



The Secret Adversary by Agatha Christie

(Continued from last week.)

"No, sir. As I said before, my father and my mother were brother and sister, just as you might be—Tommy did not correct this view of their relationship—but they didn't always get on together. And when my aunt made up her mind to marry Amos Finn, who was a poor schoolteacher out west, my father was just mad! Said if he made his pile, as he seemed in a fair way to do, she'd never see a cent of it. Well, the upshot was that Aunt Jane went out west and we never heard from her again.

"The old man did pile it up. He went into oil, and he went into steel, and he played a bit with railroads, and I can tell you he made Wall Street sit up! He passed. 'Then he died—last fall—and I got the dollars. Well, would you believe it, my conscience got busy! Kept knocking me up and saying: What about your Aunt Jane, what about her? It worried me some. You see, I figured it out that Amos Finn would never make good. He wasn't that sort. End of it was, I hired a man to hunt her down. Result, she was dead, and Amos Finn was dead, but they'd left a daughter—Jane—who'd been torpedoed in the Lusitania on her way to Paris. She was saved all right, but they didn't seem able to hear of her over this side. I guessed they weren't hustling any, so I thought I'd come along over, and speed things up. I phoned Scotland Yard and the Admiralty first thing. The Admiralty rather choked me off, but Scotland Yard were very civil—said they would make inquiries.

even sent a man round this morning to get her photograph. I'm off to Paris tomorrow, just to see what the Prefecture is doing. I guess if I go to and fro hustling them, they ought to get busy!"

The energy of Mr. Hershimmer was tremendous. They bowed before it.

"But say, now," he ended, "you're not after her for anything? Content of court, or something British? A proud-spirited young American girl might find your rules and regulations in war time rather irksome, and get up against it. If that's the case, and there's such a thing as graft in this country, I'll buy her off."

Tuppence reassured him.

"That's good. Then we can work together. What about some lunch?"

Oysters had just given place to Sole Colbert when a card was brought to Hershimmer.

"Inspector Japp, C. I. D. Scotland Yard again. Another man this time. What does he expect I can tell him that I didn't tell the first chap? I hope they haven't lost that photograph. That western photographer's place was burned down and all his negatives destroyed—this is the only copy in existence. I got it from the principal of the college there."

An unformulated dread swept over Tuppence.

"You—you don't know the name of the man who came this morning?"

"Yes, I do. No, I don't. Half a second. It was on his card. Oh, I know! Inspector Brown. Quiet, unassuming sort of chap."

A veil might with profit be drawn over the events of the next half-hour. Suffice it to say that no such person as "Inspector Brown" was known to Scotland Yard. The photograph of Jane Finn, which would have been of the utmost value to the police in tracing her, was lost beyond recovery. Once again "Mr. Brown" had triumphed.

The immediate result of this setback was to effect a rapprochement between Julius Hershimmer and the Young Adventurers. All barriers went down with a crash, and Tommy and Tuppence felt they had known the young American all their lives. They abandoned the discreet reticence of "private inquiry agents," and revealed to him the whole history of the joint venture, whereat the young man declared himself "tickled to death."

"I've always had a kind of idea that English girls were just a mite moss-grown. Old-fashioned and sweet, you know, but scared to move around without a footman or a maid on hand. I guess I'm a bit behind the times!"

The upshot of these confidential relations was that Tommy and Tuppence took up their abode forthwith at the Ritz, in order, as Tuppence put it, to keep in touch with Jane Finn's only living relation. "And put like that," she added confidentially to Tommy, "nobody could boggle at the expense!"

Nobody did, which was the great thing.

"And now," said the young lady on the morning after their installation, "to work! We should map out a plan of campaign."

"Hear, hear!"

"Well, let's do it. To begin with, what have we to go upon?"

"Absolutely nothing," said Tommy cheerily.

"Wrong!" Tuppence wagged an energetic finger. "We have two distinct clues."

"What are they?"

"First clue, we know one of the 'Whittingtons'."

"Yes, I'd recognize him anywhere."

"Hum," said Tommy doubtfully, "I

ley mansions. Miss Wheeler, 45 Clapington road, Battersea. She's a lady's maid, as far as I remember, so probably won't be there, and anyway, she's not likely."

"Then the Mayfair lady is clearly indicated as the first port of call."

South Audley mansions was an imposing-looking block of flats just off Park lane. No. 20 was on the second floor.

Tommy had by this time the glibness born of practice. He rattled off the formula to the elderly woman, looking more like a housekeeper than a servant, who opened the door to him.

"Christian name?"

"Margaret."

Tommy smiled it, but the other interrupted him.

"No, g-u-e."

"Oh, Margaret; French way, I see." He paused, then plucked boldly. "We had her down as Rita Vandemeyer, but I suppose that's incorrect?"

"She's mostly called that, sir, but Margaret's her name."

"Thank you. That's all. Good morning."

Hardly able to contain his excitement, Tommy hurried down the stairs. Tuppence was waiting at the angle of the turn.

"You heard?"

"Yes, Oh, Tommy!"

Her hand was still in Tommy's. They had reached the entrance hall. There were footprints on the stairs above them, and voices.

Suddenly, to Tommy's complete surprise, Tuppence dragged him into the little space by the side of the lift, where the shadow was deepest.

"What the—"

"Hush!"

Two men came down the stairs and passed out through the entrance. Tuppence's hand closed tighter on Tommy's arm.

"Quick—follow them. I don't know who the other man is, but the bigger of the two was Whittington."

CHAPTER IV

The House in Soho.

Whittington and his companion were walking at a good pace. Tommy started in pursuit at once, and was in time to see them turn the corner of the street. His vigorous strides soon enabled him to gain upon them, and by the time he, in his turn, reached the corner the distance between them was sensibly lessened.

Their course was a zigzag one designed to bring them as quickly as possible to Oxford street. When at length they turned into it, proceeding in an easterly direction, Tommy slightly increased his pace. Little by little he gained upon them.

Just before the Bond Street tube station they crossed the road, Tommy, unperceived, faithfully at their heels, and entered the big Lyons'. There they went up to the first floor, and sat at a small table in the window. It was late, and the place was thinning out. Tommy took a seat at the table

"But the great point is, is there a 'Rita' on the list?"

"That's just what I don't know," confessed Tuppence. "You see, very few Christian names are given. They're nearly all Mrs. or Miss."

Tommy nodded. "That complicates matters," he murmured thoughtfully.

"Well, we've just got to get down to it, that's all. We'll start with the London area. Just note down the addresses of any of the females who live in London or roundabout, while I put on my hat."

Five minutes later the young couple emerged into Piccadilly, and a

next to them, sitting directly behind Whittington in case of recognition. On the other hand, he had a full view of the second man and studied him attentively. He was fair, with a weak, unpleasant face, and Tommy put him down as being either a Russian or a Pole. He was probably about fifty years of age, his shoulders cringed a little as he talked, and his eyes, small and crafty, shifted uneasily.

Whittington ordered a substantial lunch for himself and his companion; then, as the waitress withdrew, he moved his chair a little closer to the table and began to talk earnestly in a low voice. The other man joined in. Listen as he would, Tommy could only catch a word here and there; but the gist of it seemed to be some directions or orders which the big man was impressing on his companion, and with which the latter seemed from time to time to disagree. Whittington addressed the other as Boris.

Tommy caught the word "Ireland" several times, also, "propaganda," but of Jane Finn there was no mention. Suddenly, in a full phrase entire, Whittington was speaking. "Ah, but you don't know Flossie. She's a marvel. An archbishop would swear she was his own mother. She gets the voice right every time, and that's really the principal thing."

(Continued next week.)

MELLOW'S DOZEN

DANGER SIGNS.

At the same time that he offers to the small investors of the United States the safest security they can find, with a fair rate of interest, Secretary of the Treasury Mellon has taken occasion to warn people of small means against that class of investments most usually offered by the irresponsible and dishonest. In a little pamphlet calling attention to the Treasury Say-

ings Certificates, Secretary Mellon gives some advice on "How to Avoid Bad Investments," and points out twelve "Danger Signs" which should be a warning to every investor, particularly small investors. The twelve danger signs are thus stated:

1. Mining Stock. The best looking mine in the world may prove a "white elephant." Mining is a very expensive undertaking and the risks are unusually great. There are many good mining investments, of course, but this branch of the investment market is generally not for those who work for and depend upon a salary.

2. Oil Stock. Drilling for oil is costly. The hazards are great. Oil investments are speculative and in a class with mining investments.

3. In the wake of every important discovery or invention there comes a host of schemes "airplanes," "wireless," "The promoters of these may have only the best of intentions, but frequently their enthusiasm is about all they have to sell. Look before you leap."

4. Investments in "real estate" situated in some distant place is sometimes as dangerous as mining stock. People have been known to buy swamps advertised as "sea-shore frontage." Know what you are buying before you invest.

5. "Land development" plans frequently do not pan out. At best it is a long time before any money comes in from sales. Investment in "new companies" that are going to "sell by mail" should be generally avoided.

6. Patent rights and processes distribution. It is rarely the patentee who makes the money.

7. "New manufacturing methods" should always closely investigated and checked.

8. An investment requiring a quick decision is often a fake. If there isn't sufficient time to "sleep over it" something is probably wrong.

9. "Special inducements" in cash discounts or stock bonuses urging you to be first to invest are suspicious symptoms.

10. "Tips" alleged to land you "on the ground floor" are rarely to be taken. Those who are "on the ground floor" will monopolize the opportunity.

11. "Playing the stock market on margin" and all other forms of speculation are decidedly not

for the small investor. Beware of the "bucket shop." If you buy stocks outright for investment do so through a member of a legitimate exchange.

12. Stock in "mail order companies" being organized with promises based on what others have done seldom turns out well.

OREGON STATE NEWS

United States Government Engineer Mayo has granted a permit to construct a bridge across the Necanicum river at Seaside to replace the old structure, which is in bad condition.

Hunting accidents resulted in the death of five persons and injury of eight others during the fall seasons on deer, small game and birds, according to reports by the state game commission.

Heavy snow in the higher altitudes on the lower Columbia river has postponed the reopening of the logging camps, several.

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al of which had planned on resuming operations immediately after the holidays.

The United States imported an average of 35,700,000 lbs. of walnuts and 19,500,000 lbs. of filberts in each of the years 1919, 1920, and 1921. Commercial production of walnuts in the United States is limited to the states of Oregon, Washington and California. The extent to which nut growing should be encouraged in this state will be gone into thoroughly at the agricultural conference to be held at Corvallis, January 21 to 26.

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