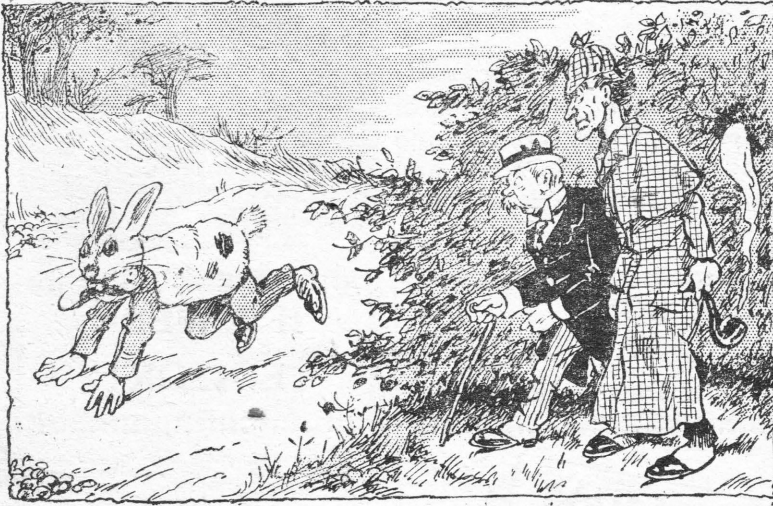


## THE WHITE RABBIT!

Another amusing adventure of Herlock Sholmes, the World's Worst Detective, recorded by his faithful friend, Dr. Jotson.



**D**IRECTLY I had signed the death certificate at the house of my late patient, I packed the saws and chisels in my little black bag and headed for Shaker Street.

Herlock Sholmes, stylishly attired in a yellow-and-mauve dressing-gown, and wearing a check cap on his head, was reclining in his armchair. The cocaine cask was at his elbow, and his violin under his chin.

"Good-evening, Sholmes!" said I, placing my bag on the table. "You have not forgotten that we have an appointment to-night?"

Sholmes looked up with a languid smile upon his face.

"I never forget a dinner appointment, my dear Jotson," he said. "And it would be impossible for me to forget that our late friend, Inspector Pinkeye of Scotland Yard, had invited us to a little celebration in honour of his birthday."

He tossed the violin on to a bookcase and raised his languid form from the divan chair.

Directly I had washed and changed into a brand-new celluloid collar, my famous friend and I left our apartments in Shaker Street and took the bus to the Thames Embankment. Calling at Scotland Yard, we were immediately shown to the beautifully furnished office of Inspector Pinkeye.

The burly inspector rose from his desk and grasped our hands fervently.

"Delighted to see you, Mr. Sholmes! Glad you have come, Dr. Jotson! I shall be ready to take you to Spaggetini's in five minutes. I have only one more schedule to dictate. I have been looking forward to this little birthday treat. Spaggetini's chef is the best in England. His potage pom-pom, followed by a little tripe a la delicatessen, with a few pickled prawns and some filleted prunes for dessert, is a feast for the gods."

We seated ourselves on a settee as Pinkeye began to dictate to one of his lady secretaries. Then the door of the office was suddenly opened, and a lean man, garbed in blue uniform with brass buttons, and wearing a peaked hat, burst past the policeman who tried to bar his entrance, and addressed himself to the inspector.

"Come at once, sir! Come at once! Uncle Joseph has escaped, and—"

"I cannot help your Uncle Joseph!" snapped Pinkeye. "Report the matter to the constable downstairs."

"I did so, sir, and he told me to come to you. It is a case where brains is needed—"

"Ahem! Then perhaps I had better attend to it," murmured Pinkeye.

He sent his lady secretary away. Then, turning to Sholmes and me, he said:

"Would you mind waiting in the ante-room a few minutes? I will just hear the

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details of this case. Perhaps it is a matter I can solve without leaving the office."

We were in no hurry, and took seats in the ante-room. Pinkeye left the door ajar, and I shrewdly expected it was with the idea of impressing us with his importance as a sleuth.

"Now, my man," we heard Pinkeye say, as he returned to the uniform client in his private office, "who are you?"

"I am Keeper Paul Pognoddy, sir. I have come on a matter of life and death. Uncle Joseph was in my charge. This evening he escaped, and there will be killing done if he is not caught mighty quick."

"Oh-ho!" said Pinkeye. "Dangerous, is he?"

"I should think so," said the uniformed man. "We never had one quite like him. He has been in my charge now come Christmas twelvemonth, and I never saw one more dangerous in my life."

Inspector Pinkeye picked up a pen.

"His full name?" he demanded.

"Uncle Joseph," he said. "That's all we ever called him."

"His age?"

"Dunno, exactly—but fifty I should say. But what on earth—"

"Colour of eyes?"

"Pale blue. But—"

"Colour of hair?"

"Hair! Uncle Joseph hasn't got a hair on his head! He's—"

"Bald," said Pinkeye, making a note on the form in front of him. "What size was he?"

"Oh, go and chop chips! There's no time to—"

"Answer the question put to you, Keeper Pognoddy," said Pinkeye sternly.

"Pognoddy," said the visitor.

"Have it your own way," said Pinkeye.

"Now, where was Uncle Joseph seen last?"

"In Regent's Park. He chased a nurse, and frightened two policemen out of their wits."

"Impossible!" said Pinkeye. (None knew the police better than he.) "You may stay your fears, Keeper Dogbody—"

"Pognoddy!" shrieked the visitor.

"Keep your hair on," said Pinkeye. "You will make yourself as bald as Uncle Joseph if you get into those tantrums. I have assured you that I will take the case up, and therefore you must rest assured that Uncle Joseph will be captured and restored to safe custody in a minimum amount of time. Oh, by the way, is there any special trait in his character about which I ought to know?"

"Only that he is dangerous and that he has a great craving for rabbits—white rabbits, for preference. He would wake out of his sleep or come a mile if you put a white rabbit near him."

"That might be useful to know," was Pinkeye's comment. "Where shall I find you

to let you know when I have recaptured Uncle Joseph?"

"Phone Hampstead 6014," answered Keeper Pognoddy.

Without waiting for further questioning, he rushed out of the office, saying something about returning to Regent's Park to join in the hunt.

Directly he had gone Inspector Pinkeye beckoned Sholmes and myself from the ante-room.

"What bad luck, gentlemen!" he said. "I am afraid that little dinner will be a wash-out, after all. A dangerous lunatic has escaped, and is at this very moment roaming about Regent's Park. Where danger calls, it is the duty of Inspector Pinkeye to be on the scene."

I do not know who was the more disappointed, Sholmes or me. That beautiful description by Pinkeye of the tripe a la delicatessen, followed by preserved prunes, had sharpened our appetites. However, we recognised, as Pinkeye said, that it was a case of duty first.

Pinkeye picked up a beautiful white Polar bear-skin which was lying across his office floor and flung it across his shoulder like a coat. Then, taking a pair of scissors from his desk, he snipped off the white bobble from the hat of his lady secretary, hanging on the peg near the door.

"My dear Pinkeye," said Sholmes, "what is the idea?"

"Come with me," answered the inspector darkly, "and you shall see."

There was an inexplicable smile on Sholmes' face as he and I followed the burly inspector out of the Yard into the street. Here Pinkeye engaged a taxi and pushed us in. He was in fine form, and was obviously very determined to thoroughly impress us with his sleuthlike abilities.

To my great surprise, Inspector Pinkeye instructed the driver to proceed direct to Drury Lane Theatre. Leaving Sholmes and me in the cab, our friend entered by the stage door, and returned in less than five minutes bearing a great white pantomime mask of a rabbit's head and chucks.

"You see the scheme now?" chuckled Pinkeye, as he reseated himself in the cab. "By astute questioning, I elicited the fact from Keeper Dogbody that white rabbits have a strange fascination over the patient. My plan is very simple. I shall disguise myself as a white rabbit, and when the lunatic, attracted by my approach, sees me, I shall up and grab him."

"Simple, yet ingenious," remarked Sholmes, with a smile. "But mind that Uncle Joseph does not grab you first, my dear fellow."

As the taxi rattled through Soho, Sholmes suddenly requested that it might be stopped for a minute. Pinkeye was annoyed at the delay, particularly as my famous friend refused to impart any information as to the reason for the delay. Apparently, however, Sholmes desired to do a little shopping at one or two of the stalls that were still doing business at that hour of the night.

In less than five minutes he returned to the cab bearing a brown-paper parcel and looking considerably stouter than usual. Both Pinkeye and I knew that it was useless questioning him. When Sholmes desired to explain he would do so, but not before.

With a piece of string, Pinkeye tied the white bobble he had borrowed from his lady secretary's hat to the Polar bear-skin. The taxi was dismissed near the northern gate of Regent's Park, and Sholmes, Inspector Pinkeye, and I climbed over the tall railings. The inspector seemed greatly gratified at having an audience for his display of detective skill.

Getting near some bushes, Pinkeye donned his disguise. He adjusted the bear-skin over his back and the white rabbit mask over his head. Then, grabbing our hands, he went strolling through the darkness, while Sholmes and I watched him from behind the bushes. Like an overfed white rabbit, Pinkeye bounded along the ground as bait to entice Uncle Joseph back to captivity.

Suddenly Sholmes gave a whistle. Pinkeye came bounding back.

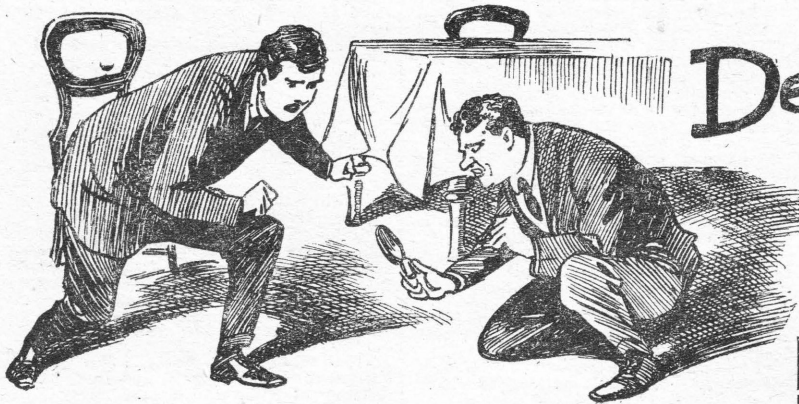
"What is it?" he mumbled.

"I thought," murmured Sholmes, "that as you might be out all night on this dangerous case, you might like a little refreshment."

"M'mm, I should!" murmured Pinkeye.

Herlock Sholmes threw the brown-paper

(Continued on next page.)



# Detective Coker!

By TOM BROWN

**S**OMEBODY'S bagged my 'Holiday Annual'!

The voice of George Blundell fairly boomed along the Fifth Form passage at Greyfriars. It brought several fellows out of their studies, including Horace Coker.

"Did I hear you say somebody had bagged your 'Annual,' Blundell?" asked Coker.

"You did! And if I find out who's taken it, I—I'll jolly well burst him!"

"Please, teacher, it wasn't me," said Fitzgerald. And there was a laugh.

Blundell was not laughing. His perfectly priceless volume, as he called it, had vanished from his table. And that was no laughing matter. Nor would it be a laughing matter for the culprit, if and when he was found.

"I left my study for two ticks," explained Blundell, "and when I got back the book was gone. Sheer piracy, by Jove! And the pirate must have made a jolly quick getaway. If only I knew who it was!"

Coker stepped forward with a businesslike air.

"Would you like me to find out?" he asked. "I'm a jolly smart detective, you know."

Blundell laughed mirthlessly.

"Some detective!" he said, with scorn. "A very defective detective, I should say. Still, you're welcome to go ahead with your investigations."

"Right!" said Coker, producing a notebook and pencil. "First of all, I want you to describe the book to me in detail."

Blundell scowled.

"It was a brand-new copy of the 'Holiday Annual,'" he said, "and it's got my name written on the fly-leaf."

Coker made a rapid entry in his notebook.

"And what time did it vanish?" he asked.

"Between five-eighteen and five-twenty."

Coker shut his notebook with a snap. He looked very wise and officious. Coker imagined that he possessed all the deductive power of a Sherlock Holmes, with those of Sexton Blake and Ferrers Locke thrown in. He assured Blundell he would soon get on the track of the book purloiner, and bring him to justice. Blundell merely snorted. He had precious little faith in Coker's detective abilities.

Coker's next movements were extraordinary. He took a magnifying-glass from his pocket, and stepped into Blundell's study.

"What the thump—" began Blundell.

"I'm going to look for footprints and finger-prints," said Coker. And he promptly knelt down and scrutinised the carpet. There were dozens of footprints there, and it needed no magnifying-glass to see them, for it was a wet day, and many pairs of muddy boots had tramped over Blundell's carpet. Similarly, a great many finger-marks appeared on the tablecloth. But which particular footprints and finger-prints were those of the book pirate was a puzzle. Even Coker had to admit that he was baffled. But he did not admit it loudly—merely to himself.

"Well?" said Blundell sarcastically. "Can you name the culprit?"

"Give a chap a chance," said Coker. "I've only just started my investigations."

He marched out of the study, cogitating what to do next. The only plan that occurred to him was to make a tour of the various studies, and see if he could find the missing volume. This was a slow and

laborious business, but Coker tackled it. He toured the Fifth Form studies, and also those of the Upper Fourth and Remove. He even went so far as to visit the sacred quarters of the Sixth. But there was no sign of the "Holiday Annual."

The receptions Coker got in the various studies were anything but cordial. But he pursued his quest with great thoroughness. Then he investigated the fags' quarters, but could find no trace of the missing volume there.

It seemed ridiculous to suppose that any master would have appropriated a book from a Fifth Form study. But Coker was warning to his work now, and he meant to leave no stone unturned to locate the author of the outrage.

Coker's quest eventually led him to Mr. Prout's study. The door was ajar, but the apartment was unoccupied. Coker stepped inside, and looked around; then a cry of triumph broke from his lips, and he darted towards the table.

A book lay open there, as if it had been hastily thrown down. It was the "Holiday Annual" for 1925! Coker picked it up and examined it, and there, sure enough, was the name "G. Blundell" inscribed on the fly-leaf.

Coker replaced the book on the table just as he had found it. Then he went to the door and gave a shout.

"Blundell! Where are you, Blundell? I've found it!"

Blundell came hurrying on the scene. Coker pointed to the volume lying on the table.

"My 'Annual'!" exclaimed Blundell, in much the same manner as a father might greet his long-lost son. "Where did you find it, Coker?"

"Here, of course! I must say I'm surprised at old Prout stooping to do a thing of this sort. He must have nipped into your study while your back was turned, and made off with the 'Annual.'"

"My hat!" gasped Blundell. "Fancy old Prout being such a pirate!"

There was a quick step in the passage, and the swish of a gown, and the sound of a wrathful voice.

"Blundell! How dare you make such a disrespectful remark concerning your Form master! How dare you insinuate that I am a pirate!"

Blundell flushed.

"Well, sir," he stammered, "don't you think it was a bit thick, to borrow a chap's 'Annual' without permission?"

Mr. Prout frowned darkly.

"I did no such thing, Blundell!"

"But—but Blundell's 'Annual' was found on your study table, sir," Coker interposed. "I've been doing some detective work, and I tracked it down. How did it come there?"

"I cannot answer your conundrum, Coker," said Mr. Prout tartly. "Certainly I did not touch Blundell's book. I can only surmise what has happened. I imagine that some boy took the volume from Blundell's study, and ran off with it. An alarm was raised, and the culprit, in a state of panic, tossed the book on to my study table as he darted past the open door. If my theory is correct, he will return for the book as soon as the hue-and-cry is over. Let us step into this doorway opposite, and see what happens."

Neither Coker nor Blundell put much faith in Mr. Prout's theory. Coker was convinced

that Mr. Prout himself was the guilty party, and he whispered as much to Blundell. However, they withdrew with the Form master into the doorway opposite, and waited patiently.

For fully five minutes nothing happened. Then there was a stealthy step in the passage, and a plump youth in spectacles advanced cautiously to Mr. Prout's study and entered. It was Billy Bunter.

"The coast is clear now," muttered the fat junior. "Yes, the 'Annual's' here—just as I flung it down when the hue-and-cry was on."

Billy Bunter picked up the volume, and stepped out into the passage.

"Stop!" thundered a voice.

And Mr. Prout stepped out from his place of concealment, followed by Coker and Blundell.

Billy Bunter halted, with a guilty start. The volume fell from his grasp and clattered to the floor.

"Oh crumbs! I—I didn't think you'd mind an old pal borrowing one of your books—" began Bunter.

Mr. Prout silenced the fat junior.

"I will leave you to deal with this wretched boy, Blundell," he said. "As for you, Coker, the next time you engage in detective work, do not be so ready to jump to conclusions. I am not in the habit of purloining books from my pupils' studies!"

Coker coloured to the roots of his hair, and he felt that he had made rather a fool of himself.

Mr. Prout retired into his study. And then the two Fifth-Formers laid violent hands on William George Bunter, and marched him away to his doom.

THE END.

## THE WHITE RABBIT!

(Continued from previous page.)

parcel he had obtained in Soho into the hands of the inspector.

"Well, there is a nice fresh cabbage for you, Pinkeye."

Never in my life before did I hear a rabbit make such a remark as Pinkeye did. Leaving the cabbage, he bounded off.

"Come!" said Sholmes, grabbing my arm. Suddenly a yell of terror rent the air.

"Ooh! Yooops! Garoogh! Call it off!"

Then Pinkeye came rushing towards us, the rabbit's mask at the back of his head and the bear-skin flying after him. Close at his heels was a great snake!

"Behind the bushes, quick!" cried Sholmes to me. "It is Uncle Joseph!"

The way that Pinkeye went out of that park and over the park railings would have turned a film comedian green with envy.

The secret of Sholmes' increased size was revealed as my famous friend unwound a rope from about his thin waist. From his pocket he took a toy dog, and tied it on the end of the line. Then he began drawing it over the ground. Suddenly there was a scrape, and a great boa-constrictor, which had chased Pinkeye out of the park, slid by. There was a snap, and the toy-dog attached to the string disappeared into the monster. With incredible swiftness, Sholmes tied the other end of the rope round a tree.

"There," he said, "Snakey can remain there while you and I go and telephone Hampstead 6014, my dear Jotson. The staff of the Zoological Gardens will be greatly gratified to know that Uncle Joseph, the famous boa-constrictor, has been captured!"

THE END.