

THE RIDDLE OF THE SPINNING WHEEL

Being An Exploit in the Career of Hamilton Cleek, Detective
By MARY E. AND THOMAS W. HANSEW

(Continued from yesterday)

CHAPTER XIX Dollops Makes A Discovery

The rest of the day passed comparatively uneventfully for all those concerned in the drama of a night's doings, and save for a searching scrutiny of the library by Cleek, carried out under the noses of the village policeman, with Inspector Campbell very much to the fore as being in command of the local constabulary and anxious to make a good impression upon the Yard's Superintendent (with an eye to future promotion), and the discovery of one or two minor details which had passed even his searching eye before, Cleek's time hung fairly heavily upon his hands.

Dollops, keen as mustard upon any task which involved the imagination of his beloved master, spent the rest of the afternoon and a goodly part of the long twilight in scamping over the country-side in pursuit of various "facts," by the aid of a borrowed bicycle, which Mr. Fairbairn had charged him seven-and-sixpence for in advance, being obviously doubtful as to whether the young man would return it or not, for Dollops's Cockney countenance was not one to breed immediate trust on sight.

His efforts in this direction proved fairly fruitful, for after having scraped

acquaintance with one of the grooms at Captain Macdonald's stables—the worthy Captain meanwhile champing furiously at the "bit" which kept him tethered to his present quarters for another night, when there were other affairs at his own place that wanted looking into—and in his own inimitable fashion managing to wangle an old letter written by his master to himself from the groom, Dollops, whistling vociferously, came spinning back again to Argon Castle to present his find to Cleek, and receive the reward in Cleek's instantly spoken pleasure.

But to see Cleek was a different matter altogether. He had been told to "lie low" where Lady Paula was concerned, and not poke his nose in anything within reach of her ladyship's sharp eye. And as he did not possess Cleek's marvelous birthright by which he was able to alter his countenance in the space of a second, and become to all intents and purposes another man, Dollops was certainly "floored".

"Better try rahn the servants' quarters, an' see what I kin see there," he decided after a brief survey of the land from an adjacent laurel bush which immediately faced the Castle. "The Gov'nor'll be ready ter spit my nob open if I ups and goes into the plice by the front door, bless 'is 'eart! And 'is shorely the back door for the

likes o' you, Dollops me lad! So here goes!"

So to the servants' quarters went Dollops forthwith, and scraped acquaintance with Jarvis, the butler, by offering him an impossible cigar, and asking off-handedly for Mr. Deland in the meanwhile.

"Dunno where 'e is at the moment," replied Jarvis, with a wink and a smile. "Seen 'im talkin' to the lodies only a few moments back, in the dromin' room. But since then, . . . Lunnon chap, ain't yer?"

"Yus!" Dollops's voice rang with pride of birth-place. He threw back his narrow chest and stuck his fingers in his waistcoat and surveyed his interlocutor with upthrust chin.

"Well, so'm I. Come dahn with the family last Janu'ry from their Lunnon 'ouse. Park Mansion, it's called. Big place in Eton Square. Know those perts, I'll lay."

"Every inch o' 'em," vociferated Dollops with emphasis. "Luvly plice, ain't it? They tells me yer got a ghost in this 'ouse, and blimy! I'm that frightened ter meet 'er, me backbone's almost come rahn ter me front. 'Ugs the gentlemen at night don't she?"

Jarvis threw back his head and let his hearty laugh ring out over the rafters of the servants' hall.

"Wouldn't 'ug you, young 'un, not for nothing—if it were light enough ter see yer face by," he retorted with heavy wit. "But 'is truth, And the wimmenfolk is that nervous at night there's no managing with 'em now."

Some sprightly feller in a bygone century went and man-handled a girl from these parts an' carried 'er ere by force. Then 'e got 'er into trouble, so 'e took a rare job er durtin' fer Minnie the under 'ousemaid. She don't 'arf kick at it, I kin tell yer! Anyway, that was 'ers! And we 'ad a footman, that May wot fanned 'imself very particular as a brave bloke. We, he says, says 'e, 'I'll sit up tonight and go dahn by the duncion door, where she's supposed ter come from, and see wot I kin see. 'Course we laughed at him, and there was a bit of friendly gambolin' done—you know an' backed the blighter for a pound-note."

"An' what 'appened?"

"Ah, that's the scrub of it, as Shakespeare says, me lad. Young fool sat up there, and then about three o'clock in the mornin' we 'eard 'im come a-screamin' ter 'is quarters, lookin' as pale as death. 'E said 'e 'eard the Pesant Girl ruttin' about in her room, and the chink o' chains, and then the iron grille door began to open, and an unearthly voice called out, 'Avaunt ye varlet, or I'll break yer bones!' and then . . . 'E was off like a pea from a catapult, and that was the last we ever 'eard of 'is bravery. 'E gave notice next day, and forfeited a month's money ter get away from the plice. And I lost me money, of course! That's wot comes of backin' a bad starter—mostly criss loses yer money, I find."

During this enlightening recital Jarvis had been polishing the table silver, peering between his task to relate the story, while Dollops's pale face went the colour of ivory, and the hair at the back of his neck began to prick with fright.

"Gawd's troof!" he ejaculated, stung to some show of feeling by this gruesome tale. "Ain't that orful! 'Ood 'ave thought it? I wouldn't spend night dahn there fer a mint o' money—would you, Guv'nor?"

"Not if I knows it. But no one never does gahn very often, only ter see the wine-cellar. See that door there? Open that and you'll find a set o' stairs leadin' right dahn into the cellar, and the rest of the pleasant little duncion places where they used ter put bad men like you an' me, my boy. Or right in daytime, er course, an' nothin' but this one!"

"Yes. Through the courtyard and down the stone steps. But it ain't never used. Your gentleman went dahn yesterday mornin' with Miss Maud, just for a bit of fun like. I'm needin' a couple er bottles er best port up, if you've a mind ter fetch 'em fer me, an' wa stairs with their carpeting of thick felt, and with his heart literally in his geyling mouth. Down, down, down the stairs led, and then, curiously getting the better of him, seeing that there was no other alternative but to go down and then return by the other way, which was scarcely ever used."

He reached the bottom of the stairs at last, and passed to take breath. He was as winded as a spent runner, and as white as a sheet, and trembling in every limb. The place was as black as a pocket, save where, through a grille-door on the left-hand side of him (which was actually supposed to be her door, if he had but known it, and led through to the torture-chamber which Cleek himself had traversed), a single candle shone with a pale, sickly light, sending a tiny shaft in his direction, though, with peering through at it, he could only just see its vague outline in some room beyond.

"Gawdamassy!" he ejaculated, his eyes fairly popping out of his head at



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much ter see. And perfectly safe. 'Ave a squint, won't yer?—while I send a maid ter find yer gentleman. Quite a nifty little 'idin'-place 'would be fer any one, but as safe as 'ouses in the daylight. Go on. Ain't scared, are yer?"

Now, if there is one thing in the world which is likely to upset a nervous man more than anything, it is to be designated "scared" in that precise sense of the word. Dollops, whose heart had turned to water within him, found it instantly hardening at the butler's joking tone, and the bantering look upon the man's rosy face settled the matter. He squared his shoulders and threw back his head, though his jaw was chattering like a chimpanzee's.

"Course I ain't—stooped!" he said stammeringly. "Show us the way, and I'm off at once. Any other entrance but this one?"

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this sight. "Someun's 'ere, that's a fact! And from what I knows er ghosts, they shine wiv a more unearthly light than wot comes from a candle in a bottle. Now, 'oo the dickens—"

But his searchings after light on this subject were cut off short by the sound of softly speaking voices creeping to him through that grille door, and coming from some long distance away within it. He darted back against the wall and, groping with his hands, found a cupboard door ajar, slipped into it, and drew himself up 'taint against the inner wall and waited for that which might come to pass, every nerve a-tremble, his eyes fixed upon the crack of the door, which at present showed black as a pocket.

(To be continued)

MAKES NEW AIR SPEED RECORD

Major Heffernan Goes 75 Miles at Rate of 250 Miles an Hour—Through Sand Storm.

Washington, March 28.—All airplane speed records have been broken by the Army Air Service with a speed of 250 miles an hour, the War Department has announced. The record-breaking flight was made recently by Major L. G. Heffernan piloting a DH-4B airplane with Sergeant Jensen as observer. The plane traveled the distance of seventy-five miles from Columbus, N. M., to Fort Bliss, Texas, in eighteen minutes, an average speed of 250 miles an hour. The flight from Columbus to Fort Bliss was made in a blinding sandstorm, the air being saturated with sand to a height of 6,000 feet.

Major Heffernan endeavored to climb above the sand after leaving Columbus, but was unable to do so on account of the velocity of the wind and the shortness of the flight. He made a safe landing at the Fort Bliss air-drome. At the time the record was made Major Heffernan and Sergeant Jensen were making a flight from Nogales, Ariz., to Fort Bliss, Texas.

The former American speed record was held by Brig. Gen. William Mitchell, Assistant Chief of Air Service, who

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piloted an army Curtiss racer four times over a measured kilometer course at Selfridge Field, Mount Clemens, Mich., last October, at an average speed of 224.38 miles per hour. This record stood as a world's record for several months until broken by the French flier Sadié LaCointe, who set a new figure of 238.01 miles per hour over a measured course in France.

The record of Major Heffernan officially announced by the War Department is considerably better than the Frenchman's record, especially when it is considered that Heffernan maintained the speed for eighteen minutes, to say nothing of having made the record flight during a violent storm.

DRINKING MORE BLACK TEA.

Americans gradually are shifting from the use of green teas to black or oolong teas, and imports from Japan have been gradually declining, while those from China, Ceylon and India are on the increase, according to Government tea examiners.

About 15,000,000 pounds more of tea were examined at the ports of entry last year than during 1921. A total

of 87,898,221 pounds of tea were examined during 1922. Of this total 1,620,162 pounds, or 1.8 per cent., were rejected by the examiners. Examinations at Eastern ports showed an increase, while the Western ports and

central ports have fallen off. Exports of tea from the United States more than doubled during the year, but, was still far behind 1919 and 1920, when exports were abnormally high.



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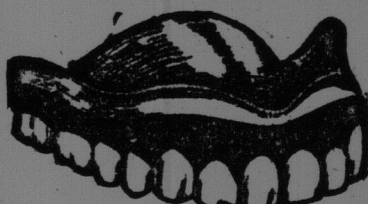
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