

THE BLUE MEDALLION

By Augustus Goodridge Sherwin.

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"It's pure gold, mister. Give me the price of a meal and you can have it."

Bryce Hulbert regarded the speaker carelessly. He was of the genus tramp—ragged, frowsy, dissolute



They Kept Regarding Him and Whispering Together.

looking. He held in his hand a medal, souvenir or watch charm, oblong, centered with an undecipherable monogram, apparently embracing oriental symbols. It was a bluish stone, rimmed with copper. At a glance Hulbert saw that it was worthless except to its oriental owner.

"Where did you get it?" he inquired.

"Just found it. Say, I'm hungry—"

Hulbert passed the man a small coin. He was poor himself, but it was his way to help the needy clear down the line. The man bolted away for the nearest gin shop. Hulbert stood under a street lamp turning over and over the queer medallion. He was a dreamer and idle and unemployed just now and had time to speculate. He built up a dream of Arabian skies, and mystic shrieks, and secret leagues in his mind. There was a small ring imbedded in the medallion. He affixed it to his watch chain, a chain leaving only a pawnbroker's check at its pocket end.

"A reckless disburser of charity," he said grimly to himself, as he reflected upon the small store of cash from which he had drawn. "I wonder what I will do when the last coin is gone?"

He had been in London for a month. A rich New Yorker had employed him as his private secretary, had died a month after his arrival abroad and Hulbert found himself stranded. The charm of the great city influenced him to remain within its confines. He was literary in his tastes and he had a vague idea that he was gathering up material for a great novel to exploit when he got back to New York.

Hulbert soon forgot about the trinket upon his watch chain. Economy was forced upon him, owing to the state of his exchequer. He had been eating at cheap odd restaurants for a week. That evening a somewhat unique array of food in the window of a little eating resort bearing a name in Greek letters over its door, allured him to enter the place.

He had noticed while he ate, two men at a neighboring table observing him narrowly. They were tawny low browed fellows, suggesting levantine origin. They kept regarding him and whispering together in a cautious and mysterious manner. Just as Hulbert arose to leave the place one of them approached him. He looked Hulbert squarely in the eye, as if naturally,