

Bull-Dog Drummond

The Adventures of a Demobilized Officer Who Found Peace Dull

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"SAPPER"

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(Continued from last week.)

SYNOPSIS.

PROLOGUE.—In December, 1918, four men gathered in a hotel in Bern and heard one of the quartet outline a plan to paralyze Great Britain and at the same time seize world power. The other three, Hocking, American, and Steinman agree to the scheme, while Steinman and Von Gratz, Germans, all millionaires, agree to the scheme, providing another man, Hiram Potts, an American, is taken in. The instigator of the plot gives his name as Comte de Guy, but when he leaves for England with his daughter he decides to use the name Carl Peterson.

CHAPTER I.—Capt. Hugh (Bull-Dog) Drummond, a retired officer, exercises for work that will give him excitement signing "X10." As a result he meets Phyllis Benton, a young woman who answered his ad. She tells him of strange murders and robberies of which she suspects a band headed by Carl Peterson and Henry Lakington of being the leaders.

CHAPTER II.—Drummond decides to go to The Larches, Miss Benton's home. An attempt is made on the road to wreck his machine when another, occupied by Peterson, Lakington and a strange man, blocks the road. While dining with Phyllis Benton and her father Drummond hears a terrible shriek at The Elms. During the night Drummond leaves The Larches and explores The Elms. He discovers Lakington and Peterson using a thumb-screw on an American who signs a paper. Drummond rescues the American after a struggle and takes him to his home. The man is Hiram C. Potts.

CHAPTER III.—Peterson visits Drummond the next day, departing with a threat to return later and recover Potts and also a torn paper which Drummond seized the night of the fight. With the aid of Peter Darrel, an old army friend, Drummond arranges to hide Potts, and substitute in his place one Mullings, a demobilized soldier, who is seized by Peterson and his gang and taken to The Elms, along with Drummond.

CHAPTER IV.—When Peterson discovers the hoax Drummond is escorted by Irma to a room where he is to stay for the night. During the night Drummond is exploring the house when he gets in a strange room in which is a cobra. He escapes, but on the stairs has a fight in the dark.

Together the two men strolled into the luncheon-room, and long after the cheese had been finished, Algy Longworth was still listening in silence to his companion.

"My dear old bean," he murmured ecstatically as Hugh finished, "my very dear old bean. I think it's the most priceless thing I ever heard. Enroll



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me as a member of the band. And, incidentally, Toby Sinclair is running round in circles asking for trouble. Let's rope him in."

"Go and find him this afternoon, Algy," said Hugh rising. "And tell him to keep his mouth shut. I'd come with you, but it occurs to me that the wretched Potts, bathed in tears at the Carlton, is in need of sympathy. So long, old dear. You'll hear from me in a day or two."

Drummond sauntered along Pall Mall. He had told Longworth more or less on the spur of the moment, knowing that gentleman's capabilities to a nicety. Under a cloak of assumed flippancy he concealed an iron nerve which had never yet failed him; and, in spite of the fact that he wore an entirely unnecessary eyeglass, he could see further into a brick wall than most of the people who called him a fool.

It was his suggestion of telling Toby Sinclair that caused the smile. For it had started a train of thought in Drummond's mind which seemed to him to be good. If Sinclair—why not two or three more equally trusty sportsmen? Why not a gang of the boys?

Toby possessed a V. C., and a good one—for there are grades of the V. C., and those grades are appreciated to a nicety by the recipient's brother officers if not by the general public. The show would fit Toby like a glove.

Then there was Ted Jerningham, who combined the roles of an amateur actor of more than average merit with an ability to hit anything at any range with every conceivable type of firearm. And Jerry Seymour in the Flying corps. . . . Not a bad thing to have a flying man—up one's sleeve. . . . And possibly some one versed in the ways of tanks might come in handy. . . .

The smile broadened to a grin; surely life was very good. And then the grin faded, and something suspiciously like a frown took its place. For he had arrived at the Carlton, and reality had come back to him.

"Mr. Potts will see no one, sir," remarked the man to whom he addressed his question. "You are about the twentieth gentleman who has been here already today."

Hugh had expected this, and smiled genially.

"Precisely, my stout fellow," he remarked, "but I'll lay a small amount of money that they were newspaper men. Now, I'm not. And I think that if you will have this note delivered to Mr. Potts, he will see me."

He sat down at a table, and drew a sheet of paper toward him. Two facts were certain: First, that the man upstairs was not the real Potts; second, that he was one of Peterson's gang. The difficulty was to know exactly how to word the note. There might be some mystic pass-word, the omission of which would prove him an impostor at once. At length he took a pen and wrote rapidly; he would have to chance it.

"Urgent. A message from headquarters."

He sealed the envelope and handed it with the necessary five shillings for postage to the man. Then he sat down to wait. After what seemed an interminable delay he saw the messenger crossing the lounge.

"Mr. Potts will see you, sir," Hugh followed his guide along a corridor, and paused outside a door while he went into a room. He heard a murmur of voices, and then the man reappeared.

"This way, sir," he said, and Hugh stepped inside, to stop with an involuntary gasp of surprise. The man seated in the chair was Potts, to all intents and purposes. The likeness was extraordinary, and had he not known that the real article was at Goring he would have been completely deceived himself.

The man waited till the door was closed; then he rose and stepped forward suspiciously.

"I don't know you," he said. "Who are you?"

"Since when has every one employed at headquarters known one another?" Drummond returned guardedly. "And, incidentally, your likeness to our lamented friend is wonderful. It very nearly deceived even me."

The man, not ill-pleased, gave a short laugh.

"I'll pass, I think. But it's risky. These cursed reporters have been badgering the whole morning. And if his wife or somebody comes over, what then? It wasn't like Rosca to bungle in Belfast. He's never left a clue before, and he had plenty of time to do the job properly."

"A name inside a breast-pocket might easily be overlooked," remarked Hugh, seizing the obvious clue.

"Are you making excuses for him?" snarled the other. "He's failed, and failure is death. Such is our rule. Would you have it altered?"

"Most certainly not. The issues are far too great for any weakness. . . ."

"You're right, my friend—you're right. Long live the Brotherhood." He stared out of the window with smouldering eyes, and Hugh preserved a discreet silence. Then suddenly the other broke out again. "Have they killed that insolent puppy of a soldier yet?"

"Er—not yet," murmured Hugh mildly.

"They must find the American at once." The man thumped the table emphatically. "It was important before—at least his money was. Now with this blunder—it's vital."

"Precisely," said Hugh. "Precisely."

"I've already interviewed one man from Scotland Yard, but every hour increases the danger. However, you have a message for me. What is it?"

Hugh rose and casually picked up his hat. He had got more out of the interview than he had hoped for, and there was nothing to be gained by prolonging it. But it struck him that Mr. Potts' impersonator was a man of unpleasant disposition, and that tactically a flanking movement to the door was indicated. And, being of an open nature himself, it is possible that the real state of affairs showed for a moment on his face. Be that as it may, something suddenly aroused the other's suspicions, and with a snarl of fury he sprang past Hugh to the door.

"Who are you?" He spat the words out venomously, at the same time whipping an ugly-looking knife out of his pocket.

Hugh replaced his hat and stick on the table and grinned gently.

"I am the insolent puppy of a soldier, dear old bird," he remarked, watching the other warily. "And if I was you I'd put the toothpick away."

"You might hurt yourself."

As he spoke he was edging, little by little, toward the other man, who crouched snarling by the door. His eyes, grim and determined, never left the other's face; his hands, apparently

hanging listless by his sides, were tingling with the joy of what he knew was coming.

"And the penalty of failure is death, isn't it, dear one?" He spoke almost dreamily; but not for an instant did his attention relax. Almost imperceptibly, he crept toward the other man, talking gently.

"Such is your rule. And I think you have failed, haven't you, you unpleasant specimen of humanity? How will they kill you, I wonder?"

It was at that moment that the man made his mistake. He looked away; only for a moment—but he looked away. Just as a cat's nerves give after a while and it looks round for an avenue of escape, so did the crouching man take his eyes from Hugh. And quick as any dog, Hugh sprang.

With his left hand he seized the man's right wrist, with his right he seized his throat. Then he forced him upright against the door and held him there. Even when inch by inch he shifted his grip on the man's knife hand he never took his eyes from his



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opponent's face; even when with a sudden gasp of agony the man dropped his knife from fingers which of a sudden, had become numb, the steady, merciless glare still bored into his brain.

"You're not very clever at it, are you?" said Hugh softly. "It would be so easy to kill you now, and except for the inconvenience I should up and doubtfully suffer, it mightn't be a bad idea. But they know me downstairs and it would make it so awkward when I wanted to dine here again. So, taking everything into account, I think—"

There was a sudden lightning movement, a heave and a quick jerk. The impersonator of Potts was dimly conscious of flying through the air, and of hitting the floor some yards from the door. He made a frantic effort to rise, but the pain was too great and he rolled over cursing, while the soldier, his hand on the door-knob, laughed gently.

"I'll keep the toothpick," he remarked, "as a memento."

The next moment he was striding along the corridor toward the elevator. As a fight it had been a poor one, but his brain was busy with the information he had heard. True, it had been scrappy in the extreme, and in part, had only confirmed what he had suspected all along. The wretched Granger had been foully done to death, for no other reason than that he was the millionaire's secretary. Hugh's jaw tightened; it revolted his sense of sport. It wasn't as if the poor blighter had done anything; merely because he existed and might ask inconvenient questions he had been removed. And as the elevator shot downwards, and the remembrance of the grim struggle he had had in the darkness of The Elms the night before came back to his mind, he wondered once again if he had done wisely in not breaking Peterson's neck while he had the chance.

He was still debating the question in his mind as he crossed the tea-lounge.

"Why, Captain Drummond, you look pensive." A well-known voice from a table at his side made him look down, and he bowed a little grimly. Hiram Peterson was regarding him with a mocking smile.

He glanced at her companion, a young man whose face seemed vaguely familiar to him, and then his eyes rested once more on the girl. Even his masculine intelligence could appreciate the perfection—in a slightly foreign style—of her clothes; and, as to her beauty, he had never been under any delusions.

"The Carlton seems rather a favorite resort of yours," she continued, watching him through half-closed eyes.

"I think you're very wise to make the most of it while you can."

"While I can?" said Hugh. "That sounds rather depressing."

"I've done my best," continued the girl, "but matters have passed out of my hands, I'm afraid."

Again Hugh glanced at her companion, but he had risen and was talking to some one who had just come in.

"Is he one of the firm?" he remarked. "His face seems familiar."

"Oh, no!" said the girl. "He is just a friend." She leaned forward

suddenly. "Why don't you join us instead of so foolishly trying to fight us? Believe me, Monsieur Hugh, it is the only thing that can possibly save you. You know too much."

"Is the invitation to amalgamate official, or from your own charming brain?" murmured Hugh.

"Made on the spur of the moment," she said lightly. "But it may be regarded as official."

"I'm afraid it must be declined on the spur of the moment," he answered in the same tone. "And equally to be regarded as official. Well, an revolver. Please tell Mr. Peterson how sorry I am to have missed him."

"I will most certainly," answered the girl. "But then, mon ami, you will be seeing him again soon, without doubt. . . ."

She waved a charming hand in farewell, and turned to her companion. But Drummond, though he went into the hall outside, did not immediately leave the hotel. Instead, he button-holed an exquisite being arrayed in gorgeous apparel, and led him to a point of vantage.

"You see that girl," he remarked, "having tea with a man at the third table from the big palm? Now, can you tell me who the man is? I seem to know his face, but I can't put a name to it."

"That, sir," murmured the exquisite being, with the faintest perceptible scorn at such ignorance, "is the marquis of Laidley. His lordship is frequently here."

"Laidley!" cried Hugh, in sudden excitement. "Laidley! The duke of Lampshire's son! You priceless old stuffed tomato—the plot thickens."

Completely regardless of the scandalized horror on the exquisite being's face, he smote him heavily in the stomach and stepped into Pall Mall. For clear before his memory had come three lines on the scrap of paper he had torn from the table at The Elms that first night, when he had grabbed the dazed millionaire from under Peterson's nose.

earl necklace and the are at present chess of Lamp-

The duchess of Lampshire's pearls were world-famous; the marquis of Laidley was apparently enjoying his tea. And between the two there seemed to be a connection rather too obvious to be missed.

THREE.

"I'm glad you two fellows came down," said Hugh thoughtfully, as he entered the sitting-room of his bungalow at Goring. Dinner was over, and stretched in three chairs were Peter Darrell, Algy Longworth, and Toby Sinclair. "Did you know that a man came here this afternoon, Peter?"

"I did not. Who was it?"

"Mrs. Denny has just told me," Hugh reached out a hand for his pipe, and proceeded to stuff it with tobacco. "He came about the water. And he told her that I had told him to come. Unfortunately, I'd done nothing of the sort."

"What do you mean, Hugh?" asked Toby Sinclair.

"It's pretty obvious, old boy," said Hugh grimly. "I should say that about five hours ago Peterson found out that our one and only Hiram C. Potts was upstairs."

"Good Lord!" spluttered Darrell, by now very wide awake, "what do we do, sergeant-major?"

"We take it in turns—two at a time—to sit up with Potts." Hugh glanced at the other three. "D—n it—you blighters—wake up!"

"I don't know what it is," Darrell said, rubbing his eyes, "I feel most infernally sleepy."

"Well, listen to me—confound you, Toby!"

"Sorry, old man." With a start Sinclair sat up in his chair and blinked at Hugh.

"They're almost certain to try and get him tonight," went on Hugh. "Having given the show away by leaving a clue on the wretched secretary, they must get the real man as soon as possible. It's far too dangerous to leave the—leave the—"

He dropped forward on his chest; a short, half-strangled snore came from his lips. It had the effect of waking him for the moment, and he staggered to his feet.

The other three, sprawling in their chairs, were openly and unashamedly asleep; even the dogs lay in fantastic attitudes, breathing heavily, inert like logs.

"Wake up!" shouted Hugh wildly. "For God's sake—wake up! We've been drugged!"

An iron weight seemed to be pressing down on his eyelids; the desire for sleep grew stronger and stronger. For a few moments more he fought against it, hopelessly, despairingly; while his legs seemed not to belong to him, and there was a roaring noise in his ears. And then, just before unconsciousness overcame him, there came to his bemused brain the sound of a whistle thrice repeated from outside the window. With a last stupendous effort he fought his way to-

ward it, and for a moment he stared into the darkness. There were dim figures moving through the shrubs, and suddenly one seemed to detach itself. It came nearer, and the light fell on the man's face. His nose and mouth were covered with a sort of pad, but the cold, sneering eyes were unmistakable.

"Lakington!" gasped Hugh, and then the roaring noise increased in his head; his legs struck work altogether. He collapsed on the floor and lay sprawling, while Lakington, his face pressed against the glass outside, watched in silence.

"Draw the curtains," Lakington was speaking, his voice muffled behind the pad, and one of the men did as he said. There were four in all, each with a similar pad over his mouth and nose. "Where did you put the generator, Brownlow?"

"In the coal-scuttle." A man whom Mrs. Denny would have had no difficulty in recognizing, even with the mask on his face, carefully lifted a small black box out of the scuttle from behind some coal, and shook it gently, holding it to his ear. "It's finished," he remarked, and Lakington nodded.

"An ingenious invention is gas," he said, addressing another of the men. "We owe your nation quite a debt of gratitude for the idea."

A guttural grunt left no doubt as to what that nation was, and Lakington dropped the box into his pocket.

"Go get him," he ordered briefly, and the others left the room.

Contemptuously Lakington kicked one of the dogs; it rolled over and lay motionless in its new position. Then he went in turn to each of the three men sprawling in the chairs. With no attempt at gentleness he turned their faces up to the light, and

"I don't remember anything," said Toby Sinclair, "except falling asleep. Have they taken him?"

"Of course they have," said Hugh. "Just before I went off I saw 'em all in the garden, and that swine Lakington was with them. However, while you go and put your nuts in the river, I'll go up and make certain."

With a grim smile he watched the three men lurch down to the water; then he turned and went upstairs to the room which had been occupied by the American millionaire. It was empty, as he had known it would be, and with a smothered curse he made his way downstairs again.



In His Eyes Was a Look of Cold Fury, and He Kicked the Unconscious Man Savagely.

studied them deliberately; then he let their heads roll back again with a thud. Finally, he went to the window and stared down at Drummond. In his eyes was a look of cold fury, and he kicked the unconscious man savagely in the ribs.

"You young swine," he muttered. "Do you think I'll forget that blow on the jaw?"

He took another box out of his pocket and looked at it lovingly.

"Shall I?" With a short laugh he replaced it. "It's too good a death for you, Captain Drummond, D.S.O., M.C. Just to snuff out in your sleep. No, my friend, I think I can devise something better than that; something really artistic."

Two other men came in as he turned away, and Lakington looked at them.

"Well," he asked, "have you got the old woman?"

"Bound and gagged in the kitchen," answered one of them laconically. "Are you going to do this crowd in?"

The speaker looked at the unconscious men with hatred in his eyes.

"They encumber the earth—this breed of puppy."

"They will not encumber it for long," said Lakington softly. "But the one in the window there is not going to die so easily. I have a small unsettled score with him. . . ."

"All right; he's in the car." A voice came from outside the window, and with a last look at Hugh Drummond, Lakington turned away.

"Then we'll go," he remarked. "An revolver, my blundering young bull. Before I've finished with you, you'll scream for mercy. And you won't get it. . . ."

Through the still night air there came the thrumming of the engine of a powerful car. Gradually it died away and there was silence. And then, with a sudden crack, Peter Darrell's head rolled over and hit the arm of his chair.

CHAPTER SIX.

In Which a Very Old Game Takes Place on the Hog's Back.

ONE.

A thick grey mist lay over the Thames. It covered the water and the low fields to the west like a thick white carpet; it drifted sluggishly

under the old bridge which spans the river between Goring and Streatley. It was the hour before dawn, and sleepy passengers, rubbing the windows of their carriages as the Plymouth boat express rushed on toward London, shivered and drew their rugs closer around them. It looked cold. . . . cold and dead.

Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the vapor rose, and spread upwards over the wooded hills by Basildon. It drifted through the shrubs and rose-bushes of a little garden, which stretched from a bungalow down to the water's edge, until at length wisps of it brushed gently round the bungalow

low itself. Suddenly the window of one of the downstairs rooms was flung open, and a man with a white haggard face leaned out drawing great gulps of fresh air into his lungs. Three other men lay sprawling unaccountably in chairs, and two dogs lay motionless on the hearthrug.

After a moment or two the man withdrew, only to appear again with one of the others in his arms. And then, having dropped his burden through the window on to the lawn outside, he repeated his performance with the remaining two. Finally he pitched the two dogs after them, and then, with his hand to his forehead, he staggered down to the water's edge.

"Holy smoke!" he muttered to himself, as he plunged his head into the cold water, "talk about the morning after!"

After a while, with the water still dripping down his face, he returned to the bungalow and found the other three in various stages of partial insensibility.

"Wake up, my heroes," he remarked, "and go and put your great fat heads in the river. We were all of us drugged or doped somehow. And now," he added bitterly, "we've all got heads, and we have not got Potts."

"I don't remember anything," said Toby Sinclair, "except falling asleep. Have they taken him?"

"Of course they have," said Hugh. "Just before I went off I saw 'em all in the garden, and that swine Lakington was with them. However, while you go and put your nuts in the river, I'll go up and make certain."

With a grim smile he watched the three men lurch down to the water; then he turned and went upstairs to the room which had been occupied by the American millionaire. It was empty, as he had known it would be, and with a smothered curse he made his way downstairs again.

TWO.

"Has it struck you fellows," remarked Hugh, at the conclusion of lunch, "that seated around this table are four officers who fought with some distinction and much discomfort in the recent historic struggle?"

"How beautifully you put it, old fink!" said Darrell.

"Has it further struck you fellows," continued Hugh, "that last night we were done down, trampled on, had for mugs by a crowd of dirty blackguards composed largely of the dregs of the universe?"

"A veritable Solomon," said Algy, gazing at him admiringly through his eyeglasses. "I told you this morning I detected your friends."

"Has it still further struck you," went on Hugh, a trifle grimly, "that we aren't standing for it? I propose that we should tackle the blighters tonight."

"Tonight!" echoed Darrell. "Where?"

"At The Elms, of course. That's where the wretched Potts is for a certainty."

"And how do you propose that we should set about it?" demanded Sinclair.

Drummond drained his port and grinned gently.

"By stealth, dear old beans—by stealth. You—and I thought we might rake in Ted Jerningham, and perhaps Jerry Seymour, to join the happy throng—will make a demonstration in force, with the idea of drawing off the enemy, thereby leaving the coast clear for me to explore the house for the unfortunate Potts. An accident. . . . A car. . . ."

What is the connecting-link. . . . Why, drink. Write it down, Algy, or you might forget. Now, can you beat that?"

"We might have some chance," said Darrell kindly, "if we had the slightest idea what you were talking about."

"Pay attention, all of you," said Hugh. "Tonight some time about ten of the clock, Algy's motor will proceed along the Godalming-Guildford road. It will contain you three—also Ted and Jerry Seymour, if we can get 'em. On approaching the gate of The Elms, you will render the night hideous with your vocal efforts. Stray passers-by will think that you are all tight. Then will come the dramatic moment, when, with a heavy crash, you ram the gate. Horrified at this wanton damage to property, you will leave the car and proceed in mass formation up the drive."

"Still giving tongue?" queried Darrell.

"Still giving tongue. Either Ted or Jerry or both of 'em will approach the house and inform the owner in heartbroken accents that they have damaged his gate post. You three will remain in the garden—you might be recognized. Then it will be up to you. You'll have several men all round you. Keep 'em occupied—somehow. They won't hurt you; they'll only be concerned with seeing that you don't go where you're not wanted. The last thing they want to do is to draw any suspicion on themselves—and, on the face of it, you are merely five convivial wanderers who have looked on the wine when it was red. I think," he added thoughtfully, "that ten minutes will be enough for me."

"What will you be doing?" said Toby.

"I shall be looking for Potts. Don't worry about me. I'll look after myself. Now, is that clear?"

"Perfectly," said Darrell, after a short silence. "But I don't know that I like it, Hugh. It seems to me, old son, that you're running an unnecessary lot of risk."

"Got any alternative?" demanded Drummond.

"If we're all going down," said Darrell, "why not stick together and rush the house in a gar?"

(To Be Continued.)