



The Black Gang

A Sequel to Bulldog Drummond.

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W.N.U. Service

SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER I.—To a gathering of anarchists in Barking, 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 Johnston, director of criminal investigation, hears from Inspector Melver, sent to arrest Zaboloff the night before, of his disappearance. He had been seized and chloroformed and his raid frustrated. Hugh Drummond, man of leisure and old friend of Johnston's, arrives and tells of seeing the kidnappers and their victims. He becomes an unpaid agent of the police, to be under the direction of Melver, and takes up his duties at once.

CHAPTER III.—A "Mr. William Atkinson," ostensibly pawnbroker and money lender, really Count Zadova, director of anarchy in England, and his daughter, another London suburb. A mysterious stranger invades the premises. Count Zadova, 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 of the fact. While so engaged, with two companions, a bomb is hurled at them from an adjoining room.

CHAPTER V.—The explosion kills "Ginger Martin," expert burglar whom Drummond had employed to open Atkinson's safe. Drummond and his friend escape, taking with them a bag they find on the floor. Neither Drummond nor his companion at the time find out what it contains.

CHAPTER VI.—At a fashionable hotel Rev. Theodosius Longmoor and his daughter Janet are guests. "Longmoor" is really Carl Peterson, international crook, with whom Drummond and his friend are engaged, pointing out that the diamonds (Russian crown jewels, which Zadova had known nothing) had been lost through his action. Longmoor insists that Zadova recover the diamonds, suggesting that they may be in the hands of the police, and warning his subordinate (Longmoor is addressed by Zadova as "chief") that failure will be punished with death.

CHAPTER VII.—Drummond, discovering that Longmoor, most cleverly disguised, is Carl Peterson. Janet, at the same time, recognizes in Drummond the leader of the Black Gang, and their old enemy.

CHAPTER VIII

In Which Hugh Drummond and the Reverend Theodosius Longmoor Lunch Together.

"OT, Hugh!" Peter turned a little irritably from his covert inspection of the Reverend Theodosius Longmoor. "You've got Peterson on the brain. Why, that old bird is no more like him than my boot."

"Nevertheless, it's Peterson," answered Drummond doggedly. "It's just that one trick he can never shake off—that tapping with his left hand on his knee—that made me spot him."

"Well, granted you're right," conceded Darrell grudgingly. "What do we do now, sergeant major?"

"I don't know, Peter. I've got to think this out."

"You're perfectly certain, Hugh?" said Peter, who was still far from convinced.

"Absolutely, old man," answered Drummond gravely. "The clergyman over there is Carl Peterson, late of the Elms, Godalming. And the game has begun again."

Darrell gave a short laugh as he noted the gleam in his leader's eyes. "I'm thinking," he remarked soberly, "that this time the game is going to make us all go out."

"So much the better," grinned Hugh. "We'll add him to our collection, Peter, and then we'll present the whole bunch to the zoo. And in the meantime, he shall lunch with when Phyllis arrives, and prattle theology to an appreciative audience. Incidentally it will appeal to his sense of humor; there's no difficulty about recognizing us. Look out, he's coming over."

They turned as the clergyman crossed toward them.

"Jolly old tum-tum beginning to 'bout for nourishment," said Hugh with an affable smile as he joined them. "My wife should be here at any moment now. Mr.—"

"Longmoor is my name," said the clergyman, beaming on them. "It is very charming of you to take such compassion on a lonely old man."

"Staying here all by yourself?" asked Drummond politely.

"No; my daughter is with me. The dear child has been my constant companion ever since my beloved wife's death some years ago. We have just returned from a visit to the famine-stricken areas," replied the clergyman.

"Most interesting—I don't think I caught your name."

"Drummond, Captain Drummond," answered Hugh, mechanically. "And this is Mr. Darrell. I think I have had the pleasure of making your daughter's acquaintance already. She was manufacturing woolen garments for the Austrians down here, and I retrieved an elusive ball of wool for her."

"That is just my daughter all over, Captain Drummond," beamed the Reverend Theodosius. "Never wasting her time, always doing something for the good of humanity!"

But at the moment it is to be regretted that Hugh was not worrying his head over the good of humanity; inconceivable though it was, judged

garded him in silence. Then, disavowing a strong inclination to throw this unexpected apparition under a passing furniture van, he raised his eyebrows slightly and removed his cigar from his mouth. Evidently the next move had begun, and he felt curious as to what form it would take.

"My powers as a conversationalist are well known," he remarked, "amongst a large and varied circle. I was not, however, aware that you belonged to it. In other words, sir, who the deuce are you and what the dickens do you want to talk to me about?"

"Something which concerns us very intimately," returned the other. "And with regard to the first part of your question—do you think it necessary to keep up the pretense, especially as there are no witnesses present? I suggest, however, that as our conversation may be a trifle prolonged, and this spot is somewhat draughty, we should adjourn to your house, Brook street, I believe, is where you live, Captain Drummond."

Hugh removed his cigar, and stared at the hunchback thoughtfully. "I haven't the slightest wish to have a prolonged conversation with you in any place, draughty or otherwise," he remarked at length. "However, if you are prepared to run the risk of being slung out of the window if you bore me, I'll give you ten minutes."

He turned on his heel and strolled slowly on toward his house, while the hunchback, shooting venomous glances at him from time to time, walked by his side in silence. And it was not until some five minutes later when they were both in Drummond's study that any further remark was made.

It was Hugh who spoke, standing with his back to the fireplace, and looking down on the misshapen little man who sat in an arm-chair facing the light. An unpleasant customer, he reflected, now that he saw him close to for the first time; a dangerous, vindictive little devil—but able, distinctly able. Just such a type as Peterson would choose for a tool.

"What is it you wish to say to me?" he said curtly.

"A few things, Captain Drummond," returned the other, "that may help to clear the air. In the first place may I say how pleased I am to make your acquaintance in the flesh, so to speak? I have long wanted a little talk with the leader of the Black Gang."

"I trust," murmured Hugh solicitously, "that the sun hasn't proved too much for you."

"Shall we drop this beating about the bush?" snapped the other.

"I shall drop you down the stairs if you talk to me like that, you d-d little microbe," said Hugh coldly, and the other got to his feet with a snarl. His eyes, glaring like those of an angry cat, were fixed on Drummond, who suddenly put out a vast hand to screen the lower part of the hunchback's face. With a cry of fear he recoiled, and Hugh smiled grimly.

So it had been Mr. Atkinson himself who had flung the bomb the night before; the eyes that had glared at him through the crack in the door were unmistakably the same as those he had just looked into over his own hand. With the rest of the face blotted out to prevent distraction there could be no doubt about it, and he was still smiling grimly as he lowered his hand.

"So you think I'm the leader of the Black Gang, do you?" he remarked. "What are your grounds for this somewhat startling statement?"

"My grounds are these," said the hunchback, recovering his self-composure; "last night my office in Hoxton was wrecked by a bomb. That bomb also killed a man."

"It did," agreed Hugh grimly.

"One of the three men who broke in. The other two escaped—how, I don't know. But one of them was recognized by the clerk downstairs."

"I gathered that was the story," said Hugh.

"He was recognized as the leader of the Black Gang—an unknown person. But today—at the Ritz, Captain Drummond—my clerk, who had brought me a message, recognized him again, without his disguise. No longer an unknown man, you understand—but you."

Drummond smiled, and selected a cigarette from his case.

"Very pretty," he answered, "but a trifle crude. As I understand you, I gather that your shrewd and intelligent clerk states that the leader of the Black Gang broke into your office last night in order to indulge in the doubtful pastime of throwing bombs about the premises. He further states that I am the humorist in question. Allowing for the moment that your clerk is sane, what do you propose to do about it?"

"In certain eventualities, Captain Drummond, I propose to send an anonymous letter to Scotland Yard. Surprised though they would be to get it, it might help them to clear up the mystery of Mr. Latter's insanity. It may prove rather unpleasant for you, of course, but that can't be helped."

"It's kind of you to give me a loophole of escape," said Drummond pleasantly. "What are the eventualities to which you allude?"

"The nonreturn to me of a little bag containing diamonds," remarked the hunchback quietly. "They were in the desk which was wrecked by the bomb."

"Dear, dear," said Hugh. "Am I supposed to have them in my possession?"

"I can only hope most sincerely for your sake that you have," returned the other. "Otherwise I'm afraid that letter will go to the police."

For a while Drummond smoked in silence, then, with a lazy smile on his face, he sat down in an armchair facing the hunchback.

"There are one or two things I have to say to you before depriving myself of the pleasure of your company. By the post following the one which carries your interesting disclosure will go another letter addressed to Sir Bryan Johnston himself. I shall be in the office when he opens it—and we shall both be roaring with laughter over the extraordinary disclosure that I—quite the biggest fool of his acquaintance—could possibly be the leader of the Black Gang. And,

Heralds the Spring



Close on the heels of the first hardy robin comes m'lady clad for Spring. Bright, gorgeous colors, feature the charming modcs she will wear during the warmer days. This frock in the pastel tinted chiffon printed in the new floral design, with tie, that the fashionable girl will wear.

as if to prove the utter absurdity of the suggestion this second letter will be from the leader of the Black Gang himself. In it he will state that he was present at 5 Green street, Hoxton, last night in an endeavor to obtain possession of the anarchist and Bolshevik literature stored there. That he took with him a professional burglar to assist him in opening the safe and other things which might be there, and that while engaged in this eminently virtuous proceeding he found that he was trapped in the room by some mechanical device. And then will come a very interesting disclosure. He will state how suddenly he saw through a crack in the door a pair of eyes looking at him. And their color—see, what is the color of your eyes?—gray-blue, very noticeable. Much the same as old Longmoor's—though his are a little bluer. And then the owner of the eyes was so inconsiderate as to throw a bomb in the room; a bomb which killed one of the men, and wrecked the desk. So that the owner of the eyes, gray-blue eyes just like yours, is a murderer—a common murderer. And we hang men in England for murder." He paused and stared at the hunchback. "This is a jolly game, isn't it?"

"And you really imagine," said the hunchback contemptuously, "that even your police would believe such a story that a man would wreck his own office, when on your own showing he had the man trapped inside it?"

"Probably not," said Drummond affably. "Any more than they would believe that I was the leader of the Black Gang. So since they're such a wretched crowd of unbelievers I don't think it's much good playing the game. Waste of time, isn't it? So I vote we play another one, all on our own—a little of make believe—like we used to play in the nursery."

"I haven't an idea what you're talking about, Captain Drummond," said the hunchback, shifting uneasily in his chair. For all trace of affability had vanished from the face of the man opposite him, to be replaced by an expression which made Mr. Atkinson pass his tongue once or twice over his lips that had suddenly gone dry.

"Haven't you, you rat?" said Drummond quietly. "Then I'll tell you. Just for the next five minutes we're going to pretend that these two statements which the police—stupid fellows—won't believe are true. We're going to pretend—only pretend, mind you—that I am the leader of the Black Gang; and we're going to pretend that you are the man who flung the bomb last night. Just for five minutes only, then, we go back to reality and unbelieving policemen."

And if during the following five minutes strange sounds were heard by Denny in the room below, he was far too accustomed to the sounds of breaking furniture to worry. It wasn't until the hunchback pulled a knife that Drummond warned to his work, but from that moment he lost his temper. And because the hunchback was a hunchback—though endowed with Nature with singular strength—it jarred on Drummond to fight him as if he had been a normal man. So he flung him with a rhinoceros-hide whip till his arm ached, and then he flung him into a chair, gasping, cursing and scarcely human.

"You shouldn't be so realistic in your stories, Snooks; I shall call you Snooks," he remarked affably, though his eyes were still merciless as he looked at the writhing figure. "And I feel quite sure that that is what the leader of the Black Gang would have done if he had met the peculiar humorist who threw that bomb last night. Bad habit—throwing bombs."

With a final curse the hunchback staggered to his feet, and his face was diabolical in its fury.

"You shall pay for that," Captain Drummond, stroke by stroke, and lash by lash," he said in a shaking voice.

Drummond laughed shortly.

"All the same, old patter," he remarked. "Tell old Longmoor with my love—"

"No, on second thoughts I think I'll tell his reverence myself—at the appointed time."

"What will you tell him?" sneered the hunchback.

"Why, that his church isn't the only place where dry-rot has set in.

It's prevalent amongst his pals as well. Must you go? Straight down the stairs, and the card tray in the hall is only electro-plate—so you might leave it."

With a great effort Mr. Atkinson pulled himself together.

"Can we come to an understanding, Captain Drummond?" he remarked quietly. "I can assure you, of course, that you have made a terrible mistake in thinking that it was I who threw that bomb at you last night."

"At me?" Drummond laughed shortly. "Who said you'd thrown it at me? That wasn't the game at all, Snooks. You threw it at the leader of the Black Gang."

"Can't we put our cards on the table?" returned the other with studied moderation. "I know that you are that leader, you know it—though it is possible that no one else would believe it. I was wrong to threaten you—I should have known better; I apologize. But if I may say so I have had my punishment. Now as man to man—can we come to terms?"

"I am waiting," said Hugh briefly. "Kindly be as concise as possible."

"Those diamonds, Captain Drummond. Rightly or wrongly, I feel tolerably certain that you either have them in your possession, or that you know where they are. Now, those diamonds were not mine—did you speak? No. Well—to resume. The diamonds were not mine; they had been deposited in the desk in my office unknown to me. Then this fool—whom you foolishly think was myself—threw the bomb into the office to kill you. I admit it; he told me all about it. He did not kill you, for which fact, if I may say so, I am very glad. You're a sportsman—and you've fought like a sportsman—but our fight, Captain Drummond, has been over other matters. The diamonds are a side-show and hardly concern you and me. I'll be frank with you; they are the sole wealth saved by a Russian nobleman from the Bolshevik outrages. He deposited them in my office during my absence, with the idea of my selling them for him—and now he and his family must starve. And so what I propose is—"

"I don't think I want to hear your proposal, Snooks," said Drummond kindly. "Doubtless I look a fool; doubtless I am a fool, but I like to think that I'm not a congenial idiot. I'm glad you have discovered that it's not much use threatening me; but to tell you the strict truth, I prefer threats to nauseating hypocrisy. So much so in fact that the thought of that starving nobleman impels me to take more exercise. Ever read 'Alice in Wonderland,' Snooks? A charming book—a masterpiece of English literature. And there is one singularly touching, not to say fruity, bit which concerns Father William—and a gentle young man."

With a look of complete bewilderment on his face Mr. Atkinson felt himself propelled through the door, until he came to a halt at the top of the stairs.

"It's a little poem, Snooks, and some day I will recite it to you. Just now I can only remember the one singularly beautiful line which has suggested my new form of exercise."

Mr. Atkinson became aware of a boot in the lower portion of his back, and then the stairs seemed to rise up and hit him. He finally came to rest in the hall against an old oak chest of the pointed-corner type, and for a moment or two he lay there dazed. Then he scrambled to his feet to find three young men, who had emerged from a lower room during his fight, gazing at him impassively;

while standing at the top of the stairs down which he had just descended and outlined against a window was the huge, motionless figure of Drummond. Half cursing, half sobbing, he staggered to the front door and opened it. Once more he looked back—not one of the four men had moved. They were just staring at him in absolute silence, and, with a sudden feeling of pure terror, Count Zadova, alias Mr. Atkinson, shut the door behind him and staggered into the sunlight street.

(To Be Continued.)

HOSKINS WORKS IN MORROW.

W. F. Hoskins, recently dismissed from the state prohibition agent's force, is now a deputy sheriff of Morrow county. He was a Pendleton visitor today. "After my dismissal from the service rumors were circulated that I had taken bribes and had been caught and that my dismissal was made on that account," he said. "Those rumors were false. I was dismissed from the service for political reasons." He assumed his duties in Morrow county February 1. —Pendleton E. O.

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