

"THE BLACK GANG"

(Continued from Page Three)

"Do you hear the different note to that dynamo?" said Yulowski.

"What the h—l's that got to do with it?" roared Peterson. "Get on with it, d—n you—and attend to the dynamo afterward!"

Yulowski nodded, and picked up his rifle again. "The last time," he said, turning on Drummond with a dreadful look of evil in his face, "that this rifle was used by me in a cellar in Russia—on even more excited people than you. I brought it specially with me as a memento, never thinking I should have the pleasure of using it again."

He swung it over his head, and Drummond shot his eyes—to open them again a moment later, as the door was flung open and a man distraught with terror dashed in.

"The Black Gang!" he shouted wildly. "Hundreds of them—all round the house. They've cut the wires."

With a fearful curse Peterson leaped to his feet, and the men holding Drummond, dumbfounded at the sudden turning of the tables, let go his arms. Yulowski stood staring foolishly at the door, and what happened then was so quick that none of the stupefied onlookers raised a finger to prevent it.

With the howl of an enraged beast, Drummond hurled himself on the Russian—blind mad with fury. And when two seconds later a dozen black-cowled, black-hooded figures came swarming in through the door, for one instant they paused in sheer horror.

Planned to the wall with his own bayonet, which stuck out six inches beyond his back was a red-headed, red-bearded man gibbering horribly in a strange language; whilst creeping toward a benevolent-looking clergyman, who crouched in a corner, was a man they scarce recognized as their leader, so appalling was the look of malignant fury on his face.

Carl Peterson was no coward. In the world in which he moved, there were many strange stories told of his iron nerve, and his complete disregard of danger. Moreover Nature had endowed him with physical strength far above the average. But now, for perhaps the first time in his life, he knew the meaning of stark, abject terror.

The sinister men in black—members of that very gang he had come over to England to desert—seemed to fill the room. Silently, as if they had been drilled to it, they disarmed everyone; then they stood round the walls—waiting. No one spoke; only the horrible imprecations of the dying Russian broke the silence, as he strove feebly to pull out the rifle and bayonet from his chest, which had fixed him to the wall as a dead butterfly is fixed in a collection with a pin.

Peterson had a fleeting vision of a girl with white face and wide, staring eyes, beside whom were standing two of the motionless black figures as guards—the girl whom he had just sentenced to a dreadful death, and then his eyes came back again as if fascinated to the man who was coming toward him. He tried to shrink back farther into his corner, plucking with nerveless fingers at his clerical collar—while the sweat poured off his face in a stream. For there was no mercy in Hugh Drummond's eyes; no mercy in the great arms that hung loosely forward. And Peterson realized he deserved none.

And then it came. No word was spoken—Drummond was beyond

speech. His hands shot out and Peterson felt himself drawn relentlessly toward the man he had planned to kill, not two minutes before. It was his turn now to wonder desperately if it was some hideous nightmare, even while he struggled impotently in his final frenzy with a man whose strength seemed equal to the strength of ten. He was choking; the grip on his throat was not human in its ferocity. There was a great roaring in his ears, and suddenly he ceased to struggle. The glare in Drummond's eyes hypnotized him, and for the only time in his life he gave up hope.

The room was spinning around: the silent black figures, the dying Yulowski, the girl—all seemed merged in one vast jumble of color growing darker and darker, out of which one thing and one thing only stood out clear and distinct on his dying consciousness—the blazing eyes of the man who was throttling him. And then, as he felt himself sinking into utter blackness, some dim sense less paralyzed than the rest seemed to tell him that a change had taken place in the room. Something new had come into that whirling nightmare that spun around him: dimly he heard a voice—loud and agonized—a voice he recognized. It was a woman's voice, and after a while the grip on his throat relaxed. He staggered back against the wall gasping and spluttering, and gradually the room ceased to whirl round—the iron hands ceased to press upon his heart and lungs.

It was Irma who stood there: Irma whose piteous cry had pierced through to his brain: Irma who had caused those awful hands to relax their grip just before it was too late. Little by little everything steadied down: he found he could see again—could hear. He still crouched shaking against the wall, but he got a respite anyway—a breathing space. And that was all that mattered for the moment—that and the fact that the madness was gone from Hugh Drummond's eyes.

The black figures were still standing there motionless round the walls; the Russian was lolling forward, dead; Phyllis was lying back in her chair, unconscious. But Peterson had eyes for none of these things; Count Zedova shivering in a corner—the huddled group of his own men standing in the center of the room he passed by without a glance. It was on Drummond his gaze was fixed: Drummond, who stood facing Irma with an almost dazed expression on his face, whilst she pleaded with him in an agony of supplication.

"He ordered that man to brain my wife with a rifle butt," said Drummond hoarsely. "And yet you ask for mercy?" He swung round on the cowardly clergyman and gripped him once again by the throat, shaking him as a terrier shakes a rat. He felt the girl, Irma, plucking feebly at his arm, but he took no notice.

But once again Fate was to intervene on Peterson's behalf, through the instrumentality of a woman. And mercifully for him the intervention came from the only woman—from the only human being—who could have influenced Drummond at that moment. It was Phyllis who opened her eyes suddenly, and, half-dazed still with the horror of the last few minutes, gazed round the room.

For a second she stared at Hugh's face, and saw on it a look which she had never seen before—a look so terrible, that she gave a sharp convulsive cry.

"Let him go, Hugh; let him go. Don't do it."

Her voice pierced his brain, though for a moment it made no impression on the muscles of his arms. A slightly

bewildered look came into his eyes: he felt as a dog must feel who is called off his lawful prey by his master. Let him go—let Carl Peterson go! That was what Phyllis was asking him to do—Phyllis who had stood at death's door not five minutes before. Let him go! And suddenly the madness faded from his eyes: his hands relaxed their grip, and Carl Peterson slipped unconscious to the floor—unconscious but still breathing. He had let him go, and after a while he stepped back and glanced slowly round the room. His eyes lingered for a moment on the dead Russian, they traveled thoughtfully on along the line of black figures, and gradually a smile began to appear on his face—a smile which broadened into a grin.

"Perfectly sound advice, old thing," he remarked at length. "Straight from the stable. I really believe I'd almost lost my temp'r."

(To Be Continued.)

ALL SAINTS EPISCOPAL CHURCH.
Sunday School 9:45 a. m.
Morning Service, 11:00 a. m.
Bishop Remington will preach and administer rite of confirmation Sunday morning, March 21st.
REV. S. W. CREASEY.

NOTICE OF SHERIFF'S SALE.
Notice is hereby given that by virtue of an execution and order of sale issued out of the Circuit Court of the State of Oregon for Morrow County, to me directed and dated the 11th day of March, 1926, upon a judgment, decree and order of sale rendered and entered in said court on the 11th day of March, 1926, in favor of Equitable Savings & Loan Association, a corporation, as plaintiff, against Edgar Jay Ball and Vie Ball, his wife, defendants; for the sum of \$4,039.44, with interest at the rate of 8 per cent per annum from March 8th, 1925; the further sum of \$300.00, attorney's fees; and the further sum of \$11.00 costs and disbursements; and the further sum of \$5.25; said decree further ordered and directed the sale of the real property mortgaged to the plaintiff to secure the payment of such

judgment.
I will, on Saturday, the 17th day of April, 1926, at the hour of 10 o'clock A. M. of said day at the front door of the County Court House of Morrow County, State of Oregon, at Heppner, Oregon, offer for sale and sell at public auction to the highest bidder for cash in hand the following described real property situated in Morrow County, State of Oregon, to-wit:
The East half of the East half of Section 23, and the South half

of the Northwest quarter and the West half of the Southwest quarter of Section 24, in Township two South, Range 23 E. W. M.; or so much of said real property as may be necessary to satisfy plaintiff's judgment and accruing costs of sale. Dated at Heppner, Oregon, this 17th day of March, 1926.
GEO. McDUFFEE,
Sheriff of Morrow County, Oregon.



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