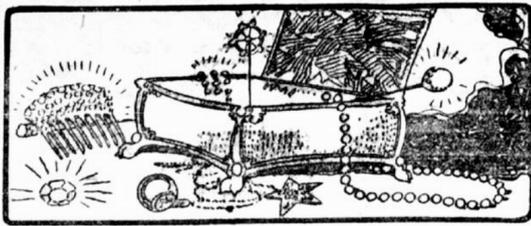


BRITZ OF HEADQUARTERS

By MARCIN BARBER
ILLUSTRATIONS BY RAY WALTERS



SYNOPSIS.
The story opens with a scream from Dorothy Marche in the opera box of Mrs. Missioner, a wealthy widow. It is occasioned when Mrs. Missioner's necklace breaks, scattering the diamonds all over the floor. Curtis Griswold and Braxton Sands, society men in love with Mrs. Missioner, gather up the gems. Griswold steps on what is supposed to be the celebrated Maharane and crushes it. A Hindu declares it is the real thing. An expert later pronounces all the stones substitutes for the original. Detective Donnelly and Carson investigate. They decide that the theft of the original gems was accomplished by some one in the house. Miss Holcomb, confidential companion of Mrs. Missioner, is suspected. One of the missing diamonds is found in her room. Mrs. Missioner protests that Elsie is innocent, but she is taken to prison. Meantime, in an up-town mansion, two Hindus, who are in America to receive the Maharane, discuss the arrest. Detective Britz takes up the case. He is fully believed by Elsie, innocent and asks the co-operation of Dr. Lawrence Fitch, her fiance, in running down the real criminal.

CHAPTER VIII.
Britz Takes Action.
Lieutenant Britz occupied a unique position in the Detective Bureau. His official grade was the same as that of Donnelly and Carson, but, by sheer force of his ability, he had lifted himself so far above them that when working on a case they accepted his orders like subordinates. Britz was one of the four or five men of the entire detective force who could not be classed as a "stool-pigeon man." That is, he did not depend on the use of stool-pigeons for his results. He needed no staff of thieves to inform him of the doings of other thieves. His detective ability was developed to a high degree, combining an acute analytic sense with remarkable industry. These talents were reinforced by a rare detective instinct, which often led him irresistibly to the goal of his pursuit.

He was a bundle of twitching nerves beneath a placid exterior. Nature had endowed him with an inscrutable countenance, an iron will, and a restlessness energy that seemed to flow from an inexhaustible inner fountain. He matched his resourcefulness against the tricks of the criminals he purged and, having the keener mind, he invariably won.

Britz's enthusiasm never bubbled to the surface. He carried himself with an appearance of mastery ease, as if he held his impulses in complete subjection. There was nothing striking in his stature, yet he left an impression of hidden strength and a steel framework behind a light coating of plaster. His eyes, deep set beneath the arched outline of his eyebrows, seemed to emit a mysterious, inexplicable current that circled around one and drew one closer within its constantly narrowing circumference. The shade of melancholy that gloomed his nature was not hidden by the mask of superb indifference that rested on his well-defined features, with their crowning breadth of lightly furrowed forehead. It revealed itself with the slightest twitch of his facial muscles as well as in the drooping line of his mouth. By some peculiarity of the blood, his complexion ran a yellow ivory, never varying its color under the stress of the strongest emotions. It required superhuman courage to meet the steady gaze of his eyes and lie to him. Through some what abrupt of manner and speech, there was something engaging about him, some subtle magic of personality that brought one under the thrall of his mind. Almost without the utterance of a syllable, he could bend weak natures to his will. Only the strongest persons were able to resist his domination.

He was one of those strange beings who live mostly within themselves, yet there were times when he felt a desolation of heart, a longing for companionship, for intimate association with his fellow beings. On such occasions, his life seemed to lack something of the beauty of other lives, as if it had been cast in a more somber shade. He could feel a wave of melancholy coming on him, and to avoid its depressing influence, he turned his mind resolutely to his work, feasting on the crime at hand as on some tempting dish. Without knowing why, the Missioner diamond robbery held for him a fascination more powerful than that called up by any other crime within his memory. He recognized surface indications of a deep cunning in the conception and execution of the theft. His experienced eye saw that no ignorant or vulgar mind had entered the substitution of those marvelous diamonds. The pursuit of the criminal fairly sparked with exciting possibilities, and Britz felt the thrill of the chase even before he started the pursuit.

Britz paced nervously up and down his room, revolving the incidents surrounding the discovery of the theft in his mind, but he was unable to pick a clue on which to work. Nor did the occurrences in which Donnelly and Carson participated furnish any promising material.

"I'll begin at the very bottom," he murmured, "and work gradually to the top." He sauntered out of the house, walking with the air of one trying to lengthen moments of reflection. In front of the Missioner home he stopped, surveying the massive stone walls, as if trying to figure the possi-

bility of nocturnal intrusion. The front door was of heavy bronze and was swung open by the butler in response to the ringing of the bell.

"Is Mrs. Missioner at home?" asked Britz.

The butler eyed him suspiciously.

"Who wishes to see her?" he asked.

"Lieutenant Britz, of Headquarters."

After a long delay, he was ushered into the same room in which the incidents preceding Miss Holcomb's arrest had occurred.

"I have come to inquire more minutely into the disappearance of the jewels," he explained.

Mrs. Missioner's face showed lines of deep suffering. Heavy rings encircled her eyes, deep furrows scarred her forehead.

"I am more than anxious to supply you with all the information in my possession," she said. "It is madder enough, and I almost despair of ever seeing my jewels again."

"Madam, no case is hopeless," Britz soothed. "The immense value of the diamonds will make their recovery all the easier. I feel safe in surmising that none of them, or only a very few of them, have been disposed of as yet. Now, do you recall the last time you wore the collarette?"

"It was a week ago, at dinner in my home," she replied.

"And when before that?"

"About two weeks before, at a dance in the home of a friend."

"How long have you owned the collarette?"

"About ten years."

"It was a gift from your husband, I believe?" Britz asked.

"It was," the widow answered.

"Where was it purchased?"

"The Maharane was bought in India. The other stones were gathered from time to time, and were strung together in the form of the collarette at Tiffany's."

"That was ten years ago?"

"It was."

"Since then, has the collarette been out of your possession at any time?"

"I recall only one instance," she replied.

"When was that?" he asked.

"About two years ago. I sent it to Tiffany's for resetting."

"The substitution was hardly made there," he smiled. "You are absolutely sure the collarette, with that one exception, has been in no one else's possession?"

"Absolutely sure," the widow answered.

"May I examine the safe?" he asked.

Through a magnifying glass he studied the steel door of the compartment, after which the widow set the combination and swung open the safe. The interior was as bare of suspicious marks as the exterior.

"Donnelly and Carson are right to this extent. It is an inside job," he pronounced.

"We must ascertain the day of the robbery as closely as possible," he said. "Two years ago is too remote a time on which to begin work. I understand that you called in Mr. Ransome the other night? Has any other expert seen the jewels in the last two years?"

"No other expert, but Mr. Ransome and I looked over the collection before I went abroad eighteen months ago. He saw the collarette at that time."

"Good!" flashed Britz. "Of course, he said nothing as to the jewels being past?"

"Nothing," answered Mrs. Missioner.

"Then it is almost certain that the real jewels were in your safe then," pronounced Britz. "Since then, who has been with you when you wore the collarette?"

"Mr. Griswold and Mr. Sands were my escorts to the dinner two weeks ago. They and Miss March also were my guests," she said.

"Now, please tell me exactly, who was in the room when you put the collarette on and when you took it off on coming home two weeks ago?" Britz inquired.

"Miss Holcomb was in the room when I opened the combination of the safe. I believe the collarette lay on the table until I was fully dressed. Then Mr. Sands and Mr. Griswold arrived, and were shown into the room. I recall that I had difficulty in adjusting the clasp, and Mr. Griswold snapped it shut."

"Were you out of the room for even a moment while the collarette lay on the table?"

"No," Mrs. Missioner answered.

"Did you observe anything suspicious in the movements, actions, or conduct of Miss Holcomb that evening?"

"Nothing."

"What occurred after you came home? Who helped you to undress?"

"My maids were asleep," said Mrs. Missioner, "and I called Miss Holcomb, who occupies the room next to mine. She helped me take off the jewels and she saw me place them in the safe."

"And with the exception of yourself, Miss Holcomb is the only one who knew the combination of the safe?" Britz flashed.

"Only Miss Holcomb," responded the widow.

"On the night of the opera, who was with you when you put on the collarette?"

"Miss Holcomb, Mr. Griswold, Mr. Sands, and Miss March," the widow informed him.

"Did any of those present help you place it about your neck?"

"No. Mr. Sands had taken the collarette from the table, and was looking at it. I took it from him and fastened it myself."

"After you took the collarette from the safe on those two nights, did any servant enter the room?"

"The footman, of course, announced Mr. Griswold and Mr. Sands. I remember, too, that my East Indian servant brought my new dress."

"Do you believe Miss Holcomb is the thief?" suddenly fired Britz.

"I cannot believe her capable of it," she said.

"Then if we eliminate her," Britz retorted, "we must look for the thief among Mr. Sands, Mr. Griswold, the footman, and the East Indian servant. Miss March, of course, is out of the question."

"So are Mr. Sands and Mr. Griswold," came in positive tones from Mrs. Missioner.

Britz made no comment. His eyes moved restlessly about the room, falling finally in a steady gaze on the widow.

"How long has the footman been in your employ?" he asked.

"More than fifteen years," she responded promptly.

"And the other servant?"

"About a year. He came very high-



No Longer Could She Find Solace in Tears.

ly recommended, and I do not see how he possibly could have substituted the paste necklace for the real one."

"Neither do I," agreed Britz. "Did either Mr. Sands or Mr. Griswold ever have opportunity to pass through Miss Holcomb's room?"

"Not that I am aware of," replied Mrs. Missioner.

Britz eyed the woman impressively.

"We must bear in mind," he said, "that whoever stole the jewels must have been in possession of the real necklace long enough to have a duplicate made. Either that, or he must have been so familiar with every stone in the setting as to enable him to have duplicates made from description. The only reasonable supposition is that the duplicate was made directly from the original. It is barely possible, however, that some other means were employed."

"That is the most puzzling feature of the theft," said Mrs. Missioner.

"How long have you known Mr. Sands?" asked Britz.

"From girlhood."

"And Mr. Griswold?"

"About five years."

"Both saw the necklace on you frequently?"

"Very often."

After several thoughtful moments, Britz remarked:

"The only one who could have taken the necklace out of the safe without your knowledge was Miss Holcomb. One of the original diamonds was found in her room. It is absolutely clear to me that she is innocent."

"Do you really think so?" the widow asked eagerly.

"It is as certain as that someone stole the necklace," answered Britz. "Then we must get her out of jail at once!" exclaimed the widow.

"We must do nothing of the kind,"

CHAPTER IX.

Word From Logan.
A week of agonized suspense in the Tombs seemed drawn into an eternity of suffering to Miss Holcomb. Conscious of her own innocence, she had, nevertheless, ceased to struggle against the relentless fate that marked her as its victim. Her sensitive nature recoiled from contact with the miserable creatures into whose midst she was suddenly thrust. No longer could she find solace in tears, for the long drain had exhausted the supply. The gloom of her surroundings penetrated the innermost sanctuary of her soul.

Doctor Fitch was in the reception room.

A groan, as of physical pain, came from Fitch as he beheld Miss Holcomb in the wan light that filtered through the window. Her distress reacted on his sensibilities; he could utter no word of encouragement.

"It is awful," he moaned, as he led her into a corner of the room.

"And they all believe me guilty?" she asked despairingly.

"I think," said he. "No one has offered me a gold mine since."

Brown Bread and Beans.
The story of brown bread and baked beans is more interesting and important than local historians appear to think. Perhaps the most incisive record of Boston brown bread is the entry in the selectmen's records, January 7, 1746, or January 18, 1747 (in a. s.). It calls brown bread that which has a good proportion of Indian meal. June 30, 1764, the selectmen ordered

"Not all," he returned, "there is one whose faith is unshaken. I talked with the lawyer to-day. He says they have sufficient evidence to convict, and that while the case looks ugly, there is nothing to fear. He is in favor of a speedy trial."

"Then even if I am set free my name will remain smirched," she declared.

"Your name will be cleared of all suspicion."

"It is so good to have you near me," she said. "I feel as if no harm could come to me."

They became vaguely conscious of a man's form outlined in the murky light of the room. As the figure gradually slipped itself to Fitch's eyes, his hand slipped from her waist and he rose to his feet.

"Lieutenant Britz!" he exclaimed.

The detective came out of the obscurity of the opposite wall, and, doffing his hat, respectfully addressed them.

"It is unusual, I know, for a police officer to ask information of a prisoner held for the Grand Jury. Before Miss Holcomb replies to the questions I am about to ask, I think it might be well for her to seek the advice of counsel."

"Miss Holcomb will answer any questions you may ask," Fitch replied.

"She has nothing to hide."

The impenetrable face of the detective gave no insight to his thoughts. He drew a chair close to the expectant couple, shifting his gaze from Fitch to the face of the young woman. Though he gave no sign of it, he read the acute suffering she felt.

"Miss Holcomb," he began, "when were you last in Europe with Mrs. Missioner?"

"A little less than a year and a half ago," came the quick response.

"Was that before or after the East Indian servant entered the employ of Mrs. Missioner?"

"He was engaged after we came back."

"Did you meet Mr. Sands or Mr. Griswold abroad?"

"We met both of them in London and Paris."

"Did Mrs. Missioner have the collarette with her? I mean the one with the Maharane diamond?"

"She did."

The detective settled back in his chair, his chin in his hands, as if lost in deep thought. The strange pallor of his face, shaded by the waning light, gave him the appearance of a dark clay image. Miss Holcomb looked inquiringly at him, seeking some explanation of his puzzling questions.

"The case is more baffling than ever," he said in response to her questioning look. "When I began my investigation, I was firmly convinced of your innocence."

"And now?" interrupted Dr. Fitch.

"I am seeking the light."

"Do you wish to ask Miss Holcomb any further questions?" Fitch asked.

"She is only too anxious to enlighten you."

The detective's eyes narrowed on the young woman.

"There is some information that I want, Miss Holcomb; I believe you can supply it." After brief reflection, he asked: "Mr. Sands and Mr. Griswold are frequent visitors at the house of Mrs. Missioner?"

"Both call very frequently," Miss Holcomb replied.

"And their visits are inspired by a feeling that is stronger than friendship?"

"Miss Holcomb looked at Fitch as if in doubt what to say.

"Be perfectly frank," he advised.

"I believe both have proposed marriage to her," she informed him.

"And Mrs. Missioner—she prefers which one?"

"I don't know," came the prompt response.

"You mean she has never indicated her preference to you? Come now, surely in a burst of confidence she dropped some hint as to her inclinations?"

It was plain to Britz that Miss Holcomb revolted against violating the intimate confidences of her employer. To reveal the secrets that had come to her through association with the woman who seemingly had turned her back on her now was so inconsistent with Miss Holcomb's entire character that Britz recognized the necessity of urging his question.

"I am not asking this out of any motive of idle curiosity," he said. "It is of vital importance I should be informed of Mrs. Missioner's relations with Mr. Sands and Mr. Griswold, as well as of the opportunity each had for obtaining the diamonds."

"I am sure neither of them would or could have taken them," Miss Holcomb said.

"That may be perfectly true," replied Britz. "I do not say either of them took the diamonds, but I must follow every line of inquiry that reveals itself to me. Now, isn't it a fact, Miss Holcomb, that Griswold was the preferred suitor?"

"I do not think so," she said in a low voice.

"You mean she preferred Sands?"

"Yes."

"Miss Holcomb, do you know the history of the Maharane diamond?" he suddenly fired.

A quick spark of memory kindled her mind, and with the first flash, she understood the import of his question.

"Mrs. Missioner told me the history of the stone," she said. "I believe there was some scandal connected with its purchase in India. She told me that when her husband obtained it, there was some talk of it having been stolen from a temple and that the provincial native government tried to regain possession of it. Mr. Missioner succeeded, however, in retaining it as part of his collection."

"What opportunity did the Indian servant have of obtaining the necklace?"

"None at all," she answered hopelessly, "unless he broke into the safe, and I believe that was not done."

"Mrs. Missioner informed me that on one occasion, when the necklace was lying on the table, the servant entered the room with a box. You were in the room at the time. Was he close enough to the table to touch the necklace?"

"I remember the incident very well," she replied. "I took the box from him at the door and he turned around and went downstairs. I do not believe he was within ten feet of the table at any time."

"I don't know what to think," Britz said, after some reflection. "Almost as soon as a new clue bobs up it falls down again. I have to begin all over again. I have no more questions to ask to-day."

Fitch accompanied the detective out of the prison, begging vainly for some word of encouragement. Britz answered his questions with monosyllables, as if he feared to commit himself with regard to the outcome of his investigation. Just before parting, however, Britz said:

"Every line that develops in this case, you can rest assured, will be followed to the end. So far, nothing has been discovered that changes the aspect of the case in the slightest degree."

The detective walked to Headquarters and entered the office of the Chief.

"Has Donnelly or Carson reported anything new?" he inquired.

"Nothing," answered the Chief.

"And you?"

"Nothing that throws any light on the case."

"Britz," the Chief remarked, as though delivering some weighty conclusion, "I think you're working on the wrong hypothesis. You seem to have decided that Miss Holcomb is innocent. If you will survey the case as it stands, you will have to acknowledge that absolutely everything in it points to her guilt. I do not understand to say what her motive was in stealing the jewels, unless it was simply the feminine lust for ornaments. I feel certain, also, that she was not alone in the crime. My belief is that she took the necklace out of the safe, turned it over to Dr. Fitch, or someone else, to have the duplicate made, and then returned the false jewels to the safe."

"But where were the paste gems made?" inquired Britz.

"That's for you to find out," snapped the Chief.

"I have personally visited every manufacturer of paste gems in this city and in Philadelphia, Boston, Buffalo, and Washington. My men have been to all the places in the smaller cities. Manufacturers in all the other cities of the country have been visited by the local police, and I feel absolutely sure that the duplicates were not made in this country. Logan is on the way to Paris now, and until we hear from him I don't think we are safe in venturing any opinion as to the identity of the thief. I am receiving daily reports of the movements of Sands, Griswold, the butler, and the Indian servant, but they show nothing."

"Why do you think Logan will discover anything? Has the real necklace ever been seen abroad?"

"Missioner had it with her on the other side, but I don't know that it ever left her possession."

The Chief's lips curled into an amused smile.

"Kind o' looks as if you're on the wrong scent," he baited.

"Wait till we hear from Paris," Britz returned.

Librarian's Requirements.
"I want the book about the tooth-hunters," said the young woman to Miss May Greiner, who is in charge of the Burrows Bros. Book Club.

"Without a moment's hesitation Miss Greiner handed out 'Colonel Todhunter of Missouri,' the book written by Rip Saunders of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Miss Greiner isn't a professional mind reader, she says, but she does know books and titles.

One young woman asked for a book, the name of which she'd forgotten, but "it had to do with a lock, or a latch, or something." "The Bolted Door" was the name of the book she wanted.

So, when another patron inquired for "The Green Umbrella," Miss Greiner had not a moment's hesitation in handing out the required volume, "The Purple Parasol."—Cleveland Leader.

Unfortunate Man.
A tourist in the mountains of Tennessee once had dinner with a quarrelsome old mountaineer who yarred about hard times for 15 minutes at a stretch. "Why, man," said the tourist, "you ought to be able to make lots of money shipping green corn to the northern market. 'Yes, I orter,' was the sullen reply. 'You have the land, I suppose, and can get the seed.' 'Yes, I guess so.' 'Then why don't you go into the speculation?' 'No use, stranger,' sadly replied the cracker; 'the old woman is too lazy to do the plowin' and plantin'."

POSITIVE PROOF.



"How do I know that you really love me? What assurance have I that you would be willing to make sacrifices and endure hardships for my sake?"

"What more can you ask? Haven't I for six months refrained from laying violent hands on your little brother?"

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SEE how much more uniform in quality
SEE how pure—how good
SEE how economical—and
SEE that you get Calumet

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Play It or Raise It!
A German composer has written an all-southern piece of music called "Hell." There will be any number of people in this country able to play it at a glance.—Houston Post.

TOMMY MURPHY.
The great horseman who is winning most of the big races for fast trotters with that farm horse, "E. T. C.," record 2:04, says: "SPOLIN'S DISTEMPER CURE is the best remedy for all forms of Distemper and coughs I have ever known. I have used it a number of years. All druggists or send to manufacturers, 50c and \$1 a bottle. Stone Medical Co., Chemists, Coshen, Ind., U. S. A."

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COL. GREEN'S SPORTY OFFER

How the Good-Natured Financier Got the Best of the Confidence Man.

Just because Col. E. H. R. Green is fat and looks good-natured, and has a sort of out-of-door air, some of the sharpers in New York had him sized up as easy to take care of. They returned from their trip to take care of the properties of the member, Mrs. Betty Green, writes

a correspondent. It may be, too, that the colonel's breezy candor kind of coaxed the boys along a bit. He will talk on any subject when he feels like talking, with a frankness unusual in the banking fraternity. "Here's my old friend, Mr. Hinks," said the colonel the other night, at his hotel, grabbing at a well-dressed man, who was walking by without speaking. His old friend, Mr. Hinks, shrunk into himself

and was obviously embarrassed. After a moment's talk he got away, and the colonel's well-padded sides shook.

"Hinks is one of 'em," said he. "I'd just landed in town when Hinks came up to me one night in the hotel. He had met me in Texas, he said. So-and-so had introduced him. I didn't remember him, but the name he mentioned was that of a good friend of mine, and I thought maybe my memory was at fault. By and by he opened the trap. He told me of the good thing he had under cover, and

that I could make a million dollars if I'd just put in a few thousands. It was a gold mine, and he had the gaudiest maps and prospectuses I have ever seen. I listened to him until he got through. 'Hinks,' said I, 'just between friends, I've got a gold mine of my own that I want to sell. Now, I won't buy a mine, but I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll draw cards with you, the winner takes both. That's all either is fit for.' Colonel Green got another good laugh out of it. 'There's a free masonry among these fellows,