

BRITZ OF HEADQUARTERS

By MARCIN BARBER
ILLUSTRATIONS BY RAY WALTERS

SYNOPSIS.

The story opens with a scream from Dorothy March 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 Brunton Sands, society men in love with Mrs. Missioner, rather up the drama. Griswold steps on what is supposed to be the celebrated Maharajah and crushes it. Griswold declares it was not the genuine. An expert later pronounces all the stones substitutes for the original. Detectives Donnelly and Carson investigate. They decide that the theft of the original gems was accomplished by some one in the house. Miss Elinor Holcomb, confidential companion of Mrs. Missioner, is found in her room. Mrs. Missioner protests that Elinor is innocent, but she is taken to prison. Meantime, in an up-town mansion, two Hindoo, who are in America to recover the Maharajah, discuss the arrest. Detective Britz takes up the case. He evidently believes Elinor is innocent and asks the co-operation of Dr. Lawrence Pritch, her fiancé, in running down the real criminal. Britz investigates affairs at the Missioner home. He learns that Mrs. Missioner's diamonds in Paris with her. Paris police inform him that duplicates of the stones were made there by the thief Elinor Holcomb. Britz interviews Miss March and learns who of her friends can draw.

CHAPTER X.—(Continued.)

She stopped in the act of throwing off her fur and stood gazing at the middle of the room. There, absorbed in his task, at ease in a big chair before the crackling grate, sat Detective Lieutenant Britz. Pad in one hand, pencil in the other, he was sketching busily.

Mrs. Missioner extended a hand behind her to silence her companions. She turned her head with a smile almost as mischievous as Dorothy could flash.

"Hush!" she whispered. She and the others watched Britz quietly as his pencil moved slowly, awkwardly over the paper. From his frequent glances at the end of the room that held the big safe, it was evident he was making a drawing of it. The laborious dragging of his pencil point proved he was not accustomed to such work—at least, so it seemed to one of the three who watched him. But the sleuth stuck to the task doggedly, and at last he bore so heavily on a pencil point that the point of his pencil broke.

He laid down the pad, took out a pocket knife, and began to sharpen the pencil. When the point was fashioned to his liking, he looked up. Then and then only did he seem to see the widow and her friends. He arose instantly and bowed to Mrs. Missioner, following that with a short nod to the men behind her.

"I told your man to let me come in, madam, because I had no time to spare," said the sleuth.

Mrs. Missioner bowed her head in assent.

"You wish to see me?" she inquired. "There is something more you wish to know?"

She was not in the mood for discussion of the detective's quest this evening. The afternoon tea in Sherry's, the short ride home, including the turn in the park, with her two most persistent admirers, this cozy home-coming in the dusk of a winter day, however unreasonable the weather, had made her meditative. Even as she spoke to the detective and sank dreamily into a conversation chair beside the fire, her eyes strayed from Sands to Griswold, from Griswold to Sands, with the vague look of

a woman trying to decide a momentous question. Griswold, ever ready to seize the smallest advantage, promptly occupied the other end of the chair. Facing the beautiful widow, he ignored both Britz and Sands, and he threw into the glances he showered upon the woman all the caress at his command.

Britz eyed Sands sharply before replying. He gripped his chin with thumb and finger, and seemed studying the big millionaire. As a matter of fact, he was watching Griswold. His gaze, even as it appeared focused most strongly on Sands, in reality was concentrated on the clubman, who shared the serpentine chair with the wealthy widow.

"I want a plan of the room," said Britz at length. "A sketch of the safe, too. One of my men was to have made draughts for me, but I had to send him out of town at short notice on another end of the case. So," and he smiled slowly at his poor workmanship, "I'm doing the best I can."

"May I see what you have drawn?" asked Mrs. Missioner pleasantly. "Oh, Mr. Britz," she laughed, holding the paper at arm's length. "I'm afraid you'll never make an artist. I hope," she added hastily, "you have no professional pride on that point?"

"None whatever," returned the detective. He liked a woman with a sense of humor, and there was something about Mrs. Missioner that appealed to him anyway. "I told you I was merely a substitute."

Sands, towering above the widow on the hearth-rug, shot a single, indifferent look at the drawing. Griswold's glance brushed it carelessly, but the widow's interest in it was echoed by him in so far that he took the diagram from her and examined it for a few seconds. Then, with a short, harsh laugh, he half turned to Britz, alternately bending and straightening the paper in his fingers.

"Ever hear of such a thing as perspective, detective?" he asked condescendingly. Britz overlooked the air of superiority. He shook his head thoughtfully. There was inquiry in his eyes as he waited for Griswold's next words. "You'd starve to death in a studio," the clubman continued scornfully.

A crisp little laugh from Britz was the only reply. He crossed the floor and made a microscopic examination of the safe. Then he circled the room, tapping the walls again, moving pieces of furniture to look behind them, turning corners of the rug, and gazing reflectively at the ceiling. All the Indian servant, appeared noiselessly at the door, started slightly at the sight of the detective, and vanished as silently. Britz pretended not to see the Hindoo, but, in his movements about the room, he paused at the threshold, and glanced quickly down the passage. There was no one in sight.

All that time, Curtis Griswold, having ripped off the sheet on which Britz had drawn the rude diagram, was sketching idly as he talked in an undertone to the widow. His words held her attention. She took no note of the detective's wandering, the heavy silence of Sands, the soundless appearance and disappearance of the Hindoo. Ripples of laughter revealed that she, at least, was amused by what Griswold was saying. It was

"No," said the rich woman with more emphasis than would be expected of her large good nature. "I can recall nothing. I am sure there is nothing to recall. You must look elsewhere if you seek to forge links in a chain of evidence against Miss Holcomb. I have told you all I know—all I could possibly know."

"That being the case," said Britz briskly, "there is nothing more to say. With your permission, I will send a draughtsman to make plans of the room and diagrams of the safe." He hesitated. "I suppose these little art gems of mine," he resumed with a dry smile, "may as well meet the fate they deserve." With a quick movement, he threw all the sheets of paper on the table and the pad as well into the heart of the fire.

"Guess I'll say 'Good-afternoon,'" and with a bow to Mrs. Missioner and the coolest of nods to the men, he left the room, the widow's detached "Good-afternoon, Mr. Britz," floating after him.

Was he mistaken, Britz asked himself as he walked quickly along the passage, or did he see a pair of eyes beneath a towering turban peer at him from the corner of a cross corridor? He made a mental note to have the Hindoo servant watched more closely, as, treating Blodgett's loftiness with exasperating indifference, he tripped down the steps of the Missioner mansion, and hurried along a path in the park. Once in the shelter of the shadows, the detective quickened his pace, heading south.

He stopped under the low-hanging bough of a great oak tree to get a better light. As he was about to strike a match, his use of that particular cigar suddenly ceased, for, gripping, clinging, strangling, something soft and silky was drawn tightly about his neck, his elbows were jammed against his sides, his knees

when Britz, having finished his detailed examination of the room, stopped close beside him that they looked up.

"I see you are an artist, Mr. Griswold," remarked the sleuth, his eyes on the paper under the clubman's pencil.

Griswold was genuinely surprised. For the first time he seemed to become aware of the shape his idle tracing on the pad had taken. In the course of his brief chat with Mrs. Missioner, he had sketched clearly, accurately, artistically, not only the room, but the great safe at the further end—sketched them far better in those few minutes than Britz could have done in as many hours. His drawing, almost automatic, showed the subconscious skill of—to say the least—an excellent amateur.

"Why, that's so," he said, holding up the drawing indifferently. His prowess with the pencil was an old story to the widow and his rival. Griswold tossed the pad and pencil on the table and resumed his talk with Mrs. Missioner, turning the coldest of cold shoulders toward the sleuth.

But Britz was not to be shouldered aside so easily. He addressed himself toward the widow, winning her instant attention with his first query:

"Has Miss Holcomb ever told you much about her last year in Smith?" he asked.

Mrs. Missioner's eyebrows arched. "Nothing important enough to remember, Mr. Britz," she said, staring incredulously. The detective had already assured her warmly of his belief in Elinor's innocence. Could it be he was not going to clear the girl after all?

"You know nothing of her engagement to a Harvard undergraduate, then?" he persisted.

The widow shook her head. "Before her father lost his fortune, I mean," said the sleuth.

"Neither before nor after, Mr. Britz," replied Mrs. Missioner, rising impatiently. "Miss Holcomb, being a beauty, naturally received a great deal of attention, but I never heard of a betrothal."

Lieutenant Britz, still standing before the hearth, moved to let Mrs. Missioner pass. The widow pushed aside the heavy hangings of a window and peered into the twilight backed by the trees in the park. Britz, having moved, took another step. Those gray eyes of his shifted so rapidly they were upon the three others almost simultaneously. So gradually, so slowly did he approach the table that no one noticed his hand upon it. Resting that hand upon the edge, he went on:

"I am sorry you are not more minutely informed concerning Miss Holcomb's university days. Slowly his fingers extended until the tips rested on the tiny pad. "In a case like this, the smallest knowledge may be of value." Slowly, ever so slowly, the fingers contracted, drawing the pad with them. "Perhaps if you make an effort, you can recall something about the—the prisoner's past, Mrs. Missioner?" The pad was in his hand. Deftly he tore off the top sheet and inclosed it in his fingers. As the widow started to speak, and entirely unobserved by Griswold or Sands, the detective slipped that agile hand into his pocket. When the hand came out, it was empty.

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were squeezed together so closely he could not take a step, and in another minute he found himself bound, gagged, helpless, with three men sitting on him, bowling rapidly in a cab along the park drive in a direction which, owing to the swirling excitement of the last sixty seconds, he could not ascertain. All he knew was that he was a captive; that he had been seized in a way unusual to city highwaymen, and that for the present a struggle for release would be simply a useless—perhaps worse than useless—expenditure of his strength.

CHAPTER XI.

A Wild Ride.

Once he realized the futility of resistance, Britz busied himself with efforts to get a line on his direction. He was in an ordinary brougham, drawn by a pair of high-stepping horses. He was lying on the floor, but on a pile of rugs. The silk scarf with which he had been fastened had been loosed from his neck, only to be drawn tightly about his mouth. A smaller strip of silk, rolled into a ball, had been thrust between his teeth, gagging him beyond his power to utter a cry. His wrists and ankles were bound with similar scarves. He was as helpless as if in the electric chair. His life, it might be, depended on his self-control and resourcefulness.

In the faint light that flashed from time to time through the windows of the brougham as it whirled past park lamps, Britz saw that all three of his captors were dark of feature and lithe of form. One moment he was convinced there was something foreign in the appearance of the men. The next, he was less certain they were not American. A hawklike sharpness of profile, however, inclined him more strongly to the former belief. He had seen recently, he thought, a face that in such a light would resemble those bending above him. As he was striving to recall it, and the circumstance surrounding it, a fourth scarf was passed about his eyes and knotted behind his head. The silken strip was light in texture, but folded so many times that he could not see the dimmest glimmer of light.

Britz focused his forces on the task of ascertaining his whereabouts and direction. One, two, three blocks the brougham sped westward. Britz knew he was headed for the Hudson. Had not his blindfold convinced him his life was not in peril, he might have thought his captors were hurrying him to the river to make an end of him. He continued counting the blocks until, whirling sharply to the right, the horses headed north, and a change in the sound of their hoofs betrayed that they had left the asphalt and were on the macadam again.

"The Drive!" Britz told himself with a slight glow of satisfaction. The distance traveled from the park, the change of direction, and the altered pounding of the lightsteppers' hoofs could mean but one thing; the vehicle was bowling along the beautiful Riverside concourse New Yorkers have come to appreciate only in recent years.

It was at that point Britz made his first mistake of the trip. The latch of the left door was jarred loose by an uneven crossing, and the detective felt the door give slightly against his shoulder. He sensed in an eye-flash the door had not swung open. Probably an end of the rug had caught under it sufficiently to hold it shut. But it undoubtedly was unfastened, and that evidently without the knowledge of his captors. Had any of the three noticed the unlatching of the door, he would have drawn it close immediately. There was momentary danger of that. There was not a moment to spare. Britz had little time for thought. With a powerful contortion of his wiry frame he threw off the men above him long enough to fling himself against the door.

Britz reckoned on the likelihood that his fall from the carriage would be seen by a patrolman—at any rate, that his attempt at escape would cause a commotion sure to result in police interference.

The detective omitted from his reckoning the astuteness and readiness of his captors. He thought the surprise hinging on his desperate attempt at escape would be of sufficient duration to let him roll to the road. He was shocked mentally as well as physically, therefore, when his fall was stopped with a jerk, and the back of his head struck with cruel force against the carriage step. Just for a second's flight, reinforced steel and rubber though he was, he lost consciousness. When his senses returned, he was in the same position—head dangling, shoulders resting against the rods of the step, back bent painfully over the steel-shod threshold of the carriage floor, legs inside, gripped in a hold not all his struggles could break. His ankles still were bound. So, for that matter, were his wrists, with his hands behind him.

Then began as strange a struggle as any in which Britz had engaged in all his exciting career. The men in the cab strove to pull him inside; he

battled against their efforts. Bound though his hands were, his fingers were twined tightly about the step rods. He had a grip on the rods as powerful as that with which one of his captors held his ankles. The crossing of his hands to bind his wrists had made his hold only the firmer. All the leverage of each sinewy wrist strengthened the other. The rods were so small they hurt his hands, but unless they broke his grip could not be loosened. Britz clutched them with an iron resolve not to be drawn into the brougham again. Safe though his life might have been at the outset he was not certain it would be secure after his daring defiance of the odds against him.

"This," said Britz to his inner consciousness, with a touch of the grim humor his colleagues often found disconcerting, "is hill-climbing under difficulties." For the coachman, in spite of—perhaps because of—the silent struggle going on furiously at the door of the cab, had whipped his horses to a gallop, and was speeding them up a slope. Over the edge of the scarf that had slipped from his eyes, Britz got a glimpse of the Soldiers' and Sailors' monument. He knew exactly where he was then. Next moment his eyes fastened themselves on the faces in the carriage, and he tried with all his might to make out the dark features of the three in the gloom of the cab; but their features still were shadowy. He would not have liked to pick them out of a line in a police station. It was a point of honor with the lieutenant always to be sure of his man before making an identification. In part, that accounted for the failure of almost every defendant in any of his cases to establish an alibi.

Lean hands stretched forth from the dark interior and caught him about the middle. Other hands seized his legs, while the pair clutching his ankle tightened their grasp, but he only twined his fingers the more firmly around their slight circumference.

By now the carriage was rolling and pitching like a seagull tug. Had he not been held so stoutly by the six lean hands above, and his own iron clutch below, the motion might have swung his head against the step again with force to crack it in a dozen places. The very fury of the battle made for his safety.

The horses struck a slope that took them out of the Drive. Britz guessed they could not go far without encountering a policeman. If they did not meet a mounted patrolman or a bicycle bluecoat in the avenue, it was almost certain they would strike an ordinary policeman in one of the by-roads. Britz chewed the gag savagely in the hope of freeing his voice.

Abrupt as its beginning was the end of the struggle. Britz, his eyes still boring into the inner curb, saw one of the long, lean hands slip forth again. This time the hand clutched something between thumb and forefinger. The arm extended until the hand was close to the detective's wrist. Suddenly the sleuth felt a frightful burning pain in the back of his hand. The agony was duplicated in the knuckles of the other. Strive though he did with all his grit and strength to retain his grip, his fingers opened against his will, the tendons contracted by the biting agony, and Britz knew a powerful acid had been sprinkled on his hands. He could not

close them again in the first moment of his torment, and before his muscles could recover from the shock, the swear of the rods. Then, by the united strength of the three inside, he was jerked upward, and dragged with a single tug into the carriage. The door was slammed, and the coachman brought his horses back to their high-stepping trot. Suddenly they slowed to a walk.

"What's wrong here?" asked a voice at the window.

"Hallo, Rafferty," said the driver with the easy familiarity of a night-hawk toward the rank and file of the force. "Just a bunch of drunks I'm taking to their little white coats, he added in an undertone.

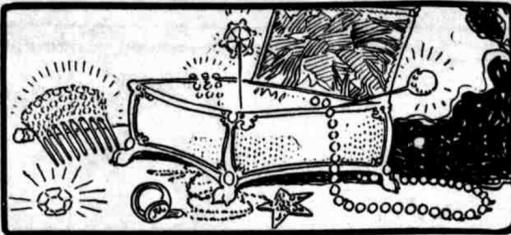
A patrolman pressed his face against the pane and looked inside. Already, the three dark, slender men who had kidnapped the detective were looting and nodding in a way suggestive of safe but satisfied intoxication. Britz, trussed more securely than ever, was under their feet, well out of the policeman's range.

"They're sure a fine lot of rummies!" exclaimed the bluecoat to his friend, the coachman. "The sooner they hit the hay the better. On your way!" And, the driver flicking his horses in a leisurely way, the brougham resumed its journey with Detective-Lieutenant Britz raging in enforced silence among the silk rugs on its floor.

It was just then that Britz made his second mistake. He breathed too deeply. True, he was blown sadly by the desperate struggle as he hung head-down from the vehicle and his lungs had almost stopped working when he was jerked so violently back into the carriage. The air near the floor was cool and refreshing. No ordinary man would have hesitated to renew his strength by drawing it as far down into his lungs as the cramped position would permit; but Britz himself, in cooler moments, would have observed sagely that air itself was not always an unmitigated blessing. He would have told inquiring minds that, under suspicious circumstances, it should be taken with caution and, if possible, should be well shaken before taken. In this instance, the air Britz breathed was mixed with a subtle something that gradually stole his senses and left him, though healthily alive, an inert heap under the feet of his captors.

So potent, so gentle was the action of that strange something that the stoppage of the carriage, the lifting from its floor of the inanimate detective, the carrying of his limp form up darkened stairs in dead silence to a room at the remote end of a suite at the top of the building, and that which happened to the headquarters man as, sodden with the subtle soporific, he remained at the mercy of the strangers three, were things Britz for many a long day could only guess. So groping was his conjecture through those weary days of uncertainty that whenever he recalled the experience, it was with a certain gliding movement of the jaws that boded ill for the three dark, slim men if ever he should be able to unfold them in the meshes of the law as they had wrapped him in their scarves.

No, Britz was not vindictive, but he was—human.
(TO BE CONTINUED.)



Acoustics Bad.
First Actor—How are the acoustic properties of the new playhouse?
Second Actor—Fierce. Your voice carries finely out to the audience, but you can hardly hear the applause!—Woman's Home Companion.

What He Stole.

Judge—You saw the prisoner steal the sheet of music. What happened next?
Witness—Then he walked out of the store with an abstracted air, Your Honor.—Boston Transcript.

Beat Him to It.

"What's the matter, little boy?"
"M-maw's gone an' drowned all the kittens."
"Dear! dear! Now, that's too bad."
"Yep, she p-promised—boo hoo!—'at I c'd do it."—The Pathfinder.

Way They Picture 'Em.

First Illustrator.—"Great Scott, man! you're painting that apple an awful size!"
Second Ditto—"I know it. It's to be used in a nursery stock catalogue."—Judge.

He Got a Reward.

"When the teacher heard me swear, she asked me where I learned it."
"What did you tell her?"
"Oh! I didn't give you away; I blamed it on the parrot."

A Tragic Proposition.

"I see you play Hamlet," remarked the novice.
"I do," admitted Yorick Hamm.
"It's a tragedy, isn't it?"
"Nearly always."

A Wise Fortune Teller.

While crossing the East Boston ferry the other evening a little fellow approached me saying: "Tell your fortune for a nickel, mister."
After a few words with the young fellow I consented. He took my hand and said: "At first I thought you were going to become a rich man, but it's all off now."
I asked him the reason.
"Well, you see, boss, anybody who parts with his money on a scheme like I played you for will never be one of them financiers."

I gave him another nickel for his philosophy.—Boston Traveler.

Short on Currency.

"Did she marry the man who rescued her?"
"Yes, and now she's discovered that her life was the only thing he ever saved."

Located.

Willis—What became of the fellow who constructed the watch with 10,000 separate pieces?
Gillis—I think I've got one of his automobiles now.—Puck.

Bad for Pa.

"Say, ma, does God see everything we do?"
"Yes, my child."
"Even the little things around the house, ma—in the hall and dining room and all around?"
"Yes, my child, everywhere."

After a moment's sympathetic contemplation in profound silence:
"Gee, I wouldn't like to be pa."—Lippincott's.

A Business Suggestion.

Bobby had worn his mother's patience to the limit.
"You are a perfect little heathen!" she remarked, giving way at last.
"Do you mean it?" demanded Bobby.

"I do indeed," said his mother.
"Then say, Ma," said Bobby, "why can't I keep that ten cents a week you gimme for the Sunday school collection? I guess I'm as hard up as any of the rest of 'em."—Harper's Week-ly.

Something to Show.

"Do you mean to tell me," demanded Mr. Sillicus angrily, "that you actually ordered \$10 worth of groceries of a total stranger, at prices less than any wholesale dealer can buy them, and paid for them in advance?"

"Yes, that's what I said," replied his better half.
"And you hadn't sense enough to see that it was a barefaced swindle!" roared Sillicus. "Well, your money's gone now, and you have nothing to show for it."

"Why, yes I have, John," said his wife. "I have this man's receipt for the money."—Lippincott's.

Preocious Willie.

"Pa!" came little Willie's voice from the darkness of the nursery.
Pa gave a bad imitation of a snore. He was tired and did not wish to be disturbed.

"Pa!" came the little voice again.
"What is it, Willie?" replied his father, sleepily.
"Turn in here. I want to eat you sumpin'," said the little voice.

So Pa rose up from his down couch and putting on his bathrobe and slippers, marched into the nursery.
"Well, what is it now?" he asked.
"Say, pa," said little Willie, "if you was to feed the cow on soap would she give shaving cream?"—Harper's Week-ly.

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WHERE ARE THE TIPPETS?

Once All Boys Wore Them, Now They Are Seldom Seen, Says Oldsby.

"Why," said Mr. Oldsby, "why, I'd like to know, don't boys wear tippets any more? When I was a boy every boy wore a knitted wollen tippet. Some of these were white, some of them were red, some of them were of mixed colors. Some were finished

with fringe of the same material on the ends, more of them had on each end a tassel made of the wool; the fringe used to get ragged with wear and rough handling or one or both of the tassels on a tasselled tippet was sure soon to get torn off.

"Many of these tippets that the boys wore were knitted at home by their mothers; many of them were bought in store; every dry goods store

kept tippets, you could always see a line of them hanging up in the store; and in those days every boy wore one. They would take a turn or two of their tippet around their neck and then make one loose tie in it, not a knot, and let the ends hang down from front or back. See a lot of boys in winter going to or from school or by sliding down hill or skating and you'd see around the necks of these boys as many tippets; many of them were bought in store; every dry goods store

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them? Boys are not any harder now than they used to be, are they? Or did they come to think that tippets looked girlish, simplified?"

Food Phones Stomach.

Sir Crichton Browne described recently how a delicate morsel perfectly served, of delicious flavor, and good aroma, will send the stomach message to say that it is coming.

Such a morsel, he said, not only sets the mouth watering by stimulating the

sally glands, but it also induces a flow of the gastric juices by acting on the glands of the stomach. These glands it brings into play before any portion is swallowed. It is, in fact, telephoning down to the stomach to say that something good is coming, and the stomach immediately prepares itself for its reception.

A nasty or insipid dish has no such effect. If it is nasty the stomach rejects it; if insipid, it receives it with comparative indifference. It is of the utmost importance, he held, that good

flavor and good aroma should prevail, for nice food is more easily assimilated than that which is flavorless, and good cooking not merely tickles the palate, but it also contributes to the great work of nutrition.

A Keener Pleasure.

Griggs—Whenever you quarrel my wife declares she'll never speak to me again.
Briggs—Mine doesn't. She couldn't forego the satisfaction of telling me what she thought of me.

The Coachman Brings His Horses Back to Their High-Stepping Trot.