

The Chronicles of Addington Peace

By B. FLETCHER ROBINSON
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MR. TAUBERY'S DIAMOND

(Continued.)

Quite half an hour had dragged by when the cab door was swung open, and the detective sprang in. At the same time I noticed a covered cart with a black pony in the shafts pass the other window at a leisurely pace. Our driver must have had his orders, for he turned his horse and followed in the same direction.

Peace remained silent, so I left him alone and contented myself with staring out of the window. We were going northward towards Hampstead. The lines of houses broke up into separate villas, lilac and laburnum bushes peeped over the garden walls. The throng of traffic grew thinner, the pavement less crowded. It was past five when we drew up at a little public house. Peace toddled out, and I followed at his heels.

"He is unloading his cart in Ashley street, yonder," said the driver, leaning from the box, as he pointed with his whip to a side road. "Do you want me to wait, sir?"

The inspector nodded and disappeared through the inn door, leaving me on the pavement. As he had given me no orders I strolled back to the corner and peeped down the road, which ran at right angles to the one in which I was.

About forty yards away stood the little covered cart with the gray-haired dealer of the auction room talking to a lad beside it. Presently the lad crawled under the canvas hood and handed down the identical long-tailed horse that had brought about the public discomfiture of the gallant Colonel Gunton. The dealer pushed it across the stone pavement into a little furniture shop, and the boy, whipping up the black pony, drove quickly away.

I turned back to find the detective at my elbow.

"Peace," I said, "what is your interest in that bicycle horse?"

"It happens to play the comedy part in our little mystery."

"What do you mean?"

"Only that it has a hole in the saddle for a pommel should a little girl ride in it, and the hole leads down to a hollow inside. Do you guess what it was that dropped into the hollow inside?"

"Not Mr. Taubery's diamond?"

"Exactly. Yet we have still to find out the man who put it there."

"But, in the meantime the old dealer may—"

"Tut, tut, Mr. Phillips. The old dealer has nothing to do with it. He is only obeying an order to buy the toy whatever it cost, and to keep it until called for. We may have to waste some time, so I have ordered a steak and fried potatoes in an upper room that conveniently overlooks the door of his shop. Let me show you the way."

We passed through a long bar at which a dingy assemblage lounged and smoked, and so upstairs into a private room, the windows of which commanded Ashley street. We ate our meal in relays—one watching at the window, while the other disposed of his section of stringy steak and heavy beer. The daylight softly faded, the gas jets sprang out along the street, the tramp of home-coming fathers dropped into silence—but there was still no caller at the furniture shop. The shutters had been put up for the night. It seemed plain to me that nothing would happen for that evening at least, though Peace did not seem to despond.

Nine o'clock—ten o'clock—ten-thirty, and the customer arrived.

I had watched his cab come rattling down the street with a casual interest, for many had come and gone since we first mounted guard. It had passed the little shop and was almost beneath us, when a head was thrust out of the window and a voice cried irritably to the cabman. A street lamp showed him to me clearly—a white-faced youth with a straggly, brown mustache and an indecisive chin.

The cab turned about, and pulled up opposite the shop door. The inspector touched my arm, and we walked down the stairs, picked up our driver, who was smoking in the bar, and so bundled into our own vehicle. A few whispered instructions, and we drove slowly round the corner into Ashley street.

The customer had been expected. As we passed the shop at a walking pace I could see that the dealer and his assistant were hoisting the bicycle

horse to the roof of the waiting cab. Fifty yards more and we drew up by the pavement.

Peace kept the windows closed, so that I could not look back along the road; but through the glass in front I could see that our driver was quietly taking note of affairs. It was not the first time that the inspector had employed him, as I learnt afterwards, and the man knew his business.

Suddenly our cab whisked round and set off at a rapid pace. The stranger had selected a fast horse, that was evident. We swung through a maze of narrow streets, tugged up a long hill, skirted a stretch of open common—a part of Hampstead Heath, I believe—and finally stopped in the shade of some tall trees. As I got out I saw the lights of the chaise stationary at some distance up the road.

"There may be trouble, Mr. Phillips," whispered the little detective. "I'm not certain I ought to bring you along. If anything—"

"Nonsense!" I interrupted, glancing down at him with some amusement.

"Well, take this, anyway. I had it from a German burglar."

He thrust a strip of hardened rubber into my hand, about eighteen inches in length by two in thickness.

"It will stun a man without leaving a mark," he said gently.

The four-wheeler that we had fol-

lowed was waiting before a green door set in a high brick wall. Without any attempt at concealment, Peace walked to the door and tried the handle. It was not locked, and we passed into a fair-sized garden, set about with flower beds and clumps of laurel. In the middle I could see the outline of a square gray house. Two of the ground floor rooms glowed behind their curtains; the rest was darkness.

We crossed a corner of the lawn, and stopped behind a patch of bushes directly in front of the entrance porch. The night was very still and silent. What desperate men were gathered in that quiet place? How could we hope to arrest them flushed with the triumph of so splendid a prize? To be truthful, I began to feel a certain anxiety for our position; though upon Peace's face, showing white in the gloom, was a look of perfect serenity—a look that I could not understand.

"Mercy, oh, mercy!" It was a trembling wall of terror, a wall that was suddenly blotted out by a roar like the challenge of a bull. From within the house came the crash of overturned chairs and the jingle of breaking glass. And all the time the shrieks and hoarse ravings drew nearer and louder, until, with a loud bang, the hall door was flung open and a man tumbled down the steps as if thrown from a catapult. His assailant, in black silhouette against the hall lights, hesitated for a moment, stick in hand. Then, with a shout of rage, he sprang forward and struck at the moaning wretch who squirmed on the gravel at his feet.

"Now, Jack Steadman, that is quite enough," said the inspector, pushing his way through the laurels.

"And who may you be?" cried the other, with a furious oath.

"My name is Addington Peace of the criminal investigation department of Scotland Yard, and I arrest you both for being concerned in the robbery of a valuable diamond, the property of Mr. Julius Taubery."

"Stolen a diamond!" he bellowed. "Do you call that a diamond?"

He flung down a stone that sparkled in the lights behind him, and stamped it into the gravel with his heel.

"I am aware that it is the imitation," said the inspector. "But it was not your fault that you missed the real thing. I have a cab waiting. You had better come with me quietly. And I warn you, Steadman, that anything you say will be used in evidence against you."

It was after two in the morning before the inspector tapped at the door of my rooms. I had made the fourth of that odd cab load to the nearest police station; for, though Mr. Jack Steadman had blustered, and the Hon. George Carstairs had groveled and whined thither, they had consented to go at last. And there I had left the detective and his prisoners, driving to my rooms to await his return.

"The case was not quite so difficult as you suppose, Mr. Phillips," he said, in answer to my question. "You remember that I believed the diamond to be still in the house?"

"Certainly."

"It would be hard to imagine a more useful bait. It was certain that the thieves would have another bite at it; it was also certain that I ought to be able to hook them when they did. Yet I very nearly lost the diamond, after all. Taubery, Gunton and the servants had all declared that, since the robbery, nothing had been moved from the dining room, passage or library. There they made a mistake."

Taubery's little grandson, George, happened to leave his toy horse in the passage from the dining room, and into the hole made for the pommel that poor creature, Carstairs, had dropped the diamond with a last despairing effort to get rid of it before Colonel Gunton searched him. Ten

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"You can understand Steadman's fury when, after all his plots and risks and expenditure, his silly dupe brought him back the identical imitation stone that had been made to deceive old Taubery. I don't believe that the Trojans could have been more astonished when the Greeks emerged from the wooden horse than was Steadman when he took out the diamond from the toy and found it to be the imitation!"

"And who was Steadman?"

"A very dangerous fellow, Mr. Phillips. I recognized him the moment he appeared at the door. For years he was a bookmaker in Paris, but left when the place got too hot for him. As a card player he is well known and avoided. He has been in low water lately. So has his dupe, Carstairs, as I now discover. Lord Wintone, the young man's brother, set him up as a coffee planter in Ceylon, but he spent all the money given him and returned six months ago. Carstairs was a distant connection of Mrs. Taubery's and both she and her husband had been very kind to him. He was always loafing about the house, getting free meals and now and then borrowing a fiver. He must have heard of the new diamond and mentioned it to Steadman; for Steadman hatched the plot—there is no doubt about that. Carstairs was merely a dupe and a foolish, vicious dupe at that—he never had the ability to rise higher in crime. How the two became acquainted I do not know; but they have been seen together several times lately. You may take my word for it, that the public will be well rid of them for a year or two."

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Resourceful.

In the club they were comparing the resourcefulness of their wives in difficult social situations. The man who lives in a Harlem flat had been a good listener, but he finally found an opening.

"Yes," said he, "my wife isn't bad at that sort of thing. We were having some people to luncheon one Sunday last spring, and just at an hour when all the delicatessens were closed she discovered that she needed some mustard and didn't have a grain of it in the kitchen. And she isn't the sort that will borrow from people next door that she doesn't know. It was a bad fix, all right. But she got mustard enough."

"Went to the delicatessen man's house and routed him out, I suppose?" suggested a member from the Bronx.

"Not much. Just went to the medicine closet, got down a box of ready-made mustard plasters, put 'em to soak, and squeezed enough of the hot stuff off."

"Good night," said the man from the Bronx.—New York Globe.

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Jones had invited a friend to dinner and asked him to carve a chicken that was placed before him. The guests set to work with a good will, but after a deal of muscular exercise was compelled to acknowledge himself beaten.

"Where in the name of leather did you get that bird?"

"I don't know," replied the host, "unless it should prove to be the offspring of some hard-boiled egg."—Chicago News.

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They were seated in the dim light of a conservatory. She was playing with her fan, and he was murmuring soft speeches in her ear. Suddenly he leaned forward and impressed a kiss on her soft cheek.

"Oh, Charlie," she cried, "how you frightened me!"

Then after a few minutes she said: "Frighten me again, Charlie."

LOAFING A FINE ART

ACCOMPLISHMENT HARD TO ONE NOT BORN TO IT.

Everyone Should Set Apart Some Time for Absolute Relaxation—Is Woman's Secret of Perennial Youth.

Most of us need a spell of loafing now and then, but few of us know how to loaf. Indeed I don't think it would be at all a bad idea to hold classes in loafing all over this hustling country of ours, says a writer in the *Rehoboth Sunday Herald*. It comes so hard to any one who isn't born a loafer—and the born loafer doesn't count. He exaggerates what should be a recreation, and occasional indulgence, into a habit, thereby spoiling both life and loaf, and incidentally throwing an excellent thing into bad repute.

No one who wouldn't rather work than loaf is in actual need of loafing, but there are really few of us who don't prefer working at something, useful or useless, to doing nothing. And he or she who loves work most requires to learn loafing.

You can't loaf properly if you are worrying over neglected work or anticipated work to come. You must begin to loaf in your mind first of all, letting it work from inside out, until you are loafing all over. Just sitting around and not working isn't loafing. I have seen a woman waiting in the reception room of an office till her turn came to go in to the hallowed precincts beyond, sitting there tense with work, thrashing things over, quivering with impatience, wearing herself out to no purpose at all. Now, if she had studied the art of loafing, she would have had a fine, refreshing half hour and enjoyed herself thoroughly besides.

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What good is there in that? Hardly one American woman gets enough of it. We may be idle, many of us, but we don't know how to loaf. Yet loafing of the right sort creates a calm of the spirit, a composure of the body, eminently good for us. Into our crowded, nervous lives it breathes sweetly, as might the piping of a shepherd from vanished Arcady. A spell of loafing will take the knots and snarls out of your nervous system as nothing else can. It will soothe your irritability and restore your equilibrium.

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