

"I know it," retorted Raven with sneer. "Play me false, and your half thought it very probable that they of the Giant Ruby will have a dead would hale him off to jail. if there man for owner" were such a thing in Monaco. There He laid the box on the table. Reece

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## way; but I'll get it right side to the front directly, sir. Is there anything else we ought to take?" "Yes; revolvers," replied Ronald nuietly; "we may have trouble." "I'm almost 'oping we shall, sir,' Smithers longingly. "For the first time in my life I've got an un'oly cravin' to shoot somebody. I'd no idea till I 'eard of this poor young lady' trouble that I was such a savage Give you my word, sir, that I'm jest thirstin' for blood. But don't you be afraid, sir; I'll keep my 'ead all right, you'll see. Just before dawn sir? That don't give us much time but I'll be ready. Mr. Ronald " As usual, he was as good as

word; and in the hour of the greates darkness they were rowed to the quay, where Smithers had got a carriage in waiting; the sailor's kit-bag with the rope-ladder inside, was stowed under the seat, and they drove within half a mile of the villa. Here they pulled up, and, telling the coachman-whom Smithers had bribed so heavily that he would have looked on at an actual murder with placid in difference-to wait for them in the secluded spot at which they had stopped, the master and man, the latter shouldering the kit-bag, went on towards the scene of an adventure

which was romantic and dangerous enough for even these two reckles and dare-devil individuals.

They went on in silence, meeting r one, and apparently unseen. They reached the wall; and Smither quickly took out the light ladder and proceeded to make his first attempt throw up the end with the grappling iron, so that they might catch on the coping, when Ronald gripped Smithers' arm.

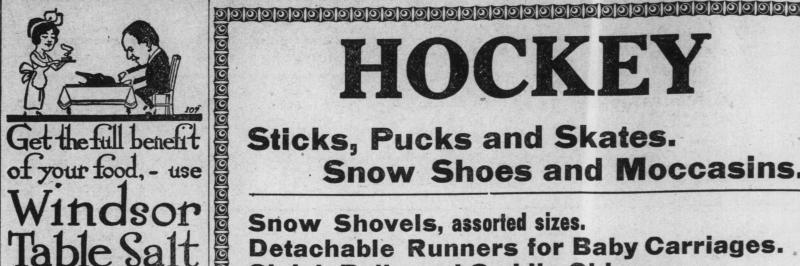
> "Hold on!" he whispered. "What was that?"

"I heard nothing, sir," Smithers whispered back. "What did you 'ear?'

"Something that sounded like th should be denied admission, that he clang of a gate," said Ronald. Smithers scratched his head, and

"Tisn't very likely that anybody would be goin' out o' the place this shut up his daughter, the equal right time o' the mornin', sir," he said

"Sure you ain't mistook ?" "I may have been." said Ronald 'but, whatever it was, we have n Instead of assisting him Ronald time to lose. Up with that ladder! Smithers, after several failures



and Smithers took the handkerchief from his face, and, after peering at it a moment in the dim light, whispered huskily

"Nita! The maid! Her name's on He's been chloroformed!" They rose to their feet, and looked at each other in stupefied amazement; then, recovering himself. Ronald sprang through the open doorway, and sped up the drive towards the house, his revolver still in his hand, and Smithers following close at his heels

As they approached the entran they saw that the door was open lights were burning in the hall, in some of the windows: servants were

moving about, there was an air o confusion, a murmuring of voices, as if something had happened. The two men sprang up the flight of marble steps and dashed into the hall into the centre of the group of servants who were only partially dressed and looked bewildered, as if they were

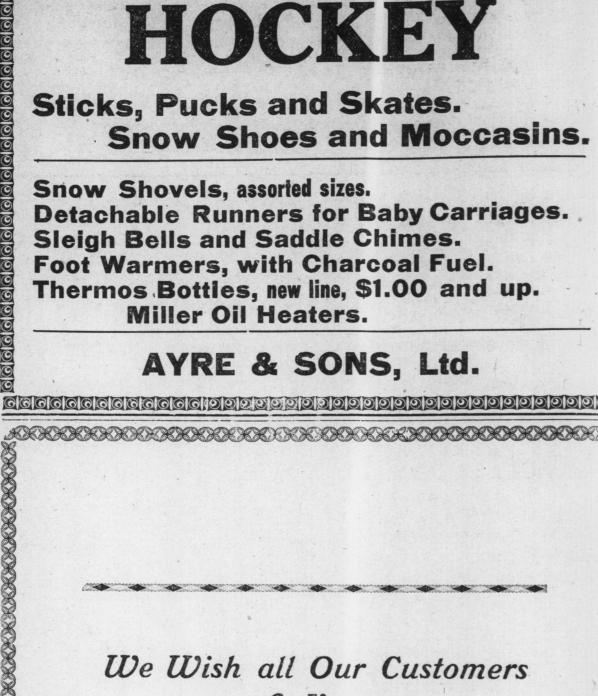
> only just awake. "The Count!" said Ronald, sternly. The frightened herd shrank back,

and stared at the intruders. "The Count! I want him!-I mus see him!" said Ronald.

A man, the major-domo of the mag nificent establishment, stepped forward, with a frightened air.

"You cannot see his Excellency, he stammered: "he has given strict orders-"

At that moment the man's was drowned by a sound from the loor above; it was a cry like that of wounded, maddened bull-a bellow of rage: and two or three servants came tearing down the stairs.



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CHARKER REACTOR

up the precious little cas bined with strategy. Ronald shut ket of plain wood and thrust it in his nimself up in the saloon, got himself ocket, and kept his hand upon it. Raven shrugged his shoulders, and a drink, lit his pipe, and tackled the problem with the national phlegm veyed him grimly.

hav

life.

such

sweet

tongue

friend--

ten."

door.

and determination: and presently he You English are fond of money, summoned Smithers, who, by the way, aid. "It is dearer to you that was not far from the door, and who wife, your children, your God entered with alacrity. Of the two love it; but to an Italian there Smithers was the more excited, for igs more precious than monhe was a Cockney, and your Cockney them is revenge. is sentimental or nothing. mine. I slew the man who "Yes, sir?" he demanded in an ne of my bride: I took his

eager whisper. child, the Giant Ruby he set "I've been thinking it out, Smithby. Ah, yes! revenge is ers," said Ronald, "and I've hit upon I feel its sweetness on my a kind of plan. We'll never get past this hour. Good night. my those gates: but there is another way on-in-law, as you will be of getting into the place---' I shall expect you at to-morroy

ers, with feverish eagerness. He stood nd watched Dexter Reece Ronald nodded as, with faltring steps of exhaustion, "Yes: I must get over that wall: excitement, h made his way to the

yacht's rope-ladders."

Smithers nodded, and his eyes CHAPTER XXV. sparkled It may be haarded that the secret

"I know, sir! We'll manage it. We of the pre-emience which Great don't want anybody else—just you Britain holds an engst the nations o and me, sir. How soon, Mr. Ronnie?" the world may be found in the fact "Just before dawn," replied Ronald. that the people of these small but 'You get a carriage: we'll pack the tight little islands are possessed of a ladder-find out a light one." kind of obstinacy compared with "Wouldn't a rope do, sir?" whisperwhich that of the proverbial mule ed Smithere

shrinks into insignificance. The Englishman, the Scotsman, the Irish-Ronald shook his head. man, may sometimes get excited and "It would be sufficient for us----lose his head; but he precious soon "But not for the lady, sir. Excuse recovers it, sets his teeth, and goes me. Mr. Ronald! My 'ead seems to for his object with a dogged persist- have screwed itself round the wrong

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to grapple with the top of the wall the next instant he was up like a monkey, and Ronald was close behind They drew the ladder up after them and dropped it the other side of the wall: they themselves then drop ped over, and after a moment, in which they looked round them, they stole through the shrubs to the house but they had not gone far before Ronald said:

succeeded in getting one of the hooks

"I am uneasy about that gate Smithers: the man may have heard us-may be on the watch. You understand-

Smithers nodded and his shrewd lips grew tight, while the craving for a fight gleamed in his blue eyes. They turned aside, and, crouching low and "The wall, sir!" whispered Smith- going cautiously, made their way in

the direction of the lodge. When they came close behind it, they stopped and listened. Not a sound could be heard you must help me. Get one of the the keeper was not in sight. But Ronald was not satisfied, and, signing to Smithers significantly, he led the way, with an increase of caution. to the front of the lodge.

> There was now sufficient light for them to see distinctly; and, to their amazement, they saw that one of th great gates was ajar; the door of the lodge was also open; there was no light in the interior. The two men gazed at each other with mute interrogation for a moment; then Smithers whispered: "What's it mean, sir? The gate's

> open, the door's open: there is no on to be seen. Is it a plant, sir?" "We'll see," said Ronald, grimly. Revolvers in hand, they crept up to the lodge, and looked in round the half-open door. The small room was o dark that, for a moment, Ronald ould distinguish nothing; but presently he sprang forward with a smothered exclamation; for, lying stretched out on the floor, his huge arms spread out, his great body limit and still, was the keeper; across his face was a handkerchief; a faint sickly smell of chloroform filled th They knelt beside the man

and Smithers darted past them, and gained the corridor. The electric light had been switched on, and, as Ronald looked round with a swift glance, he was amazed, even at that noment, at the regal splendour of the place: then, in that same instant it had flashed upon him-actually for the first time since he had discovered that Cara was a prisoner in the house -that this Count, this father of hers.

was the possessor of the stolen treasure. It simply flashed across his mind, to disappear as instantly; for it was Cara upon whom his heart and

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-but-they

are not

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mind were fixed; the treasure was ci no account

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