



3s. 6d. BUST of BLAKE—FREE!

THE UNION JACK • 2

The real bust is larger than this. YOU can have one!



The Finest Free Gift in Thirty Years of U. J. History!

The Case of the **SEXTON BLAKE BUST**

*The Story of the Life-like Bust Given to Readers—
EXTRA-LONG, and COMPLETE in this Issue.*

The SEXTON BLAKE BUST.

An Extraordinary Gift!
4s. 3d. for 10d!

Free to All Readers—This means YOU!

This announces the very biggest thing in the thirty-year history of the UNION JACK. The seven-inch high, solid bust of your favourite detective is obtainable at once by every one of you who hands copies of this issue to five new readers. There is no competition about it. Every reader who carries out his part of the bargain will get this gift. It will cost you tenpence to do so. The postage of the bust costs us ninepence. You will therefore get a 3s. 6d. portrait model of Sexton Blake for practically nothing.

BEFORE we get to business about this phenomenal offer of mine this week, I want to briefly acknowledge the avalanche of letters that has rained down on me just lately—the letters from enthusiastic "U.J." readers, who want the bust, and won't be happy till they get the bust.

I announced what the gift was to be three issues ago. The first of these issues has been on sale just one day as I write this. Already dozens of inquiries and demands for the bust have come in. How many more will arrive between now and the publication of this offer I do not venture to prophesy.

All I can say is that I hope the eager ones who have written will have been able to possess their souls in patience till the appointed day, which—now that you read these lines—has arrived. Well, then, let us to business.

The details of the arrangement are simple.

The "U.J." already possesses a very healthy circulation, hence its vigour and its attractiveness, and, incidentally, the reason why it can afford to make such a valuable present to readers. But we want more readers. The more we have, the better can the paper be. If you help to get more recruits for the "U.J." army, this paper will improve still more and you will therefore get the benefit.

We want you to help, but we don't want you to do it for nothing.

If you will buy five extra copies of this week's issue—at a cost of tenpence over and above your own usual copy—and hand these extra issues to five of your friends who are not at present readers, I will send you a Sexton Blake bust.

There is no quibble in this; no catch. Plaster models of this size, weight and finish, are retailed at a price of 3s. 6d. in the shops—but this one cannot be obtained in the shops. It is the property of the UNION JACK.

It is no exaggeration to say that this bust is the finest portrait of Sexton Blake that has ever been achieved in ANY medium. You can take it as my personal assurance that the photographs, both that on the cover and on this page, do not really convey what it is like.

A photo, however good, cannot represent adequately how a model "in the round" appears to the eye.

I can give you a few bald facts however, which may help you realise more about it until you can see the thing for yourself. This picture on the cover is rather less than the actual size of the

model itself, and of course it does its best to convey what it is like only on one plane. It gives no impression of the roundness, weight and solidity of the actual bust, which weighs, as a matter of fact, over two pounds.

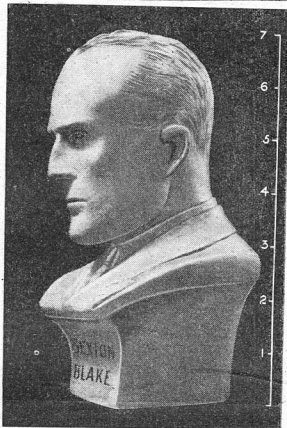
The scale of inches marked alongside the photo on this page does not give one much of an idea of the real size either.

The model is seven inches in height—which is the distance from the top of Sexton Blake's head in the picture to the star lower in the column.

Nothing approaching this has ever been given by any similar periodical for any service before.

Now how to get it:

Turn to Page 25. There you will see a coupon. Six of these coupons have to be filled in. All complications have been avoided, and nothing but a very simple job remains. One of the coupons should contain your name and address only—the regular reader applying for the bust. The other five should contain that, together with the name and address of the



The actual bust is seven inches high—from the top of the head to the star below.

new reader who has received the copy.

The names, etc., of the five non-readers must be filled in in their own handwriting, each on his separate coupon.

Each reader who sends six coupons—one from his own copy, and five from others distributed to non-readers—will receive a bust.

The new readers themselves can take advantage of this offer, too, if they like. To do so they also must get the six requisite coupons filled in.

Applications will be dealt with in strict rotation—first come, first served. Readers in the British Isles do not need to send any money for return postage, but in view of the higher rates overseas, it is necessary to ask those in other parts of the globe to prepay return postage.

A list of these rates is given on this page. If overseas readers do not see their own



country in this list, the postage rates can be ascertained locally by asking the cost of despatching from England a parcel weighing 2 lbs. 13 ounces.

Now, UNION JACK readers, go to it! Nothing like this has ever come your way before, and perhaps will not again.

Invest in those five extra copies, show five of your friends what a fine paper the "U.J." is—and then await the coming of Sexton Blake's bust!

Postal or money orders of the amounts indicated (or their foreign equivalents) should be sent, in addition to the requisite six coupons, from readers overseas in prepayment of the cost of postage ONLY. The bust itself is free. Postal and money orders, etc., should be made out to: The Amalgamated Press (1922), Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4, England.

	s. d.
Malta	1 3
Gibraltar, Barbadoes, Belgium, Br. Honduras	1 6
Holland, Hong Kong, Br. Guiana, Br. Somaliland	1 9
India, Newfoundland, United States, Aden, Bahamas, Bermuda, Ceylon	2 0
New Zealand, S. Africa, Canada, Egypt, France	2 3
Australia	2 4
Germany, Kenya, Uganda	2 9
Argentina	3 0
Rhodesia	3 6

Your Editor

THE CASE OF THE SEXTON BLAKE BUST



A photograph of the bust you see on the opposite page; the actual article you may obtain for yourself. Here, however, is the story of the bust. It is written by one of our brilliant group of authors—the creator of Leon Kestrel and the "Syndicate." Superlative though this yarn is, it is but an average sample of U.J. excellence. Such quality is taken for granted by our regular readers; to new ones it will doubtless be a welcome surprise.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. "Mr. Blake, there is a Conspiracy Against Me!"



"SMASHED!" echoed Sexton Blake, looking up with quick dismay into the pale, rather haggard face of the man before him. "You don't mean that?"
"I mean what I say!"

Cedric Robert Barker tapped the letter in his hand with fingers which quivered with emotion. His voice had become husky and strained. He peered at the great detective fixedly for some moments, and then turned swiftly, as if he could not endure Blake's calm and questioning gaze, and began to pace the studio like a man distraught.

Then he spun round suddenly, and his eyes blazed.

"Smashed, I tell you!" he cried. "And it was the finest thing I had done!"

He sank down into a chair, and buried his face in his hands—the picture of despair.

Blake rose, and put a sympathetic hand upon his shoulder. He liked Barker. Apart from an intense admiration for his work as sculptor he liked the man himself. He was still young, and, like so many of his kind, the slave of moods which could move him to the heights of exaltation or the depths of misery. Already the name of the young sculptor had become a significant one in the world of art. Yet Barker had acquired no airs, and remained unspotted.

"I'm sorry!" Blake said gently. "Tell me precisely what has happened."

Barker extended the letter in a trembling hand without raising his head.

"Read that!" he said.
"The letter was in French, the English of it being as follows:

"My dear Mr. Barker,—It is with the deepest regret that I have to inform you of a disaster which is causing us all here the acutest pain. This morning, upon opening the galleries, the porter was dismayed to find that your incomparable portrait in clay of M. Mussolini had been removed from its pedestal and thrown upon the floor, being reduced to a shapeless mass. The porter assures me that it was intact when he closed the room the previous evening, and the incident must have taken place some time during the night.

"I cannot think that it could possibly have been accidental. It is my opinion—and that of the police, whom I have informed at once—that it was a deliberate act of vandalism, committed possibly by some fanatical opponent of Italian Fascism. There is, however, no trace of the premises having been entered, and how the man could have gained access to the chamber baffles my understanding, as, of course, the strictest precautions were taken."

The letter proceeded, couched in terms of profound apology.

Blake looked up, intensely sympathetic. He knew what a bitter blow to any artist was the destruction of work which had cost him hours of labour—work performed under the influence of an inspiration which he might never again engender.

"I'm sorry, old chap!" he muttered. "This is wretched luck for you!"

Cedric Barker looked up, smiling bitterly.

"It hurts, Blake," he muttered—"it hurts! If you only knew the weeks even that I waited just to get a sitting. It was a good thing!" he muttered. "I was pleased with it. And to think that it has been smashed—deliberately! It is so senseless—so criminally futile to destroy a man's work like this!"

Blake shook his head slowly.

"It is not the work of art which arouses the antagonism, Barker," he said, "but the man portrayed. You remember the man who put a hatchet through the picture of Bismarck. You are skating on thin ice when you venture into the field of European politics."

"I don't agree. This was not the work of any political fanatic. It was a blow aimed at me!" cried Barker.

"Not at Fascism! This is the second disaster within a week. There was my statuette of 'The Ballerina'—the one which the 'Times' critic was so kind about. That was smashed at the photographer's—mysteriously smashed."

Blake looked over with sudden interest.

"You did not tell me of this."

"I felt it too keenly to mention it to anyone," the young sculptor said.

"Besides, I thought it was an accident. Borset, the photographer, thought so. He believed that the piece was knocked over by the maid. She denied it, but he did not believe her. He made me that she was lying, and that he sacked her on the spot. Now I've changed my opinion," he added bitterly. "It was no accident, and the girl was not innocent. It was smashed purposely—purposefully!"

"By whom, for the love of reason?" Blake asked quickly.

"I cannot say. By someone who has a hatred for me and my work. What other explanation can there be, Mr. Blake? There is a conspiracy against me," he cried bitterly—"some senseless, malicious vendetta! I have a feeling now that it is useless to go on—that all my work will meet the same fate. Works of art are made to be seen, criticised, admired. They are made to be exhibited. One cannot shut them in a strong-room or lock them in a safe."

He looked up with a bitter smile.

"Am I to hand your portrait there over to the police?" He pointed to the marble bust of the detective which he had just completed. It stood upon a raised dais in the studio, set firmly upon a block of granite. Blake had seen the carving take gradual shape under the chisel of the sculptor, and had marvelled at the life and speaking likeness of the bust. It was the most perfect piece of portraiture in stone he had ever seen.

"That is not safe—I have a feeling, Mr. Blake, that it is not safe!"

Blake smiled and shook his head, trying to allay his fears.

"Nonsense! Surely you have no enemies so bitter as all that," he said.

"I have no enemies that I know of," Barker said.

"There is nobody whose hatred you have unwittingly inspired—nobody who might be likely to revenge himself in such a way!"

"Heaven forbid!" said Barker earnestly.

"Then I should not worry! The accident at the photographer's was probably an accident. The business at the Salon was probably the work of some political hot-head who concealed himself overnight in one of the chambers. These porters are not too

thorough in their inspections. They are hungry and want their dinners. Certainly the coincidence is a strange one. I can understand your alarm perfectly. But—"

He paused as the telephone bell rang sharply. Barker frowned and strode across the studio, snatching off the receiver.

"Well," he growled irritably, "and who are you? What? Mr. Who? Oh-h, yes! He is here. One moment, please?"

He turned, and Blake crossed to the phone.

"Yes—Blake speaking: What's that? What?" His face changed with great suddenness, and he barked the word into the receiver. Barker saw a shadow cross his gaunt features as he listened.

"I will come back at once," he said presently, in an even tone.

He put up the receiver and then picked up his hat deliberately.

"You are going?" queried the sculptor.

"If you'll pardon me, yes!"

"Nothing wrong, I hope!"

"There is always something wrong in my profession, Barker," he said; with a wry smile.

"Is it anything serious?"

"Blake shrugged his shoulders and put out his hand to say good-bye.

"I don't think it is exactly a matter of life and death," he said equivocally. He glanced over at the likeness of himself in marble. Blake nodded towards the bust. "When do you send that to Dover-Street?"

"To-morrow!"

"And the exhibition opens—"

"Friday—shall you be there?"

"In marble, certainly," Blake said smiling. "But, possibly, in the flesh. I am so certain to be recognised. Besides," he added, with a smile, "there is the clay sketch you gave me."

"Yes; I think I caught you better in the sketch model than in the finished article," Barker said. "There's life in that bit of work, Blake," he added, with a smile. "You must take care of that."

The eminent detective nodded and passed out into the darkness. His features were thoughtful and puzzled as he strode along the narrow, unlighted street. The parting words of the sculptor rung in his ears and brought a cynical smile to his thin lips.

"There's life in that bit of work, Blake!"

"I wish there were," the detective muttered. "It was a perfect piece of modelling. And now—I ought to have told him," he broke off. "I should have told him—Great Scott, but he was right after all, it seems, about a conspiracy. What the dickens does it all mean?"

Blake paused for a moment, with his eyes fixed intently upon the narrow street ahead. One of the street-lamps had gone out, plunging a track of some thirty yards into deep shadow, intensified by the wall on the right which skirted the gardens of a sombre terrace of tall houses. It seemed to the detective that a shadow, deeper than the rest, had flitted suddenly across the lane.

Blake moved into the middle of the roadway and strode on. He would have disregarded the shadow, but for the fact that he had seen it more than

once upon his visits to the sculptor's studio. On two previous occasions he had reached the house with the uneasy feeling that his movements had been watched—were being watched at that moment. From a concealed clip inside his sleeve he allowed a short length of thick rubber to slip down into his hand, and gripped it lightly as he walked.

A minute later he stopped again, and then ducked swiftly. Something sung through the darkness within an inch of his right cheek and crashed, with a sharp, metallic ring, upon the cobbles. A patch of deep shade disappeared from the summit of the wall, followed by a gentle thud on the other side.

Blake whirled round and was across the lane. His own lightning hand had been the subject of a night ambush of this kind. Blake drew out his handkerchief and lay it on the ground at his feet. Then, without noise, he moved forward into the garden, upon a silent tour of inspection. Ten minutes later he came back to the handkerchief and replaced it in his pocket. The search had yielded nothing visible or audible.

He stooped and withdrew a small pencil torch from his pocket, peering down at the soft earth at the foot of the wall. His own boots were clearly visible. Between them was another, smaller and less evident. But the imprint was clear enough for measurement, sharp enough to show faintly the slight indentations of crepe rubber.

Blake took out a folding rule and made a few quick measurements, noting them in the small diary he always carried. That done, he sprang again across the wall and searched this time in the lane. A frown appeared on his forehead as he stooped suddenly to pick up something which glittered in the light of his torch.

It was the blade of a small sharp hatchet, attached to a light handle of hickory, and Blake smiled grimly. It was a long time since he had seen an Indian tomahawk. This was of a handsome Sioux type, the handle richly embellished and the blade of tempered steel. It was the sort of weapon which was still carried, as an ornament, by the tame chiefs of the Indian reservation in the States.

A heavy tread came along the lane, and a tall, thickest figure loomed into view.

"Lost anything, sir?" said a gruff voice.

Blake blinked in the light of a bull's-eye, concealed the tomahawk dexterously and produced his pipe with admirable sleight-of-hand.

"No thanks, constable, I've found it now! Good-night!"

"Good-night!" grunted the policeman, gazing after him suspiciously.

Blake strode on quickly along the lane, hailing a taxi as soon as he emerged into civilisation. His face was pale and a little thoughtful as he settled down into the cab. He was not such a fool as to pretend that the incident had not disturbed him rather considerably. He had long since become reconciled to the likelihood of attack anywhere, and at any time. That was

ANSWERS

Every Saturday ... PRICE 2:

the price he paid for working in the interests of law and order.

But there was something in this sort of ambush which was unpleasant and disquieting.

Yet Blake's thoughts were not entirely of the man in the lane as the taxi bore him swiftly back to Baker Street. There was another matter which claimed his interest and attention more completely—something which had brought his landlady, Mrs. Bardell, to a pitch of agitation bordering upon hysteria.

The old lady's face was a study as she ran out to meet him in the hall.

"Thank Heaven you've come, sir!" she cried. "You know what's happened, don't you, Mister Blake? Tinker did tell you over the phone, didn't he?"

Blake nodded calmly. "He told me that the clay bust in the consulting-room, given to me by Mr.

A heavy tread came along the lane, and a tall, thick-set figure loomed into view. "Lost anything, sir?" said a gruff voice.



Blake looked over inquiringly. "Mrs. Bardell has told me about the bust, Bessie," he said. "It is very strange."

"I can't make it out, sir!" sobbed the maid wretchedly.

"You are sure you heard no sound of a crash?"

"I didn't hear anything, sir. I don't think I should have heard anything," the maid whimpered, "because the door was shut."

"You had no reason at all to go upstairs during Mrs. Bardell's absence?"

"Oh, no, sir! I just set here. Then, when I went up to lay the table— She began to sob violently, and Blake turned away with a frown.

Upstairs Tinker awaited him, a worried, puzzled expression upon his youthful face.

"I've examined every nook and corner of the place, guv'nor," he said.

"Every door and window. I can't find a trace of any kind of anyone having been here. But someone has been here for a certainty. It's a queer business, and no mistake! Do you see what's happened, guv'nor?"

He pointed to the tiled grate.

Inside the fender, littered over the hearth, were the smashed fragments of a clay bust which Blake had treasured for a work of genius. As he bent to peer at them, Tinker came over and stood beside him, gazing down ruefully.

"It's a queer business, isn't it, guv'nor?" he said again.

Blake nodded grimly. It was infinitely more queer than Tinker realised.

to help her during a bout of spring-cleaning.

"And where was Tinker?" asked Blake.

"Gone out for the paper, sir. He wasn't gone more than twenty minutes. It was in that twenty minutes that it happened."

"You are sure of that? The bust was all right when he left."

"Quite all right, sir. He'll tell you so himself, sir!"

"And where were you?" Blake asked.

"I popped out to get some parsley for the omelette, sir," Mrs. Bardell said. "I wasn't gone ten minutes."

"Where was the maid?"

"Bessie, sir?"

"Yes!"

"In the kitchen peeling the potatoes. She didn't move, Mr. Blake."

"And she heard no sound of a crash?" Blake asked.

"No sound at all, sir," the old lady declared.

Blake frowned and followed the house-keeper into the kitchen. A maid with a pale, freckled face, and ginger hair was crying quietly at the table, dabbing at her eyes with a small handkerchief.

"I was a bit cross with her," Mrs. Bardell muttered to the detective. "I was so upset, sir. I thought at first it must be her."

Barker, has been broken," he said grudgingly.

"Broke, sir? Did he say broke?" cried the old lady. "It ain't broke, sir—it's smashed, Mister Blake! That's the cruel pity of it, sir. It can't be mended with fish-glass, or anything like that, sir. It's smashed to batons. It ain't broke. Was it very valuable, sir?" she asked, in a tone which was almost pitiful.

"It was probably the most valuable piece of statuary I possess," Blake said ruefully. "How did it happen?"

"That's just what we can't make out, sir. It's all so mysterious, Mr. Blake. I never knew anything so inexplicable, I didn't really!"

"When did you discover that the bust was smashed?"

"Just after six, sir," Mrs. Bardell said. "Bessie went upstairs to lay for dinner, sir, and there it was lying smashed in the fireplace."

Bessie was the name of the maid whom Mrs. Bardell had just engaged

SRP

THE SECOND CHAPTER. A Queer Morning!



SEXTON BLAKE rose from the armchair in which he had been smoking thoughtfully for some time, talking at intervals in slow, deliberate fashion to his young assistant who sat opposite.

The detective, who wore the familiar and now shabby dressing-gown which had for years been inseparable from his idea of comfort and quiet musings, crossed the room to where his coat hung behind the door. From the pocket he withdrew the weapon which, a short time before, had come so perilously near to braining him, inspected it intently, and then passed it on to Tinker.

"It's rather an unpleasant implement, when you catch it in the base of the skull," he said grimly. "Look at it!"

Tinker's cheeks paled visibly as he took the ugly tomahawk and peered at it. He could handle any sort of pistol without emotion, but cold steel with such a sinister, deadly look as this always sent a little trickle of cold water along his vertebrae.

Blake had taken a heavy volume of the famous Baker Street "Index" from the bookcase, and began to turn the pages leisurely.

"Can you remember anyone who could use that tomahawk effectively?" Blake asked, without looking up.

"Yes, Jack Turkey!"

"That Redskin fellow, you mean, from Winnipeg?"

"Yes, guv'nor."

"He's dead," Blake said laconically.

"Hanged in the gaol at Ottawa, March 10th, 1916. Anyone else?"

Tinker looked into the fire musingly and shook his head.

"No," he said presently.

"What about Jake Withers?" the detective asked. "You remember the half-caste we rounded up for attacking a white woman in Oklahoma?"

Tinker nodded.

"He's still in Sing-Sing, guv'nor," he said, with confidence.

"You're wrong, my boy," Blake bent over the "Index" which was one of the most valuable documents in criminology, and compiled by the couple from various sources over a period of many years. "I've a later note than that. He was released for War service in 1918, and his sentence commuted after the Armistice. He came to London for the Rodoc."

"Is that so?"

"It is your own note, my lad. I should have thought you would have remembered. Should you imagine that Withers could throw a tomahawk?"

"He'd throw anything from a dice to a steer," Tinker said, with a grim smile. "He is a rough hand!"

"And he loved me like a brother!"

Blake said, with a wry smile.

"Like prussic acid?" said Tinker, amending the simile. "You don't imagine, guv'nor, that—"

"We can't afford to deal in imagination," the detective said quietly.

"But in this instance the line of inquiry is worth pursuing. These little attentions in dark alleys aren't pleasant. Will you cable to Bryant Kennedy?"

Bryant Kennedy was Blake's agent in New York, who often handled various inquiries for the London detective.

"Anybody else?" asked Tinker.

"Yes, Fox in Chicago," Blake said.

"Get all the information you can about Withers. I'll ring through myself to the Yard, and see if any report has come through about him."

He closed the volume and returned it to the case, recrossing the room and resuming his seat before the fire. He leaned forward and knocked out his pipe, his eyes fixed thoughtfully upon the fire.

"This other business has got me guessing, Tinker," he admitted presently.

"This bust being broken?"

"Yes."

"It's uncanny, guv'nor. That's what it is, uncanny," Tinker muttered.

"There's no coincidence about it now. It's—"

"I regard nothing as 'uncanny,'" Blake interrupted slowly. "In fact, I dislike the word intensely. A thing may be mysterious—difficult to explain, but uncanny—the word savours of superstition. You are convinced that this bust was broken during your absence?" he asked, looking up steadily into Tinker's face.

"Dead certain, guv'nor."

"And you have no reason to suspect that Mrs. Bardell or the maid are not telling you the absolute truth?"

"I am convinced that they are telling the truth," said Tinker emphatically.

"You say you thoroughly examined the chambers, and found no trace nor sign of anyone having effected an entry?" Blake pursued.

"You searched yourself, guv'nor," Tinker challenged. "Did you find any sign?"

"I did not. But I am cross-examining for the moment. Do you think it possible that anyone could have gained access to the flat in your absence?"

"It was next to impossible, guv'nor."

"And yet somebody appears to have achieved the impossible. How else could the damage have been done?"

"That's where it is so uncanny, guv'nor."

"You mean mysterious," corrected Blake.

"All right, then, guv'nor. Have it your own way—mysterious. But what are you going to do about it? Don't you think Mr. Barker ought to know?"

"He'll have to know," Blake said with a frown. "It will be an unpleasant job to break the news. He valued this piece

of mine, I believe, more than anything else he has done. But he's got to know. I suppose I'd better tell him now."

He reached for the telephone and called the number, glancing across at Tinker somewhat ruefully.

For some time he waited patiently. Then he jiggled the receiver irritably.

"I'm trying to get them, sir," the Exchange girl said crossly.

For two more minutes Blake waited, and at last the Exchange came through again.

"Um, sorry, sir; the line is out of order."

"Out of order? But it was quite clear a short time ago. I spoke from that end myself. What's the trouble?"

"I can't say, sir. There's a fault on the line somewhere. We can get no reply from the subscriber. And there is an intermittent signalling on the switch."

Blake frowned, and put up the receiver.

"Confound it! That means another journey. What do you make the time?"

"Nine o'clock, guv'nor. Mr. Barker would not stay at the studio, would he, so late as this?"

"Possibly not," Blake had paused undecidedly. "The chances are that I shall find he has gone out. Perhaps I'd better leave it till the morning. Did anything come for me by messenger this evening, by the way?" he asked.

"Yes, guv'nor, a small packet from the Home Office."

"A small sealed tube containing fibre?"

"I believe so, guv'nor. I locked it away in the laboratory."

"That's right. It's something relating to the Lawfield murder. I promised Inspector Hall to analyse something for him and give him a report. I'll do it now."

He rose and crossed to the laboratory, remaining there absorbed in his experiments until close on midnight.

His notes complete, he came out and locked the door behind him, making the usual inspection of the rooms before he passed into his own bed-room and went to bed.

He awoke suddenly an hour later and sprang from the bed, his heart beating more quickly than usual. Somebody was battering upon the knocker of the front door below.

He threw on his dressing-gown and drew on his slippers quickly, seizing a torch as he hurried to the stairs.

Through the skylight over the door he saw the reflected glimmer of a light. Under the porch two uniformed policemen stood—a constable and a sergeant, as he saw when he opened the door.

"I'm sorry to disturb you, sir," the sergeant said. "Are you Mr. Sexton Blake, the detective?"

"I shouldn't have thought you needed to ask that question, Fry?" said Blake. For he knew the sergeant well.

"A formal question, sir," said the sergeant. "Have you got a gentleman here to-night by name of Mr. Cedric Barker?"

"Barker? Good heavens, no! He is not here. Why?"

"Has he been here, sir?" the sergeant pursued.

"No. I left him at his studio in Walford Court a little before seven last evening. Is anything the matter?"

"And you haven't seen him since then, sir?"

"No."

"He ain't been here?"

"I've told you he has not. Why are you inquiring? Has anything happened?"

Finest Cuppie Story written!



"L.S. DEE"
The Boy
with the
Brass!

You can read this stirring Cuppie yarn complete in this week's SPORTS BUDGET. Don't miss it! This fine football paper is packed with topping Cuppie articles and pictures. Ask for

SPORTS BUDGET

On Sale Thursday, March 4th. 2d.

"Thank you, Mr. Blake, that's all I wanted to know, sir," said the sergeant, ignoring the question. "Good-night!"

He touched his helmet, and led the way down the steps, followed by the policeman. Blake watched them hurry into the darkness of Baker Street. He did not wish to pry the sergeant with questions if he was unwilling to answer. The man, he knew, was one of the unimaginative pillars of the force to whom orders were orders, and nothing more nor less. It was not Blake's business nor desire to disentangle him, even for a few minutes, from the stranglehold of red tape and "Instructions to officers."

But he turned thoughtfully back into the hall and remounted the stairs with a frown.

Why had the police come to him in the middle of the night to make inquiries for Barker? What had happened? He paused abruptly at the head of the stairs as a sudden disturbing thought struck him.

Could it be that something had occurred at the studio of which the police were as yet unaware—that the police were searching for him to tell him? Had the studio been broken into? Had still another dastardly assault been made upon Cedric Barker's work?

The thought drew a low whistle of apprehension from between Blake's teeth. Entering his bed-room he paused, half-persuaded to dress and go to Walford Court straight away. He decided eventually to go to bed.

If some police officers whom he did not know were in possession of the place he might be denied admission. In any case there was little that could be done until daylight.

Better, perhaps, to go round first thing in the morning.

He slept, waking again soon after it was light, rising immediately. Tinker was already up, and was surprised to learn that there had been a midnight caller.

Blake smiled grimly as he shaved. "I'm afraid you do not compare with Pedro for a watchdog, my lad," he said. "You had better slip out quick and get some papers. I'm rather curious to see them."

He had completed his toilet when Tinker returned with a sheaf of newspapers. His glowing face showed a trace of disappointment.

"All quiet on the Barker front, guv'nor," he said. "No liveliness at all."

"There is no news?"

"No news in that direction—only a paragraph on the third page about the bust of Mussolini, smashed in Paris."

Blake took the paper and scanned it quickly. It was black with stunt headlines, but the news was unimportant. He turned to the stop-press column, and then stiffened. He folded the paper over almost feverishly. A queer expression sprang into his eyes.

"My Heaven!" he gasped. "Did you not see this?"

"What, guv'nor?" Tinker cried, springing forward eagerly.

Blake did not answer. His eyes devoured the brief lines of stop-press news avidly. The headline ran:

"Tragedy at London Studio. Well-known sculptor concerned."

The paragraph ran on:

"The police are at present investigating a mystery which will cause an inevitable stir in London artistic circles. Last evening at nine o'clock a cleaner who has access to the studio of Mr. Cedric Barker, the well-known sculptor,

summoned the police in a state of fear and agitation.

"Entering the studio, she had stumbled upon the form of a woman who lay upon the floor of the studio, apparently asleep. A brief inspection, however, revealed the fact that she was dead, and a small automatic pistol lay on the carpet near by.

"There is at present no clue to the identity of the dead woman, and suicide is not suspected.

"It is stated that Mr. Barker, the sculptor, was seen to leave the studio shortly after nine o'clock. It has been his practice, during the last week, to return late and sleep in the studio. Last night he did not return, and no trace could be found of him.

"Scotland Yard have been communicated with, and the investigation is in the hands of Detective-Inspector Galloway, who is one of the youngest men of his rank in the C.I.D., and who will be remembered for his brilliant work in the affair of the Preston Forgeries."

A low whistle escaped Blake as he put down the paper—which Tinker eagerly took up.

At that moment the door opened, and Mrs. Bardell appeared, in somewhat chastened mood, carrying a tray which supported the inevitable eggs and bacon.

She put down the tray and glanced with a hint of depression at the grey mist which enveloped Baker Street and the rest of the long-suffering metropolis.

"A queer morning, sir," she said.

"I am afraid it is," said Sexton Blake deliberately.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

It's Pretty Plain, isn't it?"



WALFORD COURT, the narrow cobbled lane in which Cedric Barker had his studio, was the sort of cul-de-sac which made it fairly easy for the police to keep at a distance the inevitable crowd of rubber-necks who, at the first rumour of sensation, assembled about the scene of the tragedy, staring at the doors and windows, and thrilling at the sight of a police-officer entering or leaving.

The luckier early comers had experienced the morbid thrill of seeing something inert and shrouded borne out upon a stretcher and carried away by a police ambulance to the mortuary.

By the time Sexton Blake arrived all the lineal descendants of the historic Nosesy Parker had been shoved and shooed along the lane by two mounted policemen, and had to be content with a stand at the end of the alley.

A murmur ran through the crowd as Sexton Blake and Tinker elbowed forward and were allowed to pass on along the court. A plain-clothes man, with whom Blake had shared a good many adventures in the last ten years, stood at the open door of the studio, and nodded a friendly greeting. He was one of the old school who had long since discarded any prejudice he might have had against Blake as a private investigator.

"I was expecting you along, Mr. Blake," he said. "This is rather a rum business."

COUPONS

in this and other U. J. issues can be cut from the paper without mutilating reading matter.

"It is, indeed, Whipps!"

"And his you very close, I believe," the Yard man said.

"I'm afraid so. Mr. Barker and I were personal friends."

"So I understand. You were with him last night, I believe?"

Blake nodded.

"I was here—at the studio. I have been in and out of here a good deal of late. I have been sitting for a portrait."

The plain-clothes man nodded, and then looked at Blake keenly.

"You knew a fair amount about the gent, I suppose?" he said.

"Not a great deal—a fair amount, perhaps, as you say."

"This must have come as a shock, Mr. Blake."

"It did."

"And a surprise, eh?" said Whipps, looking at Blake significantly.

Blake saw the purport of the question. He met the gaze of the Yard man steadily.

"An utter surprise, Whipps. There is nothing I know which sheds the least light upon it. I tell you that frankly. But Mr. Barker will clear the matter up, no doubt. Have you got in touch with him yet?"

"No," said Whipps briefly.

"He was not at his rooms?"

"Nope."

"Or his club?"

Whipps shook his head.

"We can't find him, Mr. Blake. We are beginning to assume," he added dryly, "that he wants to keep out of our way."

"Nonsense! I can't think that, Whipps. He will arrive soon—or you will get a message of some sort. He is essentially a man of moods—and something of a bird of passage. He might easily have taken it into his head to go to Paris last evening. There has been a mishap to one of his exhibits in the Salon which might easily urge him to go there."

"H'm-m!" said Whipps.

Blake frowned, and glanced through the open door of the studio.

"May I go in?"

The Yard man hesitated and looked uneasy. He had not the usual air of cordiality.

"The body has been removed," he said.

"So I understand," Blake muttered. "It is a pity."

Whipps shrugged his shoulders.

"You know who is in charge of the case?" he said.

"Yes, Galloway."

"That's right. The hustler. He likes to get busy while the clues are warm. Nothing has been touched except the body. The position has been carefully chalked out. I've got strict instructions not to admit anyone on any pretext."

"Not even me, Whipps?"

The Yard man fidgeted.

"It isn't usual to exclude you, Mr. Blake, I know that well enough. But Inspector Galloway—"

"Is not kindly disposed towards me."

"I wouldn't say that. He likes to run his cases in his own way, and since the Preston Forgeries affair, the chief

seems inclined to—to give him his head."

Blake thought "Confound Galloway!" but he did not say it. He said doggedly:

"I'd like to have a glance round. May I?"

"I'll have to get permission. Look here," he added quickly. "There's a phone inside. I'll ring on that. While I'm ringing I sha'n't see what you're doing. Do you get me? I can trust you not to disturb anything."

Blake nodded. He knew that a word over the phone with the commissioner would have secured immediate permission—might even secure a small "cough-drop" for Inspector Galloway. But it was Blake's policy not to cross any officer if it could be avoided. Their goodwill was too important.

Detective Whipps entered the studio and went to the telephone. Blake and Tinker followed. And a grunt broke from Blake as he passed through the curtain. Lying on the floor of the studio, broken in three pieces, lay the marble bust of himself which had been destined for the exhibition in Dover Street.

A heavy sculptor's mallet, which looked as if it had done the damage, lay amid the debris. Blake surveyed the smashed bust with an expression of profound dismay. The sight of it was depressing in itself, but infinitely more depressing in the light of the tragedy which had happened overnight. An unpleasant theory forced itself immediately into his mind—a possibility which sent an unpleasant trickle down his spine.

The rug near the fireplace had an ugly patch of dark, brownish-red, and was outlined by a chalk-mark showing exactly where the body of the unknown woman had been found.

A few yards away lay an automatic-pistol, which Blake went upon his knees to inspect. The butt was set with a little mother-of-pearl monogram, the initials entwined neatly, "C. B."

A swift, comprehensive glance all round the studio revealed nothing particularly noticeable. There seemed to be no particular sign of a struggle.

Detective Whipps, who had been talking in a low tone, said "Very good, sir!" and put up the receiver with a snap. His expression was apologetic as he turned to Blake.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Blake," he said. Blake frowned.

"I am not to be allowed?" he queried.

"Inspector Galloway would prefer to conduct his own investigation for the present."

"Thanks," said Blake curtly. "Then I will go!"

Detective Whipps looked a little crestfallen. He stepped over and put his hand upon Blake's arm.

"I'm sorry. It would not be my order—you know that, Mr. Blake. But I must take instructions."

"Exactly! I understand that perfectly, Whipps," Blake said, with a quick smile. "It's quite all right."

"You've had a glance round, anyway, Mr. Blake."

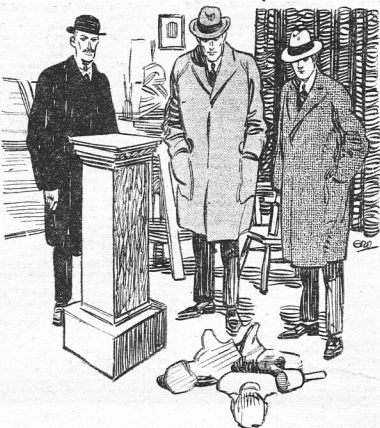
"Thanks to you—yes. I have seen a great deal."

"What do you think of it?"

"I would not care to say—not yet."

He moved to the curtain, but the Yard man detained him for a moment, his ruddy features eager, his keen eyes very bright.

"Just a minute, Mr. Blake. I'm nothing in this case. I'm on point duty, as you might say. I fetch and carry—I'm not paid to think. But I've been thinking all the same," he muttered,



Lying on the floor of the studio, broken in three pieces, Blake saw the marble bust of himself which had been destined for the exhibition in Dover Street. A heavy sculptor's mallet, which looked as if it had done the damage, lay amid the debris.

"and I've got my own ideas. Do you see that?"

He pointed to the smashed bust. Blake nodded.

"There's the solution, if you ask me," he said:

"In what way? How do you mean, Whipps?" Blake asked, with a trace of uneasiness in his manner.

"I read the papers, Mr. Blake, and I've been making a few quiet enquiries on my own. It's part of our job to put two and two together. There's somebody been going round smashing up this fellow's work."

"What makes you think that, Whipps?"

"Facts. He's had a bust smashed up in Paris, hasn't he? A bust of Mussolini, or somebody. It was in the paper."

"Well?"

"And another piece of work smashed at Borner's, the photographer's."

"How do you know that?" Blake asked sharply.

"A bird whispered. He told a neighbour, and he told me. That's two things, which makes you wonder a bit. And now that's the third."

He pointed dramatically at the shattered carving, and looked up into Blake's face challengingly. The investigator's face was mask-like.

"And what do you deduce from all this?" he asked.

"A theory which I'm keeping to myself until the time comes. The woman we found here is the culprit. It's she

who has been round smashing up his work. Spite, or jealousy or something. It's the sort of thing a woman would do. In the end she came here and smashed up that one. And he caught her in the act."

"Well?"

"It's pretty plain, isn't it? What would you do? What would anyone feel like?"

"Not like murder, I hope, Whipps," Blake said coldly.

"Perhaps not; but men differ. He might have flown into a passion. Anything might happen after that. She might have taunted him, laughed in his face—I know what they can be like. They can make a man see red."

Blake's face was unchanged and his manner unmoved. He did not betray by any movement the uneasiness in his mind.

"And you think this sufficient provocation for a decent man to murder a woman in cold blood? Is that what you suggest, Whipps?"

The Yard man shrugged his broad shoulders and followed Blake and Tinker out again into the cobbled court.

"I'm not suggesting anything, Mr. Blake, against your friend. I'm not saying anything. But I can think what I like. The only snag of it," he added dryly, "is that, if I know anything of Inspector Galloway, he'll think the self-same thing."

It was with that same uneasy conviction that Blake went away.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Converging Clues.

The flight from Croydon to the aerodrome at Chantilly, on the outskirts of Paris, had been too billowy and cold to be pleasant, and more than once the mind of Sexton Blake had reverted wistfully to the comfort of a first-class compartment in the express which they had glimpsed once as it fled

below, southward, to the Gare du Nord. But time was the essence of the trip—a fact which seemed to be appreciated by the taxi-driver, who, without any stimulus from Blake, fled wildly through the traffic, hurtled across the Place de la Concorde, and, by the grace of providence, set the detective down intact outside a small brasserie near the Place de l'Opera.

Blake's resolve to come to Paris had been a sudden one, and his decision to leave his assistant in London a source of keen disappointment to Tinker.

What increased Tinker's chagrin was that his master did not make it at all clear what was the motive of his visit. But the lad remembered what Blake had said to Detective-Sergeant Whipps in the studio.

"Do you think you will find Barker in Paris, guv'nor?" he had ventured to ask as he leaned out of the car at Croydon.

"I have not the slightest hope of seeing him there," Blake said tersely.

"Why not, guv'nor?"

Tinker stared, open-mouthed.

"Because I don't for a moment suspect that he is in Paris."

Tinker coughed and looked a little crestfallen. His master was in what Mrs. Bardwell was wont to call "one of them awkward moods, my dear. You know—cantankerous."

"I imagined," said Tinker apologetically, "from what you said to Sergeant Whipps that—"

"What I said to Sergeant Whipps is neither here nor there," said Blake, rather curtly. "You will remember what I have told you, won't you, my lad?"

"I will, guv'nor. I'm to stand by at Baker Street and wait word from you."

"That's right. I may be wiring instructions which I shall need carried out without delay. Also, I want you to keep me posted with every development, important or otherwise. Whipps will tell you what is happening. If you can't see him, ring Harker at headquarters. It is essential that I shall know promptly and continually what is happening over here."

"I'll see to that, guv'nor."

"Above all, if Mr. Barker appears or is traced, if any clue whatever is found as to his whereabouts, I want to know at once. A wire will not do. You must telephone."

"Very good, guv'nor; it shall be done."

Tinker had watched the plane rise and climb southwards before he had turned the nose of the Grey Panther back towards London.

And there was some justification for the slight pique with which he did so. Blake's mood had not been of the pleasant since that interview with Whipps at the studio, nor was it improved by the air journey across the Channel.

But it was not, as Tinker suspected, the uncompromising attitude of Inspector Galloway which caused his irritation. It was rooted in something much deeper

than that. It had settled upon him first when he saw the smashed bust of marble on the floor of the studio, and it had increased considerably during Sergeant Whipps' exposition of his theory.

It was obvious that Blake grew logical and obvious that Blake grew annoyed. He could see a number of important and undeniable facts being woven together to form a rope round the neck of a man whom he had admired and esteemed. He could see the evidence against Cedric Barker growing more and more ominous. It seemed to roll up and around him like a black cloud, which grew more sombre with every moment that the man himself was missing.

Where was he? Why had the fellow not come forward? Blake's uneasiness grew more marked as he mused upon it. He felt himself powerless at the moment to stem the tide. Not that he believed for a moment Barker to be guilty of murder in cold blood, or even passion. He was a man of temperament, but also of character and self-control.

Yet Sexton Blake, the famous investigator, the ruthless logician and dealer in facts, found himself in the position of the loyal friend who shuts his eyes to those selfsame facts and builds conviction upon the sandy basis of mere sentiment. All he could say, even to himself, was: "I am convinced of his innocence," knowing all the while that such things as had been discovered up till now pointed directly to his guilt.

And Blake had not failed to review the matter carefully. He had probed, almost greedily, for any other theory to explain this mystery away. There was the thesis of suicide. It might have been that this unknown woman had gained access to the flat, and had shot herself after having destroyed the marble bust. But this theory was negated in three vital ways. They were:

1. She had died, apparently, from a shot fired out of Barker's own revolver.

2. The doctor who held the post-mortem had declared emphatically against suicide, saying that the bullet had been fired from a distance of at least four feet.

3. If it were a case of suicide, done without the knowledge of the sculptor, why was he nowhere to be found? What possible reason would he have had for disappearing, except to escape a scandal? Also, the scandal of such an affair would not compare with that which now surrounded his name as a suspected murderer. His disappearance was the most damning point against him.

The theory of suicide Blake held to be untenable, even without the information which had been volunteered in the morning by a young woman named Teresa Parr, who was employed as an occasional model by an artist named Fletcher, occupying the studio at the end of the court.

That information had given Sexton Blake as much pain as it had given satisfaction to the police. Miss Parr's story was briefly this:

A little before nine she left Mr. Fletcher's studio for home, and on passing by No. 9 she was attracted by the sound of an altercation, or what seemed to be an altercation, inside. She might not have noticed but for the fact that the lane was quiet and deserted, and that the owners of the other studios near by seemed to be out. No. 9 was the only one, except Mr. Fletcher's, where there was a light.

She could not hear what was said, but heard a woman's voice, raised in a shrill way, several times. She also heard a man's voice, sharp and angry.

She did not pay a great deal of attention to the matter. She did not know the occupants of No. 9, and took the

affair to be an ordinary domestic quarrel. At the end of the lane, however, she was arrested by the sound of what seemed to be a revolver-shot. It came from the direction of the house, and she waited, rather frightened.

She would put the precise time of the shot at five minutes to nine. Yes, she was confident of that fact, as she glanced at her watch a few seconds later. She knew her watch was right, because she set it by Mr. Fletcher's car clock, which he kept regulated by the "wireless."

The artist's model deposed to waiting about ten minutes at the end of Walford Court. She had an uneasy feeling that something tragic had happened. She was about to move on when she saw a man come quickly out of No. 9 studio and close the door quietly behind him.

He had hurried along the lane, and she stepped back into a gateway at the end. He was running as he passed her, and she could not see his face. But he was a tall, slim man, wearing a dark brown coat and a broad-brimmed felt hat which almost hid his features. He wore either wood-cloth boots or was wearing spats. She could not say which. That was at five or ten minutes after nine.

This was the vital information volunteered to the police by the girl, whose mother testified to having heard the whole story from her daughter the previous evening. The gist of her statement was read over the phone by Harker of the Yard to Blake before he left.

If any information were required to convict Cedric Barker in the eyes of an ordinary jury, then Teresa Parr supplied it. She was an ordinary honest witness, a frightened girl making a voluntary statement of what she had seen and heard in the interests of common justice.

The facts were sombre and formidable. There could be no doubt of that. But the very number of them stirred Blake as he had not been stirred for a long time, into a grim activity.

He believed in Barker's innocence. It was, at the moment, a belief based merely upon his judgment of the sculptor's character. But he was grimly determined to unearth, if it were possible, some facts in Barker's favour. He became, for the time being, an advocate, as well as an investigator.

The task was made infinitely more difficult by Inspector Galloway's edict about the studio. A closer and minute scrutiny there might have revealed a lot. But, being denied access, Blake resorted to leave, for once, his favourite path of investigation—the one which concerned itself with marks, and prints, and measurements, and the mute evidence of inanimate things.

He would take the ordinary police line for once, and apply himself to the personal side of the mystery.

It was with that object that he came to Paris—with that object that he left the brasserie after a short interval for light refreshment, and made his way to the office of the secretary of the salon in which poor Barker's delicate bust of the Italian premier had met its mysterious fate.

Monsieur Lemaitre received Blake courteously, and paled when the detective described briefly what had happened.

"Mon Dieu! But this is terrible, M'sieu Blake. Surely, it is not possible that M. Barker—"

"The case is young yet, M. Lemaitre," Blake said. "I am hoping to clear things up and to free his name from all suspicion. But time is limited, and perhaps you will forgive me if I ask only a few brief questions."

"But certainly. I will do all in my power, M. Blake. In what way do you think I can help?"

Blake proceeded to question him in detail regarding the destruction of the bust, and the facts, according to the secretary of the salon, were as recorded in the newspapers.

There was no question about the bust being intact at the close of the salon. At ten o'clock the next morning he was summoned by the caretaker, Monteil, who was pale and agitated. The man had been closely questioned by the police and had given them all the information he could. Monteil was very upset by the affair—chiefly because the question of his dismissal was under consideration by the committee of the salon.

"Why should they consider his dismissal?" Blake asked. "Do they think he may have been the culprit?"

M. Lemaire shook his head.

"Oh, no; they do not charge him with that. What object could he have, M. Blake—what possible motive? No, one does not go so far as that. But he was not entirely truthful to me when I questioned him. Under pressure by the police he admitted to a certain negligence of duty."

"In what respect, m'sieu?"

"He did not make a complete and thorough inspection of the rooms before leaving. It was possible, you understand, for someone to have remained concealed there during the night."

"I see! And possible for them to have effected an exit from the salon after the damage had been done?" Blake queried.

"Not until the morning, m'sieu."

"It was possible in the morning?"

"The police are of that opinion. Monteil, it appears, unlocked the door, and left it open while he went below to attend to the boiler in the basement. In that time the man could have escaped without difficulty. But there is Monteil," he added, peering from the window of his small office. "If you wish I will call him in."

"Let him rest," said Blake quietly, rising and peering at the caretaker closely. "The police have probably worried him enough. I am much obliged, M'sieu Lemaire. You have told me all I wished to know."

Blake left the salon thoughtfully and hailed another taxi, which hurried him for a few francs through a maze of traffic to Montmartre. Upon more than one occasion Cedric Barker, during the sittings at the studio, had spoken disrespectfully of his student days in Paris. They were rather wild and hilarious days, Blake imagined, in which Barker had wooed his art in rather a desultory way.

"I'm afraid we nearly broke the heart of old Pere Leduc," he told Blake once, with a smile. "We were a mad set—a lot of impetuous young fools. Pere was the very soul of patience, too. The finest teacher in Europe, they said in Paris. He would have been famous but for absinthe."

It was to the shabby studio of the old art master, Pere Leduc, that Blake now repaired. He found him bent almost double over a table, by a wretched electric light, working upon an etching of Notre Dame which clothed the famous cathedral with an atmosphere worthy of Whistler. It was the work of a master, but the old man would never complete it. The plate would go, with a score of others, into a box, and be forgotten. For Pere Leduc only etched when he was depressed, and he was only de-

pressed when he was completely sober. That, unfortunately, was not often.

He received Blake courteously, but without enthusiasm. But he thawed at the mention of the sculptor, and his old eyes grew bright.

"One of my pupils, m'sieu," he said with pride. "A boy with genius. I knew it. He had but to settle down—to apply himself to his work. I told him so a thousand times."

"You found him a little difficult at times, I understand?" Blake said, with a smile. "To keep him to his art, I mean."

"I am afraid I did," the old man smiled. "I have had some wild ones, but Barker—ah, he was—what do you say?—mad as a hat-maker. Do you know that for a whole year he did not touch a brush or a chisel. He had no money. He had overdrawn his allowance, was in debt, could not even buy food, so—stay, I am talking indiscreetly. Are you a journalist, m'sieu?"

Blake shook his head emphatically.

"You are not a novelist, or para-

TO NEW READERS

Facing this page is the **Detective Supplement**, a regular and deservedly popular feature of this paper.

It deals with all the many and various aspects of police and detective work throughout the world in a popular and interesting way, and records matters of fact as distinct from the fiction which forms the main contents of the paper.

Articles on criminology from every angle are interspersed with real life stories of great crime, and with others in lighter vein. The page numbers run on consecutively week by week, and at the end of each year the separate parts can be bound up in special binding cases at a cheap rate.

Most regular readers do this. They know what splendid volumes these accumulated Supplements make. You should do the same, and always

SAVE YOUR SUPPLEMENTS.

graphist, who wishes to make money out of what I am telling you? If I thought that—"

"You can rest assured that what you tell me will go no farther, M'sieu Leduc," Blake said quietly.

The old man peered at the detective searchingly, and then went on, as if satisfied with his word:

"The boy was hard up, m'sieu. What he used to say 'stompybrok.' And he gave up his work to dance. What do you say of that? Him, an artist born, gave up his work to dance in the cabarets!"

"Not professionally?" Blake exclaimed, astonished.

"Professionally," said the old man, with a rueful smile. "Mark you, he had the gift, the sense of rhythm, just as you see it now in his work. The poise, the perfect balance and physique. It was beautiful to watch. It was poetry to watch him, though it used to give me a headache, all the same. He called himself M. Bakaloff, and used to speak in bad Russian to his partner. It was too droll, m'sieu. Yet the people rose at him, and at Nita."

"Who was Nita?" Blake asked quietly.

"Nita Verlieff. She was his partner. It was she who drew him away from his art. The boys would not have it, but I know. She was madly in love with him. I could see it, even when they were dancing. There was a whisper that they were engaged. She boasted openly one night in the Blue Cabaret that they were to be married, that they had been offered a big contract to dance in New York, and afterwards in Vienna. I saw Cedric the next morning," the old man went on, "and implored him to consider what he was doing. It hurt him, I think, to see me weep. He grew changed almost from that moment."

"Pere," he said, "I have not promised marriage to Nita. I know nothing of any contracts. I have danced for fun—to get money for food. I can see now that I have gone too far. I cannot remain in Paris. I shall return to London to-morrow."

"And he went?" Blake queried.

"He went, m'sieu!"

"Severing his connection with Nita Verlieff?"

"I believe so. It was a bitter blow to her. You see, I think she loved him in her wild way. And she hated me. Oh, how she hated me! But, of course, it was impossible for things to go on. The boys told her so. Even at the cabaret they admitted it, although the loss to them was great. Old Blancbec told her the same thing—after he had gone."

"Who is Blancbec?"

"He calls himself her godfather. He keeps the Cafe Moulin. He did well when Nita was dancing at the Blue Cabaret. The boys all flocked to him. In the cafe now you may see a portrait of her and Barker—or, I should say, of Bakaloff and Verlieff," he added, with a smile.

The old man referred to the photograph as an afterthought, but it was an afterthought which saved Blake the necessity of putting a question which he was afraid might raise some suspicion in Pere Leduc's mind.

Up till now Blake's questions and inquiries had been of a merely general kind. To inquire precisely what sort of a woman was Nita Verlieff—to ask for a description of her height and build and features would have been to give the impression of cross-questioning.

Possibly the photograph in the Cafe Moulin would supply all the information in that way he needed.

Blake wished, on his way from the studio of the old art master, that he had insisted before he left London on the privilege of visiting the mortuary. Barker, however, always willing to be helpful, had furnished him with a fairly precise description. He withdrew a note from his pocket and studied it.

Height five-feet-two; slim, but well proportioned. Hair, chestnut. Eyes, a light grey and rather striking. Profile regular; but lips thin and a little cruel. Wearing on engagement finger a narrow gold ring set with a single opal.

Blake read the description through carefully and put the note away. The basement cafe, known as the Mill Cafe, lay in a narrow street in the rear of the Rue Bergere, the home of the famous theatre Folies Bergeres. Blake descended with the tentative air of a sightseer, greatly daring, and called for vermouth-and-soda in deliberately bad French.

"Certainly, sir!" said the proprietor in perfect English. "A dash of bitters, sir?"

(Continued on page 17.)

The U. S. J. DETECTIVE SUPPLEMENT

VOLUME 4.
No. 10. Week ending
March 6th, 1926.

Rasputin!

The little-known story of the traitorous mock monk who practised his amazing impostures under the cloak



of religion, and used German gold to drag the glory of pre-war Russia down to chaos and confusion.

IN a big, gloomy house in St. Petersburg, with many empty rooms, and deep, dark cellars, where none but the occupant had ever penetrated, lived the most sinister and mysterious figure the modern world has ever known—the mock monk, Rasputin.

Rasputin! Mystery, intrigue, superstition, espionage, treachery, immorality, debauchery—these are the things his name means to those who know something of the man and the harm he wrought in the world.

The house was a dreary-looking structure, uninviting, gloomy, inhospitable; but the few rooms tenanted by this mystic monk were in marked contrast to the sombreness of the rest of the house.

The "study"—that room made famous for all time by the orgies carried on within its walls—was most luxuriously furnished, with rich carpets and deep divans and chairs upholstered in silk tapestry.

Study! It is difficult to associate the word with its uncouth, ignorant occupant, whose "studies" consisted merely of secret intrigue against the country he professed to serve.

The luxury of the dining-room, too, was well in keeping with it, and if the monk's bed-room was rather on the Spartan side as regards its furniture, its occupant more than made up for the deficiency by the riotous luxury in the other apartments. Rasputin resembled, in fact, according to one who was personally acquainted with him, a pig in Paradise.

If those walls and those couches could only speak, what tales they would have to tell—tales so wild and unbelievable and so out of keeping with the "saint's" pose as "the messenger of God," that one is forced to wonder how on earth his dupes could have been so blind to the idol's real character, and how such a palpable fraud could have so hypnotised Russian society that he made himself for some years the virtual ruler of the country.

Gregory Novikh, as he was known before the Russian populace gave him

the nickname of Rasputin, was a peasant—dirty, uncouth, and illiterate; unwashed, uncombed, and with teeth so filthy and so black as to be guiltless of any acquaintance with a tooth-brush, and with thick red, sensuous lips.

The eyes and the mouth were the only visible portions of his face. The rest was hidden by the long, thick, matted beard. His speech has been described by one of his contemporaries as a combination of cleverly veiled ignorance, insolence, and obscenity.

Yet there was a potency in the pseudo monk's impressive, slightly hoarse, but silky obsequious voice; in his small, deep-set, black eyes, with their weird, hypnotic stare; and in his manner of mock humility and piety, which served to mask his colossal self-assurance; a potency so enthralling that he could draw to his side not only the majority of the women of the Russian Court, from the Empress downwards, but men also, men of high standing and social influence.

RASPUTIN first came into notice just previous to the World War. Where he came from none knew. His birth and boyhood have remained wrapped in mystery to this day; but his rise to fame was as sudden as it was amazing.

Russia had suddenly become seething with rumours of a new religion, the religion of one Rasputin, a holy man, who was going about the country working miracles.

Who was he? Where did he come from? None knew.

There was none to answer the questions, and the mystery thus surrounding him was the impostor's first great asset. Mystery is always intriguing, and this, together with the new emotional quality which Rasputin introduced into the new religious cult he was forming, brought him letters from some hundreds of women.

A series of meetings, or seances, was started, to which Rasputin invited those he elected to be his "sister disciples."

From the very first these seances were an enormous attraction.

In spite of his uncouthness and ignorance, and his general dirty appearance, Rasputin was possessed of that mysterious fascination for women that has been the great asset of such men as Landru, Smith of the Brides in the Bath fame, and others.

This fascination is very difficult to define, and quite unappreciable to those who have not come under its spell, but it is an undisputed fact that Rasputin possessed this marvellous power, and the competition among women to become members of the select circle with which the monk soon surrounded himself was amazingly keen.

By the aid of a few confederates and large sums of money, the new "holy man" was able to perform miracles that appeared to the superstitious of the Russians, nothing short of divine.

It was whispered that Rasputin was a secret agent of Germany, working to aid the Kaiser against Russia, but no one of his followers gave credence to the rumour. It was stated that he had been in prison for some years, convicted of horse-stealing and of immorality. It was even discovered that Rasputin was not a monk at all, never having been ordained; and the Greek Orthodox Church repudiated all knowledge of him.

Yet all these charges only served to fan the flame of adoration for the holy humbug, who became thereby somewhat of a martyr in the minds of his satellites.

"I have been sent by the Almighty to save Russia," preached Rasputin; and he was forthwith dubbed "The Saviour of Russia." Other titles were given him by the mob of excited, hysterical adherents to the new religion, and still others he donated himself. Among them were "The Messenger of God," "The Hope of the World," "The Scourge of God," "The Black Monk," "Rasputin the Black," and, most common title of all to his immediate followers: "The Father."



The end of the chapter: Two Russian soldiers playing funeral airs over the rough grave of Rasputin. [Photo: Illuz. Bureau.]

As time went on it became general knowledge that the Russian Prime Minister, Sturmer, was a supporter of the new prophet, and soon after this the Empress herself expressed a wish to become acquainted with the holy man of whom she had heard such wonderful stories.

According to reports which have come to light since the Revolution in Russia and the annihilation of the Romanoff family, it was by means of a fake miracle that Rasputin first made an impression on the Empress, an impression that was to last until the day of his death.

THE monk monk had been presented to her Majesty, and had made one of his usual hypocritical speeches, something like this: "O, gracious lady, I am but a poor, ignorant pilgrim, doing God's will, and my sphere is not in the palaces of the great but in the cottages of the poor. Yet I have come here at thy behest." The tone of humility, the husky, alluring voice, and the compelling glance of those impressive eyes were not lost upon the Tsarina.

She became deeply interested. In the conversation which followed, mention was made of the young Tsarevitch.

The little heir to the throne, who was the apple of his mother's eye, was a delicate lad, and was always more or less ailing. Just then the boy was in very good health, and seemed to be outgrowing his weakness. Nevertheless, announced Rasputin in an authoritative voice, although the lad was well now, he would fall ill again in a few days' time.

This prophecy came true. Before the week was out the Tsarevitch was taken seriously ill.

In her anxiety the Empress sent for Rasputin. He came to the palace and offered to do what he could. After spending some time in deep prayer over the boy's bed, during which time he allowed none but the nurse of the lad to be present, Rasputin announced to the Empress that the child would recover his normal health again after three days.

The three days expired, during which time the boy lay as one dead, but at the end of that time the prophecy of the pseudo monk again came true, and he recovered.

It was not long after this "miracle" that Rasputin was advanced to the post of private chaplain to the Empress, and from that time onward his rise was meteoric. It was the Empress who gave him the title of "Father," and by this name he was known to the Russian Royal family thenceforth. The Empress placed her daughters so much under the sway and teaching of this monk, in fact, that they came to treat him more as their father than they did the Emperor himself.

If there was ever the slightest suspicion in the mind of Rasputin after this that the Empress was doubtful of his bona fides, or that she was lacking enthusiasm in her support, Rasputin repeated the "miracle" of foretelling, not only that the heir to the throne would be taken ill, but even the very hour at which he would recover.

AND then the War broke out. Confusion was everywhere. Rasputin had become an influential person at court. Through the influence of the Empress he had made himself a power in the land equal to none save that of the Emperor, and even he was at most times enthralled under the sway of the insidious "Black Monk."

The Empress was of German origin, and reputed to be entirely pro-German, and Rasputin was a German agent, as has since been proved conclusively from documents found after his death.

But all this was, of course, not general knowledge at that time. Rasputin was allowed a power and licence almost unbelievable.

By reason of Rasputin's domination of the majority of the influential women at court, and their influence over their husbands, he had a finger in the pie of most of the military arrangements—the sending of troops to the front, the making of shells at the munition factories, and the disposition of the defence on the frontier.

He was, as he claimed to be, virtually ruler of Russia. Most of the population were his to command. The Empress was under his thumb, and the Emperor did not sufficiently realise the insidious, Satanic power wielded by Rasputin to make him do anything against the man. Moreover, those of the Russian nobles who did not rally to

By now, thoroughly under the monk's spell, the Tsarina was so impressed by this seemingly divine power, that she became one of Rasputin's staunchest adherents, and certainly his most influential one.

Had she but known that the boy's nurse was a tool of the impostor, and that the mysterious illness was caused by her administration of a deadly drug at her master's command, the miraculous recovery also occurring simultaneously with her administration of an antidote, the charlatan's career might not have had such august backing.

his side through more fascination of the man's voice and hypnotic eyes, aided with him through fear, either of the Empress's displeasure, or of Rasputin's vengeance.

The only members of Russian society who did not lay themselves out to please and flatter this "Protector of Russia" were the Emperor Nicholas and a few patriotic nobles, who stuck to their own opinions at the risk of their lives from secret assassination.

Rasputin was as loud as anyone in his denunciation of Germany and German policy, urging the Russians on to fight, and get on with the War, while all the time plotting and planning, corresponding with his masters, the German War Lords, receiving large sums of money from them, and, if reports are true—and most of them agree on this point—working his hardest to bring about the downfall of Russia.

And history acknowledges that he was successful in this scheme to a remarkable extent. Not only was Rasputin at the back of those dastardly deeds of blowing up several munition factories, and the cause of secret orders being sent to military officers which had the effect of empty trains arriving at the front for the troops instead of train-loads of supplies, and "dud" shells arriving for the big guns, but he was responsible for a more insidious crime against Russia.

He secretly spread propaganda amongst the troops and the population which was calculated to break their morale and undermine the fighters' faith in their officers, their leaders, the justice of their cause, and to make them generally dissatisfied.

Had it not been for the machinations of this colossal impostor and the criminal schemes concocted between him and some of the military officials who were body and soul in his power, there is no doubt that Russia would have been saved millions of money and hundreds of thousands of lives. Possibly, also, it might have been saved its disastrous fall into Bolshevism.

Military officials who refused to come under the sway of Rasputin, or who were successful in persuading the Emperor not to enforce the monk's orders, were liable to be "removed" by agents of Germany, with whom Rasputin was in constant correspondence. One would be mysteriously poisoned, another "accidentally" shot, or get rid of in some equally effective manner.

AND all the time this intrigue and plot was going on, with Rasputin's agents and spies doing their insidious work of delaying supplies and ammunition, and breaking down the spirit of the troops, the "Holy" one was living a life of sensuous debauchery in the capital.

He had been given apartments in the Winter Palace by this time, so as to be within call of the Empress whenever she should wish to consult him. With the assistance of a mysterious person, a reputed doctor from Thibet, weekly fake seances were held, whereat the listeners beheld manifestations which they already superstitious and keyed up with the chaotic state of affairs in the country, were only too ready to believe.

The seances were held in an empty upstairs room, with walls bare except for a few sacred pictures and holy images, and here gathered the sister-disciples, an ever-growing band of the most influential people in St. Petersburg, as it was then called.

Nightly orgies took place, where Rasputin would spend his time surrounded by his admirers, who were, of

course, mostly women. Wine there was in plenty, and the drunken carousals lasted well into the night.

Rasputin's new religion was the religion of "Love," and his creed was that man should deny himself nothing of this world's pleasures.

The "Father" was now becoming more and more self-assured. He gave it out that he was now ruler of Russia, and that anything he wished he could cause to happen.

However true this was, it is fairly certain that the enemies of Rasputin—both his and enemies—stood little chance of doing him harm. He had but to approach the Empress with his usual air of injured saintliness, to get her support in any of his plans.

"Lady," he would say, "I am going away. I am not wanted in Russia. There is no room—here for the Messenger of God. I cannot remain where all are not my friends. I will go away to a place where I shall be welcomed."

This sort of talk usually had the same result. So much under his influence and domination was the misguided Empress of Russia, that she could not bear the idea of her "Spiritual Father" being away from her side.

And so the enemies of Rasputin were "removed." They either mysteriously disappeared and were never heard of again, or were deprived of office and banished from the capital. Some, anticipating Rasputin's displeasure and consequent vengeance, made themselves scarce and went into hiding, while other brave souls stood their ground defiantly, realizing that the Empress dare not go too far in her fanaticism.

The mock monk's next decree to his followers was that he was God's anointed, and, therefore, equal to God himself.

HOW much further this criminal sensualist would have carried his imposture—all under the cloak of religion—is open to conjecture. He had already reached a height of success never before attained by such an impostor, and was now, at thirty years of age, apparently at the climax of his career.

When he walked in the streets of Petrograd, or in the grounds of the Winter Palace, with his usual air of mock piety and humility, people would throng round him, stooping to kiss his unwashed feet, or even the hem of the nondescript, sacklike garment he wore. Photographs, too, of Rasputin were deemed sacred, and were worshipped and revered as such.

To men he was unapproachable, mighty, all-holy; except, of course, to the few who were his tools, or to those whom he elected should assist him to perform his "miracles," and who afterwards disappeared before they could tell tales.

Rasputin had enemies, of course—men who saw through the mask of piety to the sham beneath, those who had happened to incur the monk's displeasure, and ministers of the church who disagreed with the new religion as practised by its "prophet."

Several times did Rasputin complain to the Empress, and even to the Emperor, that Russia was turning away the Lord's Anointed, that he was not wanted, and the people were driving him away. Once, doubting perhaps the extent of his power over the Empress, he did go away, leaving behind him, however, the alarming information that in "ten days" time the Tsarevitch will fall ill.

Of course the blow fell. The boy did fall ill. Rasputin was urgently sent

for, but did not come. The boy was at death's door. Frantic appeals were sent to the monk to come to the palace.

The physician had given up hope of saving the life of the Tsarevitch, and the members of the Royal family were beside themselves with anxiety when, suddenly, Rasputin walked into the palace.

Casting a look of reproach at the Empress, he turned them all out of the sick chamber, and performed his famous healing trick.

The enthusiasm for Rasputin after this became even more fanatical, but at the same time the distant rumbling of the dissatisfied enemies of the insolent impostor grew more menacing.

At one time he became really scared of being secretly assassinated, and his fiendish brain thought out a ruse whereby he might guard against such a sudden end to his life.

He announced to the Royal family one day that he had had a vision of the future.

"Forty days after the day of my death," said Rasputin in his solemn, husky voice, "the young Tsarevitch will die. I know not the time of my death, but it is vouchsafed me to foretell that the boy will live but forty days afterwards."

As one may guess, this wily scheme had the desired effect. So rigid now was the guard placed upon the person of Rasputin by the orders of the Tsar,

their country of this terrible menace, even at the risk of their lives.

All exits were guarded save the one door by which Rasputin was expected to enter, and everything was in readiness before the appointed time.

And, while all waited breathlessly, they heard the noise of his arrival at the door. The fish had taken the bait.

In a few moments the Black Monk entered the room. He saw the lady he had come to meet. She was sitting on a chair near the middle of the room, but before he had a chance to advance near enough to touch her, he was confronted by one of the Russian nobles, who stepped from behind a curtain.

Rasputin was trapped! Upon what happened next accounts do not agree. Some say that Rasputin was given a glass of poisoned wine, and then afterwards shot because the wine had no more effect than to make him dizzy.

Others say that the six Russians all fired at once, and together, and Rasputin fell to the floor dead; while another rumour has it that Rasputin, after begging and entreating for his life, offering enormous bribes and advancements, but to no avail, almost escaped from the house, and was shot dead on the threshold.

But on the main point all are agreed. Rasputin was killed by self-appointed avengers, and his body thrown into the River Neva. It was the only way of



Rasputin surrounded by a group of his satellites—aristocratic ladies of the late Empress' court at Petrograd.

(Photo: Illustrations Bureau.)

who was out to save the life of his own son, that the monk's fears for his life were for the time set at rest.

But it was all of no avail. The end was near.

Rasputin's enemies, incensed at the ever-increasing power of this impostor, and the rumours of Rasputin's dealings with Germany, planned his death.

It was not easy to take the monk off his guard, but they used the bait that they knew would attract their victim.

ON December 15th, 1916, Rasputin received a letter from a young society beauty whom he had long wanted to be his spiritual wife, but had not dared to carry off because of her influential position and noble family, making an assignation to meet him at a certain house at ten o'clock that night.

Hidden in this house were six or seven men, all noble patriotic Russians, who had pledged themselves to rid

ridding Russia of the scourge which a misguided Empress and a weak-willed Emperor had made so powerful.

When the news of the monk's disappearance leaked out the Empress was distraught, guessing what had happened, and sent frantic telegrams to her husband to come and seek out the assassins. These, however, had all left the city and gone into hiding.

The river was dragged, by order of the Tsarina, and very soon the body was found and given burial.

And thus ended the career of Rasputin—the most astounding impostor the world has ever known.

Although his influence outlived him, being seen and felt in the revolution that followed soon after his death, the root of the canker which was eating at the heart of Russia has been removed, and doubtless, in time, she will recover even from the scourge of the Black Monk's heritage of chaos and barbarity which the world knows as Bolshevism.



AMERICA'S YELLOW MENACE

By
Charles
Somerville

PART THREE.

This final instalment of our arresting feature carries on the thrilling account of "long" combats, the two previous articles having described, for the first time in the history of British journalism, the origin, growth, and parting of the ways of the sinister Chinese secret societies in America. Weary at last of the long wars—expensive both in men and money—the Hip Sing and On Leong tong leaders were seized by the police and forcibly brought into a conference.

THERE were long conferences, with the result that the tongs agreed on a peace pact and a compromise.

Of course they didn't discuss openly with the American officials what the basis of this peace was going to be, but the truth was that the On Leongs agreed to permit the Hip Sings a share of the gambling privileges—about a one-third share, and each one agreed not to attempt to invade the territory of the other in the matter of compelling the merchants, restaurant keepers and business men generally on their lists to pay protection money against attacks on their persons or property.

The peace pact of 1912 expressed this poetically.

No member of the Chinese colony, it was stated in this document, should be compelled to pay "in oil and incense" to one tong when he had already paid "oil and incense" to the other tong.

Genuine peace followed in Chinatown for more than ten years. There were now and then shootings, stabbings, and a few killings, but these were out of personal quarrels, and the tongs refused to line up at each other's throats because of them.

Besides, there had grown to strength in Chinatown a clean, lawful organisation known as the Chinese Benevolent Association, headed by a Chinese of high breeding, intellect, and forcefulness, Lee Kue Ting.

Lee Kue and his aides spoke English well. And they were friendly and frank with the officials of the law and bench, and kept them informed as to affairs in Chinatown as American officials had never been informed before.

The tongs hated Lee Kue, but they feared him, too, to such an extent that they never dared to lay a hand on him.

His popularity was so great with all the decent Chinese that the tong leaders could foresee an uprising that might wipe them from the face of the earth if they attempted to make a war of assassination against Lee Kue and his aides, who had toward him the ardour of disciples.

BUT after this long peace of more than a decade Chinatown was startled by a sensation as tremendous to them as the assassination of an American president or a reigning monarch is to us.

Ko Low was shot down in Pell Street. Two young Chinese had rushed out of a doorway with blazing

pistols and riddled him with bullets, killing him outright.

And Ko Low was the president of all the Hip Sings in the country!

It was never learned—or, at least, hasn't been yet—whether it was a private spite or grudge which these two young Chinese (both members of the On Leong tong, however) had against Ko Low, or whether they did the deed for a high price.

At least, according to former schedules of prices on human life among the tongs, five thousand pounds would have been the sum paid for the murder of so august a person as Ko Low.

The two assassins were arrested.

Expert lawyers were immediately engaged, while the On Leongs protested that the tong itself had done nothing to further the crime.

But now the On Leongs, especially the two murderers, got a surprise. It must also have been something of a shock to the rank and file of the Hip Sings.

Usually when the police arrested a tong man for the killing of another he was held in gaol for weeks, sometimes months, till American lawyers, on behalf of the men, would demand that they either be brought to trial or released.

And there would be nothing for the police to do but let them go—for the police would have gone up against a wall of silence in Chinatown.

An unwritten law between the tongs had always held them in ironbound fashion from carrying their quarrels, no matter how deadly, to the hands of the American police or courts.

But this time Lee Kue, head of the Chinese Benevolent Association, took a hand. And assistance was forthcoming from the two Chinese Masonic orders, which have no sympathy



Headquarters of the Chinese Masonic Lodge whose members, having no sympathy with the Tongs, supplied evidence in the Ko Low murder trial. (Photo: Kretzschmar.)

with the criminal tongs — the Lone Gee and Lee Kong societies.

For the first time the Chinese quarter supplied evidence against Chinese in American courts. The result was that Ng Hing and Lee Dock, the assassins, were executed in the Sing Sing electric chair.

Yet while they were in the death house four members of the murdered Ko Low's tong were killed by avengers of the condemned men.

There followed two reprisals by the Hip Sing tongs on On Leong Chinese in Philadelphia, but the tong leaders began calling on the followers for a renewed peace, and the war was lulled and faded out.

Only, however, to be renewed in a manner more deadly, more wholesale than before. But the new outbreak had nothing to do with the electrocution of the two On Leongs in Sing Sing.

It was because of a most serious defection in the ranks of the On Leongs themselves.

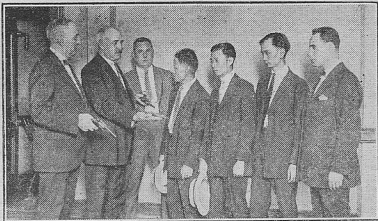
This came when it was discovered that its very president, Chen Jack Lin, was a thief. He was found to have embezzled hundreds of thousands of dollars from the central treasury. As a result Chen Jack and fourteen of his immediate lieutenants were expelled from the order.

And worse, from the standpoint of tong ethics, the American authorities were called in and he was arrested and put on trial in Mansfield, Ohio, for the specific embezzlement of \$10,000 of the tong money of the branch in that city. He was given a ten-year sentence, which he is now serving.

But Chen Jack and the fourteen others struck back in true Oriental fashion. They joined the Hip Sings. And are also charged by that tong with leading fully three hundred other On Leongs into the ranks of the Hip Sings.

It is known that Chen Jack, in order to show the sincerity of his reversal to the Hip Sing leaders, betrayed all the secrets of the On Leongs to the Hip Sings and, the American authorities believe, gave them evidence that the assassination of Lo Kow, the national Hip Sing leader in 1923, was done at the instigation of On Leong directors, in treachery to the peace pact of 1912.

Certain it is that after the discovery of Chen Jack's crookedness in the financial affairs of the On Leongs, his flight, arrest, and imprisonment, and his joining up meanwhile with the Hip Sings, there followed a meeting of the Hip Sings in Washington, which was attended by chieftains of the tong from all over the country.



Police officials (with revolvers, and on extreme right), and captives taken as the result of a big fight between the Hip Sing and On Leong tongs, in Jersey City.

(Photo: P. & A.)

The murders of members of the On Leong tong occurred quickly afterwards in New York, Pittsburg, Boston, Detroit, and other cities, immediately followed by deadly retorts on Hip Sings by the On Leongs.

The Federal authorities and New York police authorities again asked the intervention of Dr. Lee Kue and Chinese Consul General Chang, of New York.

The tong leaders obeyed the request for a conference, and an armistice was arranged, which was to last till Thanksgiving Day, November 27th, of the same year. During this time a new peace was to have been signed.

numbered more than three score, as stated in the first part of this article.

For an On Leong killed in Boston a Hip Sing is murdered in Philadelphia; for a Hip Sing knifed to death in Chicago a member of the rival tong is murdered in New York.

That's the system used, the crime usually being committed by a young tongman sent from another city, who is an entire stranger to the quarter in which he does the killing.

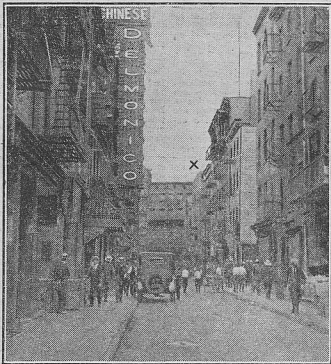
And the old Chinese hatchet-and-knife man in his loose and flowing robes and his one-time pigtail, has as a successor a lithe, well-dressed young fellow, sporting American

THEN, oddly under the circumstances, but wholly from natural causes, Dr. Lee Kue, the powerful, law-abiding arbiter of Chinatown, died. He was attacked by pneumonia and was ill only two days.

The day of his funeral there was a double killing in Chinatown. One victim was a Hip Sing, the other an On Leong.

The war was on anew!

It has now spread to fifteen cities, the assassinations having



The Chinese "Delmonico's," outside which Ko Low, president of the Hip Sing tong, was killed. The "X" marks the Hip Sing headquarters.

(Photo: Keystone.)

clothing, who as frequently uses a pistol as a knife.

Moreover, in these days, he shoots with an unerring aim. He has been learning how in the shooting galleries and, in some cases, through previous service with the armies battling in civil wars in China.

But usually the modern Chinese killer is one who has been brought up in an American city, attended American schools, and is wise in the ways of American gunmen.

THE present war, with its appalling record of deadliness, has finally stirred the authorities into what promises to be an effective war of its own against the criminal tongs.

It is being carried out by following the advice which the wise and distinguished Wu Ting Fang, former Chinese minister to the United States, once gave.

It was years ago when he was asked what could be done to squelch the tongs and their pernicious, murderous activities. To which Wu replied:

"Catch them and put them on board ships and send them back to

China. We will take care of them there."

Then he ran his slender finger with its long, highly polished nail around his neck to indicate exactly what manner of "care" the tongmen would receive at home—the pantomime of a head being sliced off by a sword.

Continued newspaper publicity given these many murders has at last caused it to dawn on Federal and State authorities that if they investigated the matter thoroughly it would be found that most of the troublesome Chinese in this country haven't any right to be here at all.

And that if they imprisoned all those suspected of being criminals and the abettors of criminals in the tong wars and demanded of each that he exhibit his "chuck chee"—his immigration permit—most of them would be found lacking it and might be immediately deported.

Raids have begun with this object, and at the present writing about two hundred and fifty Chinese have been collared who have proved to be chuck-cheeseless.

They have penned them all at Ellis Island awaiting orders from Washington to chase them back to their

own country, where doubtless some of them, on criminal records at home, will be "cared" for in the manner so vividly suggested by Wu Ting Fang with his long, slender, yellow finger.

Of course, the present raid has made only a small inroad into the ranks of the tongs, whose joint membership must be close to 25,000.

But the plan, and a persistence in it, are bound to have a big repressive effect on tong activities, and should serve to end the present war.

That it can spell the death of the tongs, while the golden profits of the gambling privileges and drug evil persist is, I fear, optimistic beyond reason.

THE END.

Back numbers of the U. J. containing the two preceding articles in this series, dated Feb. 20th and 27th, can be obtained through any newsagent; or from the Back Number Dept., Bear Alley, Farringdon St., London, E.C. 4, for 2jd. each, which includes postage.

Unfinished Crime Stories.

"Here to-day and gone to-morrow!" That might well be said of figures in criminal history who are the talk of the world for a time, and then pass into utter oblivion.

NOVELISTS of the Victorian era had a habit of disposing of all their characters at the end of their stories, sketching out their respective futures so that the conscientious reader should not be worried by "loose ends."

In this respect Art has improved on Nature.

The real-life crime story is not such a complete affair as an old-fashioned three-volume novel, and it invariably ends half-way, in a manner of speaking.

The lurid light of police proceedings illuminate certain persons' lives for a brief moment, perhaps their pasts are unmercifully dragged up for public examination—then they vanish.

Yet the criminologist would, one cannot help feeling, gain quite a new view of certain famous crimes if these tragic stories could only be resumed, and finished from where the law left them off!

Not very long ago it was reported that Madeleine Smith was still alive, a very aged woman, in Canada. Her name conveyed nothing to many of the younger generation. But her trial for poisoning a young man named L'Angelier was one of the biggest legal sensations of last century.

Madeleine Smith was sentenced to imprisonment, not death. Many people who remembered the trial must have wondered what became of her at the expiration of her sentence, unless she had died in prison. Now, at long last, comes a faint whisper—a mere hint—of the end of this almost forgotten crime-story. What could Madeleine Smith tell us were she interviewed to-day?

What did a certain famous rogue do after his release—since he appears to have given the police no further trouble? What happened to the woman who played such a prominent part in

the murder case which resulted in So-and-so's being hanged? Perhaps the briefest paragraph in an evening paper disposes of her. What will her life be—now?

Here are fascinating speculations for those who can see the dramatic and human underlying the sordid facts of a crime-story.

SOME time ago I met a prosperous West End business man, an elderly, sober-looking personage who was happily married to an equally elderly and sober-looking wife. I was surprised to learn afterwards that this lady had figured prominently in a very notorious murder case of thirty years ago.

Calling to mind the stir which, according to the records of the case, this crime had caused throughout the country, this demure little lady became a strangely interesting figure in my eyes. Her former admirer had been sentenced to penal servitude for life for his share in a particularly revolting crime! What could she have told me—if it had been possible to "pump" her?

In an obscure country village a grey little man lives a quiet, uneventful life, seldom going out, never receiving friends, the guest, maybe, of some brother or sister. Twenty-five or thirty years ago he stood upon his trial for fleeing a gullible public of something like £100,000, and the papers referred to him as possessing "one of the most astounding financial brains in the annals of crime." A mean ending for a man with "big ideas"—but, after all, a very fortunate one!

Jabez Balfour, one of the most colossal financial swindlers of last century, attracted very little attention when he came out of gaol. He ended his life in comfortable retirement in a small pro-

vincial town. And the money he made by his roguery? Well, that is a part of the sequel we must leave unwritten.

Not so lucky—to mention at random an opposite case—was Hare, the accomplice of Burke in the Edinburgh "Resurrectionist" murders. After he had escaped justice by turning "King's Evidence" against his accomplice in crime, he was blinded with lime by a gang of indignant workmen, and was for years afterwards a well-known beggar in the London streets.

There may be many similar cases. Fleming, the aged man suspected of the famous murder in Glasgow, in 1862, for which the woman McLachlan was also arrested, lived on in Glasgow under the grim shadow of popular suspicion, to the end of his days.

De Tourville, swindler and murderer, disappeared in the byways of the Continent after serving his term in an Austrian prison—he may have turned to crime again, or he may have starved. Nobody cared to finish his story.

What became of Charles Pease's wife, Dumollard's wife, Winwright's brother who was charged with him, the brutal Stauntons, and Alice Rhodes?

Is Hannah Dobbs still living? She may be, and, thinking over the Euston Square mystery of 1874 in her spare moments. Who remembers nowadays even the name of this one-time celebrity? Yet she was still a youngish woman in those days. Who could say now just where Thomas Farrow is living, or exactly what has become of many another such?

Walk down a crowded London street at mid-day, and the chances would seem to be well in favour of your unknowingly rubbing shoulders with someone who, though perhaps innocent enough themselves, could tell you if they would graphic details of the inner history of some famous crime.

But crime-stories remain unfinished, and figures that come into the limelight for a week or two pass into oblivion—mercifully for them.

But what truths, of thrilling interest to the student of crime, must pass unheard into the silence beyond the criminal courts!

The Case of the SEXTON BLAKE BUST.

(Continued from page 10.)

"No, thanks," said Blake.

He raised the glass to his lips and sipped it steadily. There was nothing to indicate either in his expression or manner that he had in that moment made a vital discovery. One glance at the framed photograph upon the wall of the cafe had confirmed a suspicion which old Pere Leduc had engendered half an hour before.

It was a picture depicting harlequin and columbine. But Blake's lips set grimly, for he knew now that columbine would never dance again—that the feather-footed dancer in the picture now lay pitifully still in a London mortuary.

Blake sipped his drink slowly and talked about the weather and the new change of Government. He allowed his eyes to drift again presently to the picture and nodded his head.

"A pretty picture, m'sieu."

"Tres jol, m'sieu. I treasure it. That is Nita Verlieff, my goddaughter. A wonderful dancer, m'sieu. She has appeared at the Blue Cabaret many times."

Blake nodded with mild interest, and then drew his chair forward as another man came in. He was a light-bearded man with a broken nose and pallid features. The sight of him brought a light of sudden interest into Blake's eyes.

It was the caretaker, Monteuil, from the L'Exposition des Arts Plastiques.

"Eh bien, Jacques!" said the landlord cheerily. "And how do things go now?"

"Bad enough!" growled the caretaker. "I'll take a cafe cognac."

It seemed that the man was quite well-known in the Cafe Moulin. Blake shot a keen glance at him, and then fell into a sudden thoughtfulness.

A small party of three men and three women had come laughing down the stairs, seating themselves at two tables in the rear of the cafe.

"Hurry, Jacques!" one of them called out. "We are hungry! Get a move on, old Blancbec!"

The landlord smiled good-naturedly and hurried forward to receive their



"Pardon, mon ami," said Blake, and the man looked up with a start. "Pray do not think I am inquisitive. Why, precisely, did you smash that bust in the Salon?"

orders. The caretaker at the salon had taken the "Echo" out of his pocket, and was peering closely at a certain paragraph which seemed to claim his attention.

Blake reached for a syphon and got close enough to see what he was reading. Then quietly and deliberately the detective rose and took a seat next to the one occupied by Monteuil.

"Pardon, mon ami!" he said. And the man looked up with a start. "Pray do not think I am inquisitive. Why, precisely, did you smash that bust in the salon?"

in a testy tone. "Don't waste my time with denials, Monteuil. I know perfectly well you are the culprit. I am asking you your motive!"

Blake's sudden question, coming like a bolt from the blue, and followed by a superb piece of bluffing, disarmed the man utterly. He seized the glass of cognac with a trembling hand and drained it at a gulp.

"It—it was an accident," he blurted out. "But—pardieu!—who are you?"

"I am an English detective, investigating this matter on behalf of M. Barker, the man whose work you have destroyed," Blake said curtly. "I am afraid you make a poor criminal, Monteuil. You lack experience. But we cannot talk freely here. Come with me!"

He rose and strode to the stairs, and Monteuil followed him, very much like a whipped cur. The man had been startled into confession, and seemed dazed. The genial M. Blancbec, godfather of Nita Verlieff, had turned and stared after them with an expression of mingled amazement and uneasiness. It was as if some unseen hand had wiped off his habitual smile with his own white napkin.

In the street Blake hailed a taxi and signalled the caretaker of the salon to get inside. The man's lips were white as he looked up from his seat.

"Where are you taking me?" he quavered.

"To the Prefecture, unless you tell the truth," said Blake curtly. "Now, M. Monteuil, why did you smash that bust?"

"It was a mishap, m'sieu—I swear it

THE SUPPLEMENT

This week consists of six pages only instead of the normal eight. This unavoidable reduction is due to the extra length of this week's story, and is an emergency measure only.

The normal eight pages will be returned to immediately, and continued in every issue except those occasional ones in which space restrictions make their inclusion inadvisable.

To those who contemplate binding their Supplement parts, it should be pointed out that the eight middle pages, including this one, should be detached as usual, and this page cut out at the edge of the column of type when the volume is completed, thus allowing the Supplement page-numbers to run on consecutively.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. The Noose Tightens.



place came a look of anger and defiance.

"Who are you, m'sieu?" he demanded in a jerky tone. "What are you talking of?"

"I have told you what I am talking of," Blake said. "I have asked you a simple question. Come, come!" he said

THE French newspaper fell from the hands of the man upon the stool, and his face turned a sickly pallor. It seemed for a moment that he was going to fall, but he recovered himself with an effort and stared at Blake's sphinx-like countenance. The terror died from his eyes, and in their

I was sweeping the floor and my broom—"

"Mon ami!" Blake broke in sharply. "You are a poor liar! Now look! I am going to ask you a question, and your liberty will depend upon the truth of your answer. Consider that. You were bribed to smash the bust of Mussolini. You were bribed by Mademoiselle Verlieff. Were you not?"

"The man's face had turned a sallow grey; his eyes moved about restlessly, avoiding Blake's steady gaze.

"Were you?" Blake prompted.

"No!" said Monteil in a low tone.

Blake drew back in his seat and withdrew a cigarette, lighting it deliberately. Then he tapped at the window and leaned forward to the driver.

"Drive to the Prefecture of Police!" he said. "Vite!"

Monteil started visibly, and terror came into his eyes. He was a poor specimen, as Blake had surmised when he had first seen him, a man with no scruples, but without the courage to be a criminal. He leaned forward and put a trembling hand on Blake's arm.

"Monsieur, have mercy, I beseech you! I was wounded in the War. It is not easy to find employment. Oh, please, m'sieu!"

"What has that to do with the case in question?" Blake asked curtly.

"I am married, m'sieu. I have three little children. Think of them, m'sieu!"

"It was for you to think of them when I asked you for the truth," Blake said. "The man peered in terror from the window. The cab had already reached the end of the Louvre. He spun round quickly.

"Not there, m'sieu. Tell him not to stop. Drive on, for the love of pity! I will tell you the truth, m'sieu. I will tell you everything. It was that woman. I—I would not have dreamed, m'sieu. I—I—"

"She bribed you?"

"Yes."

"Why did she bribe you?"

"It was for spite against the man who carved the piece," he said. "She had been his friend when he was studying here in Paris. He left her to return to London. She told me that. He had been her partner as a dancer, and she wished him to return to her. I would not listen, m'sieu, not for a long time. But she tempted me; she met me time after time, and offered me more and more money. Five hundred francs—a thousand—two thousand! Oh, m'sieu, my wife was ill—and my little daughter. I needed the money—"

"Bah!" growled Blake at him.

"You are a cur. Mechant! You set the worth of a great piece of art at two thousand francs. I have a mind to thrash you. When do you return to the salon?"

"To-morrow, m'sieu."

"Then you will not go!"

"Why, m'sieu?"

"You will not return there again," Blake said firmly. "You will stay away until your post is filled. Do you understand? You are not fit for a post of trust. If you show your face near the salon, mark you, the Prefecture shall know the truth inside an hour. Now, get out of this cab, quick, before I kick you out!"

The man did not wait for the taxi to stop. The door was open, and he was out in a trice, losing his balance as he tried to spring from the swiftly-moving vehicle, and rolling over and

over like a Catherine wheel until he came to a full-stop at the kerb.

The taxi-driver took a half glance over his shoulder, and thinking, perhaps, that the sprawling figure in the gutter was an unnoticed pedestrian he had bowled over, he jammed on his brakes. Blake leaned forward.

"Drive on!" he commanded. "Drive to the Bureau de Poste!"

The cab shot forward again, swinging round a traffic island, and fetching into the kerb. Blake paid him off and walked into the post-office with a frown. His inquiries in Paris had come to fruition even quicker than he hoped. The ten minutes he had spent over a vermouth-and-soda in the Cafe Moulin had been singularly productive.

He had learned in the first place the identity of the woman who had been found shot through the heart in Barker's studio, and from Pere Leduc he had heard all he needed to know about her association with the sculptor.

"A dancing-girl, primitive and emotional—jealous, vindictive, passionate!" Blake bit his lip as he remembered the picture painted in the prosaic words of the Yard man at the studio. Whipps was right, confound him!

In the cafe bar of Old Blancbec the unexpected appearance of the salon caretaker had pulled Blake up with a jerk, and then set his thoughts racing off on a line he would have been glad to ignore, if only he had been able. For they led to still another confirmation of Whipps' theory.

The immediate question sprang to his mind: "How did Monteil come to be a frequenter of the Cafe Moulin, which was a long way from the salon? He was obviously friendly with the proprietor. Could it be that he had been, and was, also friendly with Blancbec's god-daughter, Nita Verlieff?"

The possibility shed an immediate light upon the smashing of the bust. It pointed to the likelihood of conspiracy between the woman and Monteil. When the secretary of the salon had been talking to Blake, he had at once dismissed the suggestion of Monteil's guilt.

"What possible motive could he have?" he asked—which seemed a strong argument, until one considered him as a tool of Nita Verlieff. Then the absent motive appeared in clear relief. It was a motive of spite, of jealousy, of desire, perhaps, to sicken Barker of his art and drive him back to dancing.

The thought had leapt to Blake instantly, and with such force that he was prompted to test the value of the theory straight away.

But there was something depressing even in his success in bluffing the caretaker. All the facts he had been able to unearth pointed now with overwhelming force towards the guilt of the man whose innocence he was out to prove.

His line of inquiry led him with disconcerting directness to the point upon which Detective Whipps, with his alert, but unimaginative mind, had taken a firm stand.

"The woman we found here is the culprit!" Blake could hear Whipps saying it now. "It's she who has been round smashing up his work!"

He was not quite right but nearly. "Spite or jealousy, or something," the Yard man had said in his laconic way. "In the end she came here—to the studio—and smashed up that one. And he caught her in the act."

The present discovery in Paris, allied to the statement of Teresa Parr about

the sound of quarrelling, seemed to prove Whipps' theory up to the hilt.

"The only snag in it," Whipps had added drily, "is that Inspector Galloway will come to the same conclusion."

Blake remembered that a little bitterly. It was a snag, which irritated him now almost beyond human endurance as he strode into the post-office. He wrote a detailed telegram to Tinker rapidly. It ran:

"Blancbec's were complete. Returning to-morrow. Meanwhile, take immediate steps trace maid dismissed by Borets and make detailed inquiries concerning movements before breaking of statuette. Detail Bessie Baker Street till my return. S. B."

The wire despatched, the detective walked out leisurely, recovering his valise from the cloak-room at the Gare de Lyons where he had left it, and driving to a small but comfortable hotel where he was always certain of accommodation and good treatment.

He rose after a good dinner and turned his steps once more towards Montmartre. It would be useful, perhaps, to have a chat with the proprietor of the Cafe Moulin before he returned to London.

At the top of the steep steps he drew back to permit a tall, square-shouldered figure to come on—a figure at which he glanced keenly.

"Verlaine!" he said suddenly, and with a quick smile. "I did not think to meet you. I heard you were in Algiers!"

Verlaine, Blake's old camarade of the French Police, put out his hand delightedly, his genial face lighting up with pleasure.

"Nor I you, mon ami—I returned from Africa last week. Mon Dieu, but it is good to see you, camarade! What is the visit this time, please?"

"I'm afraid not," Blake said smiling. "What about a coffee?"

The famous French detective shook his head.

"I am sorry—I have no time! Later, perhaps!"

"But I return in the morning!"

"Then the next time we meet. I am sorry. I have urgent matter for headquarters. For transmission to London," he added, lowering his tone.

"Really—anything I am interested in?" Blake asked.

"I think not. It concerns a man named Barker, suspected of murder. He had been a student, here, in Paris, and your English commissioner has been asking for urgent information concerning his relations with a woman whose initials are N.V. It has been quite a straightforward inquiry," Verlaine added. "The girl has been found shot in his studio in London. Her name is Nita Verlieff, and she is the goddaughter of the proprietor of this cafe. I had to tell him, and the poor chap is crying like a child. I've got to phone this news to London straight away, so I cannot stay." He smiled apologetically and gripped Blake's hand warmly. "Adieu, old friend," he said. "A bientot!"

He hurried away with his quick, nervous step, and Blake watched him with a frown. So the Yard had been busy. In half an hour they would be in possession of the same damning information as he himself had elicited—damning, that was, for poor Barker. He did not descend into the cafe, but turned away, walking back slowly to his hotel. His mood of depression seemed to invest the brightly-lighted capital with an unwanted gloom. All his efforts seemed only to draw the noose more tightly about the neck of

the man who had been his friend—the man whose genius had infused into cold clay and marble the personality of Blake himself as no other man had ever done in any medium—etching, oils, or even in the facile expressiveness of a pencil sketch.

Surely Cedric Barker was in the toils!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. Persons—and Things.



SEXTON BLAKE, rising in the aeroplane above the flat meadows of Chantilly, had left Paris basking in a bright sun which was still not warm enough to thaw the frost which had held the city in an icy grip for several days.

He found London baked hard by the same frost, but grey and sullen under a sunless sky.

The nature of the day reflected his own mood as he thrust his key into the door of the flat in Baker Street and stepped in quietly. He glanced quickly round the small hall.

Tinker's hat and coat were not upon their usual peg; he had not expected to find them there. He walked through into the kitchen—a liberty he seldom took—and Mrs. Bardell turned with a faint ery of alarm, her hands white with flour.

"Gracious heavens, sir!" she exclaimed. "You gave me quite a turn!"

Blake smiled apologetically. The face of the old lady was pale and bore an expression of wretchedness which was quite pitiful. He had seldom seen her look more miserable. She seemed to anticipate the detective's question:

"Where's Bessie?" Blake asked.

Mrs. Bardell turned away and smoozed away a tear, leaving a white smudge of flour across her face, which gave an air of clownish comicality to her usually motherly face.

"Gorn, sir!" she said, in a low tone.

"Gone?" Blake's voice was sharp and unpleasant. "But I wired explicit instructions to Tinker that she was—"

"I know, sir, I can't help it!" sobbed the old lady. "But we couldn't exactly lock her up in the cellar, sir. As soon as Tinker got your telegraph last night, sir, he called me up and says, says he: 'Mrs. B.,' he says, 'that gel below has got to be kept here until the gov'nor comes back. On no account must you let her slip away!' All right, I says, I don't know as she wants to slip, anyway, she seems pretty happy and comfortable. Now's downstairs doing a bit of crochet now I says, says I. But what's the idea, I says. 'I don't know,' Tinker says, 'but them's the gov'nor's orders. Yours not to ask the reason why, Mrs. B.' he says. 'She's to be detained here and not allowed out until the gov'nor comes back.' he says."

"Then why did you not carry out your instructions?" Blake asked, so coldly that Mrs. Bardell burst into tears.

"I did, sir," she sobbed. "I done my best. I went straight downstairs and told her. 'Good heavens!' exclaimed Blake. 'Told her what?'"

"That she wasn't to go out," said the old lady. "I says, says I, 'it's the gov'nor's orders from Paris, Bessie, that you ain't to be allowed out until he comes back.'"

"But why in the name of reason did you tell her that, Mrs. Bardell?" Blake cried.

"'Because it was orders,'" sobbed the old lady. "What else could I tell her?"

"But don't you understand that by telling her a thing like that you were immediately arousing her suspicions?"

Mrs. Bardell sank into a kitchen chair and buried her face in her floury hands, sobbing brokenly.

"It don't matter 'ow hard I try," she sobbed, lifting a white-powdered visage. "I never do anything right. It's always me as is to blame if anything goes wrong. It's never anybody but me. Which I says to my sister, says I: 'When poor Bardell was alive—'"

Blake sighed, and moved towards the door. He would not have parted with the old lady for a fortune, but her lapses into stupidity were very trying.

"Where is the girl now, Mrs. Bardell?"

"Gorn, s-sir!"

"Yes, but where?"

"I don't know, sir. She must have gone last thing last night, or early this morning. She went out thro' the kitchen window and the back steps, sir."

"Taking her box with her!"
(Continued overleaf.)

£300 FOR TWELVE RESULTS FREE.

This Prize MUST BE WON!

YOU CAN USE THIS COUPON WITHOUT CUTTING INTO READING-MATTER

Three Hundred Pounds will be paid to the competitor whose forecast of the results of all the matches on this coupon is correct, or most nearly correct. The coupon contains twelve matches to be played on SATURDAY, MARCH 13th, 1928, and

THE WAY TO WIN £300

is to strike out, **IN INK**, the names of those teams which you think will lose. If, in your opinion, any match or matches will be drawn, you must strike out the names of **BOTH** teams.

Coupons, which must not be enclosed with efforts in other competitions, must be addressed to:

"UNION JACK" FOOTBALL No. 15,

7-8, Pilgrim Street, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

and must reach that address not later than the first post on FRIDAY, MARCH 12th, 1928.

RULES WHICH MUST BE STRICTLY ADHERED TO.

- All forecasts must be made on coupons taken from this journal, or from any of the issues of the journals which contain the competition offer.
- Any alteration or mutilation of the coupon will disqualify the effort. When more than one effort is submitted, coupons must not be pinned or in any other way fastened together.
- If any match or matches on the coupon should be abandoned, or full time is not played for any reason, such match or matches will not be considered in the adjudication.
- In the event of ties the prize will be divided, but no competitor will be awarded more than one share of the prize.
- No correspondence will be allowed, neither will interviews be granted.
- It is a distinct condition of entry that the Editor's decision shall be accepted as final and legally binding in all matters concerning this competition.
- All entries must be sent through the post, and any received after the first post on FRIDAY, MARCH 12th, will be disqualified. No responsibility can be accepted for efforts lost, mislaid, or delayed. Proof of posting will not be accepted as proof of delivery. Unstamped or insufficiently stamped efforts will be refused. Coupons from "Family Journal," "Home Companion," "Woman's World," "Pictorial Magazine," "Boys' Realm," "Football and Sports Favourite," "Sports Budget," "Answers," and "All Sports Weekly" may also be used. Employees of the proprietors of these journals are not eligible to compete.

CUT HERE.

U.J.

FOOTBALL COMPETITION No. 15.

Matches played on SATURDAY, MARCH 13th.
Closing Date, FRIDAY, MARCH 12th, 1928.

GARDIFF CITY	v. ASTON VILLA
HUDDESFIELD T.	v. MANCHESTER UTD.
SHEFFIELD UTD.	v. NOTTS COUNTY
W. BROMWICH A.	v. BOLTON WANDERS.
BLACKPOOL	v. SOUTH SHIELDS
CHELSEA	v. OLDHAM ATH.
CLAPTON ORIENT	v. STOKE CITY
DERBY COUNTY	v. PORTSMOUTH
PORT VALE	v. SWANSEA T.
SOUTHAMPTON	v. PRESTON N. END
MILLWALL	v. READING
SOUTHEND UTD.	v. SWINDON T.

I enter FOOTBALL COMPETITION No. 15 in accordance with the Rules and Conditions as announced, and agree to accept the Editor's decision as final and legally binding.

Name.....

Address.....

15

"No; she left that, sir. She must have had her things in a big parcel. There ain't nothing left in her room."

Blake nodded grimly and passed out, up the stairs. His heart thawed a little as Pedro, the faithful old bloodhound, came bounding towards him with every evidence of delight.

"Perhaps it's just as well the bird has flown, old fellow," he muttered, as he bent to stroke him. "There's little doubt now who smashed my handsome headpiece—and little doubt who bribed her to do it."

It was logical to assume that the method which Nita Verlieff had adopted to secure the destruction of the bust in the salon would be also adopted to achieve a similar end in London. Doubtless she had found a not unwilling tool in the somewhat stupid, carvery-headed girl who had lately been employed at Baker Street. Forewarned of approaching trouble the girl had fled precipitately.

It would not have been difficult to trace her and run her down, if it was worth while. But there were other matters now of greater urgency.

Blake had completed lunch when Tinker returned, mounting the stairs two at a time, and bounding into the dining-room. His face was flushed and excited.

"So you're back, guv'nor! Good! I was hoping I should find you. I've got news."

"Really! What's this?"

"I've been out investigating this morning, as per your instructions."

"Respecting this servant who was at the photographer's?"

"Yes. Her name is Clara Cross, and she lives in apartments off Soho. She is now working in a teashop. But that doesn't matter. I've been to see her landlady, and got some important information. Guv'nor," he cried, "it was that girl who smashed that piece of sculpture. I'll swear it was!"

Blake tried to look surprised, but failed. He managed, however, to repress a smile.

"Why do you say this, my lad?"

"Because I'm sure of it, guv'nor! She smashed that piece of statuary, and she was paid to do it!"

"Paid! Who by?"

"By the woman," Tinker cried dramatically, "who is now dead in the mortuary!"

Once more Blake endeavoured to look obligingly astonished but could not. A shadow of disappointment crossed Tinker's face.

"What makes you think this?" Blake asked.

"Because I discovered that a foreign-looking woman had been to see this girl Clara at her 'diggings' several times, and, from the landlady's description, there seems to be no doubt about it being the woman we found in Mr. Barker's studio. She bribed this girl to do the damage, guv'nor."

"What's more!" Tinker cried eagerly.

"It was that girl Bessie, the parlour-maid, who smashed the bust here. She was got at and bribed in the same way. I'll swear to it! Otherwise, why should she vanooose the way she has? What has she got to be afraid of if she's innocent? She did it, right enough. So did that other girl. That's my theory, anyway. What do you think, guv'nor?"

"I've ceased to think anything about it, my lad!" Blake said, taking out his pipe, and smiling dryly.

"Why, guv'nor?"

"Because I discovered the truth of what you are telling me now about twenty-four hours ago."

"Oh-h!" Tinker's face fell, and he looked sadly crestfallen. "Then—then I've been teaching my grandmother to suck eggs?"

"Not entirely," Blake said, with a quick smile. "As a matter of fact, you have dug out some new and very valuable information. What you tell me about Clara Cross was necessary to confirm my previous suspicions."

"You are convinced, then, that this

woman was out to destroy Mr. Barker's work, guv'nor?"

"Or get it destroyed—yes!"

"And you think she made an attempt to destroy the marble bust in the studio—a successful attempt?"

"It seems like it," Blake said quietly.

"And you agree with detective Whippis that Mr. Barker may have caught her in the act, and—"

"It looks like it, doesn't it?" Blake said resignedly. "Is there any fresh news about the case?"

"Nothing much, guv'nor. Mr. Barker is still missing. A man answering his description is said to have been seen in Winchester early this morning. The nets are out everywhere."

Blake nodded grimly.

"Anything else?"

"An initial, 'N. V.', has been found inside the ring the dead woman was wearing. And they say she is French, beyond doubt. I don't know that there is anything else!" Tinker muttered thoughtfully. "The police have had a number of other people round, I believe, volunteering information. Whether it was important, I haven't yet found out."

"Then I think we'll find out before we go any farther," Blake said quietly.

He moved to the telephone and picked up the receiver, calling the Yard.

"I want to speak to Detective-Inspector Harker, please."

He waited for a minute, and then Harker's familiar rumbling voice came over the line.

"Hallo, hallo! Harker speaking. Is that you, Blake? I understood the lad to say you were in Paris."

"I was. Are you very busy?" Blake asked.

"Up to my eyes in it!" the Yard man said, with a grunt.

"H'm! That's a pity. Are you so completely inundated that you could not spare me half an hour?"

Harker laughed.

"All right. I'll come. But you'll have to make it all right with the boss if he wants me. I'm supposed to be standing by."

"I'll do my best," Blake said, smiling. "But I won't detain you. Come along now!"

He put up the receiver, and crossed to his armchair, taking out his pipe and filling it thoughtfully. Tinker, who had been staring in a contemplative way out of the window, turned.

"Did you find out anything important in Paris, guv'nor?" he ventured.

"I am afraid I did, my lad."

"Why do you say you are 'afraid' you did, guv'nor?"

"Because, what I discovered does not improve matters for Barker."

Tinker nodded slowly. The trend of events had severely shaken his belief in the sculptor's innocence. He found himself being driven, by sheer weight of evidence, to the same conclusion as Detective Whippis.

"What made you first suspect that Clara Cross and Bessie had been bribed to smash these pieces of sculpture?" Tinker asked.


"My discovery that the caretaker in the salon in Paris had been paid to smash the bust there," Blake said briefly.

He leaned back in his chair, and smoked thoughtfully for a minute. Then, speaking in a low, even tone, he detailed briefly what he had discovered. Tinker listened intently. When his master had finished a low whistle escaped him.

"This makes things blacker than ever,

THE UNION JACK 2^o

Sexton Blake



The Adventure of the BOWERY TAR-BABY

NEXT WEEK'S STORY

is a tale of Sexton Blake and Tinker in New York—in the dangerous region of that city known as Hell's Kitchen.

It is a yarn that both new readers and old ones will enjoy fully as much as that in the present issue—and maybe even more.

It is a yarn of movement and action—brisk and stirring action amongst the notorious New York gunmen. Nor is it merely that. The author knows his locality and his types well, and he has woven into that knowledge a most fascinating plot, in which Sexton Blake does his due share of detective work.

You have read of the famous Baker Street couple in England. When you buy next week's "U. J." you will see what they can do in a foreign city, with different police and detective methods to cope with.

Next week, when you need something really good to read, buy "THE ADVENTURE OF THE BOWERY TAR-BABY." The brilliant orange-and-black cover will remind you.

LOOK OUT for THIS!

gov'nor. I'm beginning to think—" he added reluctantly, and then paused.

"To think what?" Blake asked sharply.

"That Whipp's theory is—is not far out."

"In other words—that Cedric Barker is guilty of murder?" Blake said grimly.

"I wouldn't go so far as to say that, gov'nor," said Tinker, hedging a little.

"Murder is an ugly word. It might have been manslaughter."

"You mean the shot might have been fired unintentionally—or not to kill?" Blake asked slowly.

"It might have been fired in a struggle," Tinker said.

"Yet the shot was fired from Barker's own revolver," Blake pointed out.

"Which supposes that Barker must have had recourse to the weapon. The woman was not armed, apparently, so there was no excuse for him drawing a revolver in self-defence. Your theory, my lad, points to Barker having used the weapon deliberately and in cold blood."

"Or in a fit of passion," put in Tinker. "As Whipp's said."

"Confound Whipp's!" muttered Blake with sudden heat, and then relapsed into silence for some minutes.

When he spoke again his tone was more placid and dispassionate.

"Tinker," he said, "we are going to tackle this mystery in another way. Up till now I have been working upon the hypothesis that Barker is innocent, with the result that I have succeeded mainly in establishing his guilt. I am going to assume now that he is guilty."

"In the hope that you may prove he is innocent, eh, gov'nor?"

"Precisely."

"I don't see how it can make much difference which way we tackle it," Tinker said. "That doesn't alter the facts."

"I am not so sure. Up till now we have been dealing with one set of facts only. In a case of this kind there are always two chains of evidence. There is the evidence of persons and of events relating to the crime. That we have already examined. On the other hand, there is the evidence of things. To that we have not been given access."

Tinker nodded.

"You mean the evidence of footprints and finger-marks, and all that sort of thing; the sort of clues which we might pick up by a thorough examination of the studio, eh, gov'nor?"

"Yes. One chain is personal, one material. If both chains lead to the same point then one can be pretty sure that the truth is established. If they do not—"

"Blake shrugged his shoulders.

"You mean that you're going to insist upon examining the studio?"

"I am going to examine it," said Blake, "if I have to see the Home Secretary himself. But here's Inspector Harker, if I'm not mistaken."

The door had opened, and the C.I.D. man with whom Blake had been closely associated in so many thrilling investigations, came in, his tall, muscular figure loosely clad in Harris tweeds, which brought into the flat a pleasant suggestion of the countryside.

He shook hands warmly and dropped into a chair, taking out his watch and glancing at it with a smile.

"Half an hour," he said.

"Right-ho! It should take less than that," Blake reached down to the tobacco-jar. "It's about this studio case. What do you think of it, Harker?"

The C.I.D. man glanced up as he filled his pipe, and smiled enigmatically.

"What do you?"

"I'm asking your opinion at the moment."

Harker lighted his pipe and puffed steadily for some moments.

"This artist was a friend of yours, wasn't he?" he said slowly. "Well, I'm afraid he's in the soup. We're keeping an open mind at the Yard, but at the moment we can't see a glimmer of hope for him. The man has run. That's the worst feature of it."

"I'm afraid it is," Blake agreed.

"Tinker tells me that you have had people making statements. Has there been anything important?"

Harker hesitated before replying.

"It hasn't been easy to separate the wheat from the chaff, Blake. An engine-driver and a fireman who were shunting near the studio both state that they heard the shot. Their time corresponds with the girl Parr's. There is one man who declares that he heard two shots, one very soon after the other, but I think he was suffering with noises in his casnet," he added, with a smile.

"You knew this artist chap pretty well, didn't you?"

"Quite well—yes."

"He never appeared to you as being vindictive or malicious?"

"Never," Blake said emphatically.

"Why, Harker?"

"Because there was something particularly murderous in the way he, or somebody, had carved the nose of that bullet about. It looked as if it had been deliberately notched to cause a bad wound."

"You suggest, Harker, that Barker not only planned to murder this woman, but deliberately, and in cold blood—notched the nose of the bullet so as to cause a fatal wound, even if he missed a vital spot?"

"That's what it seems like, Blake."

"But that is absurd—absolutely preposterous!" Blake said. "If you knew the man you would say so yourself!"

"What other motive could he have for meddling with the bullet, then?"

"My point is that he didn't meddle with it," Blake said quietly.

Harker smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"You can see the bullet yourself if you come to the Yard. I admit it is very strange."

For some moments the two detectives smoked in silence. Presently Blake looked over.

"What, precisely, is Galloway's reconstruction of the murder? Do you know?"

"Yes. He declares that there was a quarrel, that this woman Verlieff picked up a hammer and smashed the bust in front of him, and that Barker shot her in a fit of rage."

"I see. In the heat of anger, eh?" Blake queried.

"That's so."

"And what about the bullet? Does Galloway think that Barker had been meddling with it?" Blake asked.

"He's pretty certain of it."

"So that Galloway is certain of two things—that a man deliberately and with malice aforethought notched a bullet in his revolver and then shot a woman with that bullet in the heat of anger? On the one side he argues premeditation, and on the other sudden impulse. Doesn't the fellow see where his ideas land him?"

Harker shrugged his shoulders.

"It's a point, certainly," he said.

"But Galloway will soon adjust that little discrepancy. Trust Galloway!"

"That's exactly what I'm not going to do," Blake said, with a wry smile.

"I'd like a look at this flattened bullet. Was there anything else, Harker?"

"There was one thing—yes. About the only glimmer of evidence," the Yard man added, "which could possibly be regarded in Barker's favour. A woman who lives in the terrace of houses backing upon Walford Court declares that she saw a man wearing rubber shoes run across her garden from the direction of the studio and vault the wall into the next garden. She was alarmed, and went in, bolting her back door behind her."

Tinker raised his head quickly and looked at Blake. His thoughts sprang immediately to the attack which had been made upon his master with the tomahawk earlier on the evening of the tragedy. It seemed as if this woman were getting the two widely separated episodes badly confused.

"What time was this, Harker?" Blake asked quietly.

"The woman is not sure. For that reason her evidence cannot be taken very seriously," the Yard man said.

"She had fallen asleep in her chair and woke up to find the clock had stopped. She got up to let the cat in. She thinks it might have been somewhere about nine o'clock."

"H'm!" Blake thought to himself.

"She's only about two hours out. By the way, Harker," he said aloud, "there was a question I wanted to ask you before I forget it. Have you ever come across an American crook named Withers—Jake Withers?"

"The name seems familiar," said Harker, glancing at his watch.

"You have not heard anything of him lately?"

"No!"

"There is no mention of him in your American reports as having come to England? You haven't got him on your lists, have you?"

"I don't think so. Withers?" he mused.

"No, Blake; I'm certain we haven't. Why?"

"I was just interested in his movements, that's all," Blake said.

"Not in connection with this case, surely!" exclaimed the Yard man, rising.

"Oh, no! Nothing to do with this case," Blake said. "Is your time up?"

"I'm afraid so. I must be cutting along. There was nothing else you wanted to know was there—no way in which I could help?"

"There is one way. Yes," Blake said.

"You are aware of Galloway's edict, I suppose?"

"No. What's that?"

"Forbidding anyone to enter the studio without his express permission."

"Not you!" said Harker, with a frown.

"Yes, me!"

"Oh, help! But the man's a fool. He knows you've always got a carte blanche with the Yard."

"But not with Inspector Galloway," said Blake with a smile. "I want to see that studio, Harker. I want to make a thorough examination."

"Then go, my dear chap—go!" said Harker emphatically. "Tell Galloway I sent you."

"I'd rather you had a word with the A.C." Blake said quietly.

"All right; I'll see him at once. But it's absurd that it should be necessary."

"I'd like to see that bullet you speak of, too," Blake said thoughtfully.

"Then come along with me now," said Harker promptly.

"I think I will," said Blake, reaching for his coat.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. In Which Everything is Cleared Up.



THERE was a light, not unlike the light of battle, in the grey eyes of Sexton Blake as he strode, with Tinker beside him, towards the studio of the missing sculptor, over whose name hung the sinister shadow of murder.

Armed with a permit in the personal handwriting of the Assistant Commissioner he could afford to snap his fingers, had the gesture pleased him, in the face of Detective-Inspector Galloway.

There was something else in his pocket, also, which accorded him still greater satisfaction—something which gave him, at last, a tangible clue to grapple with.

He drew the article from his pocket now as he strode along, and peered at it intently. It was a small bullet, belonging obviously to the type of cartridge which would fit a small automatic pistol of light calibre. It was the bullet taken from the heart of the unfortunate dancing-girl, Nita Verlieff, and the nose of it was flattened and blunted.

He handed it to Tinker, who was looking over curiously.

"That is a valuable piece of evidence, my lad—mute evidence. Would you say that bullet had been tampered with?"

Tinker inspected it keenly.

"It certainly has that appearance, gov'nor," he said, after a pause.

"Of having been cut with a knife?" queried the detective.

"Hardly that. It looks more as if it had been blunted with a hammer."

"Or fired against a brick wall," said Blake, with a smile.

Tinker nodded.

"It's certainly badly blunted, gov'nor. Might it not have been flattened by contact with a bone? That's not unusual, is it, when the lead is soft?"

"No. And in this case the doctor says that the bullet was deflected by the breast-bone towards the heart. In fact, he is of opinion that the bone might have caused the flattening, although he admits that the ugly character of the

fresh-wound seems to point to the bullet having been already blunted when it entered the body. But we shall know more later, perhaps. Here we are."

A constable on guard outside the door of the studio stepped forward to challenge them. He was new to the Force, and inclined to show his authority until Blake produced the Commissioner's permit. Then he became extremely deferential.

"I suppose nothing has been touched, constable?" Blake said.

"No, sir. Nothing—except the body."

"Good!"

He passed in through the curtain and glanced about him. The condition of the studio was precisely the same as when he had glimpsed it by favour of Detective Whipples. The shattered bust remained undisturbed. The white chalk-marks on the carpet still indicated the precise position in which the body of Nita Verlieff had been found. Even Barker's small automatic lay where it had fallen, between the fireplace and the door.

"Now, my lad," Blake muttered, with a grunt of satisfaction, "you can stand by while I have a look round."

Tinker seated himself upon the arm of a chair and watched his master remove hat and coat deliberately, first taking from his pocket the powerful lens which was his invariably ally on such occasions.

Proceeding upon his hands and knees, he proceeded to make first a minute examination of the pistol, withdrawing one of the unused cartridges from the chamber and taking a careful measurement with a pair of mathematical calipers. It was ten minutes before he was satisfied with his scrutiny and moved forward, across the floor, inspecting almost every square inch through the lens, coming finally to the shattered portions of the bust which had once been such a speaking likeness of himself.

Tinker's thoughts wandered as he watched. He had long since ceased to wonder at the meticulous care and accuracy with which Sexton Blake conducted an inspection of this kind. He missed nothing. Every hair and fragment, every scratch or abrasion was required to fit into the natural scheme of things before he was content to pass it. The slightest abnormality riveted his whole attention.

A cloud of foul smoke from an engine on the big siding which fringed the tiny

gardens of the studios swept over and shut out the weak afternoon sun, causing Blake to pause a moment in his scrutiny. Sometimes he winced under the deafening screech and rattle of the incessant shunting which went on. He agreed with Barker, who had more than once complained of the nuisance as being the one intolerable drawback to the studio.

Tinker looked over with quick interest as Blake suddenly rose to his feet and peered towards the window, making a quick remark which the screech of the trains made quite inaudible.

"What did you say, gov'nor?" he shouted.

Even then his voice failed to carry, and Blake shook his head quickly and dropped down to his knees again, moving slowly across the carpeted floor towards the farther wall.

Tinker saw him bend a little lower, and then bring the lens to bear quickly. Suddenly he snatched a pen-knife from his pocket and began to dig eagerly in the dark wainscot.

Tinker leapt down from the chair and moved forward, watching him intently. Then, with a little exclamation, Blake sprang to his feet and swung round.

"Tinker!" he cried. "I've got Galloway on toast!" His grey eyes were dancing—his whole features seemed to have lighted up. It was a long time since Tinker had seen him so excited. "What will they make of this—eh?" he cried. "What will they say to this, my lad?"

He extended something in his thin hand which drew a gasp of astonishment from Tinker.

"A bullet!" Tinker cried, amazed. "No; not a bullet—the bullet! There—in the wainscot. Did you not see me dig it out?"

"What do you mean—the bullet, gov'nor?"

"The bullet from that pistol," said Blake, in a low, quick tone, pointing to the automatic which lay, as before, upon the carpet. "My lad, this will be a blow to them. What will they say now when I prove to them that the shot fired by Barker did not kill Nita Verlieff? What will they say to that? Go and fetch that constable, my lad. We must get him as a witness, or Galloway will suspect me of cooking my evidence."

Tinker's heart beat rapidly as he sprang through the curtained door. A minute later the policeman entered.

"I want you to witness a little discovery I have made, constable. You observe this hole in the wainscot here?"

"Yes, sir," said the policeman, stooping.

"I have just extracted from it this bullet. It constitutes, I think, a very valuable piece of evidence in connection with this case. I would like you to make an official note of it."

The constable nodded vigorously and withdrew, his notebook, writing somewhat laboriously for some minutes. Tinker was trying to mobilise his thoughts afresh from the confusion into which Blake's startling discovery had plunged them. The existence of a second bullet had never crossed his mind. What did it mean?

If Nita Verlieff had not died from a bullet fired from the automatic now lying upon the floor, where had the other shot come from, and who on earth had fired it?

And why was only one shot heard? The completeness of this new mystery did not seem to be affecting Blake just then so keenly as it affected Tinker. The detective was busy upon his knees, taking careful measurements of the

POPULAR BOOKS FOR READERS OF ALL AGES!

THE BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY (New Series)

- No. 37.—**LOVE-HAND LORIMER—OUTLAW!**
An Exciting Yarn of Wild West Adventure. By JAKE DENVERS.
- No. 38.—**THE CURSE OF THE CURZONS.**
A Thrilling Story of a Soldier's Temptation. By J. W. WHELAN.
- No. 39.—**FOOTBALL CRUMS.**
A Splendid Tale of the Footer Field. By A. S. HARDY.
- No. 40.—**THE CRUISE OF THE NO SURRENDER.**
A Thrilling Story of Fighting on the Spanish Main. By S. WALKER.

THE SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY (New Series)

- No. 37.—**THE CASE OF THE OLD OAK CHEST.**
Tale of Barring Mr. Gort and Clever Detective, introducing the Popular Characters, GILBERT and EILEEN HALE.
- No. 38.—**THE ADVENTURE OF THE RED-BREADED MAN.**
A Story of Adventure and Amazing Detective Work in Yorkshire, featuring DAVID MANTISSY—Tennis Photographer.
- No. 39.—**THE CLAUSE IN THE WILL.**
A Fascinating Tale of Thrilling Detective Adventure and Intrigue. By the Author of "The Case of the Press Photographer," etc., etc.
- No. 40.—**THE BLACK LIMOUSINE.**
A Romance of Thrilling Adventure in England and France, introducing GRANITE GRANT and MILE JULE.

THE SCHOOL-BOYS' OWN LIBRARY

- No. 23.—**THE SCHOOLBOY BALLOONS.**
The School and the Clever Detective, featuring Harry Wharton & Co. at Greatfairs. By FRANK RICHARDS.
- No. 24.—**WAKE UP, KATIE!**
A Rousing Story of School Life, introducing Dicky Dexter & Co. By MICHAEL POOL.

OUT ON FRIDAY!

PRICE FOURPENCE EACH!

broken bust, afterwards stepping back and peering fixedly at the tall glass window which lighted the studio from the side.

He crossed to the window suddenly, and reached up for the tassel of the blind cord, drawing the blind down slightly and peering upwards. A grunt escaped him as he released the cord again, and the blind flew upwards.

When Sexton Blake turned from the window Tinker noticed that his whole manner and expression had changed. It was as if a heavy load had been lifted from his mind, leaving him cheerful to the point of blitheness.

He withdrew a cigarette from his case, tapped it lightly upon his nail, and lighted it with the air of a man whose task is done. He dropped down upon the edge of the table, swinging one leg casually, and the policeman, who had now finished making his notes, looked over, almost as mystified as Tinker was.

"You know this district pretty well, I suppose, constable?"

"Like the palm of my hand, sir!" declared the policeman.

"Is there an undertaker's in the vicinity?"

"In Pelham Road—yessir."

"And a stonemason's?" Blake queried curiously.

"Yes, sir—Andrews—nearly next door."

"Is he on the phone, constable?"

"The mason? That I couldn't say, sir."

Blake turned to Tinker.

"Just see, my lad. If he is, I want to speak to him."

Tinker looked utterly bewildered as he turned the pages of the directory near by. The stonemason was on the telephone, and the number was quickly secured.

Blake took the receiver.

"Can you come along at once, please," he said, "to No. 9, Walford Court? I am speaking for the police. The matter is urgent."

Blake smiled at Tinker's inquiring glance as he replaced the receiver.

"What's up, guv'nor? Are you thinking of ordering a tombstone?"

"Yes; to erect over the grave of a dead theory," said the detective.

"You are certain that Nita Verlieff was not shot by Barker, guv'nor?"

"As certain as I am of my own name, I have just shown you the bullet I took from the wainscot. That bullet will fit to fit the cartridge in the pistol on the floor, there."

"But does not the other bullet fit also, guv'nor—the one which killed the woman, I mean?"

"It fits—yes. They are both of the same calibre. But they are of slightly different type. I recognised that difference as soon as I compared the blunted bullet with the others in the chamber. It is a vital fact, but one which has been overlooked by our friend Galloway. It shows how dangerous it is to be too swayed by a pet idea. Galloway went out to prove his hypothesis, which was so feasible, that he did not apply what I call the acid test."

"As soon as you examined Barker's pistol closely," repeated Tinker, getting the idea clear in his own mind, "you suspected that the bullet found in the heart of Nita Verlieff did not belong to the spent cartridge?"

"Yes."

"So that set you hunting for a second bullet?"

"Precisely. For the bullet which did correspond. And directly I found it," he added, with a wry smile, "down

came the respective theories of Messrs. Whipples & Galloway."

Tinker nodded thoughtfully, keeping his mind bent upon the case.

"Then where did this other bullet come from—this one that killed her, guv'nor?" he asked eagerly, and the constable by the curtain hung intently on his reply.

Blake's answer was startling.

"From outside," he said calmly.

"From outside the studio?" gasped Tinker. "You mean some other person fired at Nita Verlieff from outside?"

"Not exactly. They fired at me!"

"At you?" breathed Tinker incredulously, while the policeman's lower jaw sank a full half-inch. "At you, guv'nor?"

"Yes."

"But you weren't here!" Tinker cried.

Blake smiled, and drew deeply at his cigarette. He seemed to be enjoying the bewilderment of Tinker—the utter incredulity of the policeman.

"You weren't here, guv'nor!" Tinker repeated, with emphasis.

"A person outside may have been under a very strong impression that I was here," Blake said coolly. "In many respects that impression would be justified."

"I—I don't understand."

"You are familiar with my features, Tinker," the detective said. "If you chanced to be outside a lighted room and saw the distinct shadow of those features on the blind, you would gather the impression, would you not, that I was inside?"

"Shadow!" echoed Tinker, in a bewildered tone. "Your features! I—I— He paused, and his whole face lighted up as the truth dawned upon him. "You mean the bust!" he cried. "I've got it! You mean the bust. The shadow of it was thrown on the blind, and somebody fired at it, thinking it was you!"

Blake nodded, and a grunt of amazement broke from the constable.

"Well, I'm stove in and sunk!" he said. "I never thought of that!"

Blake pointed across the studio.

"You can see the position of the pedestal, on which the bust was standing; and there was the light over there. Now you can estimate pretty well how and where the shadow of it would be projected."

Tinker peered intently, glancing afterwards at the pedestal and the chalk mark on the carpet, which marked the spot where the unfortunate dancer fell.

"It must have been a rotten bad shot," he muttered, "to miss by all that and hit the girl!"

"No; it was a very excellent shot," Blake said calmly. "Had I have been, as I was upon other occasions, sitting in the same position as the bust was, I should have been shot through the head."

Tinker stared.

"But in that case the bullet must have hit the bust, guv'nor."

"It did!"

"But—but it hit the woman."

"Know!"

"But how could it have hit them both?"

"It did hit them both," Blake insisted quietly. "Nita Verlieff was killed by a ricochet!"

"A ricochet!" The simple statement came like a flash from the heavens, illuminating the whole mystery. The constable had burst into a sudden fit of chuckling.

"May I be rammed and scuttled!" he grunted. "And nobody ever thought

of it! A rickshay, eh? The bullet hit the statue and flew off at an angle!"

"A ricochet! Great Scott!" burst in Tinker. "Hence the blunted nose of the bullet."

There came a sudden knocking upon the door, and the policeman turned with alacrity. A man with a heavy moustache entered, wearing a cap which was decorated by scores of tiny granite chip-pings.

"Somebody rang up," he said. "I'm Andrews, the mason. Anything the matter?"

"Nothing alarming, Mr. Andrews," said Blake. "How many years have you been at your trade?"

"Forty, sir," said the man, not without pride.

"Then you have a fair knowledge of stone?"

"I should 'ope so."

"You work a good deal in marble, I suppose?" Blake queried.

"Es, sir."

"You know its peculiarities as a stone—how it will chip and crack?"

"I shouldn't be much of a mason if I didn't, sir."

"Then just have a look at these broken pieces on the floor, Mr. Andrews. Don't disturb them unless you can help it. Notice the relation of the pieces and the run of the grain."

The mason dropped on one knee and peered at the smashed bust closely. A frown came to his face as he saw the quality of the work which had been destroyed.

"My lor," he muttered. "This was a grand piece of carving, sir. What a wicked shame that it was smashed." He rose presently, and glanced inquiringly at Blake.

"Now tell me, Andrews, as a skilled mason. You see how that bust is split. Would it have been broken in that way by a heavy blow with a mallet from above?"

"A blow on the crown of the head, as you might say, sir?"

"Yes."

"No, it couldn't. To split down the grain like that it would have to be hit sideways."

"And by a sharp blow?"

"Very sharp," agreed the mason.

"Could it have been done by a bullet?" Blake asked.

The mason looked up and nodded.

"I should have said 'no,' at one time," he said. "But I've seen almost the same thing happen over the other side. I haven't been long back from France. Working on rebuilding in the devastated area. I've seen marble work split by a fragment of shell, just like this is split. It's the short, sharp impact what does it."

Blake nodded, completely satisfied, and put a ten-shilling note into the mason's horny hand.

"I am much obliged, Mr. Andrews. I may have to ask you to repeat what you have told us in a court of law. Good-day!"

Tinker stared after the man's muscular figure as he passed out with the constable. The evidence which was to clear the name of Cedric Barker seemed to be piling up in a most cheering manner. He turned to the detective, whose gaze was fixed thoughtfully out of the window.

"It looks as if you've cleared Mr. Barker, guv'nor."

"I venture to think so, my lad."

"Now we've got to find the real culprit."

"Yes." Blake got down leisurely from the table and crossed to the window, reaching once more for the tassel of the blind, which he again drew down.

When the blind was lowered he pointed to a small round hole cleanly drilled in the brown holland near the top of the window.

"Do you see that?"

"Yes, guv'nor. That's the bullet-hole right enough."

"I think so. We can take a line from the bust to that hole and project it. It gives us rather a queer trajectory."

"It means," said Tinker, closing one eye and taking imaginary aim, "that the bullet was fired from a height. That's queer, guv'nor. I can't see any house or window it could have been fired from."

"There is only one possible spot," Blake said in his calm, logical way. "Tinker, the pieces of this puzzle begin to fit in perfectly. You remember when I rang Barker on the night of the tragedy, and could get no reply?"

"Yes; the line was out of order."

"Yet it was subsequently found to be in perfect order, as I took the trouble to find out," said Blake. "At that time, however, somewhere about nine o'clock, the Exchange complained of intermittent ringing. Now what would cause intermittent signals?"

"A short on the two wires," said Tinker promptly.

"Exactly. And what would cause a short?" Why, the fact that somebody had climbed that telephone-post," Blake said, pointing to a tall post at the rear of the studio. "and was perched upon the cross-arms. We'll go and have a look at that post, my lad. Apart from this business of signalling at the Exchange, it happens to be the only place from which a shot with this trajectory could have been fired."

They passed out through the back of the studio into the tiny garden, mounting the high wall, and crossing two intervening gardens until they reached the pole.

It had been erected upon the inside of a wall which separated a private garden from the street, and the cross-arms carried only two other wires besides those which communicated with Cedric Barker's studio.

The soft earth of the garden was still hard with frost, and was covered in a white rime, which Blake flapped off with his handkerchief at the foot of the post. A quick grunt broke from him as he did so, for there, frozen as rigidly as though a mould had been made of it was the imprint of two feet, planted close together, as if made by a man who was about to spring up and catch the top of the wall.

In a moment Blake was on one knee, the lens in his hand. His lips tightened as he peered closely at the footprints. They were those of a man who wore crepe rubber shoes. The faint imprint of the crepe rubber was plainly visible.

Blake rose quickly, and withdrew a short folding measure of thin steel from his pocket. He took out his notebook, and turned the pages quickly until he came to the notes which he had taken when, on the night of the death of Nita Verlieff, he had been attacked by an unseen enemy upon the wall.

Blake's thoughts leapt back vividly now to the sinister hum and metallic ring of that tomahawk which had so nearly brained him—to the shadow fitting over the wall. These footprints were the same in every detail. The measurements, to say nothing of the pattern of the sole, corresponded with his notes.

The detective rose and looked at Tinker with a queer expression.

"I think this is good enough, my



Sexton Blake's lips tightened as he peered closely at the footprints. They were those of a man who wore crepe rubber shoes. "I think this is good enough," he said. "I know now the man who killed Nita Verlieff."

lad. I know now the man who killed Nita Verlieff," he said quietly.

"Who, guv'nor?" Tinker asked breathlessly.

"It is the same man who tried to assassinate me in Walford Court!"

"The man with the tomahawk?"

"Yes. He seems to have been a determined sort of fellow. He meant to get me somehow, that is certain. Let's have a look in that shrubbery, my lad."

He turned and dived into a thick clump of evergreens, and was lost to sight for a full minute. When he emerged there was a light of triumph in his grey eyes, and he carried in his right hand a small automatic pistol of American pattern, rather similar in design to the weapon in the studio.

"Our luck has turned with a vengeance, my lad," he said. "Look at this!"

"You think that is the pistol he used?"

"I am certain. Look—there is one spent cartridge," Blake said.

"But why on earth did he throw it away?" Tinker asked.

"I cannot think, my lad!"

"But you must have had some idea. Why did you search in the shrubbery?"

"I had no idea. This was the last thing I expected to find. I made the search merely as a matter of course. It's very strange," he muttered to himself musingly, "that he should have thrown the pistol away."

He examined the weapon curiously, and then thrust it into his pocket, vaulting across the wall and dropping lightly

down into the cobbled street on the other side. Tinker followed him, coming down with a rather heavy bump as his foot slipped on the frosty cobbles. He picked himself up with a grunt of annoyance, and then stiffened suddenly, his eyes fixed on the ground.

"Hallo! Look here, guv'nor! What's this?"

Blake had already seen the scarlet stain upon the stone, and was peering at it with his lens. He began to move quickly along the pavement, bent almost double. Presently he paused and looked about him. The crimson trail ended abruptly in what had been a small pool of blood—now dull red and congealed, and half-obiterated by the traffic.

Obliquely across the road, beneath the railway arch, was a dingy paper-shop, and Blake strode towards it. A sleepy-looking boy was counting out a few quires of early editions.

"Was anybody hurt in this street last night, my boy?" he asked.

"Urt, sir? Not as I know of," said the boy. "Oh, yes, there was," he corrected himself suddenly. "A man knocked down by a car, sir, and took off in the ambulance."

"What time was this?"

"Soon after nine, sir."

Blake glanced sharply at Tinker.

"Are you sure he was knocked down by a car?"

"Yes, sir. The ambulance took him to the Eastern Hospital," the boy said.

Blake turned out of the shop with a puzzled expression on his face, returning without delay to the studio. Once more he took down the receiver of the

telephone, after searching in the directory for the number of the Eastern Hospital.

He was glad it was the Eastern, because young Faraday, whom he knew well, was at present acting as house-surgeon. In a few minutes he had been put through to the doctor's quarters.

"Hallo! Is that you, Faraday? This is Sexton Blake speaking. I'm told you had an accident case last evening."

"We had three—inside half an hour," said the doctor laconically. "Which one do you refer to?"

"A man picked up in Tallow Street just after nine."

"I remember—yes; a bad case. Injuries to the spine. Knocked down by some brute in a car who drove on without stopping."

"Are you sure of that?" Blake asked.

"The man said so. He was conscious when they brought him in. The wing of a car caught him and then went on. He was found lying in the gutter."

"H'm!" Blake said thoughtfully.

"Did he give you his name?"

"I'll inquire," said the house-surgeon.

"Half a minute!"

Blake waited, drumming on the receiver impatiently.

"What does he say, guv'nor?" Tinker whispered impatiently.

"I think we've got our man," Blake muttered. "Just a minute."

After a short delay the voice of Dr. Faraday came over the line again.

"Are you there, Blake? Well, we're not quite sure of his name. He gave the name of Jake Davis. But there was an American passport in his pocket made out in the name of Jake Withers."

Blake's heart bounded.

"Ah-h! That's what I wanted to know. If I run along some time, Faraday, do you think I might see the man? It's a police matter, and rather vital."

"Of course. I'll leave instructions," the house-surgeon said. "Good-bye!"

Blake's expression was triumphant as he turned to Tinker.

"It's Withers, my lad. It's the man we guessed it was. He must have fallen from that post and, after dropping or forgetting his pistol, crawled like a dog for about twenty yards, poor devil!"

His injuries must be serious, and he may not have long to live. This clears poor Barker completely, my lad, I'm delighted to say. We'll probably get a confession if the man's dying. I think we'll go along to the Eastern Hospital straightaway, and take a police witness. Ah!" he added quickly, as the curtain was thrust back and a tall, alert, dark-eyed man strode in. "Here is the very man for us. Here is Inspector Galloway!"

Blake's manner was genial—almost gay. But his pardonable self-satisfaction was not nearly so obtrusive as that of the man from Scotland Yard. Galloway was smiling and rubbing his hands, and greeted Blake with an air of subtle patronage.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Blake! Still busy with your investigations?"

"Still busy, inspector," said Blake;

"but," he added, with an inward chuckle, "they are nearly complete."

"But not quite—eh?" queried Galloway, with an indulgent smile.

"No, not quite."

"Then I shouldn't trouble to proceed, Mr. Blake," he said.

"Why not?" Blake asked curtly.

"It's rather a waste of time," said the Yard man. "The whole affair's cleared up."

"Cleared up!" Blake echoed, while Tinker stared over with a frown. "In what way?"

"The bird's netted," said Galloway, with a grin. "Cedric Barker was taken at Salisbury this morning, and we hold his written confession."

Blake's eyes blazed.

"You hold what?" he echoed slowly.

"We hold his written confession," said the Yard man, with a grin. "He admits the crime!"

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER. Salvation—and a Souvenir.



THE quiet, complacent statement of Inspector Galloway fell upon Sexton Blake like a thunderbolt.

Barker had confessed! Surely Galloway was lying? Yet it was obvious from his smug and somewhat triumphant manner that he was not.

But it was absurd, incredible! The man was innocent. How could he have confessed?

The thoughts crowded through Blake's mind in a momentary riot of confusion. His incredulity and utter astonishment showed for a few seconds in his face. Then the detective's long-schooled self-control reasserted itself, and his expression became set and mask-like, giving no clue to his emotions.

"This is unexpected news, inspector."

"To you, Mr. Blake, maybe," said Galloway, with a smug smile; "not to me entirely."

"You are quite sure of the accuracy of your information?"

"It is part of my duty to be sure of that."

"H'm! There are times, inspector, when the most astute of us cannot afford to be too sure. Where is Barker now?"

"In Highbury Prison."

"Has he asked to see a solicitor?"

"No; he does not propose to offer a defence, I suppose," Galloway said casually.

"He is entitled to see a solicitor or a friend if he requests it."

"He has not requested it," said the inspector curtly.

"H'm!" Blake moved towards the door and motioned to Tinker. "Come on, my lad, I think we'll go to Highbury."

He passed out quickly, and his face was overcast as he strode down the narrow lane, hailing the first taxi that he saw.

YOU CAN CUT OUT :: THIS COUPON ::



without mutilating story-matter. Your friends will have the story intact.

It's yours!

Buy five extra copies of this issue, in addition to this one. (These five will cost you 10d.)

Give them to five friends of yours who do not at present read the paper. Get each of the said friends to write his name and address on the coupon cut from the issue which he has received, and send the five coupons, together with the one from your own copy, to the Editor.

In return will be sent you a solid seven-inch-high bust of Sexton Blake, as pictured on the cover and on page 2. This bust is worth 3s. 6d. It cannot be obtained from any shop.

The postage of the bust costs us 9d.—nearly the cost of your extra copies—so you are getting something worth 3s. 6d. practically for nothing.

Nothing will be charged for postage except in the case of overseas readers. Postage rates overseas and full particulars will be found on page 2.

FREE SEXTON BLAKE BUST COUPON

(Appearing in this issue ONLY.)

Name of **REGULAR** Reader.....

(Please write in Capital Letters)

Address

I hereby certify that the issue from which this coupon was cut has been given to my friend, who has not hitherto been a reader of the UNION JACK and who has written his (or her) name and address below.

Name of **NON-READER**.....

(In his or her own handwriting)

Address

Five of these coupons signed with a non-reader's name and address, and one with regular reader's name and address only—SIX IN ALL—should be pinned together in left-top corner and sent to: The Editor, UNION JACK, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. The postage is 1½d. in scaled envelopes. No money need be sent for the postage of the bust, except in the case of overseas readers. Rates from overseas are set out on page 2. The appropriate amount should be sent in each case, enclosed with six coupons.

"This is an extraordinary development, my lad," he muttered, speaking to Tinker for the first time since they left the studio.

"It is amazing! I can't make head or tail of it!" Tinker gasped.

Blake acknowledged that he, too, was completely mystified. It was not often that he confessed to absolute bewilderment. Now, search as he might, he could not find an explanation for what had happened.

It was as if daylight had appeared before them, after wandering about in the heart of the wood—as if they had suddenly perceived the open glade before them, and had hurried towards it. And then, just as they were about to emerge from the darkness, it seemed as though the glade had faded like a mirage, and that they were plunged into denser forest than before.

The taxi sped with them quickly to the gaol, and Blake was accorded a prompt interview with the governor.

"I am not sure that I have a right to let you see him, Blake. If it were a lawyer, now, whom he had requested to see—"

"That's quite all right, then," said Blake. "It may be news to you, colonel, but I'm several things besides being a detective—at least, so far as passing qualifying examinations is concerned. In my younger days I dabbled in various things, and before I took up my present line I got one or two degrees and such-like that have been rather useful to me since, though I don't practise the professions. I have my medical degrees, for instance—L.R.C.P. and others—and I ate the regulation number of dinners at my Inn, and can practise as a barrister if anyone cares to brief me."

"Really? I did not know that."

"Law is one of the qualifications I do not advertise, colonel."

"But you say you do not practise?"

"I have the right to, if I wish. I want to start practising now," he added, with a smile.

"But the man has not asked for a lawyer," the colonel said.

"Then send a message and say that I am here and willing to act for him. He will make the necessary formal request then, I am quite sure."

The governor of the gaol nodded and rose quickly, passing out of the office. Ten minutes later he returned in the company of a warder.

"The prisoner has asked for you," he said. "I have no power to deny him the privilege. Phelps, show Mr. Blake, the lawyer, to the room where Barker is detained."

Blake went out with the warder promptly. He found Cedric Barker seated upon a chair in a plainly furnished room, a meal lying untouched upon the scrubbed table. His head was pillowed in his hands.

"Well, Barker," Blake said cheerily.

"This is a pretty kettle of fish!"

The sculptor looked up with a bitter smile, and motioned Blake to take a chair.

"I was a fool to run, Blake," he said bitterly. "It was the act of an arrant coward. But I was stunned—completely stunned! I did not know what I was doing. Sit down. I am glad you have come—I can talk to you. I can't talk to these other people. Their cursed eyes seem to freeze me up—paralyse me!" he muttered.

Blake regarded him thoughtfully. "They tell me you have signed a written statement, Barker—made a confession?"

"The sculptor nodded.

"You admit having shot Nita Verlieff?"

"Yes," he said in a low tone.

"Deliberately?" Blake suggested in an even tone; and Barker's head came up suddenly, his dark eyes flashing.

"Mon Dieu, no! Deliberately?"

Blake, do you take me for a murderer?"

"No, but the police do!" Blake said sharply.

"A murderer?" cried Barker hoarsely.

"Me?"

"Yes!"

"Then they are fools—fools!" The young sculptor sprang to his feet in a passion, his fists clenched, his dark eyes flashing. "I may have shot poor Nita, but it was an accident—an accident, Blake, I swear it. She came to the studio just as I was leaving, and she was in one of her mad, wild moods. She would have stabbed me for two pins—I could see it in her eyes."

"I argued with her, pleaded, tried to pacify her. But she would not listen. She laughed in my face. She told me that it was she who had smashed my work for me, and she said defiantly that she would go on doing so. She threatened to smash that piece I had just finished off of you—on the pedestal. She wanted me to give up my work; and go back to her: We had danced together, Blake, in the old, wild days. She wanted me to go back to dancing."

He paused, and Blake nodded sympathetically.

"Go on," he said.

"I refused," said Barker, in low quick tones. "I told her point-blank that I was finished. It was then that she flew into a passion and raved at me, and whipped out of her coat a little automatic given to me by Pere Leduc—which she must have stolen from me in Paris. I haven't seen it for years, anyway, till—till she came."

"I closed with her and managed to grab it from her," he said; "but as I staggered back, the cursed thing went off. I did not know where the bullet went—I had not the least suspicion it had caused any damage. She was still

(Continued overleaf.)

Replies in Brief

.. to ..

"Round Table" Correspondents.

E. Rose (Bournemouth).—Very many thanks for your appreciation of "Nirvana's Secret." I am quite in agreement with you in your praise of this tale, and, in fact, of the series. As to your request, if you will write to Mr. G. H. Teed, care of this office, your letter will be forwarded.

G. W. Irvin (Hull).—I think you will agree that the Confederation yarns do form a serial, if you come to think of it. The thread of the main events runs continuously throughout, and each episode is, as far as possible, complete in itself. The only respect in which they do not resemble a normal kind of serial is that the "instalments" do not appear every week; but you will see that it would be almost an impossibility for the author to turn them out at that rate. Besides which, most readers like other characters in between. Recce is a good thing, but one can have too much of a good thing. For back numbers you will probably have better luck by consulting our readers' advertisements than in relying on the stalls.

A. J. Baker (Southsea).—The question

of an index for the Supplement has been gone into on previous occasions, but I'm afraid for various reasons it can't be done. Amongst other things, it would occupy one whole Supplement issue at the end of every volume, and the readers who cannot use it, on account of not having complete sets to refer to, would not like that. Another Kestrel yarn is being arranged for, and with any luck will appear very shortly. I am hoping, also, to secure tales of Lawless and Prof Kew.

K. Q. Teo (Singapore).—Val Reading illustrated a story entitled the "Lumber Looters," which has appeared by the time this gets in print. The popularity of our various artists has already been decided by readers' votes. The figures were: E. R. Parker, 878; Val Reading, 656; J. H. Valda, 421; A. Jones, 242; H. M. Lewis, 151.

A. C. Low (Catford).—Many thanks for your good wishes. You will see I partly anticipated your suggestion, and gave you ten Supplement pages instead of eight a week or two ago. Yes, the

Letters from "U.J." readers will be answered through the paper where space and other circumstances allow. It should be realised, however, that, as we go to press some four weeks in advance of publication date, replies should not be expected in the next week's issue. Other letters are answered through the post as quickly as possible. A number of replies in brief are unavoidably held over.

"U.J." is printed by Trade Union labour, as you have observed.

Miss Hilda Pitt (Manchester).—No, I do not "despise" a letter from a girl. On the contrary, I very much welcome them. I certainly understand your sympathy for Zenith the Albino; he is more to be pitied than blamed, in many ways. I'll try and keep you (and his other admirers) well supplied with his stories. Very many thanks for your good wishes.

W. S. B. (Brixton).—I don't think your suggestion about replacing the Supplement with a "sort of encyclopedia on some sorts of studies" would be very popular. You would appreciate the force of this if you could see some of the laudatory letters I receive. You are correct in a good many cases as to some grown-ups thinking the "U.J." "blood-curdling trash," and I know I can rely on you to correct this impression if ever you hear it stated. The best thing is to demand that the mistaken one shall read through a copy and see how wrong he (or she) is.

reviling me as I turned across to my desk and opened the drawer to get out a sheaf of notes I had there. I was going to offer her the money. She was a covetous little minx. I thought perhaps I could bribe her to clear out. But there was a sudden crash as I turned, and I saw the bust break in pieces, whilst she collapsed with a groan at the same time.

"I was bewildered, Blake, dumfounded. I could not understand what had happened—until I went to her. I dropped the infernal pistol and sprang to her. She lay in a pool of blood, bleeding from a gaping wound in the side, and she was already dead!

"You can imagine what I felt like. I rose and stood like a fool, staring. It was some minutes before I realised what had happened. I had shot her and I did not know it. She could not have known in her passion that she was hit until she collapsed. Then I suppose she swooned and pulled the bust over as she fell. Oh, man, it was awful!"

The young sculptor sank crouching into the chair and shuddered. Some time elapsed before he spoke again, in broken tones.

"I should have gone straight to the police, and have told them the truth I can see that now it is too late. But I was stunned, frightened. I simply ran. I can't remember what has happened since!" he muttered brokenly, "except that I have been flying from my own shadow. I could have laughed when they collared me this morning. It was like freedom instead of capture, Blake—like release! But I wish I had behaved like a man. Poor Nita, poor Nita, poor Nita!"

He repeated the name mechanically, huddled in the chair, staring fixedly before him. Presently he pulled himself together with an effort and looked up with a somewhat pitiful smile.

"That is the truth, Blake."
"You do not need to tell me that," the detective said quietly. "Did you put all this down in your statement?" he asked.

Barker shook his head.
"No; I merely stated there that I confessed to firing the shot which killed Nita Verlieff."

"Then you had no right to make any such statement," Blake said sharply.
"Why not?" asked Barker, raising his eyebrows.

"Because you were not sure of your facts. You only surmised that you had shot her. You have told me so with your own lips just now. Would you be surprised if I were to tell you that you did not shoot her at all!"

"What?"
"You did not shoot Nita Verlieff at all. When the automatic went off in your hand the bullet passed harmlessly into the wainscot."

"How do you know this?"
"I have evidence to prove it," Blake said.

"But—but if I did not shoot her, who did?" Barker gasped.

"She was killed by a bullet fired from outside the studio by somebody who was intent upon assassinating me!"

"You?"
"Yes. And this unfortunate girl was killed by the bullet when it ricocheted off the bust."

The young sculptor's eyes had opened wide with astonishment.

"Then—then this accounts for the fact that—Nita did not fall until after wards," he gasped. "—I wondered—any woman who died from the wound she received would have collapsed instantly."

"But—but who was it trying to murder you in my studio?"

"A Yankee half-caste named Withers, for whom I once secured a long holiday in Sing-Sing. The fellow has met his own judgment, and is now dying in the Eastern Hospital of a broken spine. That is why I mustn't stay any longer, Barker. I've got to hurry along there straight away."

"To see this man?"
"Yes; and to get a confession from him, if I can. It will clear you straight away, and save a lot of trouble."

Cedric Barker seized Blake by the hand and wrung it gratefully. He seemed to be trying to speak, but no sound came.

Blake smiled in a wry way.
"I have not got the confession yet, Barker, and I may not get it. The poor devil may have passed out before I get there. He may have fallen into unconsciousness and never come out. In that case, we've got to prepare our defence and mobilise our facts very carefully."

"Yes, I understand that," Barker said, nodding thoughtfully. "What must I say if they question me? What shall I do?"

"Tell the truth and nothing but the truth. Ask for pen and paper straight away, and prepare a detailed statement. Set down in black and white every fact which you have told me. It will not contradict your other statement. It will only corroborate upon it and fill in the gaps. Meanwhile, I will get busy at the other end."

He took the young sculptor's white hand with a cheerful smile and gripped it warmly.

Waiting anxiously, avid for news, Tinker was pleased to see once more the old cheery expression upon his master's face.

"Is it all right, guv'nor?"
"Yes; the mystery is cleared up. I think we shall be able to crase friend Galloway's smug smile, after all."

He raised his hand to a passing taxi, which drew into the kerb.

"Drive to the Eastern Hospital, as quick as you can," Blake said. "Life or death!"

As the cab sped southwards, past the Angel and along the City Road to Old Street, Blake related briefly what had happened in the goal, elucidating for Tinker what had been the most baffling and mysterious element in the whole strange case.

The lad had only just secured a firm grip on the truth when the cab stopped, and Blake sprang out, striding into the porter's hut.

"I want to see a patient named Davis or Withers; an accident case brought in about half-past nine on the evening before last. I have Dr. Faraday's special permission to call."

The porter nodded, and consulted a big book, moving to the telephone. After a short conversation, he turned, with a grim shrug of the shoulders.

"I'm afraid you're too late, sir. That case has been took to the mortuary!"

"Dead?" gasped Blake.
"Yesir, an hour ago. Dr. Faraday left word that if you called he wished to see you, sir. Will you kindly go to his rooms? Second floor, block II, Room No. 45."

Blake tipped the porter and passed into the big hospital, making his way to the house-surgeon's quarters with some difficulty. Dr. Faraday rose to greet him cheerfully, for the shadow of death was, alas! an all-too-familiar shadow in that place of pain and mercy.

"I'm afraid you're just too late, Blake," he said. "This fellow died at five, poor devil!"

"I am sorry."

"Why? He was in great pain, and could not possibly have recovered. It was a happy release."

"I had hoped to get a word with him," Blake said quietly.

The house-surgeon looked over keenly, and then opened the drawer of his desk, taking out a piece of paper.

"Was that what you were after?" he asked.

Blake glanced at the paper eagerly. It had been written by the house-surgeon himself, and was signed in a quivering hand, "Jake Withers." The signature of the day Sister was affixed as a witness.

The confession was couched in the crude terms of the half-caste, just as he had dictated it upon his death-bed. It ran:

"It was Blake the detective as got me into Sing-Sing, and I swore to the boys I'd get him. I tried to get him on Wednesday night with a tomahawk, but missed. Later, I see him sitting in the room where I watched him go before. I climbed the telephone-post and took a pot at him, when the trains was shunting and making a row, so as the shot wouldn't be heard. I know I got him, because I see him roll over. Coming down the pole, I slipped and fell in the road. I know I was done, so I pitched the gun over the wall, and crawled as far as I could. When a cop come, I said it was a car got me. It wasn't a car. I'm sorry about this; but I swore to Nick and the boys I'd have him, and so I have. It was him got me that spell in Sing-Sing: On my oath this is the truth."

(Signed) JAKE WITHERS."

Blake's lips set as he read the rather tragic document.

"Yes," he said, and Dr. Faraday's eyes were upon him thoughtfully. "This was what I wanted. May I have it?"

"Yes; if you promise to show it to the police."

"I will promise to do that," Blake said, with a grim smile.

Five minutes later, he and Tinker hailed a cab outside the hospital.

"Baker Street, please!" Blake said, as the man put down the flag.

THE tragic death of Nita Verlieff, the French cabaret star, in the studio of Cedric Barker, followed by the disappearance and dramatic arrest of the young sculptor himself caused a profound stir, not only in the circles of art in Europe and America, but caused a sensation among the general public which no mystery had created for a long time.

The sensation was brought to its height, however, when, after damaging evidence had been submitted at the police-court prosecution, Sexton Blake, instructing defending counsel, proceeded piece by piece to shatter the police evidence, reconstructing every detail of the tragedy, link by link and in such a way as to vindicate completely the character of the accused.

It was not until the last that Blake played his trump card, producing the signed confession of the Yankee gunman, Withers—and this devastating piece of evidence fell like a bombshell on the court, depriving the police of even a prima facie case to go for trial.

The astute face of the magistrate was sphinx-like, but his keen eyes were fixed intently upon the prosecuting solicitor as he bent in whispered conversation with the inspector.

"Do you wish to proceed with this charge?" he asked presently.

The solicitor whispered hurriedly, and then rose to his feet.

"In view of the evidence submitted by the defence, your worship," he said, "I propose to withdraw the charge!"

"I think," said the magistrate, wagging his white head, "that is your wisest course. I do not consider there is a case here to send for trial. The prisoner is discharged!"

And now, upon the mantel-shelf in Sexton Blake's consulting-room, there stands an exquisite piece of modelling—

a small bust of himself in clay which expresses the genius of a young sculptor whose work, by general consent, will one day be priceless.

The model was executed by Cedric Barker with greater care than he had bestowed upon his previous work, for he declared that only the finest expression of his art could be held acceptable as a gift to the great detective to whom he owed so much.

But, before he parted with the bust to Blake, a mould was made of it, and a number of casts taken to satisfy the demand of friends who had excited

in Blake's triumph and rejoiced in Barker's release.

It was a form of popularity Blake did not himself seek, but, as Barker himself pointed out with a smile, it was the penalty of greatness.

Blake, however, is content in the knowledge that he alone possesses the young sculptor's exquisite original. So long as it remains in his possession so long will he be reminded of what he holds to be one of the most interesting investigations and most signal triumphs in his whole career.

THE END.

TO THE NEW READERS!

By the time you read this, probably, you will have come to the end of our long story of Sexton Blake and Thicker. We hope, and we believe, that you thoroughly enjoyed it, and we are pleased to greet you as a new recruit to the ever-growing UNION JACK army.

This long yarn is but a fair sample of the sort of story that appears in this paper week by week, where excellence is commonplace, and it is hard to discriminate between one fine tale and another. This particular issue is devoted to a yarn of pure detective work; others contain those of a more adventurous tinge or of strong human dramatic

appeal. We publish a new one every week.

It is because of the excellence of its stories—*even more than the brightness of its covers and general make-up*—that the UNION JACK is, and has long been, the undisputed **FIRST** amongst detective papers. There is, in fact, no other like it.

Once you have read a Sexton Blake yarn you will want to read more. Those of our regular readers who haven't been reading the paper for years wish they had been; they buy all the back numbers they can get hold of.

Your friend who handed you this copy

is a regular reader. Ask him! He will tell you at first-hand how he enjoys Sexton Blake, and why he buys the UNION JACK every week. We want you to do the same. We want more readers, for the bigger the circulation, the better can the paper afford to be—the more ambitious schemes can we devise for your benefit.

Your friend will tell you that you can RELY on a good yarn every week. The UNION JACK is published every Thursday at 2d.—no higher price than many a less attractive paper. And realize—the UNION JACK is not only the prospect of enjoyable reading matter for you from this week onwards without a break.

JOIN THE ROYAL NAVY AND SEE THE WORLD.

THE FINEST CAREER FOR BRITISH BOYS.

Boys are wanted for the Seaman Class (from which selections are made for the Wireless Telegraphy and Signalling Branches). Age 15 to 16½ years.

Men also are required for

STOKERS - - - - - Age 18 to 23
ROYAL MARINE FORCES - - - - - Age 17 to 25
GOOD PAY - - - - - ALL FOUND.
EXCELLENT CHANCES FOR PROMOTION.

Apply by letter to the Recruiting Staff Officer, B. N. and R. M.:
50, Suffolk Street, Birmingham; 121, Victoria Street, Bristol;
30, Cannon Place, Liverpool; 65, Whitehall, London, S.W.1;
255, Deansgate, Manchester; 116, Ely Hill, Newcastle-on-Tyne; or
6, Washington Terrace, Queen's Park, Southampton.

BLUSHING SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS, SHYNESS, TIMIDITY,

Supplied 7-day Permanent Home Cure for either sex. No Auto suggestion, drill, etc. Write at once, mentioning "U.S.A." and full particulars quite FREE privately.
U. J. D., 12, All Saints Road, ST. ANNES-ON-SEA.

FREE-IMPROVED COLLECTOR'S OFFER!
As an advertisement I offer FREE DUPLICATE BOOK TO HOLD 120 STAMPS; PURGATION GAUGE; TRANSPARENT ENVELOPES; PACKET OF HINGES; A GOOD COLLECTION OF DIFFERENT STAMPS including WOLF and ARMISTICE issues, and also a fine SET OF 6 ST. THOMAS and PRINCE ISLANDS (Mini). SEND A POSTCARD asking for approvals.—VICTOR BANCROFT, MATLOCK.

YOURS FOR 6 D.
Handsome, Gent's size Lever Wristlet Watch, complete with leather strap. Luminous Hands and Dial to see times in dark. Carefully adjusted Lever Movement. Jewelled Balance, warranted honest. 12-gauge, 18-gauge, 20-gauge of Gd. Steel. After receipt send 1/6 more, balance 2/2 monthly until only 2/6 is paid. Price full cash with order, or within 7 days of receipt. 15/- only. Cash returned if dissatisfied.—**SIMPSON'S (BRIGHTON), LTD.** Dept. 10, 10, Queen's Road, Brighton, Sussex.

MY GREAT OFFER
I supply the finest Coventry built cycles ON 14 DAYS' APPROVAL, PACKED FREE AND CASH ON RECEIPT, on small deposit. Lowest cash prices, and easy payment terms. Write for Free Bargain List NOW.
C. A. ZRIEN, 14 THE WINDMILL LANE, LONDON, E.C.4. SO 18 COVENTRY.

£2,000 WORTH CHEAP PHOTO MATERIAL.—Samples catalogue free; 12 by 10 Enlargement, any photo, 9d.—HACKETT'S WORKS, July Road, LIVERPOOL.



FACTORY TO RIDER

Packed Free. Carriage Paid. Fifteen days' free trial, from £4 19s. 6d. CASH or 2/6 WEEKLY. Prompt delivery. Free Delivery. Fruitful. Big Business in Factory-Sold Cycles. Jewellers' Cycle CLEAN. Accessories and Tyres at popular prices. Satisfaction guaranteed or Money Refunded. Write for Free Lists and Special Offer of Sample Bicycle.
Mead CYCLE COMPANY, Incorp. Dept. B901, BIRMINGHAM.

POST ACCESSORIES AND 65 DIFF. STAMPS FREE!!

Metal Treezers, 100 Gummud Album Headings, British Colonials, 65 Different Stamps (50 Unused), Peleabie Stamp Mounts—Absolutely FREE. Just request Approvals.
LISBURN & TOWNSEND, London Road, LIVERPOOL.



EVERYTHING FOR HOME CINEMATOGRAPHS

Machines from 8/6 to £16 and upwards. Acetylene, Electric, and Gas Lighting Sets, and all other Accessories for Home Cinemas, of all sizes. Sample Film 1/6, post free. 1,000 ft. length, 7/-, post free.—**FORD'S (Dept. A. P.), 15, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1.** Entrance Dane Street.

THE SOLAPHONE As demonstrated at the Empire Exhibition

is the very latest Pocket Instrument; plays in all keys and produces every shade of notes as perfectly as the human voice. Blends beautifully with Piano or Gramophone. So simple a child can play it.
Post free by return post with full instructions .. 2/9.
From the maker—

R. FIELD (Dept. 10), Bankfield Road, HUDDERSFIELD

HEIGHT INCREASED 5/ Complete 3-5 inches In One MONTH. Without appliances—drugs or dieting.
THE FAMOUS OLIVE SYSTEM REVIVAL FALLS. Complete Course 5/- L.O. post free, or further particulars, stamp.
P. A. CLIVE, Harrock House, The Close, COLWYN BAY.

MAGIC TRICKS, etc.—Parcels, 2/6, 5/6. Ventriloquist's Instrument, Invisible, 15/-; Invisible Birds. Price 6d. each, 4 for 1.—T. W. HARRISON, 293, Fentonville Rd., London, S.E.1.

STOP STAMMERING! Cure yourself as I did. PAR. HUGHES, 7, SOUTHAMPTON ROW, LONDON, W.C.1.

54 DIFF. British Colonials FREE from Malta War Tax, Mint FREE to buyers requesting Approvals. Send lid. postage.
ROBERT MILLER & CO., WHITSTABLE.

WHEN ANSWERING ADVERTISEMENTS PLEASE MENTION THIS PAPER