

THE SUBURBAN BURGLARIES.

"It was my luck," so Mr. Beck always said. "The whole thing might have happened to any man."

But no person who had heard the story quite agreed with him. It was luck, of course, that he found the silver spoon in the hansom cab. Prying about keenly, as was his wont, he saw the thin, white edge shining behind one of the cushions, and fished out the curious-looking teaspoon and put it in his pocket.

He had a good look at the number of the hansom and the driver when he got out. The hansom was one of the neatest in London, with a sweet little 12-mile-an-hour mare between the shafts. The driver was a stout-built, jaunty fellow, with mottled face and a big red nose. He was smartly dressed, with nasegay in his button-hole and a cigar between his teeth.

Mr. Beck dismissed his cab and walked to the shop of Mr. Ophir, the famous jeweller and silversmith, whose name was on the spoon.

He was received by Mr. Ophir himself—a special mark of distinction—in the little glass pavilion in the centre of the glittering warehouse.

"Yes," Mr. Ophir knew the spoon well. It was one of a set made by his house in imitation of the old apostle pattern. Very creditable imitation, he should say. It would need a skilled eye to tell the difference.

"Who got them?" asked Mr. Beck, going straight to the point.

"Who got them?" Let me see. Just one moment. It is in the books, of course, but I ought to be able—

He tapped his forehead that was smooth and round and polished as an ostrich egg. "Oh, yes, of course, they were part of a teaset made as a wedding present for Lord Worston. Now, I remember—they were stolen about a month ago."

"The suburban burglaries," interrupted Mr. Beck, and he slapped his big thigh excitedly with broad palm, an unusual lapse on the part of this most stolid of men.

But his excitement was surely pardonable. The London police had for the last few months been startled, amazed, bewildered by a rapid series of brilliant burglaries, all within a fifteen to twenty miles' radius outside London.

"The crib had been cracked" in the highest style of art, and the artists, with their rich booty, had vanished into space, leaving a little trail as a sign through the water. They were gentlemen who did not stick at trifles. Three times, it would appear, they had been interrupted at their work, and three people had been left for dead behind them, and one—a woman—had died.

No wonder, then, that Mr. Beck was excited for a moment at the hope that his "luck" had put him on the track of the suburban burglaries at last. But his excitement was quenched instantly. Like a spark fallen in water, it died in the hansom, and he got going impetuously. Mr. Beck had walked home to his cozy lodging, to puzzle his plan out.

He plunged into a great easy chair, with a pipestem between his teeth and the spoon before him on the table as a saint sets a skull to concentrate his meditations. It would be worse than useless, he determined, to arrest, or even question, the driver. If he knew anything he wouldn't tell it, and plainly he could not be held responsible for a silver spoon dropped behind the cushion of his hansom. If the man were guilty, and Mr. Beck fondly hoped he was guilty—a hint of suspicion would ruin all. So Mr. Beck sat and smoked and thought, and, as the smoke grew denser, his thoughts cleared.

"If I could only get quietly inside that fellow's skin," he thought, and with the thought came his plan of campaign. Then he put by his little silver spoon, and smoked his pipe out in vacuous enjoyment.

The result of his meditations was that Mr. Beck—this time a simple-looking farmer up for the cattle show—had a drive in the same hansom next day, and came faster than he imagined. He got in talk with the driver, whose name he discovered to be Jim Blunt. The Cockney driver "smoked" the simple-minded yokel and made game of him. They had several drinks together, and Mr. Beck noted that the spirited little mare was trained to stand quietly as a lamb when the driver was away.

Next day Mr. Beck was a portly clergyman on a shopping expedition. He took Mr. Blunt's hansom here, the man and everywhence, and acquired a multitude of parcels. A most genial and affable clergyman was Mr. Beck, and particularly affable was his driver, with whom he talked a great deal, and whom he talked into the best of good humour. That was at first. Towards evening the zealous clergyman broached the temperance question, with a distinct personal application, and Mr. Blunt got sullen. In parting the Rev. Mr. Beck presented his driver with his exact legal fare, and Mr. Blunt was furious. He spoke his views fully and freely, and the other looked and listened, noting every trick of face and hand in his retentive memory. Then, when a policeman loomed in sight at last, the meek Mr. Beck turned away with a Christian benediction, and meditatively mounted the steps of his hotel. He had seen and heard enough of his model.

For two days after this Mr. Beck was a shop messenger in uniform, with a light tricycle parcel cart, quite empty, and wherever Mr. Blunt drove

his handsome tricycle cart unobtrusively followed, faithful as the little lamb of Mary in the nursery rhyme. In this way the patient Mr. Beck found out many things. He found that Mr. Blunt was not keen on fares, and was keen on sport and drink. He spent his leisure moments—often all day—in the sanctum of a certain sporting public-house at the East end, called the Ram's Horn. There he met a convivial commercial traveller named Fulham, and a bookmaker named Grimes, and the three drank and played cards, while a tricycle cart, with a heavy, stupid-looking rider, went past the door occasionally.

Then there was another change; a startling one this time. Mr. Paul Beck became Mr. James Blunt. In clothes and figure and face, and voice, in all his tricks and ways, the counterfeit was perfect. Mr. Blunt's wife or mother could not have found a difference.

The translated Mr. Beck took to dropping into the Ram's Horn on his own account at odd times, when he had reason to believe that Mr. Blunt was elsewhere with a fare. He was made free of the sanctum, and the unobtrusively commercial traveller Fulham and genial bookmaker Grimes received him as "Jim," with rough, unsuspecting cordiality.

They were both big strong men, active and sleek, who spent money freely. They were full of sly, chuckling jokes about business when the three were drinking together. A very little time was needed to convince Mr. Beck, by a hundred trivial hints, that he was on the straight track of the suburban burglaries. A dozen times in an hour he seemed on the point of surprising some definite proof. But, lead the talk as cunningly as he might, he could get no further, for the others assumed he knew as much as themselves, and he dare not appear too curious.

It was a dangerous game. An indiscreet question might arouse suspicion, and suspicion meant death. Besides, it was a ticklish thing playing Box and Cox with the real Mr. Blunt, who had a knack of throwing up his engagements and turning up at unexpected times. Twice Mr. Beck had barely time to slip away quietly before his double appeared.

It was in truth a difficult and a dangerous game, but he played it out coolly and warily to the close. Inactively he felt that things grew suddenly to a climax. A new burglary was on foot; so much he could gather from stray hints. Unfortunately, it had been planned by the real Jim Blunt, and so the knowledge of the false Jim Blunt was taken for granted. He only learned that a crib was to be cracked some distance outside of London, and that the three were to take part in it. Even the night of the burglary he could not make sure of.

He determined to make a final effort at any cost to get hold of the secret.

An appointment was made by Mr. Beck with the real Mr. Blunt to call on him early at the theatre at eleven o'clock. It was, of course, actually the mock Mr. Blunt strolled into the inner parlour of the Ram's Horn, with his driving whip under his arm, as though he had just stepped down from the driver's seat of his hansom. He had a ball of whiplcord in his hand, and was plaiting a new cracker for his whiplcord, as was the habit of the real Mr. Blunt.

Both of his friends were there, smoking cigars and drinking champagne out of a pewter.

"Hello, Jim!" cried Fulham. "Up to time and before it. Want that for to-night?" pointing to the whiplcord.

"Sustie must put her best leg foremost."

"Sustie was the sweet little murr."

"Have a touch of the whiplcord yourself," he added, pushing towards him a bright tankard, crowned with white foam. "That will put courage into you."

Mr. Beck blew off the foam and had a deep pull of the foaming liquor that surged golden in the glass-bottomed tankard.

"Zee!" he said, shortly, as he put the vessel down half empty. Mr. Blunt was inclined to become silent—not to say sullen—in his cups, and he for the once was Mr. Blunt.

He heard the trap-door open, and Fulham's voice say:—"Take it easy now, Jim; the house is on the slope of the hill, not a quarter of a mile off. We must get round by the back way and leave the horse and trap in the lane. The middle window at the back is open and ready for us."

Mr. Beck waited to hear no more. He untied the cord from the rail, gathered it up in a loose fistful, then, when the shadow was blackest, all silently past the hansom, down the incline.

In a moment the hansom began to move again, slowly and cautiously. It would almost cease as if the well-trained little mare knew silence was needed, so lightly she stepped.

All things went well with the three brave burglars. At the bottom of the lane a convenient stand was found for the docile little mare, and she was left with her nose buried in a bag of old oats. The window opened at a touch, and one after another the three dark forms crept stealthily in, the last pushing the big portmanteau through to the others.

"I have a gim ready," Grimes whispered, and the gleam of the electric lantern lay along the black passage.

In this way they stole along past the kitchen and wine cellars to a strong oak door with the key stuck in it. It opened on tiled hings, and the light glittered on piles of silver.

"Crack!" was Fulham's expressive comment as he and Grimes passed through with lantern and portmanteau, while Blunt waited in the passage with revolver ready.

The gaping mouth of the portmanteau seemed to open of its own accord to engulf the glittering treasure. It was wonderful how quickly and how noiselessly salvers and cups and bowls and jugs with double handfuls of silver spoons for pinking, were crammed into its rapacious stomach. In ten minutes it lay on the floor, locked and strapped and gored with heavy metal.

"I could do with a drink," said Fulham, straightening his back and wiping his hot face.

"I'll get one," said Grimes, "I know the way to the place." He came back with a bottle of champagne in each hand and one under his arm. "Friend in court," he explained. They got the corks out in a trice and drank the foaming liquor out of silver.

"Nasty little fellow," said Fulham, with a wink to Grimes, "oh, Jim."

"Awful night!" replied Grimes, with responsive wink: "sorry you came Jim."

"Who are you coming at?" growled Blunt. "I see nothing wrong with the night or the job, or the drink either for the matter of that."

"Who are we coming at? We are coming at you. You don't like this and you don't like that. Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Miss Molly?"

"Just listen to him, Fulham, will you?" cried the justly indignant Grimes. "If you was as ready as I was—"

"Ay, and readier!"

"Then why did you come whining about—"

of a long hill, and the fast-following bicycle almost ran into it.

But Mr. Beck, who had been expecting a halt, saved and stilled himself with a firm grip on the back rail, and waited and listened.

He heard the trap-door open, and Fulham's voice say:—"Take it easy now, Jim; the house is on the slope of the hill, not a quarter of a mile off. We must get round by the back way and leave the horse and trap in the lane. The middle window at the back is open and ready for us."

Mr. Beck waited to hear no more. He untied the cord from the rail, gathered it up in a loose fistful, then, when the shadow was blackest, all silently past the hansom, down the incline.

In a moment the hansom began to move again, slowly and cautiously. It would almost cease as if the well-trained little mare knew silence was needed, so lightly she stepped.

All things went well with the three brave burglars. At the bottom of the lane a convenient stand was found for the docile little mare, and she was left with her nose buried in a bag of old oats. The window opened at a touch, and one after another the three dark forms crept stealthily in, the last pushing the big portmanteau through to the others.

"I have a gim ready," Grimes whispered, and the gleam of the electric lantern lay along the black passage.

In this way they stole along past the kitchen and wine cellars to a strong oak door with the key stuck in it. It opened on tiled hings, and the light glittered on piles of silver.

"Crack!" was Fulham's expressive comment as he and Grimes passed through with lantern and portmanteau, while Blunt waited in the passage with revolver ready.

The gaping mouth of the portmanteau seemed to open of its own accord to engulf the glittering treasure. It was wonderful how quickly and how noiselessly salvers and cups and bowls and jugs with double handfuls of silver spoons for pinking, were crammed into its rapacious stomach. In ten minutes it lay on the floor, locked and strapped and gored with heavy metal.

"I could do with a drink," said Fulham, straightening his back and wiping his hot face.

"I'll get one," said Grimes, "I know the way to the place." He came back with a bottle of champagne in each hand and one under his arm. "Friend in court," he explained. They got the corks out in a trice and drank the foaming liquor out of silver.

"Nasty little fellow," said Fulham, with a wink to Grimes, "oh, Jim."

"Awful night!" replied Grimes, with responsive wink: "sorry you came Jim."

"Who are you coming at?" growled Blunt. "I see nothing wrong with the night or the job, or the drink either for the matter of that."

"Who are we coming at? We are coming at you. You don't like this and you don't like that. Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Miss Molly?"

"Just listen to him, Fulham, will you?" cried the justly indignant Grimes. "If you was as ready as I was—"

"Ay, and readier!"

Positively and Unquestionably
the finest Tea in the world, that's all there is about it.

"SALADA"
CEYLON TEA
Your teapot tells its worth.
Lead packets only. 25c., 30c., 40c., 50c., 60c. By all Grocers.

ASK YOUR GROCER FOR.....
EDDY'S
"Eagle" Parlor Matches, 200s. 100s.
"Victoria" Parlor Matches, 65s.
"Little Comet" Parlor Matches.
The finest in the world.
No Brinastone.
The E. B. EDDY Co., Limited
HULL, P. Q.

out in a brilliant glow of a dozen electric lights.

Turning round sharply he saw a lady fronting him, not five yards away. She was graceful and beautiful as a statue in her long white night robe, fastened with a knot of blue ribbons at her throat. Her naked feet peeped from under the white lace trimmings, pure white on the rich carpet. Down to her waist her hair fell in a tangle of ripples and curls. Her face was white, even to the lips, but her blue eyes shone big and bright, and she held in her right hand a revolver, grasped tight by the barrel, the muzzle pointing at herself and the butt at the burglar, which was her crude notion of shooting.

Jim Blunt was not in the least affected by this vision of pale beauty. To him she was merely an unwelcome interruption of business.

"Drop it!" he growled, referring to the inverted revolver.

She dropped it obediently, and it exploded as it fell, and a shrill shriek followed the report. The room was full of the stinging smoke of gunpowder.

The woman screamed and Jim Blunt cursed volubly.

"Shut your blooming mouth!" he cried. "Quit squealing, or I'll put a bullet in you!"

A second shriek answered, and the lady opened her lovely lips wide for a third.

Blunt whipped out his revolver and pointed it right side forward straight at her breast.

The scream was frozen on the lady's lips by sheer amazement, when, straight behind the ruffian, she saw his own counterfeit suddenly appear, moving swiftly and silently as a shadow.

The revolver in Jim's hand went up with a sudden jerk, boring a round black hole in the white ceiling. A strong arm gripped Blunt's bull neck from behind, and brought him choking and sprawling back on the carpet. The next moment he lay with handcuffs on his wrists and a gag between his teeth prone and helpless.

Again the lady screamed shrilly.

"Not any more, please, Mrs. Meredith," said a familiar voice, persuasively.

Mr. Blunt. "Stow your noise; it's all right; I'm coming."

He joined them on the landing opposite the drawing-room door.

"Why the devil did you use the barbers?" growled Grimes.

"Cause I had to; she was squealing like a mad steam engine. I laid her out safe the second shot. She'll tell no tales, but it's about time to be off. I've got the swag safe enough," and he showed the heap of trinkets that poor Blunt had so industriously collected.

"Right you are," answered Fulham; "the luggage is up and the mare ready."

There was a pounding noise on the floor of the bathroom over their heads.

"Listen!" said Grimes; "there's someone kicking. You haven't made a clean job of it, Jim; she wants another dose of lead. I'll quiet her."

He turned to go up the stairs, but Beck's strong hand dragged him back. He knew whose hob-nailed boots were kicking. "Let 'er, I tell you; it's her last kick. She's got a brace of bullets in her skull. I can do my work without your helping."

He pushed Grimes roughly down the stairs before him, Fulham following. So through the window they passed, and down the laneway, where the hansom stood and the mare ready waiting, with ears cocked.

Grimes and Fulham got to their places and Beck climbed to the driver's seat, with the big portmanteau tied in front of him.

He closed the wooden apron across their knees, and let the plate-glass shutter down half way to meet it.

The gallant little mare started as fresh as ever, and they bowed swiftly back to town, the rubber-tired wheels back to town.

Grimes and Fulham had carried a couple of bottles of champagne with them, and the noise of popping corks was heard presently in the interior of the hansom. After a brief interval a bottle's neck was protruded through the trap-door at the top.

"I'm not taking any," said the driver; "I have the mare to look after, and you."

"Good old Jim," said Grimes enthusiastically, elated at the prospect of more drink to share; "we can trust Jim to see us safely through. He knows where we are bound for better nor ourselves." Which was truer than he thought.

The two bottles were duly emptied and the two inside passengers were pleasantly drowsy, though not in the least drunk. They leaned back on either side on the comfortable cushions, while the hansom sped on its smooth, noiseless way to London.

Now they are sweeping through the silent town in the gray light of the early dawn. The streets seemed a little unfamiliar to their sleepy, half-opened eyes. But they had the most perfect confidence in Jim.

Their confidence was rudely shattered. The hansom took a sharp turn and drew up with a screech at the entrance to Scotland Yard station. The plate-glass shutter was let slip down with a crash on the wooden apron, and Mr. Beck himself once more leapt from his seat to the pavement.

"Hurry up!" hurried up!" he shouted, as for 'er five men came rushing out, while the two figures trapped in the hansom struggled madly like wild beasts in a cage. Here are two of the suburban burglars, with their luggage, come to stay. Kindly help the gentlemen out and make them comfortable. I must go back for the third.—M. McDonnell Backin, in St Peter's.

He has Tamed It.—Mr. John Anderson, Kinross, writes: "I venture to say few, if any, have received greater benefit from the use of Dr. Thomas' Eucalypti Oil, than I have. I have used it regularly for over ten years, and have recommended it to all sufferers I know of, and they also found it of great virtue in cases of severe bronchitis and incipient consumption."