

"Take those two into the center room," he cried. "Incidentally there's a dead Boche on the floor, but he'll come in very handy in my little scheme."

"A dead Boche!" The intimidated rabbit gave a frightened squeak. "Good heavens! you ruffian, this is beyond a joke."

Hugh looked at him coldly.

"You'll find it beyond a joke, you miserable little rat," he said quietly, "if you speak to me like that." He laughed as the other shrank past him. "Three of you boys in there," he ordered briskly, "and if either of them gives the slightest trouble clip him over the head. Now let's have the rest of the crowd in here, Peter."

They came filing in, and Hugh waved a cheery hand in greeting.

"How goes it, you fellows," he cried with his infectious grin. "Like a company pow-wow before popping the parapet. What! And it's a bigger show this time, boys, than any you've had over the water. Gather round, and listen to me."

For five minutes he spoke, and his audience nodded delightedly. Apart from their love for Drummond—and three out of every four of them knew him personally—it was a scheme which tickled them to death. And he was careful to tell them just enough of the sinister design of the master-criminal to make them realize the bigness of the issue.

"That's all clear, then," said Drummond, rising. "Now I'm off. Toby, I want you to come, too. We ought to be there by midnight."

"There's only one point, captain," remarked the American, as the group began to disperse. "That safe—and the ledger." He fumbled in his pocket, and produced a small india-rubber bottle. "I've got the soup here—gelignite," he explained, as he saw the mystified look on the other's face. "I reckoned it might come in handy. Also a fuse and detonator."

"Splendid!" said Hugh, "splendid! You're an acquisition, Mr. Green, to any gathering. But I think—I think—



And Once Again the American Laughed Softly at the Look on His Face.

Lakington first. Oh! yes—most undoubtedly—Henry first!"

And once again the American laughed softly at the look on his face.

CHAPTER XI

In Which Lakington Plays His Last "Coup."

"Toby, I've got a sort of horrid feeling that the hunt is nearly over."

With a regretful sigh Hugh swung the cart out of the sleeping town of Godalming in the direction of Laidley Towers. Mile after mile dropped smoothly behind the powerful two-seater, and still Drummond's eyes wore a look of resigned sadness.

"Very nearly over," he remarked again. "And then once more the tedium of respectability positively stares us in the face."

"You'll be getting married, old bean," murmured Toby Sinclair hopefully.

For a moment his companion brightened up.

"True, O King," he answered. "It will ease the situation somewhat; at least, I suppose so. But think of it, Toby: no Lakington, no Peterson—nothing at all to play about with and keep one amused."

"You're very certain, Hugh." With a feeling almost of wonder Sinclair glanced at the square-jawed, ugly profile beside him. "There's many a slip . . ."

"My dear old man," interrupted Drummond, "there's only one cure for the proverb-quoting disease—a dose of salts in the morning." For a while they raced on through the warm summer's night in silence, and it was not till they were within a mile of their destination that Sinclair spoke again.

"What are you going to do with them, Hugh?"

"Who—our Carl and little Henry?" Drummond grinned gently. "Why, I think that Carl and I will part amicably—unless, of course, he gives me any trouble. And as for Lakington—we'll have to see about Lakington." The grin faded from his face as he spoke. "We'll have to see about our little Henry," he repeated softly. "And I can't help feeling, Toby, that between us we shall find a method of ridding the earth of such a thoroughly unpleasing fellow."

"You mean to kill him?" grunted the other non-committally.

"Just that, and no more," responded Hugh. "Tomorrow morning as ever is. But he's going to get the shock of his young life before it happens."

He pulled the car up silently in the deep shadows of some trees, and the two men got out.

"Now, old boy, you take her back to The Elms."

"But confound it all," spluttered Toby Sinclair. "Don't you want me to help you?"

"I do: by taking the buzz-box back. This little show is my shout."

For a moment or two Hugh stood watching the car as it disappeared down the road along which they had just come, while his thoughts turned to the girl now safely asleep in his flat in London. Another week—perhaps a fortnight—but no more. Not a day more. . . . And so delightful was the train of thought thus conjured up, that for a while Peterson and Lakington were forgotten. The roseate dreams of the young about to wed have been known to act similarly before.

Wherefore to the soldier's instinctive second nature, trained in the war and sharpened by his grim duel with the gang, must be given the credit of preventing the ringing of the wedding-bells being postponed for good. The sudden snap of a twig close by, the sharp hiss of a compressed-air rifle, seemed simultaneous with Hugh hurling himself flat on his face behind a sheltering bush. In reality there was that fraction of a second between the actions which allowed the bullet to pass harmlessly over his body instead of finishing his career there and then. He heard it go zipping through the undergrowth as he lay motionless on the ground; then very cautiously he turned his head and peered about.

A shrub was shaking a few yards away, and on it Hugh fixed his half-closed eyes. If he lay quite still the man, whoever he was, would probably assume the shot had taken effect, and come and investigate. Then things would be easier, as two or three Boches had discovered to their cost in days gone by.

For two minutes he saw no one; then very slowly the branches parted and the white face of a man peered through. It was the chauffeur who usually drove the Rolls Royce, and he seemed unduly anxious to satisfy himself that all was well before coming nearer. The fame of Hugh Drummond had spread abroad amongst the satellites of Peterson.

At last he seemed to make up his mind, and came out into the open. Step by step he advanced toward the motionless figure, his weapon held in readiness to shoot at the faintest movement. But the soldier lay sprawling and inert, and by the time the chauffeur had reached him there was no doubt in that worthy's mind that, at last, this wretched meddler with things that concerned him not had been laid by the heels. Which was as unfortunate for the chauffeur as it had been for unwary Huns in the past.

Contemptuously he rolled Drummond over; then, noting the relaxed muscles and inert limbs, he laid his gun on the ground preparatory to running through his victim's pockets. And the fact that such an action was a little more foolish than offering a man-eating tiger a peppermint lozenge did not trouble the chauffeur. In fact, nothing troubled him again.

He got out one gasping cry of terror as he realized his mistake; then he had a blurred consciousness of the world upside down, and everything was over. It was Olaki's most dangerous throw, carried out by gripping the victim's wrists and hurling his body over by a heave of the legs. And nine times out of ten the result was a broken neck. This was one of the nine.

For a while the soldier stared at the body, frowning thoughtfully. To have killed the chauffeur was inconvenient, but since it had happened it necessitated a little rearrangement of his plans. The moon was setting and the night would become darker, so there was a good chance that Lakington would not recognize that the driver of his car had changed. And if he did—well, it would be necessary to forego the somewhat theatrical entertainment he had staged for his benefit at The Elms. Bending over the dead man, he removed his long grey driving-coat and cap; then, without a sound, he threaded his way through the bushes in search of the car.

He found it about a hundred yards nearer the house, so well hidden in a small space off the road that he was almost on top of it before he realized the fact. To his relief it was empty, and placing his own cap in a pocket under the seat he put on the driving-coat of his predecessor. Then, with a quick glance round to ensure that everything was in readiness for the immediate and rapid departure such as he imagined Lakington would desire, he turned and crept stealthily toward the house.

Laidley Towers was en fete. The duchess, determined that every conceivable stunt should be carried out which would make for the entertainment of her guests, had spared no pains to make the evening a success. The duke, bored to extinction, had been five times routed out of his study by his indefatigable spouse, and was now, at the moment Hugh first came in sight of the house, engaged in shaking hands with a tall, aristocratic-looking Indian. . . .

"How d'y do," he murmured vacantly. "What did you say the dam' fellah's name was, my dear?" he whispered in a hoarse undertone to the duchess, who stood beside him welcoming the distinguished foreigner.

"We're so glad you could come, Mr. Ram Dar," remarked the duchess affably. "Everyone is so looking forward to your wonderful entertainment." Round her neck were the historic pearls, and as the Indian bowed low over her outstretched hand, his eyes gleamed for a second.

It had been the marquis of Laidley himself who had suggested getting hold of this most celebrated performer, who had apparently never been in England before. And since the marquis of Laidley's coming-of-age was the cause of the whole evening's entertainment, his suggestion had been hailed with acclamation. How he had heard about the Indian, and from whom, were points about which he was very vague; but since he was a very vague young man, the fact elicited no comment. The main thing was that here, in the flesh, was a dark, mysterious performer of the occult, and what more could a house party require? And in the general excitement Hugh Drummond crept closer to the open window. Suddenly his jaw tightened; Irma Peterson had entered the room with young Laidley.

"Do you want anything done, Mr. Ram Dar?" asked the duchess—"the lights down or the window shut?"

"No, I thank you," returned the Indian. "I am ready. Who first will learn of the things that are written on the scroll of Fate?"

And it was at that moment that the intent watcher outside the window began to shake with silent mirth. For the face was the face of the Indian, Ram Dar, but the voice was the voice of Lakington. It struck him that the next ten minutes or so might be well worth while. The problem of removing the pearls from the duchess' neck before such an assembly seemed to present a certain amount of difficulty even to such an expert as Henry. And Hugh crept a little nearer the window, so as to miss nothing.

Evidently the scene was now set—the necessary props were in position—and Hugh waited with growing impatience for the principal event. But the principal performer seemed in no hurry. In fact, in his dry way Lakington was thoroughly enjoying himself. An intimate inside knowledge of the skeletons that rattled their bones in the cupboards of most of those present enabled the gods to speak with disconcerting accuracy; and as each victim insisted on somebody new facing the sands that came from beyond the mountains, the performance seemed likely to last indefinitely.

At last a sudden delighted burst of applause came from the group, announcing the discomfiture of yet another guest, and with it Lakington seemed to tire of the amusement. Engrossed though he was in the anticipation of the main item which was still to be staged, Drummond could not but admire the extraordinary accuracy of the character study. Not a detail had been overlooked; not a single flaw in Lakington's acting could he notice. It was an Indian who stood there, and when a few days later Hugh returned her pearls to the duchess, for a long time neither she nor her husband would believe that Ram Dar had been an Englishman disguised. . . . And this was what happened as seen by the fascinated onlooker crouching near the window outside.

Superbly disdainful, the Indian after a short, meaningless patter, to hold the attention of the audience, stalked to the open window. With arms outstretched he stared into the darkness, seeming to gather strength from the gods whom he served.

"Do your ears not hear the whisperings of the night?" he demanded. "Life rustling in the leaves; death moaning through the grasses." And suddenly he threw back his head and laughed, a fierce, mocking laugh; then he swung round and faced the room. For a while he stood motionless, and Hugh, from the shelter of the bushes, wondered whether the two quick flashes that had come from his robe as he spoke—flashes such as a small electric torch will give, and which were unseen by anyone else—were a signal to the defunct chauffeur.

Then a peculiar look came over the Indian's face, as his eyes fell on a Chinese cabinet.

"Where did the Protector of the Poor obtain the sacred cabinet of the Chow kings?" He peered at it reverently, and the duke coughed.

"One of my ancestors picked it up somewhere," he answered apologetically.

"Fashioned with the blood of men, guarded with their lives, and one of your ancestors picked it up!" The duke withered completely under the biting scorn of the words, and seemed about to say something, but the Indian had turned away, and his long, delicate fingers were hovering over the box.

With gleaming eyes he stared in front of him, and a woman shuddered audibly.

"What is it supposed to do?" she ventured timidly.

"For centuries that box contained the jewels—precious beyond words—of the reigning queens of the Chow dynasty. They were wrapped in silver and gold tissue—of which this is a feeble, modern substitute."

From a cummerbund under his robe he drew a piece of shining material, the appearance of which was greeted with cries of feminine delight.

"You would not ask me to commit sacrilege?" Quietly he replaced the material in his belt and turned away,



"Where Did the Protector of the Poor Obtain the Sacred Cabinet of the Chow Kings?"

and Hugh's eyes glistened at the cleverness with which the man was acting. Whether they believed it or not, there was not a soul in the room by this time who was not consumed with eagerness to put the Chinese cabinet to the test.

"Supposing you took my pearls, Mr. Ram Dar," said the duchess diffidently. "I know that compared to such historic jewels they are poor, but perhaps it would not be sacrilege."

Not a muscle on Lakington's face twitched, though it was the thing he had been playing for. Instead he seemed to be sunk in thought, while the duchess continued pleading, and the rest of the party added their entreaties. Then, as if he had decided suddenly, he swung round.

"I will try," he announced briefly, and the duchess headed the chorus of delight. "Will the Presences stand back, and you, your Grace, take that?" He handed her the piece of material. "No hand but yours must touch the pearls. Wrap them up inside the silver and gold." Aloofly he watched the process. "Now advance alone, and open the box. Place the pearls inside. Now shut and lock it." Obediently the duchess did as she was bid; then she stood waiting for further instructions.

(To Be Continued.)

LONGEVITY ON THE DECREASE

University Professor Thinks It Is, and Gives Some Cogent Reasons Why It Should Be.

Prof. Raymond Pearl of Johns Hopkins, after an exhaustive study of life probability extending through a historic period of two thousand years, arrives at the conclusion that while man's possibilities of life at birth and in earlier stages has been steadily improving, his expectation of life at advanced age has been steadily decreasing. Comparisons ranging from the Romano-Egyptian to the present day offer statistical proof. The theoretical explanation is that in early times, with less provision for the protection of babies and infants, only the more rugged pulled through. Nowadays with increasing care for childhood, the weak are carried into adolescence and adulthood. Where formerly only the fittest or toughest managed to reach the shady slope of life, and were consequently more likely to hang on to ripe old ages, the salvaging of the weaker brings them into the fifties and sixties with less hope of prolonged life. It sounds plausible and may explain the apparent decrease of longevity. Incidentally, his statistics brought out the fact that while women formerly had less expectation of life at all ages, this has been reversed—another blow to the tradition of "the weaker sex." Women now appear to have the greater probability of prolonged life.

MICKIE SAYS



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IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL

Sunday School Lesson

(By REV. P. B. FITZWATER, D. D., Teacher of English Bible in the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.)
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LESSON FOR AUGUST 28

FROM ASIA TO EUROPE.

LESSON TEXT—Acts 16:6-18.
GOLDEN TEXT—And they said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.—Acts 16:31.
REFERENCE MATERIAL—Rom. 15:15-21.
PRIMARY TOPIC—A Wonderful Dream.
JUNIOR TOPIC—Paul Crosses Over Into to Europe.
INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC—Beginning Work on a New Continent.
YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC—Paul Carries the Gospel to Europe.

I. Forbidden by the Holy Spirit to Preach the Word (vv. 6-8).

We have here a lesson on divine guidance. The inclination of Paul and his companions was to tarry in the provinces of Asia preaching the word, but contrary to their inclination they were hurried along. They might have reasoned "What difference would it make as to where we preach, just so the Gospel is preached?" Though seemingly small, the question as to whether the Gospel should be preached among the people in the East or in the West has determined the entire history of the church. Had they preached among the people in the East, Christianity would never have become worldwide. On the other hand, by laying hold upon the Grecian intellect and combining with it the push and energy of the Romans, it became worldwide. In the guidance of the Spirit we find Him just as active and as faithful in closing doors as in opening them. "The stops as well as the steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord." We ought to as truly recognize God's hand in the "shut-ins" as well as in the "open-outs."

II. Called to Macedonia (vv. 9-12).

A vision was given to Paul of a man from Macedonia pleading for help. This was the solution of the mystery of closed doors about them. There is a negative and a positive side to the Spirit's guidance. If we will note both we shall be able to determine with a surety the proper course of action. In order to be led aright we must be sure that we are willing to be led, pray definitely for leading, and then render willing obedience as fast as the light comes. As soon as the divine way was known they rendered immediate obedience.

III. The First Convert in Europe (vv. 13-15).

The missionaries went to Philippi. The Jewish element in this city was very insignificant; so much so that they could not afford a synagogue; therefore the devout people were accustomed to worship at the river side. To this humble gathering Paul came and preached to the women gathered there. A certain woman from Thyatira believed his message, and was baptized. Lydia was a woman of wealth, culture, and wide experience, and yet she had need of Christ. The steps in Lydia's conversion are worthy of note:

1. Attendance at the place of prayer (v. 13). This is the case with most people who are saved.

2. Listened to the preaching of the word of God (vv. 12-14). The instrument used by the Holy Spirit in the conversion of sinners is the word of God. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

3. Her heart was opened by the Lord (v. 14). Regeneration is a supernatural work. When the Gospel is preached the Spirit of God makes it living and active, opening the sinner's heart for the reception of Christ.

4. She was baptized (v. 15). It is natural for the one who believes in Christ to desire to be baptized.

5. Her household also believed (v. 15). Thus we see that her's was a typical conversion.

IV. A Spirit of Divination Cast Out (vv. 16-18).

As the missionaries went out from day to day to the place of prayer they were accosted by a young woman possessed by a spirit of divination. She was owned by a syndicate of men who derived large gains from her soothsaying. This act of the woman became a great annoyance to Paul who, in the name of Jesus Christ, commanded the evil spirit to come out. Here is a case of a spiritual medium, a fortune-teller, being freed from demoniacal possession. Many men today are making money by the degradation of womanhood, and they resent all efforts to destroy their infernal business, even try to destroy those who interefere with their business. Here as everywhere Satan blocks the way as the Gospel of Christ is carried into new fields, but the Lord is again triumphant.

The Multitude of His Mercies.

For the Lord will not cast off forever: but though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men—Lamentations 3:31-33.

Word of Lord Was Precious.

And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision.—I Samuel, 3:1.

Simple Deduction

"Now, tell me the truth," said the fussy old lady to the corner mendicant, "are you really blind?"

"Yes, ma'am," said the beggar.

"What is this I am about to give you?"

"A nickel, ma'am."

"Ha. If you are blind, how do you know it's a nickel?"

"Because, ma'am, I never get more than a nickel out of people like you."—Birmingham Age-Herald.

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