



The BLACK GANG A Sequel to Bulldog Drummond. BY CYRIL MCNEILE SAPPER

SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER I.—To a gathering of anarchists in Barkley 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 address in London, England, which the leader of the attacking party considers of importance.

CHAPTER XI

In Which a Rolls Royce Runs Amuck. SOME ten minutes later he emerged from the bathroom carefully carrying a saucer in his hand. The girl's announcement that Number 13 had started at once had been received with a satisfied grunt, but he had spoken no word. And the girl, glancing through the door, saw him, with his shirt sleeves rolled up above his elbows, carefully mixing two liquids together and stirring the result gently with a glass rod. He was completely absorbed in his task, and with a faint smile on her face she went back to the sofa and waited. She knew too well the futility of speaking to him on such occasions. Even when he came in, wearing gloves on his hands, she made no remark, but waited for him to relieve her curiosity.

mond entered. "Well, Carl old lad," he remarked breezily, "I am on the stroke of time with the bag of nuts all complete." "Excellent," murmured the clergyman, waving a benevolent hand toward the only free chair. "But if you must call me by my Christian name, why not make it Theo?" Drummond grinned delightedly. "As you wish, my little one. Theo it shall be in future, and Janet." He bowed to the girl as he sat down. "There's just one little point I want to mention, Theo, before we come to the laughter and games. Peter Darrell, who you may remember of old, and who lunched with us today, is sitting on the telephone at my house. And eight o'clock is the time limit. Should his ring be on the table, my wife and my wife's not be assuaged by that hour, he will feel compelled to interrupt Tum-tum at his dinner. I trust I make myself perfectly clear." "You are the soul of lucidity." "Good! Then, first of all, there are the diamonds. No, don't come too near, please; you can count them quite easily from where you are." He tumbled them out of the bag, and they lay on the table like great pools of liquid light. The girl's breath came quickly as she saw them, and Drummond turned on her with a smile. "To one given up to good socks and knitting, Janet, doubtless such things do not appeal. Tell me, Theo," he remarked as he swept them back into the bag—"who was the idiot who put them in Snooks' desk? Don't answer if you'd rather not give away your maidenly secrets; but it was a pretty full-sized bloomer on his part, wasn't it—pooping off the old bomb?" He leaned back in his chair, and for a moment a gleam shone in the other's eyes, for the name of Drummond's neck came exactly against the center of the impregnated linen cover. "Doubtless, Captain Drummond, doubtless," he murmured politely. "But if you persist in talking in riddles, don't you think we might choose a different subject until Mrs. Drummond arrives?" "Anything you like, Theo," said Drummond. "I'm perfectly happy talking about you. How the devil do you do it?" He sat up and stared at the other man with genuine wonder on his face. "Eyes different—nose—voice—figure—everything different. You're a marvel—but for that one small failing of yours." "You interest me profoundly," said the clergyman. "What is this one small failing that makes you think I am other than what I profess to be?" Drummond laughed genially. "Good heavens, do you not know what it is? Hasn't Janet told you? It's that dainty little trick of yours of tickling the left ear with the right big toe that marks you every time. No man can do that, Theo, and bluish unless."

rage inwardly at having been such a fool as to trust Peterson. But that gentleman appeared in no hurry. He was writing with a gold pencil on a letter pad, and every now and then he paused and smiled thoughtfully. At length he seemed satisfied, and crossed to the bathroom door. "We are ready now," Drummond heard him say, and he wondered what was going to happen next. To turn his head was impossible; his range of vision was limited by the amount he could turn his eyes. And then, to his amazement, he heard his own voice speaking from somewhere behind him—not, perhaps, quite so deep, but an extraordinary good imitation which would have deceived nine people out of ten when they could not see the speaker. And then he heard Peterson's voice again mentioning the telephone, and he realized what they were going to do. "I want you," Peterson was saying, "to send this message that I have written down to that number—using this gentleman's voice." They came into his line of vision, and the new arrival stared at him curiously. But he asked no questions merely took the paper and read it through carefully. Then he stepped over to the telephone, and took off the receiver. And, helplessly impotent, Drummond sat in his chair and heard the following message spoken in his own voice: "Is that you, Peter old bird? I've made the most unholly bloomer. This old bloke Theodosius isn't Carl at all. He's a perfectly respectable pillar of the church." And then apparently Darrell said something, and Peterson, who was listening through the second earpiece, whispered urgently to the man. "Phyllis," he went on—"she's as right as rain! The whole thing is a box shot of the first order. . . ." Drummond made another stupendous effort to rise, and for a moment everything went blank. Dimly he heard his own voice still talking into the instrument, but he only caught a word here and there, and then it ceased, and he realized that the man had left the room. It was Peterson's voice close by him that cleared his brain again. "I trust you approve of the way our single has started, Captain Drummond," he remarked pleasantly. "Your friend Peter, I am glad to say, is more than satisfied and has announced his intention of dining with some female charmer. Also he quite understands why your wife has gone to the country—you heard that bit, I hope, about her sick cousin?—and he realizes that you are joining her." And suddenly the pleasant voice ceased, and the clergyman continued in a tone of cold, malignant fury: "You rat! You d-d interfering young swine! Now that you're helpless I don't mind admitting that I am the man you knew as Carl Peterson, but I'm not going to make the mistake he made the second time. I underestimated you, Captain Drummond. I left things to that fool Lakington. I treated you as a blundering young ass, and I realized too late that you weren't such a fool as you looked. This time I am paying you the compliment of treating you as a dangerous man. I trust you are flattered." He turned as the door opened, and the man who had telephoned came in with two others. One was a great, powerful-looking man who might have been a prize-fighter; the other was a lean, swarthy-skinned foreigner, and both of them looked unpleasant customers. And Hugh wondered what was going to happen next, while his eyes rolled wildly from side to side as if in search of some way of escape. It was like some ghastly nightmare when one is powerless to move before some dreadful figment of the brain, only to be saved at the last moment by waking up. Only in Hugh's case he was awake already and the dream was reality. He saw the men leave the room, and then Peterson came over to him again. First he took the little bag of diamonds out of his pocket, and it struck Hugh that though he had seen the other's hand go into his pocket, he had felt nothing. He watched Peterson and the girl as they examined the stones; he watched Peterson as he locked them up in a steel dispatch case. And then Peterson disappeared out of his range of vision. He was conscious that he was near him—just behind him—and the horror of the nightmare increased. It had been better when they were talking; at least then he could see them. But now, with both of them out of sight, hovering round the back of his chair, perhaps—and without a sound in the room save the faint hum of the traffic outside, the strain was getting unbearable. And then another thought came to add to his misery. If they killed him—and they intended to, he was certain—what would happen to Phyllis? They'd got her, too, somewhere; what were they going to do to her? And he made a superhuman effort to rise; again he failed so much as to move his finger. And for a while he raved and blasphemed mentally. It was hopeless, utterly hopeless; he was caught like a rat in a trap. And then he began to think coherently again. After all, they couldn't kill him here in the Ritz. You can't have dead men lying about in your room in a hotel. And they would have to move him some time; they couldn't leave him sitting there. How were they going to get him out? He couldn't walk, and to carry him out as he was would be impossible. Too many of the staff below would know him by sight. Suddenly Peterson came into view again. He was in his shirt sleeves and was smoking a cigar, and Hugh watched him sorting out papers. He seemed engrossed in the matter, and paid no more attention to the helpless figure at the table than he did to the fly on the window. At length he completed his task, and having closed the dispatch case with a snap, he rose and stood facing Hugh. "Enjoying yourself?" he remarked. "Wondering where dear Phyllis is?" He gave a short laugh. "Excellent short that, isn't it? The first man I tried it died—so you're lucky. You never felt me put a pin into the back of your arm, did you?" He laughed again. In fact the Rev-

erend Theodosius seemed in an excellent temper. "Well, my friend, you really asked for it this time, and I'm afraid you're going to get it. I cannot have some one continually worrying me like this, so I'm going to kill you, as I always intended to some day. It's a pity, and in many ways I regret it, but you must admit yourself that you really leave me no alternative. It will appear to be accidental, so you need entertain no bitter sorrow that I shall suffer in any way. And it will take place very soon—so soon, in fact, that I doubt if you will recover from the effects of the drug. I wouldn't guarantee it; you might. As I say, you are only the second person on whom I have tried it. And with regard to your wife—our little Phyllis—it may interest you to know that I have not yet made up my mind. I may find it necessary for her to share in your accident—or even to have one all on her own; I may not." The raving fury in Drummond's mind as his tormentor talked on showed clearly in his eyes, and Peterson laughed. "Our friend is getting quite agitated, my dear," he remarked, and the girl came into sight. "You're an awful idiot, my Hugh, aren't you?" she said. "And you have given us such a lot of trouble. But I shall quite miss you, and all our happy little times together." She laughed gently, and glanced at the clock. "They ought to be here fairly soon," she remarked. "Hadm't we better get him out of sight?" Peterson nodded, and between them they pushed Drummond into the bathroom. "You see, my friend," remarked Peterson affably, "it is necessary to get you out of the hotel without arousing suspicion. A simple little matter, but it is often the case that one trips up more over simple matters than over complicated ones." He was carefully inserting a pin into the victim's leg as she spoke, and watching intently for any sign of feeling. "Why I remember once," he continued conversationally, "that I was so incredibly foolish as to replace the cork in a bottle of prussic acid after I had—er—compelled a gentleman to drink the contents. He was in bed at the time, and everything pointed to suicide, except that confounded cork. I mean, would any man, after he's drunk sufficient prussic acid to poison a regiment, go and cork up an empty bottle? It only shows how careful one must be over these little matters." The girl put her head round the door. "They're here," she remarked abruptly, and Peterson went into the other room, half closing the door. And Drummond, writhing impotently, heard the well-modulated voice of the Reverend Theodosius. "Ah, my dear friends, my very dear old friend! Tell me, it is to see you again. I am greatly obliged to you for escorting this gentleman personally." "Not at all, sir; not at all! Would you care for dinner to be served up here?" "I will ring later if I require it," Peterson was saying in his gentle, kindly voice. "My friend, your understanding, is still on a very strict diet, and he comes to me more for spiritual comfort than for bodily. But I shall ring should I find he would like to stay." "Very good, sir." And Drummond heard the door close and knew that his last hope had gone. Then he heard Peterson's voice again, sharp and incisive. "Lock the door. You two—get Drummond. He's in the bathroom." The two men he had previously seen entered, and carried him back into the sitting room, where the whole scheme was obvious at a glance. Just getting out of an ordinary invalid's chair was a big man of more or less the same build as himself. A thick silk muffler partially disguised his face; a soft hat was pulled well down over his eyes, and Drummond realized that the gentleman who had been wheeled in for spiritual comfort would not be wheeled out. The two men pulled him out of his chair, and then, forgetting his condition, let him go, and he collapsed like a sack of potatoes on the floor, his legs and arms sprawling out in grotesque attitude. They picked him up again, and not without difficulty they got him into the other man's overcoat, and finally they deposited him in the invalid's chair, and tucked him up with the rug. "We will give it half an hour," remarked Peterson, who had been watching the operation. "By that time our friend will have had sufficient spiritual solace; and until then you two can wait outside. I will give you your full instructions later." "Will you want me any more, sir?" The man whose place Drummond had taken was speaking. "No," said Peterson curtly. "Get out as unobtrusively as you can. Go down by the stairs and not by the lift." With a nod he dismissed them all, and once again Drummond was alone with his two chief enemies. "Simple, isn't it, my friend?" remarked Peterson. "An invalid arrives, and an invalid will shortly go. And once you've passed the hotel doors you will cease to be an invalid. You will become again that well-known young man about town—Capt. Hugh Drummond—driving out of London in his car—a very nice Rolls, that new one of yours—bought, I think, since we last met. Your chauffeur would have been most unhelpful if he missed it but for the note you left him, saying you'll be away for three days." Peterson laughed gently as he stared at his victim. "You must forgive me if I seem to gloat a little, won't you?" he continued. "I've got such a large score to settle with you, and I very much fear I shan't be in at the death. I have an engagement to dine with an American millionaire whose wife is touched to the heart over the sufferings of the starving poor in Austria. And when the wives of millionaires are touched to the heart, my experience is that the husbands are generally touched to the pocket." He laughed again even more gently and leaned across the table towards the man who sat motionless in



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