



The BLACK GANG

A Sequel to Bulldog Drummond.

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W.N.U. Service

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SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER I.—To a gathering of anarchists in Harkins, London suburb, Zaboloff, foreign agitator, tells of the operations of a body of men who have become a menace to their activities. He is interrupted by the men he is describing (the Black Gang), who break up the meeting, sentencing some of the participants to condign punishment and carrying away others. A memorandum found on Zaboloff gives an address in Hoxton, London, which the leader of the attacking party considers of importance.

CHAPTER II.—Sir Bryan Johnstone, director of criminal investigation, hears from Inspector McIver, sent to arrest Zaboloff the night before, of his discomfiture. He had been seized and chloroformed and his raid frustrated. Hugh Drummond, man of leisure and old friend of Johnstone's, arrives and tells of seeing the kidnapers and their victims. He becomes an unpaid agent of the police, to be under the direction of McIver, and takes up his duties at once.

CHAPTER III.—A "Mr. William Atkinson," ostensibly pawnbroker and money lender, really Count Zadowa, director of anarchy in England, does business in another London suburb. A mysterious stranger invades the premises. Count Zadowa, after a brief glimpse of the intruder, is strangely disconcerted.

CHAPTER IV.—Drummond, having knowledge of Atkinson's anarchistic activities, arranges to burglarize the latter's office to secure evidence on the fact. While so engaged, with two companions, a bomb is hurled at them from an adjoining room.

CHAPTER V

In Which the Bag of Nuts is Found by Accident.

IT WAS the desk that saved Drummond, and with him Ted Jermingham. Flat on their faces, their arms covering their heads, they lay on the floor waiting, as in the days gone by they had waited for the bursting of a too-near crump. They heard Ginger Martin, as he blundered round the room, and then—suddenly it came.

There was a deafening roar, and a sheet of flame which seemed to fill the room. Great lumps of the ceiling rained down and the big roll-top desk cracked in pieces and splintered into matchwood, fell over on top of them. But it had done its work; it had borne the full force of the explosion in their direction. As a desk its day was past; it had become a series of holes roughly held together by fragments of wood.

So much Drummond could see by the aid of his torch. With the explosion all the lights had gone out and for a while he lay pressed against Ted Jermingham trying to recover his wits. His head was ringing like a bursting kettle; his back felt as if it was broken where a vast lump of ceiling had hit him. But after mov-

ing his legs cautiously and then his arms, he decided that he was still alive. And having arrived at that momentous conclusion the necessity for prompt action became evident. A bomb bursting in London is not exactly a private affair.

"Are you all right, Ted?" he muttered hoarsely, his mouth full of plaster and dust.

"I think so, old man," answered Jermingham, and Drummond heaved a sigh of relief. "I got a whack on the back of the head from something."

Drummond scrambled to his feet, and switched on his torch. The wreckage was complete, but it was for the third member of the party that he was looking. And after a moment or two he found him, and cursed with a vigorous fury that boded ill for the person who had thrown the bomb, if he ever met him.

For Ginger Martin, being either too frightened or too ignorant, had not done as he was told. There had been no desk between him and the bomb when it burst, and what was left of him adorned a corner. There was nothing to be done; the unfortunate crook would never again burgle a safe. And the only comfort to Drummond was that death must have been absolutely instantaneous.

"Poor devil," he muttered. "Some one is going to pay for this."

And then he felt Jermingham clutching his arm.

"It's blown a hole in the wall, man. Look."

It was true; he could see the light of a street lamp shining through a great jagged hole.

"Some bomb," he muttered. "Let's clear."

He gave a final flash of his torch round the floor, as they moved toward the shattered wall, and then suddenly stopped.

"What's that?"

Right in the center of the beam, lying in the middle of the floor, was a small chamois leather bag. It seemed unharmed, and, without thinking, Hugh picked it up and put it in his pocket. Then switching off the torch, they both clambered through the hole, dropped on to a lean-to roof, and reached the ground.

They were at the back of the house in some deserted mews, and rapidly of movement was clearly indicated. Already a crowd was hurrying to the scene of the explosion, and slipping quietly out of the dark alley, they joined in themselves.

"Go home, Ted," said Drummond. "I must get the others."

"Right, old man." He made no

demur, but just vanished quietly, while his leader slouched on toward the front door of 5 Green street. The police were already beating on it, while a large knot of interested spectators giving gratuitous advice stood around them. And in the crowd Drummond could see six of his gang, six anxious men who had determined—police or no police—to get upstairs and see what had happened. In one and all their minds was a sickening fear, that the man they followed had at last bitten off more than he could chew—that they'd find him blown to pieces in the mysterious room upstairs.

And then, quite clear and distinct above the excited comments of the crowd, came the hooting of an owl. A strange sound, but no one paid any attention. Other more engrossing matters were on hand, more engrossing that is to all except the six men who instantaneously swung half round as they heard it. For just a second they had a glimpse of a huge figure standing in the light of a lamp post on the other side of the street—then it disappeared. And with astonishing celerity they followed its example. Whoever had been hurt, it was not Drummond; and that, at the moment, was all they were concerned with.

By devious routes they left the scene of the explosion—each with the same goal in his mind. And within an hour six young men, shorn of all disguises and clad in immaculate evening clothes, were admitted to Drummond's house in Brook street by a somewhat sleepy Denny.

They found Hugh arrayed in a gorgeous dressing gown with a large tankard of beer beside him, and his wife sitting on the arm of his chair.

"What happened, old lad?" asked Peter Darrell.

"I got handed a frozen mitten. I asked for bread, and they put across a half-brick. To be absolutely accurate we got into the room all right, and having got in we found we couldn't get out. Then some one switched on the light and bunged a bomb at us through a hole in the door. Quite O. K. old girl!"—he put a reassuring arm around Phyllis' waist—"I think we'd be still there if they hadn't."

"Is Ted all right?" asked Toby Sinclair.

"Yes. Ted's all right. Got a young load of bricks in his back when the ceiling came down—but he's all right. It's the other poor devil—Ginger Martin." His face was grim and stern and the others waited in silence for him to continue.

"There was a big desk in the room, and the bomb fell on one side of it. Ted and I gave our well-known impersonation of an earthworm on the other, which saved us. Unfortunately, Ginger Martin elected to run around in a small circle and curse, and he will curse no more."

"Dead?" Peter Darrell's voice was low.

"Very," answered Drummond quietly. "The poor blighter was blown to pieces. If he'd done what I told him he wouldn't have been, but that's beside the point. He was working for me, and he was killed while he was doing so. And I don't like that happening."

"What do you propose to do?" demanded Jerry Seymour.

"Well, there, old son, at the moment you have me beat," conceded Hugh. "I sort of figured it out this way. Whoever the bird is who bunged that bomb, he recognized me as being the leader of our little bunch. I mean it was me he was staring at through the door with eyes bubbling over with tenderness and love. It was me that bally bomb was intended

for—not Ginger Martin, though he was actually doing the work. And if this cove is prepared to wreck his office just to get me out of the way—I guess I must be somewhat unpopular."

"The reasoning seems extraordinarily profound," murmured Peter.

"Now, the great point is—does he know who I am?" continued Hugh.

"Our great difficulty before Zaboloff was kind enough to present us with the address of their headquarters was to get in touch with the man at the top. And now the headquarters are no more. No man can work in an office with periodical bowlers falling on his head from the roof, and a large hole in the wall just behind him. I mean there's no privacy about it. And so—unless he knows me—he won't be able to carry on the good work when he finds that neither of my boots has reached the top of St. Paul's. We shall be parted again, which is dreadful to think of. Why, we might even pass one another in the street as complete strangers."

"I get you," said Peter. "And you don't know him."

"Not well enough to call him Bertie. There's a humpbacked blighter up there who calls himself a count, and on whom I focused the old optic for about two seconds the other evening. But whether he's the humorist who bunged the bomb or not is a different matter." He glanced up as the door opened. "What is it, Denny?"

"I found this bag, sir, in the pocket of the coat you were wearing to-night."

His servant came into the room carrying the chamois leather bag, which he handed to Drummond.

The door closed behind him, and Hugh stared thoughtfully at the bag in his hand.

"I'd forgotten about this. Saw it lying on the floor, just before we hopped it. Hullo! It's sealed."

"For goodness' sake be careful, boy!" cried Phyllis. "It may be another bomb."

Hugh laughed and ripped open the bag; then his eyes slowly widened in amazement as he saw the contents.

"Great Scott!" he cried. "What the devil have we got here?"

He emptied the bag out on the table, and for a moment or two the others stared silently at half a dozen objects that flashed and glittered with a thousand fires. Five of them were white; but the sixth—appreciably larger than the others, and they

were the size of walnuts—was a wonderful rose pink.

"What on earth are they? Lumps of glass?"

With a hand that shook a little, Toby Sinclair picked one of them up and examined it.

"No, you fellows," he muttered, "they're diamonds!"

"Rot!" cried Hugh incredulously. "They're diamonds," repeated Toby. "I happen to know something about precious stones. These are diamonds."

"But they must be worth a lot," said Phyllis, picking up the pink one.

"Worth a lot," said Toby dazedly. "Worth a lot! Why Mrs. Hugh, they are literally worth untold gold in the right market. They are absolutely priceless. I've never even thought of such stones. That one that you're holding in your hand would be worth over a quarter of a million pounds, if you could get the right buyer."

For a moment no one spoke; then Hugh laughed cheerily.

"Hang goes next month's dress allowance, old thing!" He swept them all into the bag, and stood up. "I'm laying even money that the bomb thrower is coughing some and then again over his bread-and-milk. This bag must have been in the desk." His shoulders began to shake. "How frightfully funny!"

(To Be Continued.)

NOTICE TO CREDITORS.

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned has been appointed by the County Court of the State of Oregon for Morrow County administrator of the estate of Charles W. Caldwell, deceased, and that all persons having claims against the said estate must present the same, duly verified according to law, to me at the office of my attorney, S. E. Notson, in Heppner, Oregon, within six months from the date of first publication of this notice, said date of first publication being the 28th day of January, 1926.

M. F. CALDWELL,
Administrator.

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