyes.

"There," he said suddenly, "wot did I tell yer? Now we're for it! 'Ead-strong, that's what 'e is!"

He caught sight of Penny's face, and remembering where he was, was about to withdraw in an abashed and elephantine fashion when she stopped him.

"I had a letter from Mr. Lugg, too," she said. "He said I was to give you this." She handed him the red silk bag, and added brazenly: "He said you'd probably show me your letter."

Mr. Lugg hesitated at first, but finally seemed relieved at the thought of having a confidante.

"There you are," he said ungraciously. "That'll show yer what a caution 'e is." He tossed the note into her lap. "It may be a bit above yer 'ead!"

Penny unfolded the missive and began to read.

Unutterable Imbecile and Cretin:—

Hoping this finds you as it leaves me—in a blue funk. However, don't you worry, cleversides. Have had to resort to the Moran trick. If I am not back by to-morrow morning get somebody to take the beard of the prophet to Mrs. Sarah on Heronhoe Heath. Don't have hysterics again, and if the worst comes to the worst don't forge my name to any rotten references. You'd only be found out. Leave the Open Sesame to Sarah and the Chicks. Yours, Disgusted.

Penny put the note down.

"What does it all mean?" she said.

"Ask me another!" said Mr. Lugg savagely. "Sneaked off on me, that's what 'e's done. 'E knew I'd 'ave stopped 'im if 'e didn't. This 'as torn it. I'll be readin' the Situations Vacant before I know where I am. 'E ain't even left me a reference. Lumme, we are in a mess!"

"I wish you'd explain," said Penny, whose patience was beginning to fail her. "What's the Moran trick, anyhow?"

"Oh, that!" said Mr. Lugg. "That was silly then. It's soocide now. We was up against a bloke called Moran, a murderer among other things, 'oo kep' a set o' coloured thugs around 'im. What did 'Is Nibs do when we couldn't

got any satisfaction from 'im but walk into 'is 'ouse as cool as you please—forcin' 'em to kidnap 'im, so's 'e could find out what they was up to. 'Curiosity'll kill you, my lad,' I said when I got 'im out. 'A lot of satisfaction still be to you when you're 'arpin' to 'ave a pile of evidence against the bloke who's bumped you off.'"

Penny sprang to her feet. "Then he knows who it is?" she said. "O' course 'e does," said Mr. Lugg. "Probably known it from 'is cradle; at least, that's what 'e'll tell you. But the fac' remains that we don't know. Gorn off in a silly temper and left me out of it. If I ever get 'im back from this alive I'll 'ave 'im certified."

The girl looked at him wildly. "But if the Cup's safe with Val, what's he doing it for?" she wailed. Lugg cocked a wary eye at her.

"Depend upon it, miss, there's a lot o' things neither of us 'ave been told. All we can do is to carry out 'is orders and 'ope for the best. I'll tell yer wot, though, I'll get my lucky bean out to-night; curse me if I don't!"

Penny returned to the letter. "Who is Mrs. Sarah?" she demanded. "The Mother Superior of a lot of gippos," said Mr. Lugg disconsolately. "It's either nobs or nobodies with 'im, and I loathe the sight o' both of 'em—begging yer pardon, miss."

Penny looked up quickly. "We'll take the token together to-morrow morning," she said. "Heronhoe Heath is about five miles from here across country. Mrs. Shannon has her racing stables on the far side of it. We'll drive over."

Lugg raised an eyebrow. "Mrs. Shannon? Is that the party as came snooping round 'ere the day after yer aunt died?" he said. "Powerful voiced, and nippy like?"

"That's right," said Penny, smiling in spite of herself.

Mr. Lugg whistled. "I 'ate women," he said, with apparent irrelevance. "Especially in business."

HERONHOE HEATH, a broad strip of waste land bordered by the Ipswich road on one side and Heronhoe Creek on the other, was half-covered with gaudy broom bushes when Mr. Lugg and Penny bumped their way across it in the two-seater on the morning after Mr. Campion's departure. The sunshine was so brilliant that a grey heat haze hung over the creek end of the heath, through which the flat, red buildings of Mrs. Shannon's stables were faintly discernible. There was not another house for three miles either way.

The gipsy encampment was equally remote from the world. It lay sprawled along the northern edge of the strip like a bright bandanna handkerchief spread out upon the grass by the side of a little ditch of clear water which ran through to the creek.

When they were within hailing distance of the camp the track, chewed up by many caravan wheels, became unnegotiable. Penny pulled up.

"We'll have to walk this bit," she said.

Mr. Lugg sighed and scrambled out of the car, the girl following him. They made an odd pair.

Penny was in a white silk jumper suit and no hat, while Mr. Lugg wore the conventional black suit and bowler hat of the upper servant, the respectability of which he had entirely ruined by tilting the hat over one eye, thereby achieving an air of truculent bravado which was not lessened by the straw which he held between his teeth. He grumbled in a continuous, breathy undertone as he lumbered along.

"Look at 'em," he said. "Vagabonds. 'Ut dwellers. Lumme, you wouldn't catch me spendin' my life in a marquee."

Penny surveyed the scene in front of her with approval. The gaily painted wagons with their high-hooped, canvas tops, the coloured clothes hanging out on the lines and the dozens of little fires whose smoke curled up almost perpendicularly in the breathless air were

there, too, and ugliness, but on the whole the prospect was definitely pleasing, the sunlight bringing out the colours.

What impressed the girl particularly was the number of wagons and caravans; there seemed to be quite forty of them, and she noticed that they were not settled with the numerous little odd tents and shacks around them as is usual in a big encampment, but the whole gathering had a temporary air which was heightened by the presence of a huge, old-fashioned yellow charabanc of the type used by the people of the fairs.

Although she had known the gipsies since her childhood she had never visited them before. Their haunts had been forbidden to her, and she knew them only as brown, soft-spoken people with sales methods that would put the keenest hire-system traveller to shame.

It was with some trepidation, therefore, that she walked along by the disconsolate Lugg towards the very heart of the group. Children playing half-naked round the caravans grinned at her as she approached, and shouted unintelligible remarks in shrill, twittering voices. Mr. Lugg went on unperturbed.

A swarthy young man leaning over the half-door of one of the vans, his magnificent arms and chest looking like polished copper against the outrageous red-and-white print of his shirt, took one look at Lugg and burst into a bellow of delight that summoned half the clan. Heads popped out from every conceivable opening, and just for a moment Penny was afraid that the reception was not going to be wholly friendly.

Mr. Lugg stood his ground. "Party, name o' Mrs. Sarah?" he demanded in stentorian tones. "I got a message for 'er. Private and important."

Things are warming up! Val vanished. Campion trying the "Moran trick," and now Mrs. Sarah, the gipsy queen, will be bringing her tribe into the fray against the "Daisy." Don't get gaps in your reading now—have your copies booked!

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