

# BRITZ'S HEADQUARTERS

By MARVIN BARBER  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY RAY WALTERS

## SYNOPSIS.

The story opens with a scream from Dorothy March in the opera box of Mrs. Misstoner, a wealthy widow. It is the night when Mrs. Misstoner's necklace breaks, scattering the diamonds all over the floor. Curdie Griswold and Brewster, two society men in love with Mrs. Misstoner, gather up the gems. Griswold keeps what is supposed to be the real stones, and Misstoner and Brewster are left with the fake. A Hindoo declares it was not the genuine. An expert later pronounces all Britz stones except the original. One of the stones is found in the room of Elinor Holcomb, confidential companion of Mrs. Misstoner. She is arrested, and the Hindoo is released. Britz takes over the case. He asks the co-operation of Mr. Fitch, Elinor's fiance, in running down the real criminal. Britz learns that the Hindoo was in Paris on the order of Elinor Holcomb. While walking Britz is seized, bound and gagged by Hindoos. He is imprisoned in a deserted house, but makes his escape. He is convinced that the Hindoos are materially interested in the case. Pretending to be a reporter, Britz interviews the Swami as to the rare diamonds of India. Britz learns of an Indian diamond expert on Ward's Island and decides to interview him.

## CHAPTER XV.

### At Ward's Island.

"It's rather a remarkable coincidence, I'll admit," said Britz to Fitch, as they stood on the deck of the little ferry boat that bore them toward the island; "but it's possible your little old friend had something to do with the making of the imitation Maharane diamond. You realize thoroughly, I'm sure, the importance of that link in our chain of evidence. It may be difficult to fasten the responsibility for manufacturing all the other fraudulent diamonds on the necklace upon the guilty person, because diamonds of that size can be imitated in any case of several large cities; but the man who made the fake Maharane is a past master of his craft; a man so skillful that even the most expert artificers of Europe and America do not pretend they can equal him."

"What makes you think the curio dealer had anything to do with it?" asked Fitch. "How could it be done? I thought the Maharane was made quite recently."

"I don't know how long it's been," the detective replied. "It may have been only a few months, and the diamond, if it is possible, may have been copied any time within the past year. That big office building has been less than a year in construction, and it's well within the bounds of fact that the curio dealer received the commission for the work twelve months ago, or possibly more."

"Oh," said the physician, "there is one law in your theory. He was not a fakir. All the information I gleaned about him convinced me he was not engaged in the manufacture of bogus jewels. His grand purpose in life was to make real diamonds."

"Presumably," said Britz. "It is that fact, much more than anything else, that leads me to think he may be in the employ of the persons we are trailing. Doesn't it occur to you that the fake Maharane, in order to deceive Mrs. Misstoner and all her friends for so long a time, must have been such a beautiful piece of work that it could not have been intended as an imitation? In other words, didn't the man who made the imitation Maharane believe he was manufacturing a genuine diamond?"

The little boat grated its nose against the island pier, and the two investigators sprang ashore. As soon as they entered the asylum grounds, their positions were reversed. Fitch became the mentor, Britz the willing pupil, for in that abode of darkness reason were medical men whose hourly association with that phase of existence made them welcome gladly visitors from the outer world—especially members of their own profession. Fitch, as he ran up the steps of the visitors' entrance, was received royally in the office by three or four physicians and surgeons who had known him in his Bellevue days. There was no jealousy of his success among them. He had shot ahead of several of them, and it was pretty well understood among the island doctors that Lawrence Fitch was rapidly forging to the fore as a fashionable physician. What was more important in their eyes was the fact that he had gained real distinction in his profession. Several minor but helpful discoveries of his had been recorded gratifyingly in the "Lancet," and more than once his name had been mentioned with flattering recognition at meetings of the County Medical Society.

Fitch was now in his element. He grasped warmly the hands held out to him, clasped two or three of his closer cronies on the back, and presented Britz to the little group with a few words of introduction that won respect for the man from Mulberry Street.

"Get a patient here, Larry?" they asked him jokingly.

"No," said Fitch, "not exactly a patient; but it's possible you have a case here I'm a little bit interested in." He recited the history of the curio dealer, with an urgent request that everything in connection with the old man be revealed to him. Britz, accustomed as he was to glean his facts unobtrusively, was unmistakably surprised by the readiness with which each of Fitch's friends promised aid.

Another vicious little nod, follow-

and hastened to put their promise into execution.

One of the younger doctors showed himself familiar with the old diamond maker's case, and seemed thoroughly to understand his delusion.

"He is now in my ward," he said. "He has been there six months; rather unusual case; harmless but hopeless. Can't rid himself of the idea that diamonds are banked up all around him, and that all he has to do is to make one with his own hands to possess the whole of that wealth in jewels. He does his best to make it, too. Unfortunately the ingredients he demands include several dangerous chemicals, and of course he cannot be trusted to go pounding away with a pestle and mortar when his brain is so far gone that he is likely to forget the combination."

The other medical men looked interested.

"What do you do with him, doctor?" asked Fitch.

"Oh, I substitute harmless things—a little bismuth and sodium phosphate, and a dash of French chalk, and he thinks he has everything he needs. All the stuff he wants that is not dangerous I let him have. He is happy enough mixing and mashing the paste and hammering away all day long. He rolls the mass into dirty little gray balls, and thinks they are diamonds."

"Let us have a look at him," said Fitch.

"Sure thing! You don't mind if I don't go with you? I have an amputation on in about ten minutes, and as there is a green nurse helping me, I don't want to take any chances in letting her monkey with the ether cone. So you won't mind, will you, if I ask you to run right along by yourself? Stay as long as you like."

Britz and Fitch were glad enough of an opportunity to question the old man without an auditor, and with a brief, "So long!" to his colleagues, the doctor piloted the detective through dreary stretches in that home of hopelessness to the ward where the curio dealer was found.

In a sunny corner of the long, bleak room, the barrenness of which was relieved slightly by a few boxes and pots of geraniums and fuchsias on the window sill, seated at a bench covered with odd-looking leather, was the little old man the physician and the Headquarters sleuth sought.

In the patient's face was a rapt look that told them he was as far away from his present environment as if he had been in the little dingy curio shop where young Dr. Fitch first had seen him. His pliant hands had been plunged many times into a dough-like lump plastic as a sculptor's clay at one end of the bench. A row of jars at the back of the bench was flanked by a phalanx of vials. An earthen bowl half full of water stood at his right hand. Directly in front of him, scattered in workmanlike confusion, were several palette knives and mixing brushes. Ceaselessly his fingers plucked tiny pellets from the plastic lump, rolled and patted them, dipped them in the many-colored contents of the vials and jars, then trundled them upon the board with industry purposeful of performance, but purposeless of achievement.

At times a spectral smile seemed to glow upon his cadaverous features—a faint gleam like the specter of a corpse-light. The sunlight, reflected from the rows of jars and bottles, played queer tricks with the contour of his face and gave his tireless hands a ghost-like appearance. He was a poor little shriveled remnant of a man, the dried core of what had been a dabbler in the occult, and which, along normal channels might have been a distinguished scientist. No one looking at him could ever have pictured him as possessed of the greed of gain.

Britz, though he made no pretense of being a psychologist, comprehended at a glance the outer vision of the former curiosity shop proprietor conveyed little to his distraught, scientific mind. Beyond doubt, the old man, as Fitch had said, had run the shop merely as a means to an end. Fitch and Britz stood looking at him for a few moments before he became aware of their presence. When at last he glanced up, a shade of perplexity flitted across his face, his fingers halted, but they did not stop in their studious task, and he looked at them inquiringly. With a slight shake of his head he apparently gave up the attempt to puzzle out their identity, and once more bent his eyes on the bench he firmly regarded as the threshold to Golconda.

"Guess you don't remember me, Mr. Martin," said the doctor. The old man appeared not to hear. Britz and Fitch exchanged glances, and the detective took up the attempt to awaken a response from the aged inmate's mental vacuum.

"Pretty busy man, eh?" said Britz. He had touched the right chord. Any reference to the industry that absorbed his fading senses was sure to arouse the intelligence of the old curio dealer. He nodded briskly, and went on with his work more zealously than before.

"Got to finish a contract on time?" the Headquarters man pursued.

Another vicious little nod, follow-

ing, and he hastened to put their promise into execution.

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His Pliant Hands Had Been Plunged Many Times Into a Dough-Like Lump.

ed by a swift search of the detective's face on the part of the old man's suaken eyes.

"Rather interesting work you're doing," pursued the detective.

Thereupon Mr. Martin rejoined:

"It is the only work that can interest me. I have given my life to it."

"Find it profitable?" inquired the sleuth.

"For an instant those gray fingers played in their manipulation of the clay pellets."

"Well, it depends on what you call profitable, young man," answered the ward of the State. "There are things more important than monetary gain."

"Oh, yes, I know, I know," said the detective hastily. "I suppose your work is purely scientific?"

"It is more than science," answered Martin. "It is art, philosophy, philanthropy—everything. It is the crystallization of the beautiful. Love is beauty, and beauty is life. All mankind needs is beauty in greater measure and higher degree to attain perfection of happiness."

"And you are engaged in forwarding that theory?"

"Yes," said the old man simply. "I have taken upon myself the task of glorifying every home in the world with the prisoned sunshine of the centuries. Every abode of man, however humble, should be illuminated by the light of diamonds. The diamond is the most exquisite expression of creative love we have. The only trouble is that we have not enough of them. It has remained for me—it has remained for the poor old student of mysteries to find the key to the true jewel wealth of the universe. For thousands of years men have been seeking diamonds in the ground. I take them from the air."

In similar vein he ran on, his words betraying the strange groping of a clouded mind that in its time had been nearer the truth than most men's. There was something extraordinary about the little old fellow's brain. It had not cracked; rather, it had been attenuated by overstrain. It was after

a process of patient questioning covering so long a time that it ended in the twilight, that Britz led the tireless worker back to days before his arrival in the asylum. The protracted inquiry taxed all the detective's skill in word-handling.

Fitch, scientist though he was, long conversant with the phenomena of the mind as he had been, marveled at the Headquarters man's adroitness. Long before Britz had finished his task, the doctor, in sheer weariness dropped into a chair and stayed there in silent attention. But the detective remained on his feet, immutable as the incarnation of will itself, and slowly, cautiously, persistently piloted that darkened intelligence out of its depths back to at least a glancing of coherent memory. So guided, so aided and lifted along the difficult backward path, Martin's mind reverted to instances that hung like stalactites from the cavern ceiling of retrospection. It was in a flash of intelligence, briefly eliminated as a (winkle of daylight seen from the recesses of a cave, that the old man recalled the great triumph of his strange craft.

"I have made diamonds, yes," he said in response to a query from the detective, swift and searching as a rapier thrust, "beautiful enough to hang about the neck of a princess; brilliant enough to glorify the but of a toiler in the fields; but there was one—ah!" His recollection reveled in widening circles until its force was spent. For a long time, his hands motionless again, he sat gazing into the past. Britz, feeling that he was on the edge of an important disclosure, waited patiently. Fitch scarcely breathed.

"I mind me," the one-time curio dealer resumed, "of the one great diamond that came as the grand reward of all my labor. Ah, that was a diamond! But though it was a wonderful achievement, I dishonored myself in the making of it for— and a faint flush deepened on his parchment face, "I fashioned it for gain!"

Without an instant's warning he

pushed away the bench, dropped his face into his hands and gave way to grief that moved equally the man long hardened to dissection of the body and the veteran crime hunter accustomed to vivisection of the soul. Few things are more terrible than to see an old man weep. It is dual surrender, for tears are the prerogative of youth and womanhood. Britz and Fitch with difficulty controlled their own emotions just for a moment, for tears streamed over the ashen countenance of the broken amateur alchemist, and his wasted form writhed and rocked in convulsive sobs.

"I have had my punishment," said Martin when at last the tempest had spent itself; "out, oh, the long years—the long years of remorse! Urged by poverty, that enemy of seekers after truth and beauty, I succumbed to the temptation the stranger held out to me. I made the great diamond as he desired—and I gave it to him for his gold!"

The doctor glanced swiftly at the detective and started to speak. Britz raised a warning hand, and Fitch checked his exclamation. Seating himself for the first time the Central Office man—the prober of mysteries—laid his hand encouragingly on the diamond-maker's shoulder, and said:

"There now; don't let it distress you so much. Other men have done things far worse than that!"

"Nothing could be worse," screamed Martin, springing from the low stool on which he sat and facing his visitors in an agony of abasement. "I sold the delight of my eyes, the light of my life, the star of my soul—the queen of all jewels, the purest, truest, most beautiful diamond the world has ever known!"

"Yes," said the detective, "but don't forget it was yours to sell. You had a right to do as you pleased with it."

"I had no such right," cried the alchemist. "That diamond was the product of my laboring hours. I brought it forth from the air, the sunshine, the silver water, the milk of the moon, as an Aphrodite is fashioned of dew and mist. It was not a mere stone; it had thought and sense and soul; it was a microcosm of the marvelous!"

Fitch could not hide his astonishment at the learning and poetry the fearfully agitated old man displayed. Britz himself, had not his thoughts been focused rigorously on his purpose, would have stopped to wonder at them. As it was he struck the iron of the alchemist's remorse at white heat.

"What did the stranger want with it?" demanded the detective.

"I don't know," said Martin. His voice still trembled, his features worked, his hands fluttered and knotted themselves in the intensity of his emotion. "He came to me a stranger; he went away the same, and with him went my queen of jewels, my beautiful, beautiful diamond of diamonds! But I will find him," he shrieked.

"For centuries I have been upon his path. He thought all things ended between us when he lured me into parting with my treasure. He said because he had suggested the outline and color of the stone he had a right to make me give it to him for his money; but it was I—who thrust into the center of the glorious gem the fire from heaven. I penned the sunbursts in the priceless prism, and it is mine. It is mine by right of creation!"

This outburst excited the old man, but in a little while there was another outburst of his emotions. He fairly shouted:

"I will have him, though I will come up with him yet, and when I do, I will give him back his money and make him return the diamond to me. He thought he left nothing to tell me who he is. He thought I never would be able to find him in this big town. He felt sure the old curiosity dealer would not venture far enough away from his shop to track such a fine gentleman. But he forgot one thing. I have kept it all these years, and through it I will find him yet!"

Abstractedly he thrust his hand into an inner pocket and fished out a bit of cardboard. Excitedly he waved it in front of the detective's eyes. Britz resisted for a moment the impulse to snatch it from his grasp, but he gripped himself sharply. Awaiting developments was one of the detective's strong points. As he expected, the old alchemist was in a state of mind to share his knowledge with anybody. After a few more flourishes, Martin laid in Britz's hand a man's visiting card, face down.

Studiously avoiding an appearance of haste, Britz turned it up and read the single line engraved upon it. Without the tremor of a muscle, and with only one swift significant look, he passed the card to Fitch.

The doctor, a little less self-restrained than the detective, looked steadily at a drawing on the back, gazed earnestly at the inscription on the face, then wonderingly, before the card fluttered from his fingers, he read the line aloud.

MR. BRUXTON SANDS.

"But I have Got to Have the Necessary Time."

meeting in the street. The minister smiling, asked the sutor the cause of his prolonged absence.

"Mon Dieu, monsieur le Ministre," was the reply, "I had your photograph and spoke to it, and that was enough for me." "And what did my photograph do for you? What favor?" inquired the minister. "Oh, nothing, absolutely nothing," was the quick reply, "exactly as the original, so I knew the resemblance was perfect."

The next day this youth of enterprise received his appointment, and

he is said to be named for an under prefecture.

That Did It.

"The hardest audience in the world to play to is an audience of typical first-nighters," said the theatrical manager. "The first-nighters are mostly deadbeats, and those who pay their way are of the blasé type, hard to enthrall. I have in mind one man in particular who never misses a first night, and who, to hear him talk, gets about as much enjoyment out of

it as he would out of an attack of mumps. I put on a comedy last season that was one of the big money makers of the year. The first-night audience regarded it as mourners attending the obsequies of a dear departed. I met this particular one I speak of in the lobby after the performance.

"Well, what did you think of it?" I said. "Pretty funny, eh?"

"One of the funniest things I ever saw," he admitted. "In fact, it was so funny I had to read the jokes on the

program to keep from laughing."

To Remove Mildew.

If kid gloves have become spotted with mildew they should be placed in a bottle with a lump of ammoniac about the size of a walnut; cork the bottle tightly and leave them for a short time, when the mildew spots will quite disappear. If left too long, however, the ammoniac will rot the stitches; so they must be watched. An air-tight box will do equally as a bottle.



## CHAPTER XVI.

### The Assistant District Attorney.

While Britz was struggling with the tangled threads of contradictory circumstances that constituted the fabric of the diamond mystery, the district attorney's office was not inactive. With the slow stealthiness of a cat approaching its prey it combined the disconnected fragments of evidence gathered by the police into the semblance of a perfect case, and prepared to present it to a jury. The grand jury had indicted Elinor Holcomb, and again she was dragged into the glare of a courtroom, this time to plead the indictment. There remained only the verdict of a petit jury to open the gates of state's prison for her. Her lawyer was served with the fateful notice of trial, and she was made to realize the great struggle was about to begin.

Assistant District Attorney Mott was taking a last survey of the depositions in the case, mentally picturing the curtain of gilt he would weave before the jury. To his mind the evidence was conclusive. It pointed irresistibly to Miss Holcomb as the thief.

And yet, the prosecutor felt there was something strangely lacking in the structure; something that made it appear hollow and unreal. No other reasonable explanation of the disappearance of Mrs. Misstoner's necklace offered itself, and still it was hard to conceive Miss Holcomb as the thief. Mott knew that the same uncertainty in the minds of the jurors would inevitably result in a verdict of acquittal. The benefit of any reasonable doubt as to her guilt must go to her, and he realized he had yet to eliminate that last slim possibility of a verdict favorable to the prisoner. Were it an ordinary larceny case he would be content to offer the testimony at hand and leave the verdict to the conscience of the jurors. But this trial would fill thousands of newspaper columns. The press of the entire country was on the alert for it. It meant much to a struggling assistant to obtain a conviction in so famous a case. To lose, he feared, would reflect on his own competence.

The entrance of Britz brought the prosecutor out of his absorption.

"Just the man I wanted to see," he greeted.

"And I'm equally glad to find you in," the detective returned.

"I've got the evidence down pat," Mott responded. "It seems complete; and yet, somehow, I feel that it is not entirely convincing. I want to get something to clinch it. It's a pretty tough proposition at best to get a conviction on circumstantial evidence when the defendant is a woman of good appearance, and I don't want to slip up on this case. We haven't got much time left. The case is on the calendar for next Monday."

"That's what I came to see you about," informed Britz. "I want to get you to adjourn the trial a month."

"New facts?" anxiously inquired the prosecutor.

"Yes."

"Who do you think did the trick?" suddenly questioned Mott.

"Sands, Griswold or the Indian servant," came from the detective's hesitant lips.

The prosecutor's hands went above his head in a despairing gesture.

"Is that as far as you've arrived? Three suspects, and you've no idea which one you want? What sort of weak stuff is in your possession that you don't know whom you're after?"

"The circle is narrowing very quickly," Britz observed. "In the next few days I'll know who committed the robbery, how it was committed, and where the jewels were taken. But I have got to have the necessary time."

"All right," agreed the prosecutor. He called a clerk and directed him to inform Miss Holcomb's lawyer that the case had been withdrawn from the calendar for a month.

The detective was reaching for his hat when Donnelly and Carson burst into the room. Donnelly's face was flushed with the news of a great discovery. Carson was smiling approvingly on his partner.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Bitterly Disappointed.

Here's a story in the week's annals of Maine merchants, this time from Portland. A Portland tradesman was visited by a friend from the country and among attempts to entertain the visitor to the theater. When the lights were low the merchant quietly drew forth a pair of opera glasses and handed them to his guest. A contented "Ah" slipped from the man from the country and then his arm in the air were faintly discernible. "What's the trouble?" asked the host. The answer came in a distressingly plain whisper of disappointment: "Oh nothing, only the thing's empty."

Good Idea.

Jack Hardup (with unwonted enthusiasm)—"By Jove! I see that some fellow is talking about introducing a bill into the house making it a misdemeanor to send annoying letters to anybody. Very clever idea, that. I've have my tailor locked up for six months, by Jove!"

## MRS. SCOTT WELL AGAIN

Good News from Martin Tells of Timely Recovery. Details Regarding the Case.

Martin, Tenn.—Mrs. Bonnie Scott, of this city, says: "For years, I was troubled, more or less, with womanly troubles. Sometimes I would have shortness of breath, and smothering spells. I tried several doctors, but they only gave me temporary relief.

At last I tried Cardui, the woman's tonic, and found it to be the medicine relieving my case. I was quickly bettered by it, and now, for the first time in years, I am very well, and enjoy good health.

I praise Cardui for these good results. I recommend the medicine to my friends, because I know it is good, safe and reliable. It helped me wonderfully, and I can truthfully say that Cardui is the best medicine I have ever taken."

Be sure that Cardui, the woman's tonic, will bring you help, if you will use it regularly, and for a reasonable length of time.

You know you can depend on Cardui, because you have read of so many who are enthusiastic in its praise. Cardui has stood the test of time, the supreme test of merit.

Cardui is successful. It has been found to relieve womanly pain and build up womanly strength. Try Cardui. It will help you.

N. B.—Write to Ladies' Advisory Dept., Chattanooga Medicine Co., Chattanooga, Tenn., for Special Instructions, and 64-page book, "Home Treatment for Women," sent in plain wrapper, on request.

No man ever abuses an enemy as much as he does his stomach.

Smile on wash day. That's when you use Red Cross Ball Blue. Clothes whiter than snow. All prices.

It's easier to secure a patent than it is to convert it into cash.

ONLY ONE "BROMO QUININE." That is LAFAYETTE BROMO QUININE. Look for the signature of E. W. GROVE. Used the World over to Cure a Cold in One Day. No.

Many a self-made man merely offers an explanation that doesn't explain.

Constipation causes and seriously aggravates many diseases. It is thoroughly cured by Dr. Pierce's Peppermint Tonic sugar-coated granules.

An Every-Day Creed.

I desire to radiate health; cheerfulness, sincerity, calm courage and good will. I wish to live without hate, whim, jealousy, envy or fear. I wish to be simple, honest, natural, frank, clean in mind and clean in body, unaffected, ready to say "I do not know" if so it be, to meet all men on an absolute equality, to face any obstacle and meet every difficulty unafraid and unabashed. I wish others to live their lives, too, up to their highest, fullest and best. To that end I pray that I may never meddle, dictate, interfere, give advice that is not wanted, nor assist when my services are not needed. If I can help people I'll do it by giving them a chance to help themselves; and if I can uplift or inspire let it be by example. That is to say, I desire to be radiant—to radiate life.—Elbert Hubbard.

See Value of Open-Air Schools.

During the year 1911 the greatest percentage of increase among the different forms of anti-tuberculosis work was among the open-air schools for atretic and tuberculous children. On January 1, 1911, there were only 29 open-air schools in operation or provided for in the entire country. On January 1, 1912, there were 91, an increase of 214 per cent. Sixty-two new schools have been established or provided for the past year. This entire number of open-air schools have been established since January 1, 1907.

Entire Country Interested.

On January 1, 1915, there were about 150 different agencies engaged in anti-tuberculosis work, of which number 111 were sanatoria. The increase to over 2,000 agencies has emphasized the National Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis points out, the importance of the campaign for the prevention of consumption being carried on in all parts of the country.

**Post Toasties**

A Treat So Sweet; Add Cream Then Eat.

**Post Toasties**

"The Memory Lingers"

Postum Cereal Company, Limited, Battle Creek, Mich.