



The BLACK GANG

A Sequel to Bulldog Drummond.

BY CYRIL McNEILE SAPPER
W.N.O. Service

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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 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 Melver, 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 Melver, 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 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 has an old feud. Zadowa tells Longmoor and his daughter of the bomb he had hurled, which he believes killed the three invaders. Longmoor is enraged, pointing out that the diamonds (Russian crown jewels, of which Zadowa had known nothing) had been long in his possession. Longmoor insists that Zadowa recover the diamonds, suggesting that they may be in the hands of the police, and warning his subordinate (Longmoor is addressed by Zadowa as "chief") that failure will be punished with death.

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

CHAPTER VIII.—Drummond becomes convinced that Peterson knows he is head of the Black Gang. Zadowa also knows it.

CHAPTER IX.—Zadowa, impressed with the belief that Drummond has the diamonds, visits him and makes the proposition that Hugh restore to him an equivalent in an auto, which Peterson plans to be driven into the Thames. Drummond's consequent death being made to appear the result of an accident.

CHAPTER X.—Mrs. Drummond disappears, and Hugh recognizes Peterson's hand. Peterson summons Drummond to his hotel. He goes, and they come to an understanding. Peterson stipulates that the diamonds must be returned to him before Mrs. Drummond is released. Hugh agrees to the terms, and leaves to bring the gems.

CHAPTER XI.—Returning with the stones, Drummond is drugged and placed in an auto, which Peterson plans to be driven into the Thames. Drummond's consequent death being made to appear the result of an accident.

CHAPTER XII.—Drummond escapes from the river and, following his would-be murderers, reaches a house, Maybrick Hall, in which he has learned his wife is hidden. He effects her release.

CHAPTER XIII.—Unable to escape from the grounds, though at liberty, Hugh witnesses the arrival of an automobile in which are Peterson, Zadowa and, to his consternation, his wife, again a captive. Peterson threatens instant death to Mrs. Drummond if Hugh does not surrender.

CHAPTER XIV.—Drummond goes into the house. Peterson informs him that he and his wife are to be killed and their deaths made to seem accidental. Mrs. Drummond, before her capture, had got word to the Black Gang, which arrives in time to save the pair.

CHAPTER XV
In Which the Threads Are Gathered Up.

IT WAS a week later. In Sir Bryan Johnstone's office two men were seated, the features of one of whom, at any rate, were well known to the public. Sir Bryan encouraged no notoriety; the man in the street passed him without recognition every time. But with his companion it was different: as a member of several successive cabinets, his face was well known. And it is safe to say that never in the course of a life devoted to the peculiar vagaries of politics had that face worn such an expression of complete bewilderment.

"But it's incredible, Johnstone," he remarked for the fiftieth time. "Simply incredible."

"Nevertheless, Sir John," returned the other, "it is true. I have absolute indisputable proof of the whole thing. And if you may remember, I have long drawn the government's attention to the speed of these activities in England."

"Yes, yes, I know," said Sir John Haverton a little testily, "but you have never given us chapter and verse like this before. Incredible," he muttered. "Incredible."

"And yet—the truth," said the other. "That there is an organized and well-financed conspiracy to preach Bolshevism in England we have known for some time; how well organized it is we did not realize. But as you will see from that paper, there is not a single manufacturing town or city in Great Britain that has not got a branch of the organization installed, which can, if need be, draw plentifully on funds from headquarters."

he remarked. "But in the meantime you have raised my curiosity most infernally about this Black Gang of yours."

Sir Bryan leaned back in his chair and lit a cigarette.

"There are one or two gaps I haven't filled in myself at the moment," he answered. "But I can tell you very briefly what led us to our discoveries at the house in Essex of which I spoke to you—Maybrick hall. About six days ago I received a typewritten communication of a similar type to one or two which I had seen before. A certain defect in the typewriter made it clear that the source was the same, and that source was the leader of the Black Gang. Here is the communication:"

He opened a drawer in his desk, and passed a sheet of paper across to the cabinet minister.

"If," it ran, "Jolly old Melver will take his morning constitutional to Maybrick hall in Essex, he will find much to interest him in that delightful rural spot. Many specimens, both dead and alive, will be found there, all in a splendid state of preservation. He will also find a great many interesting devices in the house. Above all, let him be careful of an elderly clergyman of beneficent aspect, whose beauty is only marred by a stiff and somewhat swollen neck, accompanied by a charming lady who answers to the name of Janet. They form the peerless gems of the collection, and were on the point of leaving the country with the enclosed packet which I removed from them for safe keeping. My modesty forbids me to tell an unmarried man like you in what portion of dear Janet's garments this little bag was found, but there's no harm in your guessing."

"What the devil?" spluttered Sir John. "It is a practical joke?"

"Far from it," answered the other. "Read to the end."

"After Melver had done this little job," Sir John read out, "he might like a trip to the north. There was an uninhabited island off the west coast of Mull, which is uninhabited no longer. He may have everything he finds there, with my love.—The leader of the Black Gang."

Sir John laid down the paper and stared at the director of criminal investigation.

"Is this the rambling of a partially diseased intellect?" he inquired with mild sarcasm.

"Nothing of the sort," returned the other shortly. "Milver and ten plainclothes men went immediately to Maybrick hall. And they found it a very peculiar place. There were some fifteen men there—trussed up like so many fowls, and alive. They were laid out in a row in the hall."

"Enthroned in state, in two chairs at the end, and also trussed hand and foot, were the beneficent clergyman and Miss Janet. So much for the living ones, with the exception of an Italian, who was found peacefully sleeping upstairs, with his right wrist padlocked to the wall by a long chain. I've mentioned him last, because he was destined to play a very important part in the matter." He frowned suddenly. "A very important part, confound him," he repeated. "However, we will now pass to the other specimens. In the grounds were discovered—a dead fowl, a dead fox—and three dead men."

Sir John ejaculated explosively, sitting up in his chair.

"They had all died from the same cause," continued the other imperturbably—"electrocution. But that was nothing compared to what they found inside. In an upstairs room was a dreadful looking specimen, more like an ape than a man, whose neck was broken. In addition, the main artery of his left arm had been severed with a knife. And even that was mild to what they found downstairs. Supported against the wall was a red-headed man stone dead. A bayonet fixed to a rifle had been driven clean through his chest, and stuck six inches into the wall behind him. And on that the body was supported."

"But, my dear fellow," spluttered the cabinet minister, "you can't expect me to believe all this. You're pulling my leg."

"Never farther from it in my life, Haverton," said the other. "I admit it seems a bit over the odds, but every word I've told you is gospel. To return to the discoveries, Melver found that the house was the headquarters of a vast criminal organization. There were schemes of the most fantastic descriptions cut and dried in every detail. Some of them were stupid; some were not. I have them all here. This one"—he glanced through some papers on his desk—"concerns the blowing of a large gap in one of the retaining walls of the big reservoir at Staines. This one concerns a perfectly-thought-out plot on your life when you go to Beauchamp hall next week. You were to be found dead in your railway carriage."

"What?" roared Sir John, springing to his feet.

"It would very likely have failed," said Sir Bryan calmly, "but they would have tried again. They don't like you or your views at all—these gentlemen. From time immemorial wild, fanatical yagers have done similar things; the danger was far greater and more subtle. And perhaps the most dangerous activity of all was what I have spoken about already—Maybrick hall was the headquarters

of these poisonous proletarian Sunday schools. But in addition to that there was forged going on there on a big scale: money is necessary for their activities. There were also long lists of their agents in different parts of the country, and detailed instructions for fomenting industrial unrest. But you have it all there—you can read it at your leisure for yourself. Particularly I commend to your notice, the series of pamphlets on Ireland, and the method suggested for promoting discord between England and France, and England and America."

Sir Bryan lit a cigarette.

"To return to the personal side of it, Melver, engrossed in his search, paid very little attention to the row of mummies in the hall. They certainly seemed extraordinarily safe, and one can hardly blame him. But the fact remains that, at some period during the morning, the Italian, who, if you remember, was padlocked in a bedroom upstairs, escaped. How I can't tell you; he must have had a key in his pocket. They found the padlock open, and the room empty. And going downstairs they found the chairs recently occupied by the clergyman and Miss Janet empty also. Moreover, from that moment no trace of any of them has been found. It is as if the earth had opened and swallowed them. Which brings us to the packet enclosed with the letter from the leader of the Black Gang."

He crossed to a safe and took out the little chamois leather bag of diamonds.

"Nice stones," he remarked quietly. "Worth literally a king's ransom. The pink one is part of the Russian crown jewels; the remainder belonged to the Grand Duke Georgius, who was murdered by the Bolsheviks. His son, who had these in his possession, died ten days ago of an overdose of a sleeping draught in Amsterdam. At least that is what I understood until I received these. Now I am not so sure. I would go further, and say I am quite sure that even if he died of an overdose, it was administered by the beneficent clergyman calling himself the Reverend Theodosius Longmoor—the most amazing international criminal of this or any other age—the man who, with Miss Janet and the Italian, has vanished into thin air, right under Melver's nose."

"And you mean to say this man has been in England and you haven't laid him by the heels?" said Sir John incredulously.

"Unfortunately that is what I mean," answered the other. "The police of four continents know about him, but that's a very different thing from proof. This time we have proof—these diamonds; and the man has vanished—utterly and completely. He is the master mind who controls and directs, but very rarely actually does anything himself. That's why he's so devilishly difficult to catch. But we'll do it sooner or later."

The cabinet minister was once more studying the typewritten communication from the leader of the Black Gang.

"It's the most astounding affair, this, Johnstone," he said at length. "Most astounding. And what's all this about the island off the coast of Mull?"

Sir Bryan laughed.

"Not the least astounding part of the whole show, I assure you. But for you to understand it better I must go back two or three months, to the time when we first became aware of the existence of the Black Gang. A series of very strange disappearances were taking place: men were being spirited away, without leaving a trace behind them. Of course we knew about it, but in view of the fact that our assistance was never asked to find them, and still more in view of the fact that in every case they were people whose room we preferred to their company, we lay low and said nothing."

"From unofficial inquiries I had carried out we came to the conclusion

that this mysterious Black Gang was undoubtedly an extremely powerful and ably led organization whose object was simply and solely to fight the Red element in England. The means they adopted were undoubtedly illegal—but the results were excellent. Whenever a man appeared preaching Bolshevism, after a few days he simply disappeared. In short, a reign of terror was established amongst the terrorists. And it was to put that right I have no doubt that the Reverend Theodosius Longmoor arrived in his country."

Sir Bryan thoughtfully lit another cigarette.

"To return to the island, Melver went there, and after some little difficulty located it, out of the twenty or thirty to which the description might apply. He found it far from uninhabited, just as that letter says. He found it occupied by some fifty or sixty anarchists—the gentlemen who had so mysteriously disappeared—who were presided over by twenty large demobilized soldiers commanded by an ex-sergeant-major of the Guards. The sixty frenzied anarchists he gathered, were running a state on communistic lines. And the interpretation moved even Melver to tears of laughter. It appeared that once every three hours they were all drawn up in a row, and the sergeant-major, with a voice like a bull, would bellow: "Should the ruling classes have money?"

"Then they answered in unison—'No.'"

"Should anyone have money?" Again they answered 'No.'"

"Should everyone work for the common good for love?" 'Yes.'"

"Whereat he would roar: 'Well, in this 'ere island there ain't no ruling classes, and there ain't no money, and there's dam' little love, so go and plant some more potatoes, you loped sons of Beelzebub.'"

"At which point the parade broke up in disorder."

Sir John was shaking his head.

"This is a jest, Johnstone. You're joking."

"I'm not," answered the other, "But I think you'll admit that the man who started the whole show—the leader of the Black Gang, is a humorist, to put it mildly; who cannot well be spared."

"My dear fellow, the cabinet is the only place for him. If any he'd expect two or three of my colleagues to this island and let 'em plant potatoes I'd take off my hat to him. Tell me—do I know him?"

Sir John smiled.

"I'm not certain; you may. But the point, Haverton, is this. We must take cognizance of the whole thing, if we acknowledge it at all. Therefore shall we assume that everything I have been telling you is a fairy story—that the Black Gang is non-existent—I may say that it will be shortly—and that what has already appeared in the papers is just a hoax by some irresponsible person? Unless we do that there will be a cease vellebre fought out on class prejudice—a most injudicious thing at the present moment. I may say that the island is shut down, and the sixty pioneers have departed to other countries. Also quite a number of those agents whose names are on the list you have have left our shores during the past few days. It is merely up to us to see that they don't come back. But nothing has come out in the papers; and I don't want anything to understand it better."

He paused suddenly, as a cheerful voice was heard in the office outside.

"Ah! here is one Captain Drummond, whom I asked to come round this morning," he continued, with a faint smile. "I wonder if you know him."

"I've seen him at his aunt's—old lady Meltrose. She says he's the biggest fool in London."

Sir Bryan's smile grew more pronounced as the door opened and Hugh came in.

"Morning, Tum-tum," he boomed genially. "How's the liver and all that?"

"Morning, Hugh. Do you know Sir John Haverton?"

"Morning, Sir John. Jolly old cabinet merry and bright? Or did you all go down on Purple Polly at Goodwood yesterday?"

Sir John rose a little grimly.

"We have other things to do besides backing horses, Captain Drummond. I think we have met at Lady Meltrose's house, haven't we?"

"More than likely," said Hugh affably. "I don't often dine there; she ropes in such a ghastly crowd of bores, don't you know."

"I feel sure, Captain Drummond, that you are an admirable judge."

Sir John turned to Sir Bryan Johnstone and held out his hand. "Well, I must be off. Good-morning, Johnstone—and you're thoroughly roused my curiosity. I'd very much like to know who the gentleman is whom we've been discussing. And in the meantime I'll look through these papers and let you know my decision in due course."

He bustled out of the office, and Hugh sank into a chair with a sigh of relief.

"The old boy's clothes seem full of body this morning, Tum-tum," he remarked as the door closed. "Indi-

(Continued on Page Six)

The BULL'S EYE

Editor and General Manager
WILL ROGERS

You Can't Smoke History

A fellow from Carolina wants to know where I get the idea that "Bull" Durham and George Washington come from the same state. He says, "Why don't you write and give the people the real History of 'Bull' Durham in its native State, South Carolina, that people would appreciate that more than these Bull Legends of yours."

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Writing Ads that will be remembered is a queer game. This is an Ad, not a History. I selected Ads over History on account of the pay. (American Tobacco Company's pay is as good as its tobacco.) Where "Bull" Durham comes from or where it goes to is left for the starving Historian.

Will Rogers

P.S. You notice I named in this article the WRONG Carolina. That's so North Carolina will get sore because I named South Carolina, and South Carolina will get sore because I didn't name North Carolina. A true Southerner never forgets.

P.P.S. There will be another piece in this paper soon. Watch for it.

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