The Return of SHERLOCK HOLMES

By A. CONAN DOYLE.

Author of "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes,"
"The Hound of the Baskervilles," "The Sign
of the Four," "A Study in Searlet," Etc.

1. Mr. mer



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He sank with a deep groun on to the

Watson, I owe you every atonement

for having allowed your natural curi-losity to remain so long unsatisfied.

To you, inspector, the whole incident

sional study. I must tell you, first of

nected with the previous consultations

which Mr. Hilton Cubitt has had with

me in Baker street." He then shortly

ready been recorded. "I have here in

front of me these singular productions,

at which one might smile had they not

proved themselves to be the forerun-

ners of so terrible a tragedy. I am fairly familiar with all forms of secret

writings and am myself the author of a

trifling monograph upon the subject, in

which I analyze 160 separate ciphers.

but I confess that this is entirely new

to me. The object of those who in-

to conceal that these characters con-

they are the mere random sketches of

that the symbol X stood for E. As you are aware, E is the most common let-

ter in the English alphabet, and it pre-

even in a short sentence one would ex-

pect to find it most often. Out of fif-

teen symbols in the first message four

probable, from the way in which the flags were distributed, that they were

used to break the sentence up into

and noted that E was represented by X.

printed sheet may be reversed in a sin-

be an endless task to try each combi-

I therefore waited for fresh material

"But now came the real difficulty

letters after E is by no means

recapitulated the facts which have al

all, the interesting circumstances con-

may appeal as a remarkable profes-

The country inspector's face had shown his intense amazement at the rapid and masterful progress of Holmes' investigation. At first he had shown some disposition to assert his own posi-tion, but now he was overcome with admiration and ready to follow without question wherever Holmes led.
"Whom do you suspect?" he asked.

"I'll go into that later. There are several points in this problem which I have not been able to explain to you Now that I have got so far I had best proceed on my own lines and then clear the whole matter up once and for all."

"Just as you wish, Mr. Holmes, so long as we get our man." "I have no desire to make mysteries.

but it is impossible at the moment of action to enter into long and complex I have the threads of explanations. I have the threads of this affair all in my hand. Even if this lady should never recover con-sciousness we can still reconstruct the events of last night and insure that justice be done. First of all, I wish to know whether there is any inn in this neighborhood known as Elrige's?"

The servants were cross questioned. but none of them had heard of such a place. The stable boy threw a light up-on the matter by remembering that a farmer of that name lived some miles off in the direction of East Ruston.

"Is it a lonely farm?

"Perhaps they have not heard yet of all that happened here during the

Maybe not, sir." Holmes thought for a little, and then a curious smile played over his face.
"Saddle a horse, my lad," said he. shall wish you to take a note to Elrige's farm.'

He took from his pocket the various slips of the dancing men. With these in front of him he werked for some time at the study table. Finally he handed a note to the boy, with directions to put it into the hands of the person to whom it was addressed, and especially to answer no questions of any sort which might be put to him. I saw the outside of the note, addressed in straggling, irregular characters, very unlike Holmes' usual precise hand. It was onsigned to Mr. Abe Slaney, Elrige's

I think, inspector." Holmes remarkthat you would do well to tele graph for an escort, as, if my calculaa particularly dangerous prisoner to convey to the county jall. The boy ward your telegram. If there is an aft we should do well to take it, as I have finish, and this investigation draws rap-

When the youth had been dispatched his instructions to the servants. If any visitor were to call, asking for Mrs. Hilton Cubitt, no information should e given as to her condition, but he was to be shown at once late the drawing room. He impressed these points upon them with the utmost earnestness. Finally he led the way into the drawing room, with the remark that the business was now out of our hands and that we must while away the time as hest we in ght until we could see what was in store for us. The doctor had departed to his patients, and only the in-spector and myself remained.

"I think that I can help you to pass an hour in an interesting and profit-able mather," said Holmes, drawing out in front of him the various papers upon which were recorded the antics of the duncing men. As to you, friend

preceded 'Elsie,' and it ended in E. 1 rely the word must be 'COME.' I tried all other four letters ending in So now I was in possession of C, O and M. and I was in a position to attack the first message once more, dividing it into words and putting dots for each symbol which was still unknown. So treated it worked out in

M . ERE . . E SL . NE . "Now, the first letter can only be A, which is a most useful discovery, since it occurs no fewer than three times in apparent in the second word. Now it

AM HERE A. E SLANE, Or, filling in the obvious vacancies in

AM HERE ARE SLANEY. I had so many letters now that I could proceed with considerable confidence to the second message, which worked out in this fashion:

A. ELRI. ES. Here I could only make sense by putting T and G for the missing letters and supposing that the name was that of some house or inn at which the writer was staying." Inspector Martin and I had listened

with the utmost interest to the full and clear account of how my friend had produced results which had led to so complete a command over our difficulties

"What did you do then, sir?" asked the inspector.

"I had every reason to suppose that this Abe Slaney was an American, since Abe is an American contraction and since a letter from America had been the starting point of all the trou-I had also every cause to think that there was some criminal secret in the matter. The lady's allusions to ed in that direction. I therefore cabled to my friend, Wilson Hargreave of the New York police bureau who New York police bureau, who has more than once made use of my knowledge of London crime. I asked him whether the name of Abe Slaney was known to him. Here is the reply: 'The most dangerous crook in Chicago.' the very evening upon which I had his answer Hilton Cubitt sent me the last message from Slaney. Working with known letters, it took this form:

vented the system has apparently been ELSIE RE ARE TO MEET THY GO . The addition of a P and a D completed vey a message and to give the idea that a message which showed me that the rascal was proceeding from persuasion to threats, and my knowledge of the crooks of Chicago prepared me to find "Having once recognized, however, that the symbols stood for letters, and that he might very rapidly put his words into action. I at once came to having applied the rules which guide us in all forms of secret writings; the Norfolk with my friend and colleague, Dr. Watson, but, unhappily, only in solution was easy enough. The first message submitted to me was so short time to find that the worst had already effect on her. that it was impossible for me to do more than to say with some confidence occurred.'

"It is a privilege to be associated with you in the handling of a case,' said the inspector warmly. "You will excuse me, however, if I speak frankly dominates to so marked an extent that were the same, so it was reasonable to set this down as E. It is true that in some cases the figure was bearing a flag and in some cases not, but it was seated here I should certainly get into "You need not be uneasy. He will

"How do you know?"

"To fly would be a confession of "Then let us go to arrest him."

"But why should be come?"

marked, and any preponderance which may be shown in an average of a "Because I have written and asked paper? asked young Singleton. him."
"But this is incredible, Mr. Holmes!

Why should be come because you have T. A. O. I. N. S. H. R. D and L are the asked him? Would not such a request rather rouse his suspicions and cause occur, but T. A. O and I are very near-"I think I have known how to frame

the letter," said Sherlock Holmes. "In fact, if I am not very much mistaken, here is the gentleman himself coming up the drive.

ton Cubitt he was able to give me two which led to the door. He was a tall, handsome, swarthy fellow, clad in a which appeared, since there was no flag, to be a single word. Here are the suit of gray flannel, with a panama symbols. Now, in the single word I hat, a bristling black beard and a have already got the two E's coming second and fourth in a word of tive letflourishing a cane as he walked. He ters. It might be 'sever' or 'lever' or swaggered up the path as if the place There can be no question belonged to him, and we heard his loud, that the latter as a reply to an appeal is far the most probable, and the circonfident peal at the bell.
"I think, gentlemen," said Holmes

counstances pointed to its being a reply quietly, "that we had best take up our written by the lady. Accepting it as position behind the door. Every precorrect, we are now able to say that the symbols caution is necessary when dealing with such a fellow. You will need your handcuffs, inspector. You can leave the

We waited in silence for a minuteone of those minutes which one can never forget. Then the door opened "Even now I was in considerable never forget. Then the door opened afficulty, but a happy thought put me; and the man stepped in. In an instant in possession of several other letters. Holines clapped a pistol to his head, it occurred to me that if these appeals and Martin slipped the handcuffs over his wrists. It was all done so swiftly and deftly that the fellow was help less before he knew that he was at-

> on me this time. I seem to have knocked up against something hard. But I came here in answer to a letter from she is in this! Don't tell me that she helped to set a trap for me!"

"Mrs. Hilton Cubitt was seriously injured and is at death's door. The man gave a hoarse cry of grief.

which rang through the house. "You're crazy!" he cried fiercely. "It was he that was hurt, not she. would have hurt little Elsie? I may have threatened her-God forgive me -but I would not have touched a hair of her pretty head. Take it back-you! Say that she is not hurt!"

"She was found badly wounded by the side of her dead husband." He sank with a deep groan on to the settee and buried his face in his mansilent. Then he raised his face on posure of despair.

gentlemen," said he. "If I shot the man he had his shot at me, and there's no murder in that. But if you think I could have hurt that woman, then you don't know either me or her. I tell you, there was never a man in this her. I had a right to her. She was pledged to me years ago. Who was between us? I tell you that I had the first right to her and that I was only

"She broke away from your influen when she found the man that you are, said Holmes sternly. "She fled from said Holmes sternly. America to avoid you, and she married an honorable gentleman in England. You dogged her and followed her and made her life a misery to her in orde to induce her to abandon the husband whom she loved and respected in orde to fly with you, whom she feared and You have ended by bringing about the death of a noble man and driving his wife to suicide. That is your record in this business, Mr. Abe Slaney, and you will answer for it to

"If Elsie dies I care nothing what becomes of me," said the American He opened one of his hands and looked at a note crumpled up in his palm. "See here, mister," he cried, with a gleam of suspicion in his eyes, "you're you? If the lady is hurt as bad as you say, He tossed it forward on to the note?" table.

To be continued.

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> Did you read the account of the Smith-Jones wedding in yesterday

No answered the Wedderly. eldom read the read the war news

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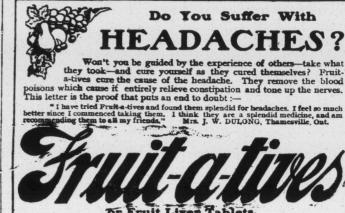
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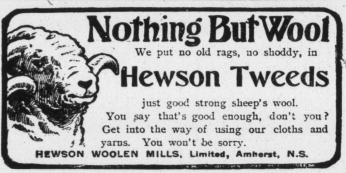
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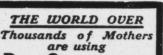
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came, as I expected, from some one who had been intimate with the lady in her early life a combination which contained two E's with three letters contained two E's with three letters that the between might very well stand for the name 'ELSIE.' On examination I eyes. Then he burst into a bitter laugh. "Well, gentlemen, you have the drop the time. I seem to have knockwas three times repeated. It was cerway I had got my L, S and I. But

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stand respectively for N. V and R.

only four letters in the word which

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