

# THE SIGN OF THE FOUR

BY CONAN DOYLE

(CONTINUED FROM LAST WEEK)

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE STRANGE STORY OF JONATHAN SMALL.

A very patient man was the inspector in the cab, for it was a weary time before I rejoined him. His face clouded over when I showed him the empty box.

"There goes the reward," said he, gloomily. "Where there is no money there is no pay. This night's work would have been worth a tenner each to Sam Brown and me if the treasure had been there."

"Mr. Thaddens Sholto is a rich man," I said. "He will see that you are rewarded, treasure or no."

The inspector shook his head dejectedly, however. "It's a bad job," he repeated, "and so Mr. Athelney Jones will think."

His forecast proved to be correct, for the detective looked blank enough when I got to Baker street and showed him the empty box. They had only just arrived. Holmes, the prisoner and he, for they had changed their plans so far as to report themselves at a station upon the way. My companion lounged in his armchair with his usual listless expression, while Small sat stiffly opposite to him with his wooden leg cocked over his sound one. As I exhibited the empty box he leaned back in his chair and laughed aloud.

"This is your doing, Small," said Athelney Jones, angrily.

"Yes, I have put it away where you shall never lay hand upon it," he cried, exultantly. "It is my treasure; and if I can't have the loot I'll take damned good care that no one else does." I tell you that no living man has any right to it, unless it is three men who are in the Andaman convict barracks and myself. I know now that I cannot have the use of it, and I know that they cannot. I have acted all through for them as much as for myself. It's been the sign of four with us always. Well, I know that they would have had me do just what I have done, and throw the treasure into the Thames rather than let it go to kith or kin of Sholto or of Morstan. It was not to make them rich that we did for Achmet, you'll find the treasure where the key is, and where little Tonga is. When I saw that your launch must catch us, I put the loot in a safe place. There are no rupees for you this journey."

"You are deceiving us, Small," said Athelney Jones, sternly. "If you had wished to throw the treasure into the Thames it would have been easier for you to have thrown box and all."

"Easier for me to throw, and easier for you to recover," he answered, with a shrewd, sidelong look. "The mar that was clever enough to hunt me down is clever enough to pick an iron box from the bottom of a river. Now that they are scattered over five miles or so, it may be a harder job. It went to my heart to do it, though. I was half mad when you came up with us. However, there's no good grieving over it. I've had ups in my life, and I've had downs, but I've learned not to cry over spilt milk."

"This is a very serious matter, Small," said the detective. "If you had helped justice, instead of thwarting it in this way, you would have had a better chance at your trial."

"Justice!" snarled the ex-convict. "A pretty justice! Whose loot is this, if it is not ours? Where is the justice that I should give it up to those who have never earned it? Look how I have earned it! Twenty long years in that fever-ridden swamp, all day at work under the mangrove tree, all night chained up in the filthy convict huts, bitten by mosquitoes, racked with ague, bullied by every cursed black-faced policeman who loved to take it out of a white man. That was how I earned the Agra treasure; and you talk to me of justice because I cannot bear to feel that I have paid this price only that another may enjoy it! I would rather swing a score of times, or have one of Tonga's darts in my hide, than live in a convict's cell and feel that another man is at his ease in a palace with the money that should be mine." Small had dropped his mask of stoicism, and all this came out in a wild whirl of words, while his eyes blazed, and the hand-cuffs clanked together with impassioned movement of his hands. I could understand, as I saw the fury and the passion of the man, that it was no groundless or unnatural terror which had possessed Maj. Sholto when he first learned that the injured convict was upon his track.

"You forget that we know nothing of all this," said Holmes, quietly. "We have not heard your story, and we cannot tell how far justice may originally have been on your side."

"Well, sir, you have been very fair spoken to me, though I can see that I have you to thank that I have these bracelets upon my wrists. Still, I bear no grudge for that. It is all fair and above-board. If you want to hear my story I have no wish to hold it back. What I say to you is God's truth, every word of it. Thank you; you can put the glass beside me here, and I'll put my lips to it if I can dry."

"I am a Worcestershire man myself—born near Pershore. I daresay you would find a heap of Smalls living there now if you were to look. I have

often thought of taking a look round there, but the truth is that I was never much of a credit to the family, and I doubt if they would be so very glad to see me. They were all steady, chapel-going folk, small farmers, well known and respected over the country-side, while I was always a bit of a rover. At last, however, when I was about eighteen, I gave them no more trouble, for I got into a mess over a girl, and could only get out of it again by taking the queen's shilling and joining the Third Buffs which was just starting for India.

"I wasn't destined to do much soldiering, however. I had just got past the goose-step and learned to handle my musket, when I was fool enough to go swimming in the Ganges. Luckily for me, my company sergeant, John Holmer, was in the water at the same time, and he was one of the finest swimmers in the service. A crocodile took me, just as I was half way across, and nipped off my right leg just as clean as a surgeon could have done it, just above the knee. What with the shock and the loss of blood I fainted, and I should have been drowned if Holder had not caught hold of me and paddled for the bank. I was five months in hosp., over it, and when at last I was able to limp out of it with this timber toe strapped to my stump I found myself invalided out of the army and unfitted for any active occupation.

"I was, as you can imagine, pretty down on my luck at this time, for I was a useless cripple, though not yet in my twentieth year. However, my misfortune soon proved to be a blessing in disguise. A man named Abelwhite, who had come out there as an indigo-planter, wanted an overseer to look after his coolies and keep them up to their work. He happened to be a friend of our colonel's, who had taken an interest in me since the accident.

To make a long story short, the colonel recommended me strongly for the post, and as the work was mostly to be done on horseback, my leg was no great obstacle, for I had enough knee left to keep a good grip on the saddle. What I had to do was to ride over the plantation, to keep an eye on the men as they worked, and to report the idlers. The pay was fair, I had comfortable quarters, and altogether I was content to spend the remainder of my life in indigo-planting. Mr. Abelwhite was a kind man, and he would often drop into my little shanty and smoke a pipe with me, for white folk out there feel their hearts warm to each other as they never do here at home.

"Well, I was never in luck's way long. Suddenly, without a note, or warning, the great mutiny broke upon us. One month India lay as still and peaceful, to all appearance, as Surrey or Kent; the next there were two hundred thousand black devils let loose, and the country was a perfect hell. Of course you know all about it, gentlemen—a deal more than I do, very likely, since reading is not in my line. I only know what I saw with my own eyes. Our plantation was at a place called Muttra, near the border of the northwest provinces. Night after night the whole sky was alight with the burning bungalows, and day after day we had small companies of Europeans passing through our estate, with their wives and children, on their way to Agra, where were the nearest troops. Mr. Abelwhite was an obstinate man. He had it in his head that the affair had been exaggerated, and that it would blow over as suddenly as it had sprung up. There he sat on his veranda, drinking whisky pegs and smoking cheroots, while the country was in a blaze about him. Of course we stuck by him, I and Dawson, who, with his wife, used to do the bookwork and the managing. Well, one fine day on a crash came. I had been away on a distant plantation, and was riding slowly home in the evening, when my eye fell upon something all huddled together at the bottom of a steep nullah. I rode down to see what it was, and the cold struck through my heart when I found it was Dawson's wife, all cut into ribbons, and half-eaten by jackals and native dogs. A little further up the road Dawson himself was lying on his face, quite dead, with an empty revolver in his hand and four Sepoys lying across each other in front of him. I reined up my horse, wondering which way I should turn, but at that moment I saw thick smoke curling up from Abelwhite's bungalow and the flames beginning to burst through the roof. I knew then that I could do my employer no good, but would only throw my own life away if I meddled in the matter. From where I stood I could see hundreds of the black fiends, with their red coats still on their backs, dancing and howling round the burning house. Some of them pointed at me, and a couple of bullets sang past my head; so I broke away across the paddy-fields, and found myself late at night safe within the walls at Agra.

"As it proved, however, there was no great safety there, either. The whole country was up like a swarm of bees. Wherever the English could collect in little bands they held just the ground that their guns commanded. Everywhere else they were helpless fugi-



HOW HE LOST HIS LEG.

tives. It was a fight of the millions against the hundreds; and the cruellest part of it was that these men that we fought against, foot, horse and gunners, were our own picked troops, whom we had taught and trained, handling our own weapons, and blowing our own bugle calls. At Agra there were the Third Bengal Fusiliers, some Sikhs, two troops of horse and a battery of artillery. A volunteer corps of clerks and merchants had been formed, and this I joined, wooden leg and all. We went out to meet the rebels at Shahjunge early in July, and we beat them back for a time, but our powder gave out and we had to fall back upon the city. Nothing but the worst news came to us from every side—which is not to be wondered at, for if you look at the map you will see that we were right in the heart of it. Lucknow is rather better than a hundred miles to the east, and Cawnpore about as far to the south. From every point on the compass there was nothing but torture and murder and outrage.

"The city of Agra is a great place, swarming with fanatics and fierce devil-worshippers of all sorts. Our handful of men were lost among the narrow, winding streets. Our leader moved across the river, therefore, and took up his position in the old fort of Agra. I don't know if any of you gentlemen have ever read or heard anything of that old fort. It is a very queer place—the queerest that ever I was in, and I have been in some rum corners, too. First of all, it is enormous in size. I should think that the inclosure must be acres and acres. There is a modern part, which took all our garrison, women, children, stores and everything else, with plenty of room over. But the modern part is nothing like the size of the old quarter, where nobody goes, and which is given over to the scorpions and the centipedes. It is all full of great deserted halls, and winding passages, and long corridors twisting in and out, so that it is easy for folks to get lost in it. For this reason it was seldom that anyone went into it, though now and again a party with torches might go exploring.

"The river washes along the front of the old fort, and so protects it, but on the sides and behind there are many doors, and these had to be guarded, of course, in the old quarter as well as in that which was actually held by our troops. We were short-handed, with hardly men enough to man the angles of the building and to serve the guns. It was impossible for us, therefore, to station a strong guard at every one of the innumerable gates. What we did was to organize a central garrison in the middle of the fort, and to leave each gate under the charge of some white man and two or three natives. I was selected to take charge of one certain hour of the night of a small isolated door upon the southwest side of the building. Two Sikh troops were placed under my command, and I was instructed if anything went wrong to fire my musket, when I might rely upon help coming at once from the central guard. As the guard was a good two hundred paces away, however, and as the space between was cut up into a labyrinth of passages and corridors, I had great doubts as to whether they could arrive in time to be of any use in case of an actual attack.

"Well, I was pretty proud at having this small command given me, since I was a raw recruit, and a game-legged one at that. For two nights I kept the watch with my Panjabees. They were tall, fierce-looking chaps, Mahomet Singh and Abdullah Khan by name, both old fighting men who had borne arms against us at Chillianwallah. They could talk English pretty well, but I could get little out of them. They preferred to stand together and jabber all night in their queer Sikh lingo. For myself, I used to stand outside the gateway, looking down on the broad, winding river and on the twinkling lights of the great city. The beating of drums, the rattle of tom-toms, and the yells and howls of the rebels, drunk with opium and with lung, were enough to remind us all night of our dangerous neighbors across the stream. Every two hours the officers of the night used to come round to all the posts, to make sure that all was well.

"The third night of my watch was dark and dirty, with a small, driving rain. It was dreary work standing in the gateway hour after hour in such weather. I tried again and again to make my Sikhs talk, but without much success. At two in the morning the rounds passed, and broke for a moment the weariness of the night. Finding that my companions would not be led into conversation, I took out my pipe, and laid down my musket to strike a match. In an instant the two Sikhs were upon me. One of them snatched my firelock up and leveled it at my head, while the other held a great knife to my throat and swore between his teeth that he would plunge it into me if I moved a step.

"My first thought was that these fellows were in league with the rebels, and that this was the beginning of an assault. If our door were in the hands of the Sepoys the place must fall, and the women and children be treated as they were in Cawnpore. Maybe you gentlemen think that I am just making out a case for myself, but I give you my word that when I thought of that, though I felt the point of the knife at my throat, I opened my mouth with the intention of giving a scream, if it was my last one, which might alarm the main guard. The man who held me seemed to know my thoughts; for, even as I braced myself to it, he whispered: 'Don't make a noise. The fort is safe enough. There are no rebel dogs on this side of the river.' There was the ring of truth in what he said, and I knew that if I raised my voice I was a dead man. I could read it in the fellow's brown eyes. I waited, therefore, in silence, to see what it was that they wanted from me.

(CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.)  
**ROYAL Baking Powder.**  
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## HOW TO SECURE HEALTH.

MENTAL worry, it is thought, is the chief cause of cancer.  
DR. HAMMOND says that thin soles are the worst propagators of disease among women.

NEVER use the first water that comes from the tap. It has been in a lead or iron pipe all night, and is not healthful.

SLEEPING-ROOMS ought to be located not lower than the second story of the house, and should be large and airy. Pure air and plenty of it is more efficacious than drugs, and is cheaper.

KEEP the back, especially between the shoulder blades, well covered; also the chest well protected. In sleeping in a cold room, establish the habit of breathing through the nose, and never with the mouth open.

WHILE as yet we have discovered no way of avoiding contagion which comes to us in the air, we know, from recent investigations, the extremely important fact that the air does not become contaminated with bacteria unless they are allowed to dry.

HONEY is one of nature's purest sweets, valuable both as food and medicine. It has always been esteemed a luxury—the food of kings. Eaten in small quantities with other food it is very nourishing, and favors the cure of pulmonary diseases and colds.

FLUTE-PLAYING for women is recommended as a means of health and bodily development. "Filling" a flute necessitates lung expansion. The continued daily practice begets deeper and deeper inspirations. Steeping shoulders become thrown back and the chest contracted by the habit of tight lacing becomes expanded and broadened.

AGAINST damp or cold beds a medical writer says: "Not only the guests, but the family, often suffer the penalty of sleeping in cold rooms and chilling their bodies at a time when they need all their bodily heat, by getting between cold sheets. It is a needless peril and the neglect to provide dry rooms and beds has in it the elements of murder and suicide."

## PILGRIMS TO PALESTINE.

Nights and Scenes on the Banks of the River Jordan.

The crossing of the Jordan by the Israelites was accomplished in the most perfect order, because they had been trained under Moses to perfect military discipline, which was continued under Joshua. It was an occasion when almost any large body of men would have been thrown into confusion unless thorough discipline can be presupposed. If this was the first great pilgrimage to the Jordan, it certainly was not the last one. Thousands of devout pilgrims from different parts of the world visit this river every year. They bathe in it; and carry water from it to their distant homes. Greater numbers come from Russia than any other one country; but every country in Europe is represented, as well as North and South America and Australia. I have seen the road from Bethany to the banks of the Jordan literally crowded with pilgrims on their way to this sacred stream. In groups of ten, twenty or fifty, as the case might be, they were scattered throughout the entire distance, like the remnants of a routed army. They numbered probably two thousand or more. Once, on arriving at Jericho, I saw the bushes covered with garments, like the washing of a military encampment, and soon ascertained that they belonged to a crowd of pilgrims that had just returned from bathing in the Jordan. The clothing in which they bathe is preserved with great care, and it is these garments in which they desire and expect to be buried. The current of the river is very strong, and by ropes and other means precautions are taken against accidents while the pilgrims are bathing. It is not infrequently happens, however, that persons lose their lives; but it is usually those who have confidence in themselves as being good swimmers. Such persons pay little heed to cautions. They run risks, and in a moment are carried beyond the reach of help. These facts serve to illustrate the difficulties the Israelites would have found in crossing the river had they not been miraculously aided. Three years ago the Governor of Palestine had a narrow bridge built over the Jordan. It was called an "American bridge;" and at the opening, to which I was invited, the valley presented a strange and lively scene—tents, horsemen, a multitude of people, and the sound of trumpets, as if some new Joshua, with another invading army, had arrived in the "borders of Jericho."—Interior.

## Cattle Killed by Elks.

A ranchman living on the Satsop, Col., missed three head of cattle, and noticing a congregation of bozards a short distance away proceeded to make an investigation and found all three of the animals lying dead, their bones all broken, their horns knocked off, scarcely any hair left on them, and the ground around them all torn up with elk tracks. Apparently a band of elk had come up and attacked them in an opening, hooked and butted them down, and pawed and stamped them to death.

## A Tree That Owns Land.

There is a tree at Athens, Ga., which is a property holder. In the early part of the century the land on which it stands was owned by Colonel W. H. Jackson, who took great delight in watching its growth and enjoying its shade! In his old age the tree had reached magnificent proportions, and he thought of its being destroyed by those who would come after him was so repugnant that he recorded a deed conveying to it all land within a radius of eight feet of it.

—James Russell Lowell, it is said, will devote the remainder of his life to travel and reading. He says that his literary work is all done.

## Neat Pin-Cushion Cover.

Take a cushion six inches square and cover the top with dark green satin eight inches square. Sew all around the edges of the cover before attaching to cushion a band of rose pink satin three inches wide. Put the right sides of satin together and sew it in slashes one inch wide and one and one-half inches deep. Cut the slashes out with the scissors, turn them carefully, and then with a needle and thread tack each slash half way over, diagonally, showing the pink satin against the green. Under the slashes all around put a frill of lace, and on the upper corners of the slashes put tiny chenille balls of rose pink. Embroider or paint in the center of cover a design of wild roses. Fasten this cover firmly to the top of the cushion.—Detroit Free Press.

## Russian Remedy for Toothache.

A Russian practitioner recommends the use of hyoseyamus seeds for toothache. His plan is to burn the seeds and to convey the smoke through a little paper tube to the hole in the tooth. He declares that in nearly all cases one application, or at most two, will suffice to cure the toothache.

—Blinks' Coachman (colored)—"I tought you sayed youah folks was so dog-gone rich?" Jinks' Coachman (Celtic)—"So they are, ye black devil." Blinks' Coachman—"Huh! I guess not. I looked in de winder las' night and seen two ob de young ladies playin' on de same pianny. Guess you all has ter economize."—America.

—Northern gentleman (who has been reading on the subject of Voodooism among the colored people, and thinks he will make a little original research)—"Jasper, do any of your people carry charms about them for protection?" Jasper—"Oh, yes, sah; but I nebber hear dem call charms 'fore; more generally call dem razors, sah."—Harper's Bazar.

—Some men never like to be alone. Because a man is judged by his company, you know.—Yonkers Statesman.

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