

# THE GREENHOUSE MYSTERY --- AN EXCITING DETECTIVE STORY

So utterly done up was Sexton Blake as he journeyed homeward that evening that even his customary habit of close observation lay in temporary abeyance.

So it was with a start of mingled annoyance and surprise that he suddenly became aware of a man sitting opposite him in the Tube train, watching him with a quizzical smile. A strenuous twenty-four hours with scarcely any sleep had left the great detective's nerves rather raw, and he frowned darkly.

The offender was a solid looking man of about fifty years of age, apparently occupying some good position in the city, for he carried a small, neat hand bag, and the end of a gold-mounted fountain pen peeped from his waistcoat pocket. As Sexton Blake's brows contracted, the other's expression became instantly apologetic, and he turned his eyes away. It was about 9 o'clock. The rush of pleasure-seekers bound for the theatres and music halls was over and there was a temporary lull. No one sat near the two, and suddenly the city man stepped across the car and occupied the seat next Blake.

"Pardon me," said the stranger. "If I am not greatly mistaken, I am addressing Mr. Sexton Blake the famous detective."

"That is my name," said Blake coldly. "My name is Burrowes. Here is my card. Let me explain my apparent rudeness. Do you know when I recognized you the thought crossed my mind that even you would find a little mystery which has been worrying me for the past day or two to be one too many for you."

Sexton Blake took stock of the speaker before replying. "I can assure you sir," said he, somewhat frigidly, "that I have no notion of trying to solve your puzzle, whatever it may be. As you may see, I am somewhat in need of a rest at present."

Mr. Burrowes's face fell. "Quite so—quite so!" he returned hastily. "Thoughtless of me—very! I apologize!" And he retreated clumsily to his original seat. He sat there looking so crest-fallen and self-condemnatory that Sexton Blake half regretted his brusqueness, and as they approached Baker Street he leaned forward.

"You must excuse my curtness, sir," said he. "I am nearly dead beat. What is the nature of the mystery you spoke of?" The other's face brightened. "Don't mention it, my dear sir! As for my little puzzle, it is quite beneath your notice. I ought not to have troubled you. Say no more about it, I beg of you."

The train stopped. There was no time to press the matter. "I have your card, said Sexton Blake. "I may look you up. Are you at home tomorrow—Sunday?"

"Certainly!" exclaimed the delighted Mr. Burrowes. "All day. Most pleased to see you. Good night, my dear sir—Good night!"

About noon the following day Sexton Blake came upon the card.

"Edwin Rochester Burrowes," he read. "Corona Villa, Bivouac Road, Hampstead,"

"Hampstead—Hampstead," repeated Blake musingly. "I have a great mind to take it on my day down to St. Albans. I was undoubtedly a trifle short with the old boy—and one never knows."

About three hours later Sexton Blake was being welcomed by a very beaming young gentleman just awakened from his afternoon nap.

"Never expected you, Mr. Blake!" he cried. "I am absolutely delighted. Quite alone—wife and girls gone out walking. You will stay to tea? We dine midday Sundays. No? Well, something now, at any rate. There you are! Help yourself. My little mystery? Certainly; tell you in two twos. You'll laugh, I know, and then give me the solution. And yet I am not so sure," added Mr. Burrowes, cocking his head waggishly. "You aren't a bit of a gardener, by any chance are you?"

"I am a little of all sorts!" laughed Sexton Blake. "Have to be, you know."

"Exactly—exactly. Now come this way, if you please."

They passed through a drawing room and a French window into a conservatory.

"Now tell me what you make of this," said Mr. Burrowes, with the air of one settling a problem.

The detective cast a quick glance around. "Well, Mr. Burrowes, he said slowly, "I should say that your plants have the creeping sickness, and that the epidemic has crept about half way through your collection."

Mr. Burrowes rubbed his hands together. "You spot it at once!" he said gleefully. "Queer, isn't it?"

A bench about three feet wide ran around the side of the conservatory, with hanging plants artistically arranged at the edges, and almost reaching to the floor, thus concealing the supports and hot water pipes beneath. About half way round the plants seemed in perfect health, but the remainder were drooping and apparently past recovery.

Sexton Blake took up one of the latter. It came out of the pot quite easily.

"Why, they have been tampered with—the roots have been disturbed!" he said at once.

"That is so, as far as here."

"Some one playing a joke upon you," suggested Sexton Blake, suppressing a yawn. "This was really too futile a matter!"

Mr. Burrowes looked at him. "Joke!" he exclaimed. "I fail to see it."

"Jealous neighbor," said Sexton Blake. "I know feeling runs high among you horticultural enthusiasts at times. Ever gone in for prizes?"

"Never!" replied Mr. Burrowes. "Besides mere malice is out of the question. Here are my grapes overhead, a batch of seeding carnations on this shelf, a valuable cool-house orchid here and a dozen pot roses of the newest varieties all untouched. As a matter of fact, only the least valuable plants have been meddled with."

"When did this happen?" asked Blake, trying to work up a glimmering of interest.

"Thursday night; but the results were not

apparent until Friday, after the sun had shone on the damaged plants."

Sexton Blake walked to a basket chair which stood in the centre of the conservatory, and sat down. As he did so, his eyes narrowed slightly and his lips tightened.

"And you have no idea as to the possible culprit?" he said quietly.

"Not a ghost of one!" replied Mr. Burrowes. "If Eli Mason were about here now—but then that's absurd, of course."

Blake looked up quickly. "Eli Mason—the Prescott Hall burglar?"

Mr. Burrowes laughed uneasily. "That's the man. You remember him, of course. Posed as a jobbing gardener, you know. Used to put in a day a week here for me. But, of course, he is safe in goal, so it can't be he. Besides, he wouldn't stop at spoiling my geraniums."

"No," said Sexton Blake thoughtfully; "I suppose not. Would you mind leaving me here alone for awhile, Mr. Burrowes? A pipe won't hurt your carnations, I take it?"

Mr. Burrowes laughed. "Do 'em good. Kill the green-fly. Smoke by all means! You shall not be disturbed. Come in when you are ready, and ring the bell in the drawing room."

Sexton Blake glanced round to make sure the door had closed, then he said quietly.

"Now, then, my friend, you may come out and explain yourself."

Slowly from beneath the bench opposite the detective crept the dirty and dishevelled figure of a man. He was not a prepossessing individual, and he blinked his eyes in the light.

"Spikey Joe, by all that's great—and otherwise!" exclaimed Sexton Blake. "My word, young man, you haven't lost much time in getting on the war path again! Why, you only came out on Thursday!"

"Strooth, Mister Blake, I meant no harm! I just crep' in here for a snooze, an' mebbe a bunch o' grapes."

"That is a lie, Spikey!" retorted Sexton Blake coolly. "Now, tell me what your game is. It is no use your looking at the ventilator you came in through. You can't go out again—not just yet, at any rate."

Spikey maintained a sullen silence. "You may as well out with it," continued the detective persuasively, "because the game is up as far as you are concerned. You won't have the chance to finish your job, you know."

Spikey looked up quickly. "I dunno what you're gettin' at," he said sulkily.

"Ah," sighed Sexton Blake, "you might have saved me the trouble of fudging it out for myself! Now let me see," he went on meditatively, between whiffs of his pipe. "You got two years for housebreaking, didn't you, Spikey? Being out on ticket you will have about six months, or so left to serve. Then there's this job—on premises for unlawful purposes—that will be—"

"Then you're goin' to hand me over, arter all?" broke in Spikey.

"If you don't tell me what I want to know."

"Lummy, then, I s'pose I must!" exclaimed Spikey desperately. "But you promise to let me go if I do?"

"I promise nothing!" said the detective sharply. "But it is your only chance. And keep your voice down. If Mr. Burrowes finds you here I can do nothing, remember that."

"Right you are, gov'nor!" said Spikey with a quivering little sigh. "Ere goes; but it's precious 'ard on a bloke to have been so near to it an' miss it, arter all!"

Half an hour later Sexton Blake stepped quietly into the drawing room and touched the bell on the table.

Mr. Burrowes appeared. "Well?" he said eagerly. "You have solved the riddle? Yes, I knew you would. Wonderful—wonderful!"

The great detective smiled. "Your confidence is extremely flattering," said he. "And, as a matter of fact, I believe I have got to the bottom of this little affair, or, rather, shall do so shortly. But come to the conservatory. Now, then, sit down, Mr. Burrowes, and tell me what you consider to be the most valuable plant in your collection."

"The most valuable, eh?" His eyes rolled round. "Well, I suppose that orchid there. It is nothing special, you know, but, I dare say it's worth—well, say a couple of sovereigns."

The detective smiled. "Well, now, what would you say, Mr. Burrowes, if I told you it was worth a thousand sovereigns just as it stands?"

Mr. Burrowes jumped up with a laugh. "A thousand! Ha, ha! Very good, Mr. Blake. You will have your little joke. No, sir, I do not profess to be an expert, but I know enough about it to be quite sure there is no thousand pounds about that orchid—or thousand shillings if it comes to that. Simply an ordinary odontoglossum—quite a common variety."

"At any rate, I am going to ask you to allow me to turn it out of its pot," said Sexton Blake. "I take it that this can be done without damage to the plant, providing we are careful?"

"Bless you, yes," returned the mystified Mr. Burrowes, "nothing easier. I hold it upside down—thus"—and he dexterously reversed the plant. "Now you lift off the pot—stuck is it?—just a tip—so—there we are!"

A compact mass of peat, charcoal and brown moss lay bare to the eye.

"Freshly potted only last spring, said Mr. Burrowes. "Last job that rascal Mason did for me."

"Yes," said Sexton Blake grimly—"yes, it is about the last job he did for anybody outside His Majesty's prisons."

While he spoke he was delicately probing between the lumps of peat, and at last, with a sudden exclamation of triumph, he withdrew something that gleamed and sparkled in the afternoon sun. Mr. Burrowes almost dropped his precious orchid on the floor.

"Steady!" said Sexton Blake. "Now we

will replace the pot—so. There we are. Not a penny the worse, though I am afraid your orchid has rather dropped in value."

Mr. Burrowes stood gaping with astonishment.

"Good heavens!" he cried. "A necklace—a diamond necklace! How on earth"—He could say no more, but gaped at the detective in utter mystification.

Sexton Blake laughed. "Stolen property," said he. "Oh, Mr. Burrowes!"

His host turned crimson. "But, good gracious, you—you don't imagine that I knew—"

The detective reassured his astounded companion, with a smile.

"My dear sir, of course not! Come into the drawing room. I will explain things to you very briefly. Two nights before Eli Mason came here for the last time, he, as you know, committed a burglary at Prescott Hall, in Kent. It was not his first job by any means. This necklace was part of the fruits of a former exploit. Hard pressed, and fearing it would be found in his possession, he selected your orchid as a hiding place, probably on the spur of the moment."

"Goo' gracious!" ejaculated Mr. Burrowes. "That same evening he was arrested, and later on sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. Whilst in prison he rather foolishly got talking to a fellow prisoner, and confided to him as to where he had hidden the necklace, probably in return for some service to be rendered outside. On this fellow craftsman's release he proceeded to look up the treasure. Unfortunately for himself, not being a man of horticultural knowledge, Mr. Mason's reference to an 'odontoglossum'—only remained in his brain as 'something blossom,' which was absolutely useless as a guide to the exact hiding place. So there was nothing for it but to go laboriously through the lot. That explains why your flowers withered. Luckily, he drew blank on Thursday night. Had he been given another chance he would probably have scored."

"And you reasoned all this out whilst merely smoking a pipe and observing things," said Mr. Burrowes, completely awed, "even to the exact plant? Marvellous!"

"Quite simple," returned Sexton Blake. "I must thank you for a very pleasant and profitable afternoon, Mr. Burrowes."

"But won't this fellow come back and have another try?"

"I think I can quite reassure you on that point," said Sexton Blake. "And, by the way, there is a reward offered for this little article, one-half of which I shall ask you to accept, if only to compensate you for the trouble and loss you have sustained."

"I will accept only what is necessary to replace my losses," returned Mr. Burrowes. "The opportunity of witnessing your wonderful powers is ample reward for me. Besides—why, the fellow might have come back this very afternoon whilst I was asleep had you not been here!"

"That is quite possible," said Sexton Blake, gravely.

## On "English as Spoken"

A delightful and instructive lecture was delivered before the Montreal Women's Club by Dean Moysé on "English as Spoken."

Dean Moysé was preceded by Miss Horniman, who dwelt on the wonderful heritage the English-speaking world possesses in its language and that care should be taken to preserve it in its purity. She did not object to slang, real slang, which meant something, but slovenliness in the use of one's mother tongue should not be tolerated. "Menial" and "de-mean" were given as two words popularly misused.

Dean Moysé gave three examples of modes of treating his subject, the first, extremely high-flown; the second, containing long lists of words, and third, full of platitudes. One such platitude was the advice "open your mouths." It was possible to get into a great deal of trouble, he said, by opening one's mouth at the wrong time. The English opened their mouths more than the French, for there were many words like "pit" which it was impossible to pronounce without going to that trouble.

Emphasis was laid on tone, quality, and the necessity of avoiding monotony in speech. There should, said the Dean, be a bright face and as much movement as possible. He could forgive a girl with a radiant face and bright speech even if she did live "on" St. Catherine street instead of "in," as they say in England. When "in" is used it means the streets and surrounding houses, and the use of "on" suggests to an Englishman that we live in the middle of the road.

The question of accent followed and led to a very interesting exposition of phonetics with the word "impenetrability" as an example. The shifting accent was explained and the audience told of the discovery forty years ago that the German language had a shifting accent, a discovery comparing in importance in its field to that of a new continent. The habit of calling "library" "libry" was cited as an example of the evil effects of the over-emphasis of the first syllable.

A comparison was drawn between American and English speech and a distinction made

between what was now correct and what was historically correct.

"The Americans have a right to speak as they pleased," said Dean Moysé, "but if I were asked whether they spoke English I should have to say, No."

Considering the number of immigrants, it was a matter of surprise that they had not wandered further from the English standard than they have. "Noo York," for New York, and "I guess" were given to show the difference between historical accuracy and present day correctness. The former approached the old English pronunciation more nearly than "new," and the latter was used by Chaucer, but neither is correct today. Henry James, speaking at Bryn Mawr, told the students the country spoke abominably and that they should keep up, but, on the other hand, Judge Haliburton, "Sam Slick," said the best English was spoken on this continent. The chief difference, said the lecturer, was the stress in the sentence.

"Remember," furnished the next peg for an explanation of the silent "r" in such words as father, mother, sister, water, and so on. A convincing proof that the final "r" was dropped by correct speakers was given by the fact that the false palate used in phonetics to place the mode of speaking and covered with chalk was untouched when the last syllable was pronounced, whereas, if the last "r" had been sounded, there would have been a streak on the chalk. The long and the short "a" in such words as "advantage," "Newcastle," and "path" was a matter to be left to the individual. Personally, Dean Moysé said he preferred the long "a" but care must be taken not to err in using it too often, like the American girl going to England, who was anxious to impress with her English accent and spoke of "plahn."

The name of a popular shop was given as an example of the wrong "o" sound so prevalent in Canada, and "bread and butter" corrupted into "breadum butter," to illustrate the tendency to neglect certain letters. "Toronto" commonly called "Trunto," was given as still another example.

The difference between the spoken tongue and the printed page was clearly explained. "We are speaking twentieth century Eng-

lish with the spelling of the Tudor times," said Dean Moysé.

The different dialects of England were touched upon and the survival of the East-Midland, combined to some extent with the Southern dialect, explained. This was practically the London dialect and was the language of the Court, the Church and the Bar. It was noteworthy what little difference in mode of speech there was between educated Englishmen from any part of the United Kingdom.

In conclusion, with reference to "aitches," sounded and dropped, an amusing reference was made to George Bernard Shaw and, finally, a beautiful extract from Chaucer was read, showing the musical quality of English as spoken in his day.

### THE HOPE

That night they took him from the Sea  
(And him in truth it was, they said),  
I went not when they summoned me,  
Nor viewed I wanst that sheeted head.

Not wanst I looked on his white face,  
That bitter dusk they brought him home,  
And shut in such a wee dark place  
A lad who's ever loved to roam!

Yet now I listen through the rain,  
And foolish-like I still believe  
That back some day he'll come again  
To where the Arran wathers grieve!

Some day he'll come, wid parrakeets,  
Wid shells and sharms and furrin' lore,  
Come climbin' up the ould sad streets,  
And stop beside me waitin' door!

And when I'm wid me wheel, alone,  
And all the ould grey house is still,  
I seem to hear, past sod and stone,  
A homin' step that mounts the hill!

I listen as the sound comes near,  
(And now me ould heart flutters fast!)  
I sit and wait and sake wid fear—  
But iv'ry footstep, faith, goes past!

Yet dusk by dusk when through me door  
There sobs and sings the ould grey sea,  
Och! still I watch and listen for  
The Dead that's never dead to me!  
—Arthur Stringer in Hampton's Magazine.

## Indian Burying Grounds

Islands were favorite burying grounds among the Indians, probably from the protection the surrounding water furnished against the incursions of animals, and coffin islands may be found at different points around the coast. In Victoria harbor and the Arm both Coffin Island and Deadman's Island were used for this purpose within the memory of such old-time residents as Mr. R. T. Williams and Mr. Edgar Fawcett.

Mr. Williams, whose memory goes back to the fifties when he went to school from a shack on Yates street opposite the site of the present Prince Edward Hotel, believes Colville Island may also have been used for this purpose as well, but distinctly remembers the trees and scrub on Deadman's Island and the fire on it described in the following account, which is kindly furnished by Mr. Fawcett from material he is collecting, and which he will shortly publish in book form. Mr. Fawcett writes:

"Like the Egyptians of old, the Indians of this country had professional mourners, that is, they acted as they did in Bible days. The mourners, usually friends or members of the same tribe, assembled as soon as the death was announced, and either inside or outside the house they (mostly women, and old women at that) kept up a monotonous howl for hours, others taking their places when they got tired. In the early sixties an execution of four young Indians took place on Bastion Square for a murder committed on the West Coast. All day and night before the execution took place the women of the tribe squatted on the ground in front of the jail, keeping up the monotonous howl or chant, even up to the time the hangman completed his task. After hanging the prescribed time, the murdered and handed to their friends, who took them away in their canoes for burial. In the earliest days, I don't think they used the regular coffin; the common practice was to use boxes, and especially trunks. Of course for a man or woman a trunk would be a problem to an undertaker, but the Indian solved the problem easily, as they doubled the body up and made it fit the trunk. For larger bodies a box was made of plank, but I do not remember

seeing one made the regulation length of six feet, even for an adult, as they always doubled the knees under. A popular coffin for small people was one of Sam Nesbitt's cracker boxes. He was a well-known manufacturer of soda crackers and pilot bread, whose place of business will be remembered by many old-timers at the corner of Yates and Broad streets.

"The Indians rarely dug graves for their dead, but hoisted them up in trees, tying them to the branches or merely laid them on the ground, and piled them up on top of one another. In time they fell into the customs of their white brothers, and got coffins made by the undertaker, and many a time I have seen Indians carrying coffins along Government street, down to the foot of Johnson, for their reserve."

In 1861 Mr. Fawcett with four companions, all schoolboys at the time, were bathing on Deadman's Island, and had lit a fire to warm themselves. Broken coffins were lying about and piles of box coffins and trunks; these were set fire to, and the boys promptly made off to escape the wrath of the Indians, who, in those days, were numbered by hundreds. They made good their escape, and the whole island was swept by the flames, trees, scrub and coffins being burnt up. Since that time the island has remained in its present condition.

The Indians on the Songhees reserve, also, Mr. Fawcett says, buried at two points on the reserve, but when the smallpox worked such havoc among them, the authorities insisted on the bodies being buried in soil, and when the removal of the Indians was accomplished a special amount was allotted to provide for the removal of the bodies elsewhere.

Prior to the recent revolution Mexico purchased about 600 pianos every year from the factories in Chicago.

Not His Fault—Liverman (to rider)—"Here, what's this? Half a dollar? Why you've been out two hours."

Rider—"So I may have, but I've been on the brute's back only ten minutes."—Fliegende Blaetter.

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