

# Doubloons

By EDEN PHILLPOTTS and  
ARNOLD BENNETT.

## CHAPTER XI.—(Continued.)

"The commissioner, with the courage of an old soldier, plunged himself and Philip straight into the seething heart of the Brent daily battle, and did not leave his charge until, after a lift and a long corridor, he had deposited him at a door marked 'Mr. Brent,' with the named crossed out and 'Lord Nasing' written over it. Philip remembered then who Lord Nasing had knocked and received a favorable answer, and Philip entered.

The interior was vast and noble, the caprice of a millionaire who spent the whole of his waking hours in the successful pursuit of pleasure by means of business, and who believed in comfort with splendor. His office was an exact reproduction of Napoleon's Council Chamber at Fontainebleau, with its ceiling by Boucher, its Beauvais tapestries, and even the famous round table whose top is a single piece of mahogany.

At the round table, which was covered with letters and slip-proofs, sat a pale, puffy man of forty-five with the sharp features of a telephone strapper round his dark head. Two young women were writing in remote corners of the room.

"No," the man was saying with careful distinctness into the telephone, "Giralda. G as in gin, I R as in roller, A L D as in donkey. A. Got it? Good." He looked up. "Two young women were writing in remote corners of the room."

"Will you sit down a moment? I'm just phoning to Paris."

"He finished what was apparently part of a paragraph for the Paris edition of the Record and then he rang off, released himself from the ear-piece, and turned to Philip. A messenger had come and gone. The two women silently departed.

"Good-morning, Mr. Masters. Won't you have this chair near the table?" "Thanks," said Philip. "Are you Lord Nasing?"

"I am. You know I've just bought the 'Daily Courier'."

"I did not," said Philip.

"And yet I have spent twenty thousand in advertising the fact. It just shows that one can advertise enough."

"Well, I've bought the Courier, and henceforth it's produced in this building. You are after a situation, aren't you?"

"Yes," said Philip.

"How would you like to come on the staff?" The tones were even, placid, cold.

"But I'm not a journalist."

"That's all the better. I want new blood. Journalists always think in grooves."

"I can't write."

"That's not necessary," said Lord Nasing. "I can't, either. And look at me! I can hire writers for a couple of pounds a week."

"But what do you want me to do?" "I want you to go round and get stuff for the Courier."

"What sort of stuff?"

"Bright stuff. Interesting stuff. Exclusive stuff."

"And why do you pick out me?"

"For various reasons. Chiefly because Evenwood, the special of the Record, has been able to make nothing of you. His description of you, and—er—what we know. In short—"

"And the screw?" Philip demanded, smiling.

"What do you ask?"

"Philip, having been thus requested to open his mouth and then he ought to open it extremely wide."

"Twenty pounds a week," he said, calmly, drumming on the table.

Lord Nasing paused. "I have over four hundred staff contributors and secretaries in this place. Every one can walk out when he pleases, and I can shoot 'em out when I please. That's fair, isn't it?"

"Perfectly," said Philip. "Life must be quite interesting here."

Lord Nasing laughed.

"It is," he said shortly.

"Of course I understand your motives," Philip remarked.

"My motives?" Lord Nasing repeated, with a gesture almost threatening.

"Yes," said Philip, "you're going to tell me to work in the Corner House affair. Now, it seems to me that, next to the murderer, I know more about it than anybody in London. I'm in it. I'm of it. I've refused to talk to reporters, and the Record is cross with me for my silence. I'm worth money in Fleet street. What you can't get in one way you usually get in another. That's why you succeed, Lord Nasing. You think you've got the most valuable journalistic asset in London for a paltry twenty pounds a week."

"And haven't I?"

"Yes," said Philip. "Provided you give me a month's engagement certain."

"Impossible, Mr. Masters. I cannot break the rule of a lifetime."

"As you please," Philip rejoined. "But suppose the mystery was cleared up to-morrow, I reckon I should be 'shot out' to-morrow. And it's not good enough."

Lord Nasing rose.

"I admire you," said he.

"The admiration is mutual," said Philip. "Good-morning, my lord."

crowd without hindrance from the police, and whom Philip knew for a detective.

Difficulties with his private photographer afforded some distraction to Philip's mind. Meredith did not come to lunch. But Mrs. Upottery, to the surprise of all the world, did come to lunch. She was in profound mourning, and she brought with her a satisfactory meal with infinite gravity, refusing, however, the tapoca pudding—perhaps on account of its flippancy.

She spoke, now of the command of people at the tables, and none dared to address her. She was sterner here than even at the inquest, and men marveled anew that such frigid and antique charms had bewitched Captain Pollexfen, who was a sailor, and probably, therefore, a connoisseur in charms of countries.

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"Who are you?" said a valet, coming noiselessly out of an adjoining room.

"My name is Masters," said Philip. "And I have an important appointment with Lord Nasing at seven o'clock."

"Well, I should advise you to look it," said the valet.

"Listen, my friend," Philip was beginning, when Lord Nasing strove into the room in the wake of his man. He was wearing a white necktie at the summit of a broad lap of shirt-front.

"You're there!" said Philip, relieved. "I thought it was very strange if you'd forgotten me."

His greeting so affected the valet that the latter disappeared into the next room to conceal his sense of humor.

Lord Nasing dropped the ends of his necktie. Then, having considered the situation, he laughed. There was nothing else to do.

"Oh!" said he, "you're the young man that's got charge of the Corner House."

"I am," answered Philip very dryly. He had been called "young man" just once too often that day, and Lord Nasing was the young man.

"What have you done?"

"Are you engaged for dinner?" Philip asked him, as if at the sword's point.

"No," said Lord Nasing, quite unused to these tactics from his legionaries.

"Well," said Philip. "Come along and dine with me at the Savoy, and I'll tell you there what I've done. I'm too exhausted to talk till I've got some Burgundy inside me."

Silence reigned for a space in the council chamber.

"The reception of Lord Nasing called."

"My coat, Mr. Masters has been waiting for me to dine with him at the Savoy."

"If you don't mind," Philip added, "I'll go into the grill-room, as I'm not hungry."

He was strangely enthusiastic in his new profession. He reckoned that he was succeeding. And certainly his was a success. He was now in the grill-room, and he was now in the grill-room.

"I don't care for fifty Josephines," said Philip, producing his pocket book. "How do you explain this?"

"Here she is," Tony whispered. "Skip, my son!" He glanced at the door, and his face suffused with a great glow.

"Mildred!" he exclaimed. "My darling Tony!" (twittered a fluffily-dressed and maturely handsome woman, who floated across the room in a maze of chiffons, and then took Tony by the neck. After which, on perceiving Philip, she gave a little "Oh!" of surprise.)

"My friend, Philip Masters," said Tony, disengaging himself. "Phil, this is my sister, Mrs. Appleby."

"I'm always delighted to meet my Tony's friends," Mrs. Appleby asserted, smiling down upon Philip.

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toward ritualism in the delivery of the journalist's hat and coat. As for Lord Nasing, he abandoned with such breath-taking brusqueness, Louis the Fourteenth, when someone pitched the bed-hanging into the middle of the supper table, was far less astonished than he. Lord Nasing's sole comfort centered in a moral certainty that Masters must be the criminal himself. Philip bounded into the cab, and told the driver to drive, in an unmentionable manner, to the Devonshire Mansion. He drew again the pocket book from his pocket. Happily the cab was the last word of civilization in cabs, and had a small oil-lamp fixed in its interior, which the driver could examine the bank note thoroughly and at leisure. Not only was there no mistake about the number of the note, but he had another note for a hundred pounds, and that also bore one of the advertised numbers. He thus held in his possession two of the notes which the shipping firm had paid to Captain Pollexfen on the day of the latter's murder. No wonder his hand went down below the seat, and he hid the notes in the bottom of the cab.

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