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THE UNION JACK

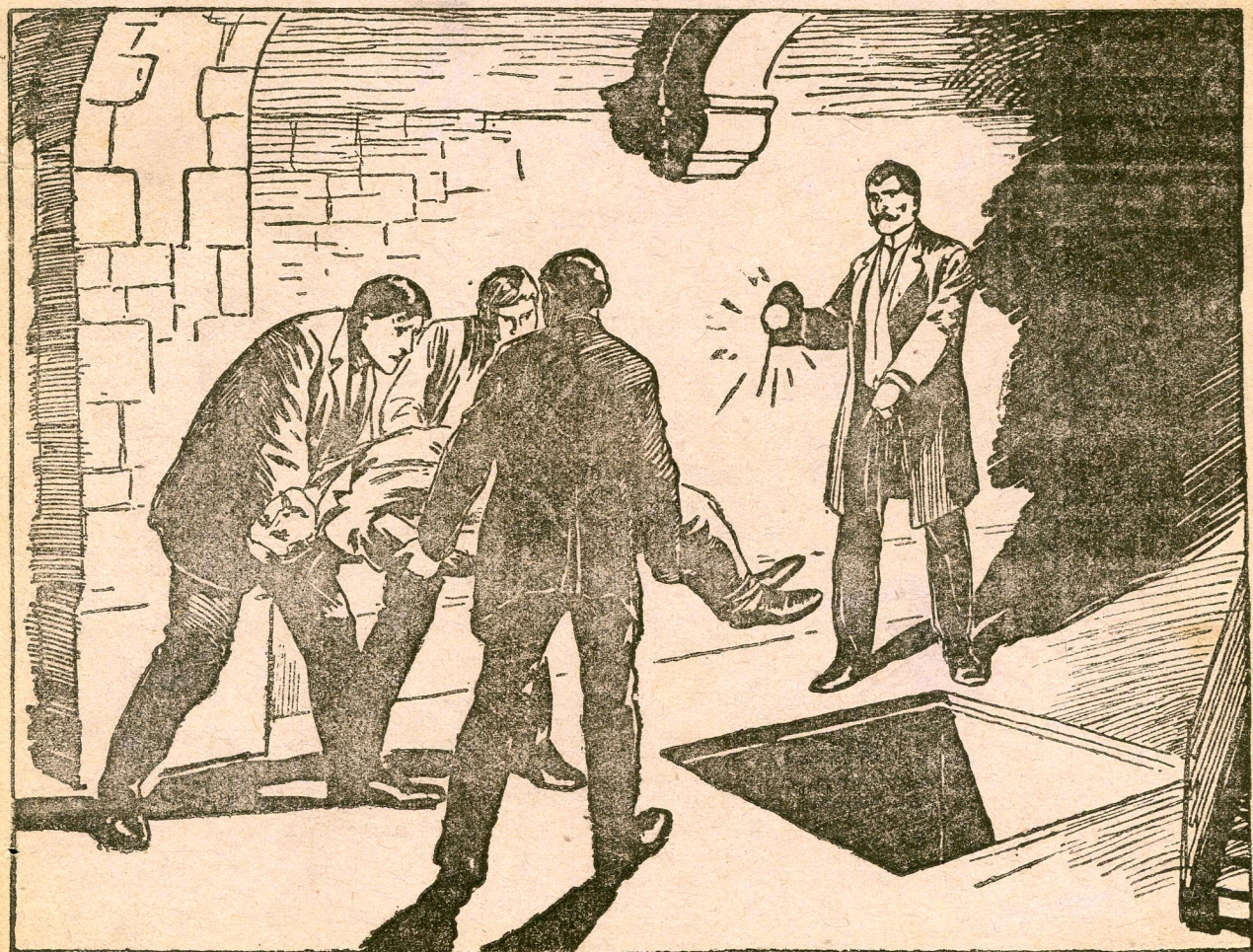


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BOUND BY A SPELL.

A Story of Mesmerism.



His feet dangled over it; then, as a last piercing shriek left his lips, he was sent hurtling down — down into the black and awful depths.

PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY.

No. 203.

BOUND BY A SPELL.

A TALE OF MESMERISM.

By JOHN G. ROWE.

CHAPTER 1.

HENRY DACERY IS SENT ON AN IMPORTANT ERRAND—ARTHUR MIDDLETON'S STRANGE BEHAVIOUR—THE ITALIAN, GIOVANNI CALOSTRO—HENRY OVERPOWERED AND ROBBED—THE MYSTERY.

"Henry," said Mr. Garrod, of the firm of Garrod and Pilkington, diamond merchants, of Hatton Garden, to his confidential and managing clerk, "I have heard there is an Italian gentleman making extensive purchases in stones for the Continental markets. It is chiefly 'three grains,' he wants, I believe. We have a pretty large stock of diamonds of that particular size, and you might go and see him this afternoon, and take about £2,000 worth with you. You ought to be able to effect a good deal. Here is his address."

Henry Dacery took the piece of pasteboard from the hand of his superior, and, glancing at the superscription, read:

"Giovanni Calostro, 10, Albani Gardens, South Kensington."

"Very well, Mr. Garrod," he said. "When is the best time to see Mr. Calostro—about three?"

"Yes, I suppose so. Of course, you will make as good a bargain as you can."

"You may rely on that, sir," Accordingly, Henry Dacery set out for South Kensington after lunch, with a pocket-book containing diamonds to the amount Mr. Garrod had specified. He soon arrived at his destination, a handsome residence, and was shown into a luxuriously furnished drawing-room by a footman in livery.

He seated himself, and, after a few minutes' wait, heard a rustle, and, turning, beheld the curtains covering an alcove or inner apartment brushed aside, and a young man of about his own age stride into the apartment.

Henry Dacery leaped to his feet in astonishment, for he recognised the young fellow as his bosom friend, Arthur Middleton, the brother also of the girl Henry one day hoped to make his bride.

"Arthur, old fellow!" he cried; "what on earth are you doing here?"

But Middleton took not the slightest notice of Henry. He looked round the room with a peculiarly dazed expression in his eyes, and a strange feeling of mingled amazement and horror crept over his startled friend as the latter realised that he did not see him, but seemed to be in a sort of stupor.

"What is wrong, Arthur? Are you trying to play some trick upon me? Come, don't be so foolish; drop your nonsense, and tell me how you come to be here."

Henry caught his friend by the arm, and shook it sharply;

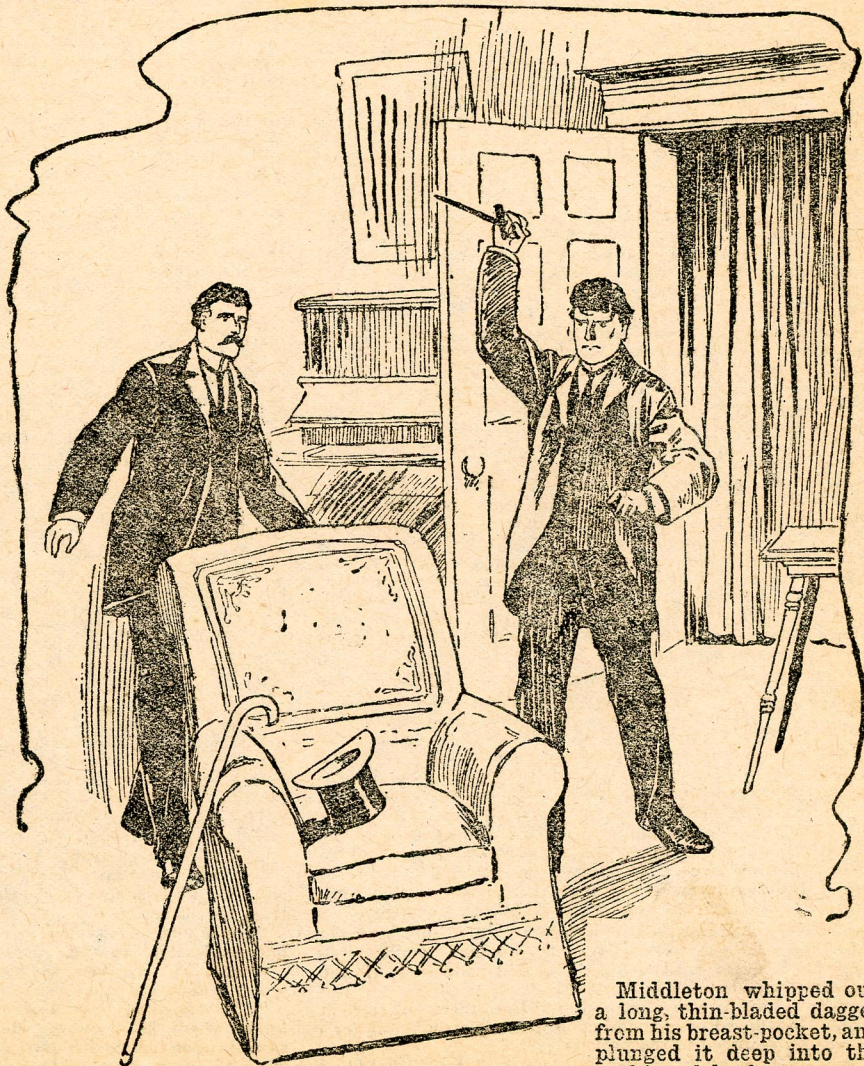
but Middleton took no notice whatever of him, and, instead of bursting into a ringing laugh, and admitting he was trying some practical joke, the latter muttered in strange, unnatural tones:

"To his heart! Strike to his heart!"

Dacery, in blank astonishment, relaxed his grip upon the other's arm; and, striding quickly forward towards a large and comfortable armchair, Middleton suddenly whipped a long, thin-bladed dagger, like an Italian stiletto, from his breast-pocket, and plunged it deep into the cushioned back once—twice.

Then, starting erect, Arthur struck a theatrical attitude, holding the gleaming blade aloft, with the point directed vertically downwards, and almost touching his wrist.

He stood thus for a couple of minutes, to the utter amazement of his friend, who, now fully convinced Arthur was acting, and would presently join him in a hearty laugh, burst out with:



Middleton whipped out a long, thin-bladed dagger from his breast-pocket, and plunged it deep into the cushioned back.

"Splendid, old chap, splendid! You would make a grand Hamlet; or is it Macbeth who uses the dagger?"

But Arthur paid not the slightest heed. He suddenly wheeled round, and, with the same strange, unseeing light in his eyes, stalked quickly past the astonished Dacery, and disappeared as suddenly as he had entered through the hangings.

Henry stood rooted to the spot. What was the meaning of his friend's strange behaviour? He was not in the diamond trade, so it could not be for the purpose of trading like himself.

But of course it was all a joke. Arthur would re-enter presently, and laugh over the fright he had given him.

Several minutes elapsed, though, and Arthur did not return, and the same strange, nameless dread—a dread of he knew not exactly what—that he had before felt crept over him.

Arthur's peculiar behaviour was quite at variance with his usual conduct; he was not one to indulge in wild harum-scarum tricks or practical jokes, and Henry, as he last remembered the light in his friend's eyes, thought there was something rather uncanny about the affair.

Then the thought once more asserted itself. Perhaps after all he is only poking fun at me, and is watching the effect from behind the curtains.

Henry sprang to his feet, and, approaching these, dashed them aside. The alcove beyond was empty, a glass door appearing to lead from it into a conservatory.

Dacery advanced to the glass door, and looked out into the conservatory; but he could see no one, though the profusion of plants would act as an excellent screen for anyone inside the place.

While he was looking through the glass door, he suddenly felt a most unaccountable and irresistible impulse to return to the outer room.

He obeyed the impulse, and, as he drew aside the curtains dividing the alcove from the drawing-room, he started back in some astonishment to see a tall, spare man, standing in front of the fireplace, with his hands under his coat-tails.

The man turned towards Henry as he entered, and he saw a face of unmistakable Italian type, swarthy and forbidding, with heavy black eyebrows and moustache. The eyes, however, were the most striking feature of the face. They were black as coal, yet burned with an intense brilliancy, and were keen and penetrating as those of a hawk.

As the stranger turned his eyes full upon him, Henry felt a strange thrill, a sort of fascination creeping over him; but, with a great effort of the will, he fought against the occult power that seemed to hold him spell-bound. A few moments of this strange mental conflict; then a look of something very like chagrin or baffled fury passed over the face of the Italian, and Henry instantly felt a relief.

"I am Giovanni Calostro," said the stranger, in soft, sibilant tones, which created a curious antipathy to the speaker in Henry's breast. "Pray be seated. You are Mr. Dacery, the representative of Messrs. Garrod and Pilkington, I presume?"

"Yes," answered Henry, now quite free from the indefinable sensation which the moment before had so sorely beset him. "I was given to understand you are purchasing 'three grain' stones for the Continental markets."

"Quite right; and you have brought me some to see."

Once more those baleful eyes looked full into our hero's, and glittered like the orbs of a serpent, and seemed almost to emit flashes of fire.

Henry again felt the curious fascination creeping over him, and now the Italian made several gentle passes with his hands; but, with all the strength of will he was capable of, the young man fought against the horrible sensation, and, at length, with a curse and an awful look of baffled fury, Calostro withdrew his gaze and fell back panting.

The experience he had just undergone so alarmed Henry that he sprang to his feet, but ere he could demand an explanation of the other's strange conduct, the hangings, concealing the alcove were again dashed aside, and in burst Arthur Middleton and two other men, whom Dacery did not know.

Without a word they rushed upon Henry, and one clapped a cloth, saturated with chloroform, he could tell from the smell, over his mouth and nostrils.

So horrified was he at seeing his bosom friend assisting in the dastardly attempt to overpower him that he could scarcely make very adequate resistance. He received several cruel blows upon the head and face from his assailants, Arthur Middleton himself dealing him a terrible one on the skull with a bludgeon.

He fell back half-stunned in the chair, and unable to make any further resistance. Then the cloth was held over his face for several minutes until he had inhaled sufficient of the anæsthetic to render him insensible.

Giovanni Calostro now advanced, and the others fell back in silence. He stooped over Henry, and, tearing open the latter's coat, eagerly searched in the pockets.

A look of triumph lit up his face, as he felt the well-filled pocket-book, and drew it forth.

With fingers trembling from excitement he opened the book and shook out all the diamonds on to the table.

His eyes glistened with avaricious delight, and he murmured: "E magnifico! There is a fortune here. They cannot be worth less than a couple of thousands. All gems of the purest water, undoubtedly. Well, my first essay has turned out a splendid success. Now, to clear out of here. My dupes must return to their homes till I want them again. I will renew the chloroform, so that that confounded fool may not recover for some time!"

He brushed the gems back again into their receptacle inside the pocket-book, which he then carefully stowed in his own breast-pocket, and, crossing back to the unconscious Henry, he poured more chloroform from a phial upon the cloth, and again placed this over Henry's face. The sickening odour diffused itself through the room.

Arthur Middleton and the other two men had stood by during all this, motionless as statues, and with peculiar, almost insane, expressions upon their faces.

Giovanni Calostro turned to them, and, pointing to the door, uttered the one word: "Go!"

Without a muscle of their faces moving, the three men moved towards the door, and passed out.

Calostro waited till he heard the front door bang; then, with a peculiar smile, he, too, quitted the room.

CHAPTER 2.

HENRY RECOVERS CONSCIOUSNESS—HE LEAVES THE HOUSE, AND SUMMONS ASSISTANCE—THE MYSTERIOUS DEEPENS—WHO IS THE MYSTERIOUS ITALIAN?—HENRY IS DISCHARGED BY HIS EMPLOYERS—HIS DETERMINATION.

It was some time after when Henry Dacery recovered consciousness. He felt dazed and weak, and for several moments could not comprehend what had occurred.

Then, as he remembered the object of his visit to the Italian and what had passed, he immediately felt for the pocket-book. He uttered a deep groan when he found it had gone.

Rising to his feet with difficulty, he glanced round the room. Everything was exactly as he had last seen it. But the mysterious Italian, Arthur Middleton, and his other two assailants were no longer there.

"Oh, Heaven!" he gasped. "I have been chloroformed and robbed by those scoundrels, and Arthur Middleton was one of them. Great Powers! am I losing my reason, or what? To think that he, my best-loved friend, the brother of Bearice, could be guilty of such a crime! It was he—there cannot be the slightest doubt about that. I—I must get out of here. No doubt the thieves have flown; but I will soon put the police on their track."

He reeled unsteadily towards the door, and, much to his surprise, found it opened easily. As he staggered out into the passage, there was a horrified shriek, and a female servant dashed wildly past him, and flew screaming at the top of her lungs up the stairs.

Henry imagined she was going to tell her master, the Italian, he had recovered consciousness, and, not knowing what danger threatened him by remaining longer in that mysterious house, he hastened to the front door, flung it open, and staggered down the steps, to fall in a heap on the sidewalk.

With alarmed cries, several passers-by halted for a moment, and then, seeing him struggling ineffectually to rise, ran towards him and helped him to his feet.

He was so weak, though, from the ill-usage he had received that he had to be supported on either side.

The sympathetic pedestrians uttered ejaculations of horror and surprise at sight of his bloodstained face, but he could only gasp:

"Fetch a policeman!"

When a blue-coated official presently made his appearance, Henry had so far recovered as to be able to inform him he had been robbed and maltreated inside the house, and that some of the thieves' accomplices he believed were still there.

The policeman summoned several of his comrades, and, followed by an excited and indignant crowd, approached the house indicated, and rang the bell peremptorily.

The footman who had admitted Henry answered the door, and the policemen, stepping into the hall, told the man to fetch his master.

"He is not at home, sir," the man said. "He goes to his business in the City every day."

Henry, who had been assisted up the steps by several of the crowd, cried out:

"He was here only a short time ago, and we want to know where he is now. He committed a most dastardly assault upon me in his own drawing-room not an hour ago. With the assistance of three others, he chloroformed me and robbed me of £2,000 worth of diamonds."

The footman fell back with a look of genuine incredulity. "My master, Mr. Coburn, it could not have been, for he has not been home to-day. It was Signor Calostro you came to see, sir."

"Yes, I thought he was your master. He is the villain who has robbed me!"

"No; he has simply been stopping here a few days."

"Well, we want to hear what he has to say for himself," growled one of the officers. "It is clear this young man has met with ill-usage in this house. Several of these people here saw him come out all covered with blood. We want to see Signor Calostro."

And the officers came down and said they could find no trace of Calostro, who had evidently cleared off with his booty.

Mrs. Coburn and her daughters came from their rooms to learn the cause of the unusual disturbance, and they were both incredulous at the charge brought against their guest.

"He certainly only came here the other day, and I had never even heard of him before," said Mrs. Coburn. "But then my husband would never introduce and harbour a man such as you describe. Signor Calostro is a wealthy Italian gentleman, and my husband, I believe, made his acquaintance on the Continent."

The police sergeant looked dubiously at Henry, and the latter knew not what answer to make.

"That may be as you say, madam," he said, after a pause.

"But all I know is I came here to sell Giovanni Calostro some gems for my firm, Messrs. Garrod and Pilkington, of Hatton Garden. Your footman admitted me and showed me into the drawing-room, and there I met Calostro, and he and three others, whom he must have had in hiding, attacked me before I could utter a cry, and robbed me of my pocket-book and its contents."

The lady stared in astonishment, and the footman took the opportunity to whisper something in her ear. She started and turned pale.

"My footman tells me," she said, "that Signor Calostro's room bears evidence of a hurried departure; that his valise and things are all gone. Oh, good heavens!" she cried, bursting into tears. "If it is really true that he has robbed this gentleman, what a terrible disgrace it will be! We will have our name in the papers! Oh, what could James have been thinking of to bring a common swindler and thief here?"

The distress of the lady and her family was clearly genuine, and Henry felt sure they were not in league with the thieves.

He knew not what to say or do under the circumstances, but the sergeant came to his rescue.

"Give me a description of this Calostro, and I will at once put the authorities at Scotland Yard upon his track. *He is pretty sure to try and make for the Continent, and if we are sharp, we may be able to have a watch set upon all outgoing steamers."

Henry gave the required particulars, but said nothing of his recognition of his own friend, Arthur Middleton, among the Italian's accomplices. How could he do so? How could he denounce one whom he loved and trusted as a brother as a common thief.

He cared nothing for the hand Middleton had had in his maltreatment; the man was the only brother, and, indeed, support of the girl he loved dearer than life. For her sweet sake he could forgive Arthur for his cowardly attack upon him; but then what about his duty to his employers? Did not that demand that he should give the fullest information in his power against one and all of his assailants?

Henry was a prey to the most agonising thoughts. He must, in the fulfilment of his duty to his firm, give up his friend as a thief. He must for ever forgo all hope of ever winning Beatrice Middleton for his wife, for would she ever look at him again were he to denounce her brother and set the police upon the latter's track?

His brain in a perfect whirl, he accompanied the sergeant to the police-station, and there repeated his statement; then, having washed the blood off his face, and being considerably recovered, he hastened to Mr. Garrod's private address, for he knew the senior partner would have left the office for home.

He had wired Mr. Garrod on his way to the police-station, and when he reached the latter's residence, he found the junior partner, Mr. Pilkington, also there.

The two gentlemen were, of course, very much concerned at the loss they had sustained, and received him rather coldly.

Mr. Pilkington, indeed, seemed to regard him with a certain amount of suspicion, and, after listening quietly to his account of the theft, said:

"Well, Mr. Dacery, this occurrence is very unfortunate, both for you as well as for us. As you know, business has not been very prosperous with us of late, and a loss like this is a great blow to us. Mr. Garrod and I have been talking over matters, and we really think it will be necessary to cut down

a great many expenses to tide the firm over until business becomes a little brisker. Er—er, you yourself Mr. Dacery, in the position you have hitherto held in our employ, must know how unstable things are with us at present, and how necessary it will be for us to retrench in some way. I—I think that I myself might very easily take upon my shoulders, in addition to my ordinary duties, those of manager and cashier; and therefore, of course, you will understand, er—er that we—"

"I quite understand, Mr. Pilkington, you wish to dispense with my services?" said Henry, as the junior partner hummed and hawed in some confusion.

"Er—er, yes; but you must see, Mr. Dacery, we have no other course left. We cannot afford to lose so large an amount, and must begin to retrench in some way."

Mr. Garrod never put in a word at all to assist his partner, but stood staring out of the window the whole time with rather a shamed-faced look.

His dismissal was a severe blow to Henry, for he had come to look upon his position in the firm as practically permanent. However, he must put the best face possible on the matter, so he asked as cheerfully as he could:

"Would you like me to stay the week, Mr. Pilkington, or leave at once? My books are all posted up to date, and if it be all the same to you, I myself would prefer not to stay."

Though he strove hard to choke down his feelings of indignation at his treatment, Henry could not altogether, and there was just a tinge of bitterness in his voice.

"Be it as you wish, Mr. Dacery," said Mr. Garrod, speaking for the first time. "We do not wish to interfere with any prospect you may have in view."

"I have no prospect immediately in view, Mr. Garrod, but I may tell you that it is my intention to devote all my energies to bringing to justice the men who have robbed me, and, if possible, recovering the stolen gems."

"We will be very much obliged to you if you do, Mr. Dacery," observed Mr. Pilkington, with a half sneer. "Good-evening."

CHAPTER 3.

HENRY DACERY DETERMINES TO PAY A VISIT TO BEATRICE MIDDLETON—HE FINDS ARTHUR AND THE ITALIAN ARE IN THE HOUSE—HENRY'S SUSPICIONS—IS GIOVANNI CALOSTRO A MESMERIST?—OUR HERO AGAIN IN THE ITALIAN'S HANDS—DOOMED TO A TERRIBLE DEATH—FLUNG INTO A SEWER.

Henry Dacery left his late employer's house in no very enviable frame of mind. He felt he had been most unfairly treated.

He could not believe otherwise than that it was because he had been so unfortunate as to have the gems stolen from him that he had thus so unexpectedly been given his walking papers. He felt it was hard—very hard; but there was no help for it, he must only grin and bear it.

With his excellent character, he had no doubt he could get another place, even though it might not be so good as that he had lost. However, he would now have plenty of time on his hands to devote to tracing the thieves, and he fully meant to do as he had said to Mr. Pilkington—viz., never to rest until he had traced and brought the criminals to justice.

As these thoughts were passing through his mind, another was suggested.

He halted for a moment; then, clapping his hand to his head, he said:

"A good idea! How is it I did not think of it before? Yes, I will go at once and try and see Arthur Middleton. Of course he will not be there. He is sure to have fled with his vile accomplices; but then there is no knowing. Anyhow, I must see Beatrice and tell her of this terrible affair. I am afraid she and I can never be anything to one another now. Her brother's crime lies between us. And if I found him down and bring him to a prison cell, how can I ever expect her to become my wife?"

Then the thought came to him, why should he attempt to hunt down her brother? Why should he take any further interest in the case at all?

His employers had acted most unkindly, had dealt most unfairly by him. Why should he then put himself out of the way for them? Why should he ruin his whole future by estranging the girl without whom life, he felt, would have no pleasure for him? Why bring to the cell the man whom he still loved as a brother, despite the fact that the latter had so deeply wronged and injured him? He could not altogether believe yet that Arthur Middleton could be capable of such a crime, and almost felt inclined to doubt the evidence of his own senses.

That it was Arthur Middleton, however, who had assisted

in the attack upon him he could not bring himself to disbelieve. It was Arthur, there could not be the slightest shade of doubt about that.

He paused as the recollection of Middleton's peculiar behaviour flashed upon his mind, and with the remembrance came also that of the fascination and curious sensation he had experienced when Giovanni Calostro had bent his piercing gaze upon his.

A dim knowledge of the truth began to dawn upon him. Yet could it possibly be? Could any man possess such wonderful, such almost supernatural power?

He remembered how the Italian's simple gaze had influenced him, and the hard struggle he had had not to succumb to some mysterious and secret power the other had evidently exercised. Yes; the more he dwelt upon the mysterious affair, the more he became convinced he had hit the right nail on the head.

Giovanni Calostro was a mesmerist.

The arch-villain had mesmerised Arthur Middleton, his friend, whose acquaintance he had made in some way. That explanation, and that alone, would account for Arthur's strange conduct prior to the attack upon himself, when he entered the room in that silent manner and plunged the stiletto into the chairback.

Henry Dacery felt he had got at the bottom of the mystery as regarded his friend, and he eagerly seized upon the explanation as showing him a way out of his chief difficulty.

He fully believed that Arthur Middleton had been mesmerised by Calostro, and thus made to participate involuntarily in the theft. In this case, Henry determined that he would devote himself to hunting down the master-villain and release his poor friend from the latter's diabolical power.

He felt for a moment a thrill of something like superstitious terror as he realised the insidious and terrible foe he would have to fight.

It seemed something supernatural and even demoniacal, this mesmeric power possessed by Calostro.

However, Henry was a plucky fellow, and he determined that, alone and unaided, he would run down this Italian fiend, for he well knew the futility of attempting to get the police to believe in his theory of mesmerism.

He proceeded at once, as it was by no means late, to Arthur Middleton's home in Camden Town, and Beatrice herself opened the door for him.

"Is Arthur at home?" he asked, after their first greetings were over.

"Yes," was the reply he little expected, "and—and—I would just like to speak a few words in private to you, Henry," she whispered, looking cautiously back into the house. "Arthur doesn't seem to be himself these last couple of days. He has brought to the house a strange man—an Italian—whom I never saw before or ever heard Arthur speak of, and a man whom I don't like. He—he repels me somehow. His eyes seem so unnaturally bright and—"

"Ha! is he here now?" demanded Henry eagerly.

"Yes; in the parlour. There are two others also, strangers to me."

"Beatrice, quick! Fetch a policeman. The villain shall not escape!"

The girl stared at him in surprise, but, seeing the look upon his face, was about to obey, when the parlour door was thrown violently open, and out rushed Giovanni Calostro and the three men who had attacked him in the house in South Kensington.

They pounced upon Henry in a trice, and one clapped his hand over his mouth to prevent him uttering a cry for help.

But the young fellow struggled desperately to free himself, and, though he felt certain his three assailants were mesmerised, he found he was helpless in their grasp. They rained the most savage and brutal blows upon him; and, in sheer self-defence, he struck Arthur Middleton a blow in the face that knocked the latter down.

Beatrice, more dead than alive from terror and horror, was held securely in the muscular arms of the Italian himself, who covered her small mouth with his hand to prevent her screaming.

"Carry the fool into the room," said Calostro. "Middleton, bring some stout cord; you are sure to have some in the house."

Henry was dragged, despite his desperate struggles, into the parlour; then a heavy blow from a sandbag on the head rendered him unconscious. He was left lying an inert heap upon the floor, while the Italian and his dupes or victims—for the other two men, like Arthur Middleton, were under the weird spell of his hypnotic powers—proceeded to gag and bind the terrified girl.

When this was done, Giovanni Calostro ordered his three victims to take up Henry and carry him down to the cellar.

The three men silently obeyed, and bore our unconscious hero down the steps into the vaults.

"Middleton," said the Italian, "there is an underground passage, is there not, leading from this cellar, and connected by a shaft with the sewers?"

"There is," answered Arthur, in a mechanical sort of voice.

"Show the way to it, then," commanded the mesmerist.

Arthur crossed over to the darkest corner of the cellar, and opened a small iron door sunk in the wall.

The Italian and the other two men took up the senseless form of their captive, and followed him into the black tunnel beyond.

"Bring a lantern," ordered the master will, and Arthur left the cellar to shortly return with a bull's-eye, which he handed to Calostro.

The latter then led the way along the tunnel, while the others once more took up Henry by the head and feet and carried him along.

Presently the Italian stopped and directed the rays of the lantern upon an iron grid at his feet.

"Lay down your burden and pull up this grid," was his next command, and, under the united efforts of the three mesmerised men, the heavy iron grid was lifted up, revealing a vertical shaft or well descending apparently into the very bowels of the earth.

"Now, then, take up that blundering fool again. I will take care he does not trouble me any more. Ah, he is coming to; that's better! I would like him to appreciate something of the horror of the doom I mean for him. Ha, Mr. Dacery, I am glad to see you have come round! Listen to me. I am a mesmerist, and I tried to bring you under the influence of my will, but you are a hypnotist of a high order yourself, though you are not aware of your own power, and I failed. However, you shall not be able to oppose me or attempt to thwart my plans again, for it is my intention to hurl you down to death in this sewer. If you are not killed by the fall, and I sincerely hope you will not be, you will wander about in utter darkness until you are either drowned by the floods or perish of starvation. Then the rats will finish you. How do you like the prospect, my friend? Take him up, the three of you, and drop him feet foremost into the well. Addio, Signor Dacery, you will cross my path no more."

Fully alive now to the horrible fate in store for him, Henry uttered several ringing cries for help, but there was little chance of anyone hearing him in that subterranean passage.

He struggled and fought fiercely against his four assailants—fought as a brave man will fight for his life; but, gripped in the strong hands of the clairvoyants, he was remorselessly lifted over the yawning mouth of the well.

His feet dangled over it; then, as a last piercing shriek left his lips, he was sent hurtling down—down—down into the black and awful depths.

CHAPTER 4.

AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PIT—HORRIBLE THOUGHTS—IN STYGIAN DARKNESS—LOST IN LONDON SEWERS—A RAY OF HOPE—RESCUED BY THE POLICE—ARRESTED ON SUSPICION—MR. GARROD BAILS HENRY OUT.

Splash!

Henry Dacery struck a pool of water at the bottom of the well and was instantly immersed in it.

The water, however, broke his fall and providentially saved his life, for he must have fallen many feet before striking it.

As he rose, spluttering and gasping for breath, to the surface, he found to his infinite relief that he could touch the bottom, the water barely reaching to his waist.

Standing upright, his first thought was to find if he could possibly climb out of the shaft, but the four walls were as straight and as bare of crevice or projection as those of a house.

As he stood there, he heard a dull crash over his head, and looking up beheld the top of the shaft illuminated by the lantern of his diabolical enemy, who had just dropped the heavy grid into place, shutting him down, it seemed, from all hope of rescue.

Then he saw the light fading away, and knew the Italian and his dupes were leaving the spot, and, with startling eyeballs and teeth clenched, he watched the light grow fainter and fainter.

He uttered a cry of despair as the last rays disappeared, and he was in total darkness.

He felt that it was his last glimpse of the world above, the last ray of light he would ever see upon this side of the grave. With an awful feeling of despair clutching at his heart, he realised that he was practically entombed alive.

For several moments the horror of his position almost over-

came him, so that he nearly swooned. Then the thought, "while there is life there is hope," gave him renewed heart and courage.

He remembered reading somewhere or another of how boysweeps in former days had climbed up chimneys by pressing their elbows and knees against the bricks, and working themselves upwards in this way.

If he could only climb up the shaft, he might be able to raise the grating and crawl out. But then he remembered the weight of the grid, and his heart sank again.

However, he determined to make the venture, and, pressing his feet against the opposite side of the shaft, and his hands against each side of the well, he tried to raise himself out of the water.

As a matter of fact, he did succeed in working his way up the shaft in this way several feet above the level of the water; but then he relaxed his caution in some way, and fell down.

Again and again, he made the attempt; but on each occasion he could only mount a few feet, and then slipped down again. After half a dozen essays, he was utterly fatigued, and his hands and elbows were all torn and bleeding through contact with the sharp bricks.

He was at last fain to abandon the attempt; but had the shaft been a little narrower and, therefore, more like the formation of a chimney, he felt assured he could very easily have accomplished the feat of working his way up to the top.

In feeling round the four walls, he had found the low-arched entrance to a tunnel, which he felt certain led to the sewers, as Giovanni Calostro had said.

But Henry was loth to leave the shaft and explore the unknown depths. His mind shrank in horror from wandering about those subterranean caverns in inky darkness.

Only too well did he realise that he might wander on and on for days, without ever finding an outlet, lost in their horrible labyrinth, literally shut up in a living tomb.

The very thought of meeting with such a doom was enough to make the stoutest heart stand appalled.

And if it came on to rain in the world above while he was groping his way along those Stygian galleries, he knew he would stand a good chance of being drowned.

No wonder, then, he dreaded quitting the shaft and facing the horrors of the catacomb-like sewers. He felt that at the bottom of the shaft there might be some chance of rescue. Beatrice might be able to escape from the power of the demon, who held her brother's will in thrall, and save him.

With this hope, he waited for hours in the total darkness, and up to his waist in the lukewarm water; but as time passed, and there came no welcome sounds of rescuers, his heart sank within him, and at last, in desperation, he decided to try the forlorn hope of exploring the sewers.

Half a dozen times he groped his way into the tunnel, to return overcome with horror at the thought of losing himself in their labyrinthine depths; but at last, calling all his courage to his aid, he determined to go on, though he felt that he was only seeking a miserable and horrible death.

Groping his way along the reeking walls, he could feel the rats brushing past his legs in scores, and he shivered as he thought what little chance he would have for his life if the monsters chose to attack him in that inky gloom.

He could see their little red eyes glaring at him as he struggled along, and his heart was suspiciously near his mouth, but his spirits rose gradually as he found they made no attempt to attack him.

Sometimes the water washed above his knees; at others, it dropped as low as his ankles. The air, too, was warm and heavy, at times almost stifling, but he struggled desperately on.

Occasionally he struck his head rather badly against the low roof, and presently he had to bend double, and crawl along on his hands and knees, the passage lowered and narrowed to such a degree. He could feel the rats running over his back and neck, and brushing their slimy bodies against his face, as he thus dragged himself along on all fours, and the experience was horrible in the extreme.

At length, however, he crawled out into a larger tunnel, and now hope once more rose in his breast, for he believed he was in the sewer under the mainroad, and would presently come to a manhole. Then his heart sank again, as he remembered it was night, and in the darkness he might wander on and on, unable to find a single well.

Even as this demoralising thought flashed upon him, however, his hand came in contact with a sort of horseshoe driven into the wall, and he uttered a cry of joy, for he guessed at once that it was one of a series ascending like a ladder to the world above.

Nearly delirious with reawakened hope and joy, he felt above it, and found—oh, Heaven be thanked!—another iron rung.

Grasping it firmly, he proceeded to mount one to another, and at length reached the top of the well, where, however,



They succeeded in lifting up the grating, and our hero was extricated from his awful position.

he found the exit barred by a heavy iron grating, which it was utterly beyond his power to raise.

Still, he could see the bright stars above him through the bars, and feel the fresh air upon his heated face.

He was once more within reach of the beautiful world of sunlight and sound, which he had never expected to see more.

Clinging to the iron rungs, he began to utter lusty shouts for help, but it seemed hours before he heard the welcome sound of footsteps in the street.

The footsteps came nearer; then, as he eagerly continued, his cries, they halted.

"Help! help!" he shouted. "Help! for mercy's sake! I am down a sewer!"

The footsteps drew nearer still; then, to his delight, they paused once more, but this time immediately above him, and the light of a policeman's lantern flashed down the grating upon his upturned face.

"Oh, officer, for heaven's sake lift up the grating! I have been nearly murdered and thrown into the sewers!"

After what seemed to him an interminable time, the policeman, aided by a few belated pedestrians, succeeded in opening the grating, and, more dead than alive, our hero was extricated from his awful position.

So weak and fatigued was he by his terrible experience that it was several minutes before he could explain to the amazed group how he came to be in such a place.

When, at length, his extraordinary tale was told, the constable summoned several of his comrades, and, led by Henry, the little posse straightway proceeded to Arthur Middleton's house.

But to all their knocking they received no answer; and finally the officers forced an entry, and searched the building.

The mesmerist and his victims, however, were not to be found. The house was empty, and Henry Dacery reeled back into the arms of his companions, quite overcome by this fresh blow.

His sweet betrothed, Beatrice Middleton, was now also in the power of this demon, and doubtless the latter would make use of her, too, to execute his villainous designs.

The officers knew not what to think. They could scarcely credit Henry's tale of the mesmerist, and yet how could he have got into the sewer.

They insisted on his accompanying them to the station, and there the inspector laughed in his face, and told him he must have been drunk, got into bad company, and probably been thrown into the sewer by his companions.

"No, this tale of a mesmerist won't do," he said. "It strikes me very forcibly that it was you yourself who stole those diamonds of Garrod and Pilkington's, or that you were in league with the thieves. You quarrelled over the division of the spoil, and your mates tried to do away with you by pitching you down the well. That is the solution to all this mystery, I'll be bound, and you are going to pass the night in a cell on suspicion."

It was in vain Henry remonstrated, asserted his innocence, and persisted in his original statement; the inspector and the other officers were convinced they had hit the right nail on the head, and our unfortunate hero was marched off, and clapped into a cell for the rest of the night.

In the morning he begged to be allowed to send a note to Mr. Garrod, his former employer, and his request was granted.

He was brought up in the court before the magistrate, told his story, but again was only laughed at for his pains. The police were sure they had got hold of one of the diamond thieves, and there was not one in that court who did not fully concur in their belief.

The magistrate was about to remand him, to enable the police to make further inquiries, when Mr. Garrod entered the court, and spoke highly in the prisoner's favour, offering to go bail for him to any amount.

The diamond merchant's words put a new complexion on affairs, and ultimately Henry was released on his former employer's bail of \$500.

As he quitted the dock, he seized and wrung Mr. Garrod's hand.

"Believe me, sir, everything I stated in that note to you is true. I am on the track of the real criminal, and he nearly murdered me last night by flinging me into a sewer. But I will devote my recovered liberty to hounding him down to justice, and I will yet prove to you, sir, that your kindness to me is not misplaced."

"I do believe you, my boy; and it was not I who was to blame for your dismissal from our employ, you will understand that. But, of course, I could not put myself in direct opposition to my partner."

CHAPTER 5.

LONDON IN A PANIC—A MYSTERIOUS GANG OF THIEVES—HENRY'S RESOLVE—AN UNEXPECTED MEETING—FACE TO FACE—THE STRUGGLE IN THE OFFICE—ARTHUR, WHILE UNDER THE MESMERIST'S SPELL, ATTEMPTS HENRY'S LIFE, AND FATALLY STABS A CLERK—ESCAPE OF THE MESMERIST HIMSELF.

All London was thrown into horror and consternation by the number of large and daring diamond and jewel robberies which were daily taking place. Shops were entered during the night, and everything of value stolen; merchants even were drugged in their own offices, within call of half a dozen clerks, and their safes rifled to the extent of thousands of pounds' worth of precious stones.

A regular panic set in, and jewellers and diamond merchants were afraid to keep any large quantity of valuables on their premises.

The one or two who had been found drugged could only say they had been interviewed in their private offices by a foreign-looking gentleman, and had presently felt strange drowsiness

creep over them. When they returned to consciousness the visitor was gone, the safe rifled, and the clerks in the outer office quite ignorant that anything unusual had taken place.

Everyone's cry was "Where are the police?" And that really clever and intelligent body of men came in for a great deal of maligning and hostile criticism. But they had no grounds to work on. The thieves performed their nefarious work with the utmost astuteness, never leaving the slightest clue behind them.

From the statements made by the merchants, who were supposed to have been drugged, Henry Dacery guessed that the robberies had each and all been perpetrated by the mesmerist, Giovanni Calostro, aided doubtless in the burglaries by his mesmerised victims.

Our hero had been unremitting in his endeavours to find a trace of the Italian, or Arthur and Beatrice; but they had wholly disappeared, and his agony of mind was intense to think of the girl he loved still in that demon's power.

He determined to haunt Hutton Garden in the forlorn hope that Calostro might attempt another robbery in that quarter; but he felt in his heart that the hope was vain, for the police had set a double watch upon the offices of the diamond merchants, and he himself soon found he was an object of suspicion to the officers on that beat.

However, even at the risk of being arrested and "run in" as a suspect, he still continued to frequent the vicinity, for he well knew the daring rogue he had to deal with, and that, with the dreadful powers of a mesmerist, Calostro could practically continue his game of wholesale robbery without fear of detection.

At length his patient vigil was rewarded, for one day, as he was haunting the neighbourhood as usual, he saw two men approaching, one of whom seemed rather familiar to him.

He looked more closely at them, and his heart gave a wild leap, for, despite the sandy beard and whiskers the man wore, he recognised him at once as his friend Arthur Middleton.

Instantly he turned his gaze upon the other, and penetrated readily the disguise of the heavy black beard. It was the mesmerist, Giovanni Calostro.

Slipping into a sort of passage, Henry permitted the two men to pass him, and then, when they had got some distance ahead, he crept forth again and stole softly after them.

The Italian had clearly not seen him, and Henry was keeping an eager look-out for a policeman, intending to call the man to his assistance, and help to arrest the daring criminal, when the latter and his undoubtedly still-mesmerised companion turned into one of the buildings.

Henry Dacery wavered between two minds. One was to summon assistance, the other to try and effect the capture of the mesmerist alone and unaided.

He at last, though rather foolishly, decided upon the latter course of action, as thereby he hoped to save his victimised friend from the disgrace of being arrested and charged with complicity in the robberies.

There was also, however, a certain amount of pride or vanity traceable in his resolution, a desire to prove himself equal to if not better than the man who had already outwitted him more than once.

He advanced to the entrance of the building, and glanced inside; but to his chagrin could see nothing of the men he was following. However, he heard the bang of a door on the second floor, and, bounding up the steps, looked eagerly at the names on the various office doors.

There was one with the name, "R. T. Bolsome," newly painted upon it, and something seemed to whisper to him that this was the room the mesmerist and his companion had entered.

He determined to try, at all events, knowing well he could easily frame some excuse for his intrusion, should he happen to be mistaken.

Approaching the door, therefore, he turned the handle and entered.

He found himself in a handsomely-furnished office, occupied by the two men, whom he had seen and recognised in the street.

Giovanni Calostro was standing in front of the fireplace, with his hands under his coat-tails, and Arthur Middleton was sitting at a desk with rather a muddled look upon his face.

The mesmerist at once turned a startled glance upon Henry as he entered, and a cry of genuine terror and horror broke from his lips.

"You!" he fairly shrieked. "Have you come back from the grave?"

"Ruffian, and would-be murderer, I am alive, and am here to put an end to your vile machinations! You do not escape me this time, by Heaven!"

He dashed forward, and, with a shout to Arthur to help him, threw himself fiercely upon Calostro.

The pair fell crashing to the floor, such was the fury of his onset, and then rolled over and over upon the carpet, clawing and striking at one another more like a couple of wild beasts than human beings.

The mesmerist did not hesitate to use even his teeth, and, with

his eyes darting mingled hate and fear, he bit savagely at Henry's hands.

Arthur Middleton had risen to his feet, and stood gazing down stupidly at the pair; but Henry was more than a match in physical strength for the mesmerist, and presently the former got the latter under him, and, holding him down, began to shout for help.

Calostro's face was a study from terror and rage, and while he struggled wildly to free himself, he hissed:

"Quick, quick! Middleton; use your knife!"

Henry uttered a cry of horror and dismay, and, relaxing his grip for a moment upon the mesmerist, he glanced up.

Arthur Middleton stood over him, holding a gleaming blade aloft, and about to plunge it into his back. The mesmerist had exercised his diabolical power over his victim, and our hero was to be done to death by his own friend.

But even, as the stiletto descended, Giovanni Calostro, taking advantage of Henry's momentary horror, threw the latter off him, and the knife, instead of being buried to the haft in our hero's back, only caught him in the shoulder, though it inflicted a deep and painful gash.

Henry reeled, and fell backwards, even as the door of the office was flung violently open, and a number of alarmed clerks and merchants from the adjoining offices rushed in.

With a bound, Calostro regained his feet, and made a wild dash to escape.

"Stop him! Stop him!" cried Henry. And two men rushed forward to seize him; but, with an oath, he dashed his fist full into the face of the foremost, and, whipping forth a revolver, shot the second through the brain.

The murdered man fell without a groan, and, taking advantage of the horror caused by this dastardly deed, the mesmerist, with a spring, gained the window, and flung himself bodily through it, smashing frame and glass into a thousand fragments.

Several of the gentlemen ran to the broken window and looked forth, expecting to see the daring villain lying a mangled heap upon the pavement below. But he had fallen upon the low roof of an adjoining building, and was hastily scrambling over the tiles, little the worse seemingly for his desperate leap.

Meanwhile, others had thrown themselves upon Arthur Middleton; but, still under the influence of the demon's will, he fought like a very tiger, stabbing and slashing with the keen-edged stiletto with deadly purpose.

One man fell to the ground wallowing in his blood, and several others sustained horrible gashes before the now maniacal-like dupe could be disarmed and overpowered.

Henry Dacery struggled to his feet, weak and faint from loss of blood, and he had to clutch at a desk to prevent himself falling as he beheld the unfortunate man Arthur had wounded to the death.

"Good heavens!" he could only groan. "This is horrible!" Then, recovering himself with a giant effort, he gasped:

"And that villain has escaped? After him! After him! Don't let him escape, for Heaven's sake; he is the real criminal!"

But already several of the clerks and merchants had rushed out in chase of the fugitive, and the whole of Hatton Garden had caught the alarm.

All this had happened in broad daylight, and it seemed impossible that the arch-villain, who had now added a double murder to his numerous other crimes, could get away.

Crowds of excited people lined the streets, and looked up eagerly at the roofs of the buildings; and the police, who were speedily upon the scene, climbed several of the house-tops and searched eagerly for the fugitive.

But he was not to be found. He had disappeared as utterly as though he really were a demon, and was possessed of supernatural powers of vanishing into thin air at will.

But the police had one of the desperadoes, at any rate, safe in custody, and Henry Dacery, nigh fainting by this time with weakness from his wound, knew it would be worse than useless at that period to attempt to explain to the officials that Arthur was really irresponsible at the time he mortally wounded the unfortunate clerk.

He must let his friend be marched off to gaol for the present, and await a more favourable time to make his startling disclosures.

What his horror and grief were the reader can well imagine.

CHAPTER 6.

HENRY DACERY ATTENDS THE INQUEST—HIS THEORY OF MESMERISM SCOUTED BY THE CORONER AND THE JURY—ARTHUR MIDDLETON'S STRANGE LANGUAGE—A STARTLING DENUNCIATION—THE MESMERIST IN COURT—EXCITING SCENE.

Henry Dacery's wound was not a very severe one, and he was able to accompany the police to the station and give his

account of the whole affair. He asked to be allowed to see Arthur Middleton in his cell, but to his inexpressible sorrow the latter was still clearly under the mesmeric influence, and made a fierce rush at him the moment he entered, so that he had to give up the idea of speaking with him.

However, the following morning he learned from the police that Arthur was more rational, and seemed utterly overcome at the horror of his position; but he was not allowed to see him until the inquest on the two murdered men.

When Henry entered the room where the inquiry was to be held, his poor friend looked up and called his name in accents of the deepest despair. Arthur was guarded by two stalwart policemen, but Henry crossed over to his side, and said:

"Courage, Arthur, courage! My evidence may go far towards clearing you."

"Oh, heavens, Henry! what is the meaning of all this?" asked Arthur, whose face was deathly white. "They accuse me of having murdered someone."

"Cheer up, old fellow. Do you know Giovanni Calostro?"

"Is that the scoundrelly Italian who kidnapped me? I suppose it is, though I have never heard his name. Oh, Henry, I seem to be the victim of a dreadful nightmare! I seem to have been asleep and unconscious again and again, and whenever I did come to my senses it was to find myself helplessly bound and gagged, and in the power of a wretch who seemed more like a demon than a man."

"Arthur, you have been the victim of a mesmerist. But wait until the inquest opens and you will hear all. Stay, though, can you remember nothing of the past few weeks?"

"Weeks, do you say? Have I been in that infernal villain's power all that time? No, I can remember nothing, except, as I said, waking up at intervals, to find myself in a strange place and gagged and bound. It seemed to be always night, and the ruffian, after looking at me in silence, would go to bed in the same room. Oh, tell me am I mad, or have I dreamt all this?"

"It has been no dream but a terrible reality, Arthur. But the coroner and the jury have taken their seats."

Henry left his unfortunate friend and was the first witness called.

His statement created the profoundest astonishment and incredulity amongst his hearers.

"Oh, come, come," said the coroner, "are you in your right senses to tell such a tale as this and expect us to believe it? This is the prosaic nineteenth century, my man, and we really cannot accept your theory that the murderer who has escaped is a mesmerist, and possesses such superhuman powers as you assert."

"Believe me, sir," answered Henry, "I speak the absolute truth. This Giovanni Calostro tried to mesmerise me the day the diamonds belonging to Messrs. Garrod and Pilkington were stolen from my charge. He tried to murder me afterwards by throwing me down a sewer, but I providentially escaped. If you doubt this theory of mine that the ruffian is a clever mesmerist, ask those merchants who were found drugged or mesmerised, the experiences they went through. Oh, consider the theory I set forth, gentlemen," he continued, turning to the jury—"consider it well, before you bring in a verdict against that man there! I most positively affirm he has been made the dupe of this Giovanni Calostro, and was no more responsible for his actions on the day of the murder than a person walking in his sleep."

The coroner and his jury looked incredulous; but after several other witnesses had sworn that Arthur was the man, who had stabbed the deceased, Henry was called up again, and was closely cross-examined by one or two of the jurymen.

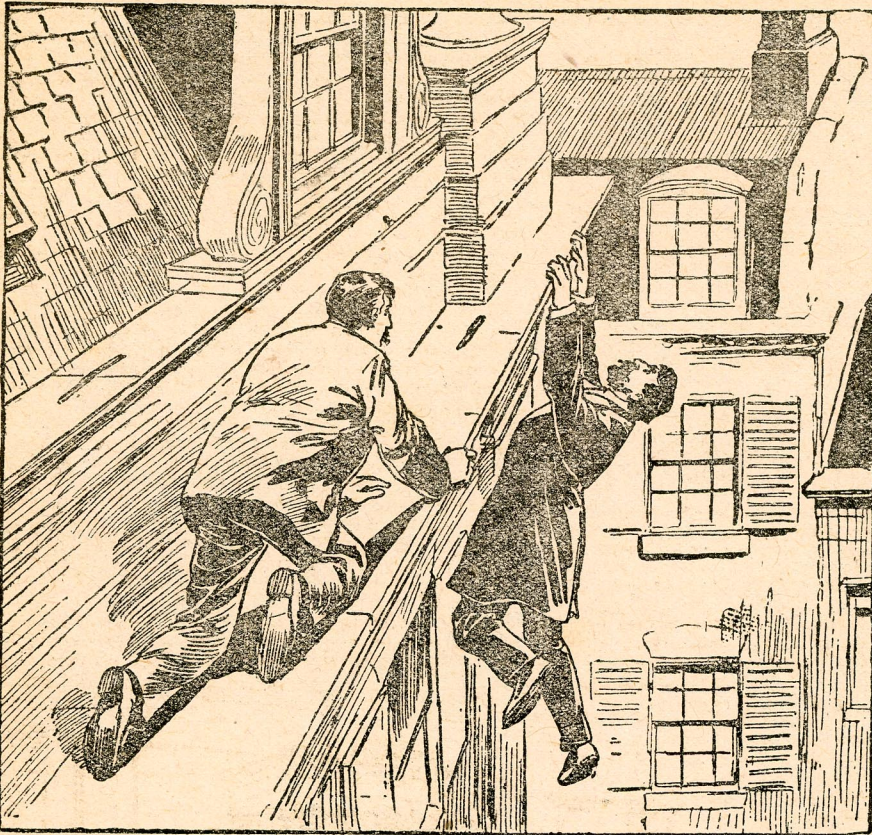
"You say this Italian tried to mesmerise you?" asked a little perky individual, who had done nearly all the talking for his fellow jurors. "How was it, supposing your story to be true, that he did not succeed?"

And the little man looked round him with a self-satisfied air, as though he had delivered a poser.

"I really cannot say," answered Henry despairingly; "but I know I had a very hard struggle to prevent myself succumbing to his influence. I will tell you that when he and his subjects had overpowered me in Middleton's house and were going to throw me down the well, Giovanni Calostro said that I was a hypnotist of a high order myself, though unaware of my power, and therefore not amenable to his influence."

Even while he was saying this, Henry felt he was making a mistake, and he had scarcely finished when there were several loud guffaws of derision from the back of the court. One or two of the jurymen themselves could not suppress a smile.

"Bah!" rapped out the perky individual, with a triumphant look around at his colleagues, "this last tale caps everything. A hypnotist of a high order himself, eh? Ahem! It strikes me very forcibly, Mr. Coroner, that the witness himself knows



Henry scrambled through the window, and on hands and knees began to crawl along the ledge.

a little too much altogether about both the prisoner and the man who has escaped. He seems a very suspicious witness, to my thinking, and it is quite possible he is or was in league with the ruffians. I don't think he has accounted very satisfactorily for his presence in the building the day of the murder."

A police inspector stepped forward.

"If I may be allowed to speak, sir," he said, addressing the coroner, "I can tell you the witness is only out 'on bail.' He was arrested on suspicion of being concerned in these jewel robberies a week ago."

This announcement naturally created a great sensation, and the perky juror leaned back in his seat with a smile, which seemed to say, "I thought as much."

"Yes," replied Henry, though with an awful sinking of the heart, as he saw how damaging this piece of information was to the cause of his friend. "Yes, the officer is quite correct. I was arrested on suspicion, but I will yet disprove the charge against me. I see it is practically useless to attempt to convince you I am speaking the truth, and I cannot wonder at the attitude you all take up. But as there is a heaven above me, I swear that both myself and that man there, who stands charged with this murder, are as innocent—ay, as you sir," turning to the coroner. "My story of this mesmerist and his terrible powers is true in every detail, and I ask you to pause and consider my words well before you think of saying that man is guilty. Yes; he certainly struck the fatal blow as these other witnesses have sworn. I saw him do so with my own eyes, and as I am here on oath I cannot deny it; but I do say and swear in the sight of Heaven that he was in a mesmeric trance when he did so, and was not, therefore, responsible for his actions. I consequently ask you to pause and consider well before you do this terrible wrong, for it will be a wrong, if you bring in a verdict of wilful murder against him. This tale of mine may seem far-fetched, but it is, nevertheless, true. Don't be too ready to jump at conclusions and pronounce my story of mesmerism humbug, because you yourselves know nothing, or next to nothing, about the subject, and were never brought in contact with such a case before."

He paused, breathless with his peroration, and a dead silence fell upon the court. The coroner looked perplexed, the jury

seemed wrapped in thought. Even the perky gentleman was abashed and disconcerted.

For several minutes a pin might have been heard to drop in the crowded room, then the stillness was rudely broken by a voice—the voice of Arthur Middleton shouting excitedly:

"Henry Dacery, you are a fool for your pains! And if ever you fall again into my power, I will take precious good care you don't live another moment!"

Our hero started back aghast at these words, and every eye instantly turned on the speaker.

He had risen from the chair with which he had been accommodated during the proceedings, and was standing bolt upright, the strange, dazed expression of old upon his face, and the dull, unseeing light in his eyes.

Henry was, perhaps, more overcome by amazement than anyone else present, for he wondered how on earth the mesmerist had resumed his sway over Arthur.

There could be only one possible answer to the question—the mesmerist was present somewhere in court, and had once more succeeded in fascinating the unfortunate Arthur.

This thought no sooner flashed upon Henry than he wheeled like lightning upon the rows of spectators, and ran his eye over them.

A face out of all the others arrested his gaze. It was the face of Giovanni Calostro, the mesmerist. The coal-black eyes were simply glittering from under the bushy brows like beads could not hide the thin, cruel lips and powerful chin.

"Seize him, that man there with the wild eyes! It is the mesmerist—the real murderer, Giovanni Calostro!"

He pointed full at the shrinking, terrified ruffian, who, before any of the crowd could recover from their astonishment at this sudden denunciation, sprang quickly from his seat and bounded towards the door.

"Seize him! Don't let the villain escape!" cried Henry, in wild excitement, and he made a rush himself after the fleeing figure.

But the fugitive had taken the precaution to be close to the door, and, though the policeman guarding it attempted to bar his passage, he hurled the man out of his path, and had gone like a flash.

Instantly the wildest excitement prevailed in the court, and the coroner and the officers in vain attempted to restore order.

CHAPTER 7.

THE CORONER'S JURY RETURNS A VERDICT OF "WILFUL MURDER" AGAINST ARTHUR—HENRY'S LIFE ATTEMPTED BY A MYSTERIOUS FIGURE—BEATRICE UNDER THE MESMERIST'S SPELL—HENRY AND CALOSTRO FACE TO FACE AGAIN—THE LATTER ONCE MORE ESCAPES.

Everyone present had seen the stranger rush from the court, and the police-officer, who had been knocked down, ruefully picked himself up, and, giving chase, blew his whistle for assistance. Many of the spectators ran out to join in the pursuit, but others stayed to see the end of this most extraordinary case.

Henry himself attempted to rush from the room, but the police-inspector stepped before him, and said significantly:

"I don't think the coroner or the jury have finished with you. There are enough gone after that man."

Henry turned to the coroner, who was sitting back in his chair, perfectly amazed.

"Now, sir, did I not speak the truth? The mesmerist had the audacity to come here and listen to the evidence against his unfortunate dupe. Look at the prisoner now, and tell me if that man is not in a mesmeric trance?"

All eyes were turned on Arthur, who had resumed his seat, and was staring vacantly before him.

"I—I really cannot see how—no, I cannot accept this theory of mesmerism," said the coroner. "For all we know that man you denounced may be an accomplice of yours, and the whole affair looks very much like a skilfully-laid plot to defeat the ends of justice. But we will delay proceedings if you like in hopes that the man may be caught."

However, the pursuers returned soon after, explaining that the fugitive had contrived to give them all the slip, and the coroner said he did not feel justified in sanctioning further delay.

"I will leave this extraordinary affair in the hands of the jury," he said; "and I would urge them not to give too much credence to this tale of mesmerism. In any case the matter does not rest here, and I really think should go before a judge."

The jury whispered together for a few minutes, and then the foreman told the coroner they had agreed upon a verdict of wilful murder against Arthur Middleton in the one case, and Giovanni Calostro in the second.

The coroner then committed the prisoner for trial, and a warrant was issued for the arrest of the Italian, upon which the jury was discharged.

Arthur Middleton heard the verdict quite unmoved. He was clearly not in a position to appreciate the gravity of the charge against him. He was marched off in custody, and Henry Dacery, a prey to the keenest anguish and almost despair, returned to his apartments in Bayswater.

He sat far into the night, with his head bowed upon his hands, thinking of the girl he loved still in that demon's power, of his unfortunate friend, Arthur Middleton, charged with murder.

Oh, to think that that arch-villain was twice almost in his grasp, and that he should have got away, and now he would have to begin his weary search all over again, and might never have the same opportunities.

He was so immersed in these sad reflections that he did not hear a stealthy footstep outside his door, nor yet a "creak, creak," as the handle was slowly turned.

The door opened, and a figure, so muffled up that at first sight it would have been difficult to tell to what sex it belonged, stood upon the threshold.

It gazed for a few moments at the silent bowed figure, and then advanced slowly towards him. It halted immediately behind his chair, and raised an arm aloft. The flickering light of the fire shimmered and glanced from a long steel blade poised in mid-air, and about to plunge downwards into our unconscious hero's back.

But at that moment that strange premonition of an unknown peril that sometimes comes to us made Henry turn his head.

He saw the mysterious figure about to strike, and, with a cry of horror, leaped to his feet.

The dagger descended, but only struck the back of the chair harmlessly.

Henry rushed upon the strange figure, and tore the knife instantly from its grasp. Then, as his eye fell upon the lily-white hands, he uttered an exclamation of astonishment, and gazed wildly at the cloaked stranger.

It never moved, but stood stock-still, and, a terrible suspicion bursting upon his mind, he sprang quickly forward, and tore the hood or cloak from its head.

Beatrice Middleton stood before him, her face strangely drawn and deathly pale, the eyes dull and expressionless.

"My God, Beatrice, is it you?" he cried. "And under that demon's spell? Oh, heavens! what might have been

my fate—to be assassinated by the hand of her I love! But, ah, she has come to me, and shall never return to that demon. Then his influence over her must have an end. Ha!"

He paused, and clapped his hand to his forehead, as he remembered the words of the Italian: "You are a hypnotist of a high order yourself, though unaware of your power."

Could he use the power he possessed to conquer the mesmerist through Beatrice—in other words, use his counter-influence, and try and rouse her from her trance?

He immediately began to make passes before the girl's face, and threw his whole soul into his eyes, which he riveted upon hers.

For a time she simply gazed back at him vacantly; but all of a sudden her features became convulsed, and she began to moan and cry as though in great pain.

Henry became alarmed and terrified that perhaps he had done evil instead of good in thus exercising his counter-influence; and, lifting the poor girl upon a sofa, he made a rush towards the door to summon assistance. He was distracted with apprehension, and thought Beatrice was going into convulsions.

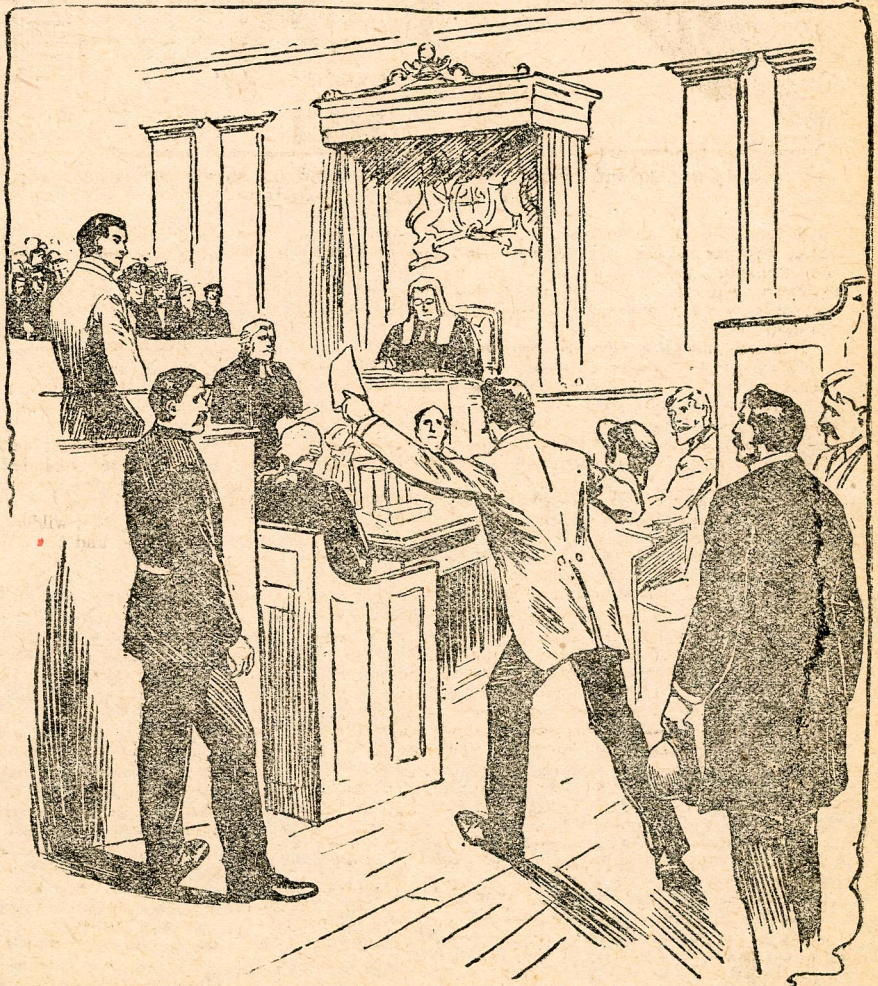
Frantically he flung open the door, to recoil with a startled cry.

Giovanni Calostro stood upon the threshold, his arms folded, and a mocking, Mephistophelian smile upon his saturnine face.

"Villain, what are you doing here?" demanded Henry, when he could recover his speech.

"At present, nothing," was the reply. "Fool and dolt, did you think to measure your power against mine? See the fruits of it! Were you to persist in your mad attempt to rouse her and defeat my power through her, the direst harm would result. Look at her face now!"

Henry turned, and, to his delight, but none the less to his astonishment, he saw the expression of agony had gone from her face, and she appeared to be in a deep and calm sleep.



"Stay, my lord!" cried Henry excitedly. "I am Henry Dacery, and I hold here proof of the prisoner's innocence."

When he turned again to the mesmerist, he found himself looking into the deadly muzzle of a revolver.

"Ha! ha! ha! Now, at last, Mr. Dacery, I think I have you fairly trapped, and in your own lodgings, egad! If you raise your voice above a whisper, or attempt any resistance, I swear to shoot you dead as a doornail. I think you already know me sufficiently well not to need a second warning."

Henry cursed himself for not having been more on his guard, but fearlessly faced his implacable foe.

"Curse you!" hissed the mesmerist, through his set teeth. "You exposed me at the coroner's inquest, and I was hard put to it to throw the bloodhounds off my scent. But fortunately I baffled them. However, I cannot afford to take any more risks, and I mean to settle accounts with you once and for all to-night."

Henry, looking into the mesmerist's eyes, thought they had a curious and exultant expression in them—that they were looking not at him but over his shoulder, perhaps at something or someone behind him.

As this thought suggested itself, Henry, in a flash, remembered the diabolical power this wretch possessed over Beatrice Middleton, and, suddenly turning his head, was not very much surprised to see the girl stealing softly up behind him.

She had again picked up the stiletto, which he himself had carelessly laid upon the table, and it had undoubtedly been the mesmerist's intention to keep his mind fixed until she had driven the knife into his back.

Like lightning Henry hurled himself upon Calostro, and the latter's finger pressed the trigger involuntarily.

The report rang through the room, the bullet sang harmlessly past Henry's head, but was followed by a shriek in a woman's voice, and a heavy fall.

Horrified at the thought that the woman he loved was shot, Henry sprang like a panther upon the Italian, and, grappling fiercely with the latter, strove to wrest the pistol from his grasp.

But Calostro, who had not meant to fire, knowing full well the report would be sure to alarm the house, was now concerned for his own safety, and attempted to break away from our hero.

The latter, however, was determined the villain should not escape again if he could help it, and held him tightly, shouting the while at the top of his voice for help.

Frenzied with the fear of capture, Giovanni Calostro put forth all his strength, and at last succeeded in freeing the hand which gripped the revolver.

The next moment he had pressed the trigger again, and a second report rang through the silent night; but the bullet, though aimed with murderous intent, only grazed Henry's temples.

Still, the force of the explosion so close to his face knocked him backwards.

There was the sound of voices, and footsteps approaching the room, and, in an agony of apprehension, the Italian darted towards the window.

To unlatch it and throw up the lower half was the work of an instant, and, scrambling out on to the narrow ledge, he was recklessly about to jump to the ground, when a detaining hand was laid upon his arm.

He turned his white, scared face towards his captor, and uttered an oath as he recognised Henry.

"Can lead and steel not kill you?" he panted. "Let me go, I tell you!—let me go!"

Henry said nothing, but attempted to drag the ruffian back through the window, while he strove as desperately to break away and take the daring leap.

As our hero thus clung to the murderer, the door was thrown open, and a number of men rushed in. With a last great effort Calostro wrenched himself free, and jumped into the darkness.

Without a moment's hesitation, Henry also scrambled through the window, and leaped after him.

Our hero struck the ground upon his feet, but with a force which almost drove his legs into his body, and, staggering backwards, he fell against the side of the house. His head came in contact with the wall, and the blow stunned him for a time.

When he came to his senses, he found himself lying upon the sofa in his room, surrounded by several of his neighbours in the flat.

"Has—has that villain escaped?" he asked anxiously, half expecting yet dreading the reply.

"Yes; but we have secured the woman. She was only slightly wounded, and was handling a murderous-looking knife in an awfully suggestive way when we entered," said one. "Who is she—a woman burglar?"

"No—no! But, thank Heaven, you did not let her go. Friends, that woman is the woman I love; but she was mesmerised by the villain who has escaped, and who meant to use her as his instrument to slay me. Yes, you may all well stare. But it is truth I am telling you, and a man, that woman's brother, is at present lying in gaol, awaiting his trial for a murder, which he committed while under the spell of Giovanni Calostro's demon power!"

CHAPTER 3.

HENRY LOSES THE TRAIL—THE PARIS DIAMOND ROBBERY—A CLUE AT LAST—OFF TO BORDEAUX—CALOSTRO'S DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE—A FRIGHTFUL PREDICAMENT.

Henry Dacery, though he regretted that the mesmerist should again have escaped, nevertheless felt considerably relieved to know Beatrice Middleton was no longer in the villain's power.

After her wound had been attended to, he handed her over to the care of the housekeeper, a motherly old dame, for the night, and in the morning was rejoiced to find she had completely recovered from her mesmeric trance.

"Oh, Henry," she cried, bursting into tears at sight of him, "what is the meaning of it all? I seem to have been asleep, and yet have hazy recollections of waking moments when I was a prisoner in the hands of that dreadful man."

"Never mind, dearest, you shall never again fall into his power. I will never rest until I have hounded him down and brought him to the justice he has so long outraged."

He thought it best to leave her then, for he could not bring himself to tell her of the terrible charge hanging over her brother's head.

The housekeeper, for a consideration, promised to look after her in his absence; and Henry, who meant to spare neither pains nor money to save his friend, sought one of the first lawyers of the day, and persuaded the latter to interest himself on Arthur Middleton's behalf.

Henry laid the whole extraordinary case before the man of law, and the latter simply fell back in his chair and listened amazedly.

When our hero ceased speaking, the lawyer remained silent a long time, then said:

"Well, Mr. Dacery, you fairly took away my breath. But I may tell you I know something of mesmerism myself, and can well imagine the terrible weapon for evil a power you say this Giovanni Calostro possesses might be made. The difficulty, however, will be to get a judge and jury to believe that Arthur Middleton was under this man's influence when he committed the murder. However, I do not despair of success, though if a confession of his guilt could in any way be wrung from the Italian, it would materially assist us."

"I fear that is out of the question," answered Henry despondently.

"Why?" asked the lawyer. "A warrant has already been issued for the arrest of Calostro, and if he is caught and finds himself unable to escape his doom for the murder he is known to have committed, he may confess to the other and save your friend."

"You do not know the villain as I do, sir. He would go to the scaffold with his lips sealed, I greatly fear, exultant at the thought that, after all, he was partly triumphing over us."

Leaving the lawyer's office, Henry betook himself to Scotland Yard, and enlisted the services of a couple of clever detectives.

But days, nay weeks, flew by, and no trace of Giovanni Calostro could be found, and Henry was nearly distracted as the date of Arthur's trial was rapidly approaching.

A close watch had been set by the authorities upon all steamers leaving for the Continent or the United States, but our hero feared that the arch-villain had contrived, after all, to pass through the cordon of detectives and get out of the country.

Henry Dacery had now given himself up entirely to the pursuit of the mesmerist, and this he was well enabled to do, as he had managed to lay by a pretty little nest-egg during the time he was with Garrod and Pilkington.

But time passed, and no trace of the mesmerist could be found. Henry was beginning to lose heart, when he read one morning in the daily paper that a famous French actress had been drugged and robbed of all her jewellery at an hotel in Paris. The facts of the case as reported in the newspaper left no doubt in his mind that the robbery was the work of the man he was in search of.

The actress had returned home to the hotel on the previous night, accompanied by a gentleman, whom the clerk thought looked like an Italian. Some hours later the lady was found unconscious in her room by a chambermaid, and when brought round could give no explanation whatever of what had occurred. She did not remember returning to the hotel with any gentleman, but had a hazy recollection of having been attracted and fascinated by the glittering eyes of a stranger in the stalls while performing on the stage.

The mysterious affair had created the profoundest sensation in Paris, and was fully reported in all the London papers.

Henry, convinced this was more of Calostro's work, wired at once to the two detectives he had engaged to follow him to Paris with all speed, and, not waiting to inform even his

housekeeper whither he was going, hastily packed up a few necessities, and caught the Continental train at Victoria Station.

The steamer that left Dover for Calais that night included him among her passengers, and a few hours later he stood upon French soil.

He made straight for Paris, and, proceeding to the address of the actress, sought and obtained an interview with her.

From the lady's description of the man who had so strangely fascinated her from his seat in the stalls, our hero was now fully satisfied that the thief was the mesmerist right enough.

Through the courtesy of the actress, who was distracted at the loss of her jewels, he was permitted to make a thorough search of her apartments at the hotel. While the lady was showing him where she usually kept her jewel-case, his quick eye noticed a piece of crumpled paper, tossed into a corner of the drawer among various odds and ends.

He picked it up, and, smoothing it out, was about to hand it over to the lady, as it appeared to be a letter, when his eye was arrested by these words in French, that stood out in bold caligraphy:

"Dear sir,—We reserve the rooms for you, as you—"

The sentence ended there, the rest having been torn off, but the top of the half sheet he held in his hand bore the address of an hotel in Bordeaux.

With an anxious thrill, Henry handed the actress the torn letter, asking if it belonged to her.

The lady glanced at it, and a look of surprise overspread her face.

"No," she said. "Where did you find it?"

"In the drawer where you kept your jewel-case, madame. You do not know the handwriting, or to whom it might belong?"

"No," she replied amazedly; "and I cannot imagine how it came to be there!"

"Then we have a clue indeed, madame, to the whereabouts of this most atrocious villain. He must have in some way dropped this letter while committing the robbery. Don't mention a word, madame, as to our find, but I will start for Bordeaux at once. Before long, I hope to be able to return you your jewels intact."

Henry Dacery felt that his long chase of this most desperate criminal was drawing to a close, and his heart felt considerably lighter as he found himself whirling as fast as steam could carry him towards the south of France.

He had made inquiries at the terminus in Paris, but the booking clerk could not very well be expected to remember the face of every passenger for the south, and was therefore unable to help him.

Still, he felt convinced he was on the right track at last, and panted eagerly for the hour when he and Giovanni Calostro should stand once more face to face.

When, after a long and wearisome journey, he at last found himself set down upon the platform in Bordeaux, he forgot his fatigue—everything in his impatience and anxiety. He took the precaution, however, to first visit the bureau of the police, and procure the assistance of three gendarmes.

Then the four drove in a closed carriage to the hotel, and learned from the proprietor that an Italian gentleman, who had given his name as Antonio Galazzi, had taken rooms on the top floor.

"He is at present in his room," added the man.

The officers and Henry mounted the stairs, and, approaching the door, knocked softly upon it.

There were instantly the sounds of someone hastily shutting drawers or boxes inside; and then, after a few minutes' delay, the door was cautiously opened, and a man, wearing a heavy black beard, looked out.

He started back with a cry of dismay at sight of the gendarmes, and his face went deathly pale.

He attempted to close the door in their faces, but Henry had placed his foot between it and the jamb, and he was unable to.

Despite the beard, our hero had recognised in the occupant of the room the mesmerist, Giovanni Calostro, and, throwing his whole weight against the door, he burst it open.

The Italian made a dash for the window, which was open, and got out on to a narrow ledge, scarcely two feet wide, along which he crawled on his hands and knees at imminent risk of falling and being dashed to pieces on the pavement below.

Henry and the police-officers gained the window, and the latter called upon the man to come back.

But he paid no attention to their demands, and continued his perilous course.

All at once he uttered a shriek of terror; his legs had slipped off the ledge, and the next moment the horrified pursuers beheld him suspended over that terrible drop, clinging despairingly with his hands to the cornice.

CHAPTER 9.

HENRY'S HEROISM—THE FATE OF THE MESMERIST—THE SCENE IN THE POLICE-COURT—REMARKABLE EVIDENCE—THE MESMERIST'S CONFESSION—ARTHUR ACQUITTED—A HAPPY ENDING.

Shriek after shriek pealed from the terrified miscreant's lips as he hung in this truly awful situation. It would be impossible for him to hold on until ladders could be brought to rescue him from his predicament, and this Henry Dacery saw immediately.

The latter's mind was made up in an instant. He would risk his own life in an attempt to rescue his foe from his impending fate.

Before the gendarmes could realise his purpose, he, too, had scrambled through the window, and on hands and knees began to crawl along the ledge towards the spot where the mesmerist hung between life and death.

"Come back! Come back, monsieur, or you will go over, too!" shouted the alarmed officers; but, unheeding their cries, Henry crawled further along that aerial and fearfully dangerous path.

He had almost reached Calostro, and was about to stretch out his hand and grasp the latter's wrist, when the mesmerist's fingers slipped from the edge, and, with a wild, despairing scream, the hapless man shot earthward with terrific rapidity.

In his fall the Italian turned a complete somersault, and then struck the earth with a sickening thud.

Overcome with horror, Henry somehow managed to crawl back the way he had come, and was dragged in at the window by eager hands.

* * * * *
The court was crowded to suffocation. All London was deeply interested in the trial of Arthur Middleton for wilful murder, and the case had already occupied two days.

The evidence against the prisoner had been taken, and the prosecuting counsel had stated his case.

Arthur's advocate, Mr. Bilston, made a long and eloquent defence, asserting that his client was in a mesmeric trance when he committed the crime, and was therefore not responsible for his actions.

He brought forward as witnesses the prisoner's own sister, the diamond merchants who had been so mysteriously robbed in their own offices, and Mr. Coburn, in whose house the reader may remember the mesmerist, by the aid of his victims, overpowered and robbed Henry Dacery of the precious stones in the latter's charge.

These swore to various extraordinary adventures at the hands of the mysterious Italian, named Giovanni Calostro.

Mr. Coburn explained how he had been accosted in a railway carriage on his way home from business by the stranger, and remembered nothing more until, returning home a few days later from a short holiday trip he had taken, he was amazed to learn that the Italian had been stopping during his absence at his house, had suddenly decamped, and was suspected of having committed a most daring and desperate robbery. His family asserted that he had personally introduced the stranger to them as an old and valued friend; but he himself had not the remotest recollection of having done so, and affirmed that he had never laid eyes upon the man before in his life.

Mr. Coburn's statements naturally created the profoundest amazement; and when Beatrice Middleton followed him into the witness-box and testified how her brother had brought the Italian home one day, and had acted ever since that hour in a very peculiar manner, there was not a person in the court who did not hang with the keenest interest upon every word that fell from her lips.

When she had described the fearful struggle that had taken place between Henry Dacery and the mesmerist and his victims, a pin might have been heard drop as she paused for breath. Then she told how she herself must have become unconscious, and only had dim recollections of occasionally waking up to find herself a bound and helpless prisoner.

"I saw no one during that terrible captivity," she concluded, "but that awful Italian. At times he would look at me, and his eyes would seem to burn into my very soul, and then consciousness would again leave me, and I would remember nothing more until I woke up again to find myself a prisoner as before. One day, however, I awoke to find the face of a woman bending over me, and then I learned that Mr. Dacery had saved me from that demon's power."

Such evidence as this could not but electrify not merely the court, but, when it was afterwards reported in the papers, the whole English-speaking world.

"Where is this Henry Dacery?" demanded the judge. "How is it he has not been brought here?"

"He has most mysteriously disappeared, my lord," said the

counsel for the defence. "He left his chambers suddenly, and no one knows whither he went."

"This—is this very unsatisfactory," said the judge. "He would have been a most important witness."

"He would, indeed, my lord. And the court may rest assured he would have been here under ordinary circumstances. He has sworn to hound down this mesmerist, this Italian, Giovanni Calostro, and hired the services of two detectives from Scotland Yard to assist him. These men, too, I learn, have disappeared, gone no one knows whither. Either they have lighted upon a clue, and are hard upon the trail of this most mysterious miscreant, whom we assert is the real murderer, or—"

"Or what, sir?" asked the judge.

"Or there has been more foul play!"

A dead silence fell upon the court, and lasted for several seconds; then it was rudely broken by a great clamour at the door.

"Silence in court!" cried the ushers and constables. But the noise increased, and presently the crowd around the door parted, and in burst Henry Dacery, followed by the two detectives.

"Who are you, sir?" demanded the judge, regarding Henry sternly. "Officers, remove those men!"

"Stay, my lord!" cried our hero excitedly. "I am Henry Dacery, and I hold here proof of the prisoner's innocence!"

And he waved a paper above his head.

"Hal!" said the judge. "The important witness has turned up. I must hear what he has to say. Swear this man!"

Henry entered the witness-box, and took the oath.

"My lord," he began, "I have here the death-bed confession of one Giovanni Calostro, an Italian. Before I read it to you, I must, however, first tell you how I obtained it.

"It was Calostro who stole the diamonds entrusted to my charge by my employers, Messrs. Garrod and Pilkington, of Hatton Garden. He tried on that occasion to mesmerise me, but failed. However, with the assistance of three others, who I have every reason to believe were mesmerised at the time, he overpowered me, and effected his purpose. I resolved to bring him to justice, and devoted myself to tracking him down.

"On one occasion he and his subjects nearly murdered me by throwing me down a well. Thanks to Providence alone, I escaped the doom he meant for me.

"Some time later, I recognised him and the prisoner there in Hatton Garden, and followed them into an office they appeared to have engaged. I attempted to arrest Calostro, and raised an alarm. Several persons rushed in, Calostro shot one man dead, and escaped by throwing himself out of a window. The prisoner resisted capture, and stabbed a man fatally before he was overpowered.

"I knew at the time, though, that he was under the spell of the mesmerist, and to save him from the scaffold, for he is my friend, I took up detective work once more.

"I read casually in a morning paper of the robbery in Paris of an actress's jewels, and as the circumstances of the case pointed to Giovanni Calostro as the perpetrator, I went over to Paris, and there obtained a clue, which took me to Bordeaux.

"Here I obtained the assistance of the French police, and attempted to arrest the miscreant at his hotel. But Calostro made a desperate effort to escape by climbing out of the window on to a narrow ledge. He fell from this into the street below, and when picked up was in a dying state.

"Ere he succumbed to his injuries, however, he made a statement, which was taken down in writing, and which I will now read to you:

"My name is Giovanni Calostro, and I am a mesmerist. By means of my mesmeric power, I have been able to subject many persons to my will, amongst others the Englishman, Arthur Middleton, who is at present under arrest for murder.

"I solemnly swear here on my death-bed, and in the fear of Him, before whom I must shortly take my stand, and to whom account for all my misdeeds, that Arthur Middleton was not responsible for his actions at the time the murder was committed. He was under the influence of my mesmeric power, and I "willed" him to make the desperate fight he did, so as to create a diversion, and enable me to make good my escape.

"My plan succeeded. He stabbed several men—one fatally, I believe, just as I "willed" him to do—and in the confusion I got clear away.

"But this Henry Dacery, whom I robbed of the diamonds entrusted to his care at one Coburn's house, has followed me everywhere. I have tried to murder him on more than one occasion; but he seems to have possessed a charmed life, and has tracked me down with untiring zeal.

"When I got out of England and reached Paris, I thought I had effectually shaken him off. But my exploit in that city—the theft of the actress's jewels—was a fatal mistake. It gave him a clue to my whereabouts, though how he obtained my address in Bordeaux I cannot tell. He seems to be possessed of

almost supernatural powers, and his iron will was proof against even my attempt to mesmerise him.

"I am dying, I know it, so I may as well tell all, and, if possible, do one good action at least by saving an innocent man from the gallows.

"I mesmerised Arthur Middleton and several others, and made use of them to commit all the diamond robberies, which created such a sensation in London a few months back. While under my mesmeric influence my victims were utterly irresponsible for a single action.

"I released all the others, except Arthur Middleton, from my spell as soon as they had served my immediate purpose, for I knew they would be unable to remember anything of what had occurred while they were in the trance; and I was always able to obtain new instruments when I wanted them by entering into conversation with likely subjects in the streets or trains.

"I kept Arthur Middleton almost a prisoner out of fear of his friend, Henry Dacery, who, as I have said, pursued me with the unerring instinct of a sleuth-hound.

"I have nothing further to add, save to repeat my asseveration on oath that, though Arthur Middleton's hand dealt the fatal blow, it was while he was subject to my will, and while he was utterly irresponsible. I really committed the murder by proxy."

Henry looked up from the paper, and his eye glanced over the breathless, dumb-stricken court.

"That is Giovanni Calostro's confession, my lord," he said. "It was signed by him before his death, witnessed by those two men"—pointing to the detectives, who had followed him to Bordeaux—"and is furthermore attested by the French police commissary, and the British consul."

He handed the paper to the judge, who examined it carefully, and passed it over to the jury.

"This is a most extraordinary case," said his lordship. "Murder by proxy! I doubt if the like of this has ever been heard of before. Still, gentlemen of the jury, mesmerism is an established fact, though the powers this Giovanni Calostro swore he possessed seem to pass all credence. Still, you must carefully weigh this additional evidence, and, if you think it worthy of belief, and I see no reason why you should not, you must return a verdict of 'not guilty' against the prisoner at the bar."

The jury remained in the box, and, after a short whispered conference, the foreman rose:

"My lord, we are perfectly unanimous in our verdict."

"Do you find the prisoner guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty, my lord!"

The cheer that followed this announcement could with difficulty be repressed.

Then the judge commented upon the case, which he said was more like a page from a sensational novel than anything else.

"I fully concur, however," he concluded, "in the verdict of the jury, and Mr. Arthur Middleton leaves this court without a stain upon his character. I have to congratulate him on the true and steadfast friend he possesses in Mr. Henry Dacery, to whom Justice itself is indebted for his exposition of the true facts of the case."

But little remains to be told.

Vast wealth in jewellery and precious stones had been found in the room at the Bordeaux hotel, which Giovanni Calostro had occupied, and the valuables were afterwards traced and restored to their rightful owners.

Still this store could not have represented all the proceeds of his daring robberies, as certain papers proved he had disposed of many stones in Paris and elsewhere.

Messrs. Garrod and Pilkington recovered the greater part of the £2,000 worth they had lost, and, to make amends and express their gratitude, they took Henry Dacery into partnership with them.

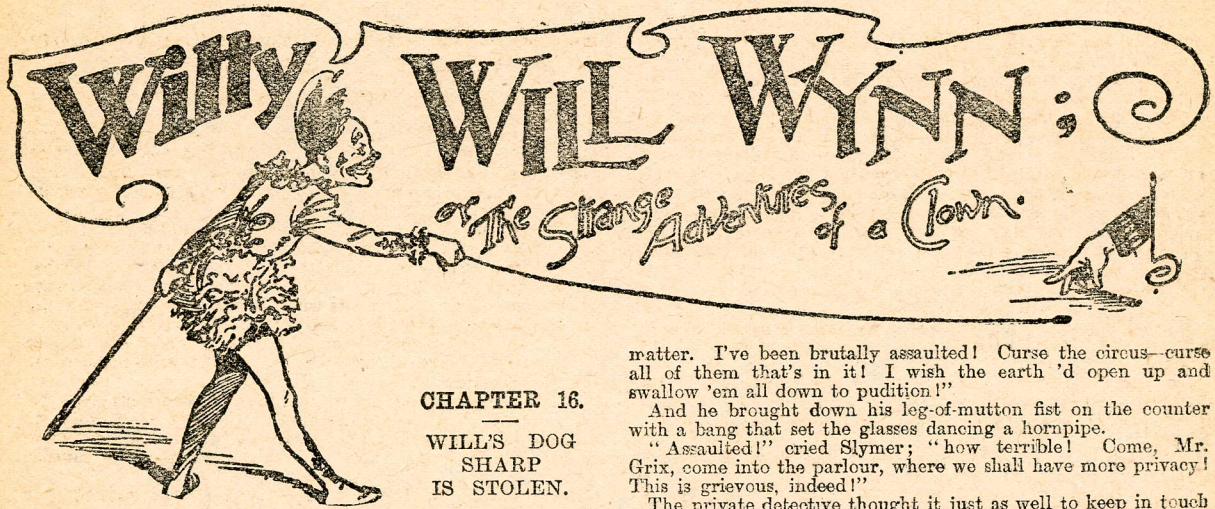
And that young gentleman, not being satisfied with one partnership, soon afterwards joined another, this time with Beatrice Middleton, and it was to last until death dissolved it.

THE END.

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CHAPTER 16.

WILL'S DOG
SHARP
IS STOLEN.

Sleuth Slymer had worked out his little idea of ensnaring Will by means of Sharp on the return journey from Oldham. He had heard of the affection that existed between the lad and the animal.

"Don't you think it a first-class idea, Dicky?" he said, with a cunning grin at the squinting landlord.

"First-class; but you've got to get the dog!"

"That's easy enough, though the brute's got sharp enough teeth; but I fancy a bit of meat, well-flavoured with prussic acid, or some such delicacy, will do the trick. So long as we get the brute, it doesn't matter whether he's dead or alive."

"Well, when do you intend making a start?"

"I'm going to try to get the dog to-night. Only it's too early to set to work yet, so I'll just take another fourpenn'orth of gin cold along with you, Dicky, and drink success to our little scheme."

Sleuth Slymer never paid for a drink if he could possibly help it. It was one of his maxims to get all he could out of other people, and to never give anything away himself.

The two men were sitting in the parlour at the back of the house, drinking and talking together in low tones, when there was a sharp rap at the door, and a moment later, a flaring carrotty head—so flaring that it altogether cast the red wig of the disguised Slymer into the shade—was thrust into the room, and a voice, in a strong Hibernian brogue, exclaimed:

"Plase, sorr, here's a parthy in the bar wid two lovely black eyes, and a nose swollen like a football, after makin' inquiries for a Mister Timble-riggin' Joe; and so I'm makin' so bould to ask if that's the gentleman wid ye at the present moment?"

The landlord looked at Slymer; Slymer looked at the landlord; and the red-headed face—nothing more was visible—looked at both of them. Then Slymer, with a wink at the landlord, slipped out of the room to see who it was inquiring for him. The red head had disappeared before him, and, once outside, Sleuth Slymer realised that it was part and parcel of a tall, raw-boned young fellow of about nineteen, who acted as pot-man, barman, and cellarman at the Beetle and Wedge. His face, with its wide mouth, and turn-up nose, and twinkling grey eyes was comical to look at. He was decidedly ugly; but his ugliness, like that of a bull-dog, was an attractive ugliness.

"Now, then, ugly mug," said Sleuth Slymer, whose humour was inclined to be personal when there was no chance of its being resented, "just point out this gentleman to me, please!"

"Shure, if ye don't kill me wid yer compliments first, sorr, I will. Though there's no need to point him out, seein' that he's the size of two men and a spalpeen all rolled into one, sorr!"

Then Slymer realised that it must be Joe Grix, the giant-clown, who was inquiring for him.

And it was Grix. When he had recovered from the knock-out blow dealt him by Jim Butler, he had reeled off to the Beetle and Wedge to drown his pain in more drink, and to plot revenge. Then he had bethought himself of inquiring after his companion of the debauch of the night before. Grix was indeed a gruesome spectacle. His eyes, set in deepest mourning, had almost disappeared. His nose had assumed enormous proportions, and his mouth seemed to have spread all over his face.

"Good gracious, the great Mr. Grix!" exclaimed Slymer, catching sight of him, and gasping with astonishment. "Why, what has happened to you? An accident at the circus? Has some unmanageable steed trodden upon your face?"

"Stop that, curse you!" spluttered Grix; "it's not a joking

matter. I've been brutally assaulted! Curse the circus—curse all of them that's in it! I wish the earth 'd open up and swallow 'em all down to pudition!"

And he brought down his leg-of-mutton fist on the counter with a bang that set the glasses dancing a hornpipe.

"Assaulted!" cried Slymer; "how terrible! Come, Mr. Grix, come into the parlour, where we shall have more privacy. This is grievous, indeed!"

The private detective thought it just as well to keep in touch with the giant-clown, as there was no knowing when his services might not be needed. Grix reeled after Slymer into the back-parlour, and the landlord, when he had recovered from the first shock of his battered countenance, proceeded to ply him with drink. Then Grix, every moment growing more inarticulate, gave a garbled account of what had happened at the circus. The recital over, he began to grow sleepy, and presently his head fell forward on his chest, and he began to snore.

"I say," said the landlord, in a whisper, "this party you've been telling me about—is it this boy-clown, Witty Will?"

"You've hit the right nail on the head, Dicky," said Slymer; "that's the party. He's going to be worth a lot of money to us. And if any dirty work had to be done, old Vesuvius there—he nodded to the dormant giant—"would do it for us. You can tell he don't love him too much. Now, Dicky, just give me a good-sized bag, and a nice bit of fresh meat, and I'm going after that dog!"

"Pat!" shouted the landlord—"Pat! Where the blazes is that red-headed, good-for-nothing son of a Fenian?"

"Is it after me ye're callin', sorr?" And the flaring head popped round the door.

"Yes, you lazy beggar! Bring me one of those sacks from the kitchen, and ask the missus to cut a nice piece of that steak, and look sharp, you carrotty-nobbed son of gun-cotton and dynamite, and take care you don't set fire to anything with that poll of yours!"

"Witty as ever, Dicky," said Slymer, grinning at the landlord's humour. "Where did you get that type of Irish beauty from?"

"Oh, he came here a year ago, and asked for a job, and I gave it him; but he eats more than he earns! I'll sack him one of these days!"

The hum and the roar of the fair had died away, and silence reigned over the almost deserted market-place when Sleuth Slymer, a bag thrown over his arm, slunk out of the Beetle and Wedge, and made his way towards the Temple of Matchless Mirth.

When Will, accompanied by Jim Butler, had reached the temple, Professor Romah, having heard what had happened, had insisted on the Witty One going to his lodgings. He was not in a fit state for working that night, and though he would have returned as usual to sleep in the temple, madame insisted that a bed should be made up for him in their rooms. The temple, in consequence, had been left in charge of Tommy Perch, the orator, and the faithful Sharp.

Tommy Perch, seeing that he was doing it for Will, raised no objections, and was soon fast asleep on an impromptu bed of sacking. But Sharp was in a restless and rather suspicious mood, and missed his usual comrade, and instead of curling up and going to sleep, prowled up and down within the temple, sniffing around and poking his nose into various corners. Then he thought he would like to take a look round outside, and, knowing of a certain hole near the side door through which he could squeeze himself, trotted off towards it. As he drew near, he suddenly pricked up his ears, and gave a low growl. But the orator, worn out with much speech-making, slept soundly, and heard it not.

"Good doggie!—good doggie!—nice old boy!—come along then!—there's a good fellow!"

Sharp growled again. He was a conservative dog, and though the voice that came through the hole was reassuring enough, he was not inclined to make fresh acquaintances easily.

HOW DO YOU LIKE THIS SERIAL?

He growled again, and Sleuth Slymer, vividly remembering Sharp's teeth, became nervous.

"Oh, nice doggie!" he said, rather shakily, at the same time edging away a little from the hole—"oh, nice little doggie!"

But, alas! dogs, as well as men, have their price! And Sharp's growl died away as his keen scent told him of the presence of fresh meat somewhere near the hole. And he thrust his head through the hole—to be grabbed round the scruff of the neck by Slymer, so tightly that he could not even yap out an alarm.

And the next moment he had been plunged headlong into the abyssal darkness of a bag. He gave one howl; but only one, and that was unheard. The next moment, Sleuth Slymer swung the bag in the air, and then dashed it to the hard ground with such force that the unfortunate Sharp was utterly bereft of his senses.

"Now," muttered Sleuth Slymer, with a gleam of triumph in his ferrety eyes as he glided away into the darkness, "I've got the dog; to-morrow night I'll get the boy! Ho, ho! Mr. Coppers, you'll have to shell out pretty handsomely!"

"Miscreant, with a bag, what are you doing at this hour of night around the sacred precincts of the Matchless Temple?"

Sleuth Slymer had been in too much of a hurry, and had rushed up against the Skeleton Masher, who, owing to the grave fact that his weight had suddenly increased by a couple of ounces, had been indulging in a long training walk after business hours, enveloped in five "sweaters" and two heavy overcoats.

The Skeleton Masher, it will be remembered, had met Sleuth Slymer on the occasion of his ducking; but had it been light instead of very dark, he would not have recognised him now owing to the disguise he wore.

"Answer me, prowler by night. Why are you slinking away with a suspicious bag that suggests plunder? You shall not pass till you have answered!"

And the Skeleton Masher extended his long arms to bar the way.

Slymer's answer was as sudden as it was unexpected. It was not verbal, but came in the shape of a blow. Swinging up the bag containing the unconscious Sharp, he struck the Skeleton Masher with it full upon the chest. There was a rattle of bones, a gasp that told of breath expelled, and the Human Serpent's rival and suitor for the hand of Frances Amelia went down like a ninepin; and, glaring up into the firmament, realised that there were more stars in heaven than even in his most sentimental moments he had ever imagined. And by the time he had regained his breath and his feet—no easy matter when one is swathed in two overcoats and five sweaters—the miscreant with the bag had disappeared!

Trembling lest robbery had been done, the Skeleton Masher hurried to his side door, and aroused Tommy Perch, and together they searched the show—to find nothing missing. Neither of them gave a thought to Sharp.

"Perhaps," cried the Skeleton suddenly, and in anguish, "it is Frances Amelia!"

Not that he suspected that the Bearded Lady had been stowed in the bag of the unknown man who had felled him to the ground; but that, perhaps, her caravan, which, one day, he hoped to share with her, had been burgled. Tommy Perch was not interested in the Bearded Lady, and returned to his bed, thinking much fuss had been made about nothing. But the Skeleton Masher, hurrying out, made for the caravan, and rapped upon the door.

"Frances Amelia—strange things have happened this night! Awake, awake! Tell me is the teapot of Britannia metal missing? Count your spoons!"

Then came a bustling sound within as Frances Amelia sprang from her virtuous couch, and stirred up her brother, the knotted man.

"Oh, Peter Perkins, nothing is missing!" she cried, as she thrust a bearded, be-night-capped head round the door; "but, go away, or scandals will be raised!"

And Frances Amelia slammed to the door.

No lights shone out from the Beetle and Wedge; but, reaching it, Sleuth Slymer quietly rapped on one of the shuttered windows, and was admitted by the landlord. Once within the parlour, where the Giant Grix still snored in a chair, Slymer flung down the bag containing Sharp.

"I've got the brute. He's in the bag, or, rather, his carcass is. He started to howl, but I soon quieted him. I'll slip a few stones into the bag, and fling it into the river to-morrow."

The landlord leered with evil satisfaction. Then cast a rather disconsolate glance at the snoring Grix.

"I say, your pal's a bit of a nuisance. He looks like remaining a fixture. I can't wake him, and I certainly can't shift him. He must weigh over a couple of tons."

"Oh, let him stay the night in the chair. He'll clear out in the morning. Have you got a bed for me, Dicky? I'm just about tired out."

CHAPTER 17

BYRON JONES WRITES MORE POETRY, AND WILL CHALLENGES HIM TO FIGHT—THE WITTY ONE DISAPPEARS.

On the following morning, Will, in spite of stiffness and sundry aches, declared to Professor Romah that he was quite prepared to go through his usual performances. As he walked with Ada to the temple, he unfolded to her his plan of training Sharp to accompany him into the ring.

"Oh, how funny that would be!" said Ada. "I wonder if you could teach him to walk on his back-legs?"

"I'm going to try. Sharp is wonderfully clever."

"Then I'll tell you what I will do, Will. I'll make Sharp a little clown's suit, just like yours. Just think how the people would laugh if, after you had entered the ring, old Sharp came toddling in on his back-legs, dressed in a clown's dress!"

"That's just a ripping idea, Ada. You are a brick to offer to make a dress for him. I am going to give Sharp his first lesson this morning. I shall have time before the show opens."

Then as they went along Ada told Will of the strange man who had had his fortune told, and confided to him that she was afraid he was a spy.

"You know," she concluded, "my guardian would do anything to get me back in his power. And if once he got to know that I was here I should have no peace. He would fetch me away."

Will did not altogether like Ada's account of the red-haired stranger.

"Look here, Ada, if he comes hanging about to-day, let me know. If you can't come to me, send a message by Tommy Perch. And I'll have a look at him. And if he's a spy, we shall have to turn the English Hercules on to him!"

Then Ada told him about Byron Jones and his poetry, and Will laughed heartily thereat. On reaching the temple, he was surprised to see no signs of Sharp. In vain he searched and inquired after him. Tommy Perch had not seen him since the evening before. Knowing that Sharp had a way of going off occasionally on independent little jaunts, with the object of seeing life, Will hoped that before long he would return. But as the day wore on there came no signs of the dog. Not only Will, but all the members of the professor's company were in deep distress, because the animal was a general favourite.

"I can't make it out, Will," said Professor Romah, in one of the brief pauses from business. "Sharp's not the sort of animal to attract a dog-stealer—his beauty isn't in his breed or appearance, but in his faithfulness—and, secondly, he'd take some stealing. I shall offer a ten-bob reward, however. I wonder if anyone's got a spite against him?"

"Perhaps," said Will, "he was stolen in the hope that a reward would be offered. Did the Skeleton Masher tell you of his adventure last night with an unknown man carrying a bag? I've been wondering if that had anything to do with Sharp?"

Professor Romah smiled. The Skeleton Masher was proverbial for adventures, and the exaggerated accounts he gave of them.

"Yes, Perkins did tell me something about a fierce encounter with a burly ruffian, whom he utterly discomfited and put to flight; but you know Perkins, and I took it all with a little grain of salt."

There was no time for further conversation. The audience were pouring out of the temple. The brazen organ was beginning to roll out its strident notes, and Professor Romah, raising a great funnel of a speaking-trumpet to his lips, shouted out:

"Walk up, walk up, walk up! Another marvellous, soul-deluding, eye-entrancing, brain-bewildering performance in a few minutes! Good wine needs no bush, and the Temple of Matchless Mirth and Magic Mystery no recommendation. It speaks for itself. Walk up, walk up! One good laugh is worth twenty bottles of medicine. Why waste your money on nauseous drugs—drugs won't do—when for the paltry, despicable sum of twopence you can behold our marvellous entertainment? Men of science are bewildered, and doctors testify to the wonders of Romah's Temple!"

Tommy Perch, being told off to exploit Lanetta, the gipsy queen, Professor Romah was compelled to do his own oratory. That day, Will, still stiff and bruised, did not turn many somersaults; but he made up for them by the extra funniness of his jests and quirks, and, Madame Romah, busy as she was in the pay-box, rolled about and chuckled to herself as she listened to the lad's merry, sparkling "cackle"—to call it by the professional term. Once he got hold of the speaking-trumpet, and drew from it such extraordinary noises, and squeaks and grunts, that the crowd round the platform were literally convulsed with laughter; and then, when Professor Romah was not looking, he winked at the crowd, and stuffed up the funnel with newspaper.

(To be continued in next Friday's UNION JACK.)

AN EQUALLY THRILLING INSTALMENT NEXT WEEK.

TRY YOUR HAND AT THIS SIMPLE COMPETITION.

First Prize, £5.

Over 150 other Prizes.

What Countries do these people come from?

WE TELL YOU THIS ONE.

WRITE THE NAME OF THE COUNTRY UNDER EACH FIGURE.

Below you will find six more pictures, representing people of different countries. Four more sets of six pictures will appear, making thirty-six pictures in all. A £5 Note will be sent to the reader who correctly names all the nationalities. No. 1, you see, is England. What are the others?

IF MORE THAN ONE IS RIGHT, THE FIRST PRIZE WILL BE DIVIDED. THE EDITOR'S DECISION IS FINAL.

The other Prizes are:

Six Silveroid and Gun-Metal Watches.

Fifty Sheffield-made Pocket Knives.

Fifty Stamp Albums. Fifty Pencils.

Also a Special Ladies' Prize of Ten Shillings.



England.



7..... 8..... 9.....



10..... 11..... 12.....

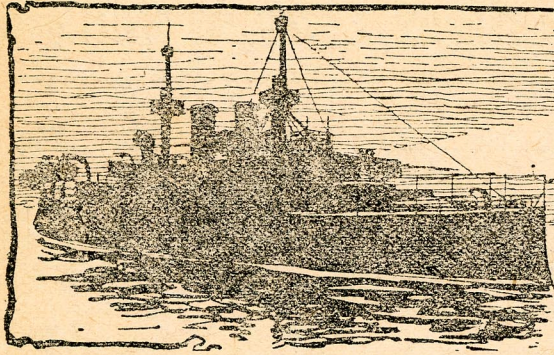
The sender of every TWENTIETH Letter opened (whether the solutions are right or wrong) will be awarded a Consolation prize.

SOME HINTS TO COMPETITORS.

1. As we cannot answer any letters in connection with this competition (whether accompanied by stamped addressed envelope or not), competitors should ask their parents or friends to advise them about anything they cannot understand. Everything has been made very clear, and anyone entering the competition may rest assured that every reader has an equal chance of winning the prizes offered.
2. You must not send in any solutions until we give the word in the UNION JACK. When the sixth set of pictures appears (in No. 207) we shall tell you exactly how to send in your solutions. Not more than one country may be written beneath any one picture. Competitors are warned that any breach of this rule will disqualify them.
3. If, when you have made out one set of solutions, you think you have one or two of them wrong, make out a second set (for which you must purchase or obtain from your friends extra copies of the UNION JACK). Any competitor may send in as many sets as he likes; but each complete set of six lists must be sent to us in a separate envelope. THIS IS IMPORTANT.
4. Every competitor is advised to procure an extra copy of the UNION JACK this week, and every week during the run of the competition, because some of the pictures will be difficult, and in the event of one set of pictures being incorrect, the competitor has another set to fall back upon.
5. Every reader of the UNION JACK should have a try, BECAUSE THE SENDER OF EVERY TWENTIETH SET OPENED, WHETHER RIGHT OR WRONG, WILL BE AWARDED A CONSOLATION PRIZE.

IMPORTANT!

Keep the Sets of Pictures until we tell you how and when to send in.



FROM THE QUARTERDECK.

The Editor's Chat with his Readers.

"THE TRUMAN MYSTERY; OR, A STRUGGLE FOR FORTUNE," is the title of next week's story. It is one of the UNION JACK's extraordinarily popular detective series, and your old friend Sexton Blake—the first detective of the century—is the hero of it. His sharp little assistant, We-wee, also plays a prominent part.

Ask your chums if they like startling detective stories, and if they say "Yes," as I think they are sure to do, recommend them to buy this paper next Friday.

Every lad can afford a halfpenny, and for that tiny coin the purchaser of the UNION JACK gets quite as good and thrilling a story as any of those published at six shillings a volume, in addition to the serial and other attractions.

I pay very heavily for the tales you buy so cheaply, so I hope you will repay me for my outlay by giving this number away when you have read it, and telling your friends about "The Truman Mystery."

The second set of pictures in my competition, no doubt, you have already seen on page 15. I hope you are trying your hand at it. Remember, I do not restrict you in any way. If

you are in doubt you may consult as many friends as you like. Remember, too, that I am giving the lucky ones a chance as well as the skilful by awarding a prize to the sender of every twentieth letter opened.

The week after next I publish a most exciting story by an author new to the UNION JACK.

I am always on the look-out for gentlemen capable of writing really good stories, and I have made a decided find in the author of this story.

Keep an eye open for it, and when it appears, let me know what you think of it.

E. Tunley (Manchester) sends me a copy of a certain paper with some very uncomplimentary remarks concerning it, and asks me to endorse them. I am afraid I cannot do that. I have no wish to figure in a libel action.

I want three complete sets of the UNION JACK. If any of you have clean sets, let me know what you will take for them.

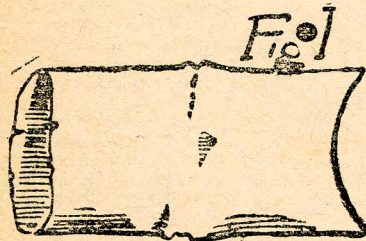
How to Make Money in Spare Time.—No. 6.

The only joints which enter into the composition of the little article illustrated last week (the easel) are the joining of

the nail is hammered in. It is well to note here that it is always necessary to prepare the holes with a bradawl or bit in bamboo-work before attempting to insert nails or screws; it is not necessary to do so in the dowels, however.

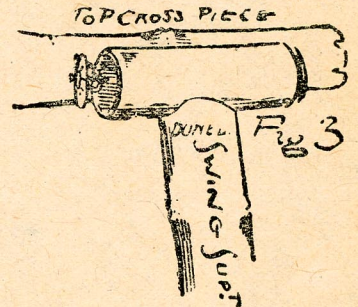
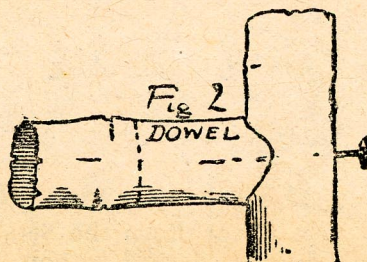
The method of making the swinging back-support is shown in Fig. 3. The joint used in making the T-shaped piece is identical with that already described. The ends of the short cross-piece are also plugged, and an ornamental nail is inserted, but not quite driven home up to the head; two pieces of bent wire, hair-pins would do, are formed into loops, which are passed around the nails, one at each end, and the ends of the wires are inserted into the back of the top cross-piece of the easel. It is better to do this before making the easel itself up, as the wires need not then pass right through the cross cane, but may be turned over on the inside by passing a long screw-driver or similar tool down through the hollow in the bamboo.

A number of holes should be bored neatly up the face of the uprights, to take pegs, which can be shifted up and down to suit the size of the picture. The holes must, of course, be bored evenly



the ends of the short cross-pieces to the sides of the uprights.

As the cane used is of the same diameter throughout, or nearly so, it will be necessary to plug the ends of the cross-pieces with glued-in dowels. When the dowels are set in firmly, take the semi-circular rasp and shape the dowelled ends of the canes as shown in Fig. 1. This is done to allow the cane to fit neatly against the rounded surface of the upright cane (Fig. 2). The same illustration shows the method of uniting the two pieces. This is done by driving a French nail through the side of the upright and into the dowel of the cross-piece, the hole for the nail being first carefully bored with a bradawl through the cane, otherwise the cane will certainly split when



two and two, or the picture will be held in a crooked position.

Although the size suggested for the easel is small, there is no reason why the instructions should not be carried out on a much larger scale, as an easel six feet high need cost no more than sixpence or sevenpence, and when finished would be well worth half-a-crown.

Next week another article in bamboo will be discussed, and all the other joints used in the work explained.

(To be continued.)

CHEQUES FOR CLEVER WORKERS

Thousands of Pounds to be paid away to the Public by Cheques on our Bankers

To Purchasers of Forks solving the following:

1. EMOSDNAH SI TAHT EMOSDNAH SEOD.
2. A YNNEP DEVAS SI A YNNEP DENRAE.
3. YTISSECEN SI EHT REHTOM FO NOITNEVNI.

A Cheque will be sent to every purchaser of our wonderful Nickel Silver Forks who solves **ONE PROVERB**, besides an offer whereby a £2 Silver Watch can be obtained **FOR NOTHING**.

A larger Cheque to every purchaser who solves **TWO PROVERBS**, besides an offer, &c.

For **THREE PROVERBS** a still larger Cheque, &c.

DIRECTIONS.—Re-arrange to represent well-known Proverbs as many of the above lines as you can, and enclose with it 4/6 for one half-dozen Forks, or 8/6 for a dozen. The Forks are full-size Table Forks, and we guarantee them fully equal in wear and appearance to solid Sterling Silver Hall-marked, as they are actually manufactured from Solid English Nickel Silver. Also enclose a stamped, directed envelope for us to post you your cheque if correct.

It takes £5,000 to pay the Prizes we will pay it cheerfully. All depends on the number of successful contestants, and the number of cheques and the amounts of each which we must send, according to our promise in this advertisement. There is no chance, no lottery. Each successful contestant will receive a sure and certain CASH PRIZE by cheque, as well as the Free Silver Watch offer mentioned above.

This offer is good for 30 days from the date of this paper. The cheques for the Prizes will be forwarded immediately, with the Forks ordered, in due turn as received.

The Result of our last Prize Distribution was as follows:

A Cheque for £40 was posted to J. A. Turner, Esq. (son of the Premier of British Columbia), 46, Queen Victoria Street, London, E.O.

A Cheque for £20 was posted to Charles Bailey, Imperial Hotel, Ilfracombe.

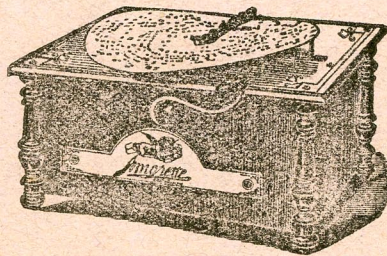
A Cheque for £10 to Officers' Mess, 3rd Field Battery, Royal Artillery, per Messrs. H. S. King & Co., Pall Mall, London; and seventeen other cheques from £5 to £1 each.—Address:

WATCHMAKERS' ALLIANCE, LTD.,
184, OXFORD STREET, LONDON.

Incorporated according to Act of Parliament. Capital £90,000; Reserve Fund, £7,500.

PHENOMENAL SUCCESS.

Thousands Sold
 in a
 Few Months.



Size,
 13in. by 10½in.
 by 8in.
 Weight 12lb.

To any person who cuts out this advertisement and sends it to us at once, we hereby guarantee to send, carriage paid, for 20s. only, the

ROYAL AMORETTE

equal in every respect to the four-guinea organs advertised elsewhere. The **ROYAL AMORETTE** is in a handsome black and gold case, has 16 indestructible steel reeds, and will play not dozens, but hundreds of tunes. We sent one to the Editor of "Fashion Novelties" for his inspection, and he replied: "Herewith please find 20s. for the **ROYAL AMORETTE** you sent on approval. I shall purchase several for Christmas presents, and cannot understand how they can be made at the price. It is the best home musical instrument I have ever seen."

The advantage of the **ROYAL AMORETTE** is that it can be played by children of any age. It will play hymns, polkas, and all the popular tunes of the day. We will pay carriage throughout any portion of the British Islands, but for foreign countries postage for twelve pounds weight must be sent.

The small picture above gives a very small notion of the instrument, which is large, handsome, and melodious. Do not confuse the Royal Amorette with any other advertised instrument. It is the only one of its kind in the world, and if you are disappointed with it we will cheerfully return the 20s. on receipt of the Royal Amorette, if returned at once.

The Royal Amorette, including 6 (six) metal tunes and packed in a strong wooden box, will be sent only to the readers of **THE UNION JACK** who, in addition to forwarding 20s., cut out this advertisement. Remit by Postal Order to

The Saxon Trading Co., 84, Oxford St., London, W.

Just the thing for the long winter evenings for Dances or Parties. We sell extra Tunes, six for 4s., or 12 for 7s. 6d., Carriage Paid. New list of tunes ready.