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THE FAIR

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FOR BARGAINS

THE FAIR

FOR BARGAINS

RECOLLECTIONS OF CAPTAIN WILKIE By A. CONAN DOYLE.

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"We both lay still, though feeling pretty considerably small, as you may imagine."

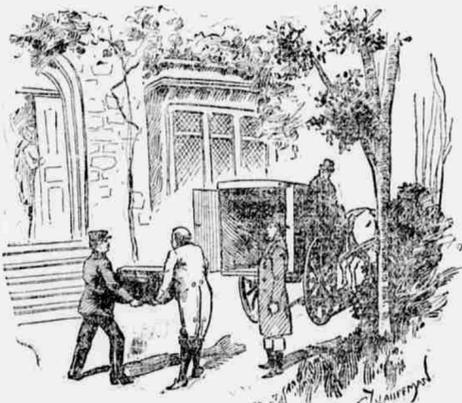
"It's all right; I see you," he continued. "Why, I have been waiting behind that lilac bush every night for the last week, expecting to see you. I knew you couldn't resist going up that ladder, when you found the windows were to much for you—Joel Joel!"

"Yes, sir," said a voice, and another man came from among the bushes. "Just you keep your eye on the roof, will you, while I ride down to the station and fetch up a couple of constables—Au revoir, gentlemen! You don't mind waiting, I suppose?" And Col. Morley—for it was the owner of the house himself—strode off; and in a few minutes we heard the rattle of his horse's hoofs going down the avenue.

"Well, sir, we felt precious silly, as you may imagine. It wasn't so much having been nabbed that bothered us, as the feeling of being caught in such a simple trap. We looked at each other in blank disgust, and then, to save our lives, we couldn't help bursting into laughter at our own fix. However, it was no laughing matter; so we set to work going round the roof, and seeing if there was a likely water pipe or anything that might give us a chance of escape. We had to give it up as a bad job; so we sat down again, and made up our minds to the worst. Suddenly an idea flashed into my head, and I groped my way over the roof until I felt wood under my feet. I bent down and found that the colonel had actually forgotten to secure the padlock! You will often notice, as you go through life, that it is the shrewdest and most cunning man who falls into the most absurd mistakes; and this was an example of it. You may guess that we did not lose much time, for we expected to hear the constables every moment. We dropped through into the lumber-room, slipped downstairs, tore open the library shutters, and were out and away before the astonished groom could make out what had happened. There wasn't time enough to take any little souvenir with us, worse luck. I should have liked to have seen the colonel's face when he came back with the constables and found that the birds were flown."

ting the colonel out of the way, so I wrote him a note purporting to come from Squire Brotherwick, who lived about ten miles away, and was not always on the best of terms with the master of Morley hall. I dressed myself up as a groom and delivered the note myself. It was to the effect that the squire thought he was able to lay his hands on the scoundrels who had escaped from the colonel a couple of years before, and that if the colonel would ride over they would have little difficulty in securing them. I was sure

time to see a business-like closed car drive up to the door. One of my pals while Jim, with an official-looking hat, was sitting very demurely on the box, sprang out and hustled into the hall. "Now, then," I heard him say, "look sharp! What's for the bank? Come on!" "Wait a minute, sir," said the butler. "Can't wait. There's a panic all over the country, and they are clamoring for us everywhere. Must drive on to Lord Blackbury's place, unless you are ready?" "Don't go, sir!" pleaded the butler,



"You'll Never Have Any More Trouble with It."

that this would have the desired effect; so, after handing it in, and remarking that I was the squire's groom, I walked off again, as if on the way back to my master's.

"After getting out of sight of the house, I crouched down behind a hedge; and, as I expected, in less than a quarter of an hour the colonel came swinging past me on his chestnut mare. Now, there's another accomplishment I possess which I have not mentioned to you yet, and that is, that I can copy any handwriting that I see. It is a very easy trick to pick up if you only give your mind to it. I happened to have come across one of Colonel Morley's letters some days before, and I can write so that even now I defy an expert to detect a difference between the hands. This was a great assistance to me now, for I tore a leaf out of my pocketbook and wrote something to this effect:

"As Squire Brotherwick has seen some suspicious characters about, and the house may be attempted again, I have sent down to the bank, and ordered them to send up their bank-cart to convey the whole of the plate to a place of safety. It will save us a good deal of anxiety to know that it is in absolute security. Have it packed up and ready, and give the bearer a glass of beer."

"There's only this one rope to tie—Tie it; it is ready now. You'll look after it, won't you?" "That we will. You'll never have any more trouble with it now," said Jim, helping to push the great case into the car. "I think I had better go with you and see it stowed away in the bank," said the butler.

"All right," said Jim, nothing abashed. "You can't come in the car, though, for Lord Blackbury's box will take up all the spare room. Let's see—it's 12 o'clock now. Well, you be waiting at the bank door at half-past 1, and you will just catch us."

"All right—half-past 1," said the butler. "Good-day!" cried my chum; and away went the car, while I made a bit of a short cut and caught it around a turn of the road. We drove right off into the next county, got a down-train to London, and before midnight the colonel's silver was fused into a solid lump. I could not help laughing at the veracity of the old scoundrel. "It was a daring game to play," I said. "It is always the daring game which succeeds best," he answered. "At this point the train began to show symptoms of slowing down, and my companion put on his overcoat and gave other signs of being near the end of his journey. 'You are going on to Dover?' he said. 'Yes.' 'For the continent?' 'Yes.' 'How long do you intend to travel?' 'Only for a week or so.' 'Well, I must leave you here. You will remember my name, won't you? John Wilkie, I am pleased to have met you. Is my umbrella behind you?' he

added, stretching across. "No; I beg your pardon. Here it is in the corner;" and with an affable smile, the ex-crackman stepped out, bowed, and disappeared among the crowd upon the platform. I lit another cigar, laughed as I thought of my late companion, and lifted up the Times, which he had left behind him. The bell had rung, the wheels were already revolving, when, to my astonishment, a palid face looked in at me through the window. It was so contorted and agitated that I hardly recognized the features which I had been gazing upon during the last couple of hours. "Here, take it," he said—"take it. It's hardly worth my while to rob you of seven pounds four shillings; but I couldn't resist once more trying my hand; and he flung something into the carriage and disappeared. It was my old leather purse, with my return ticket, and the whole of my traveling expenses. His newly awakened conscience had driven him to instant restitution. (The End.)

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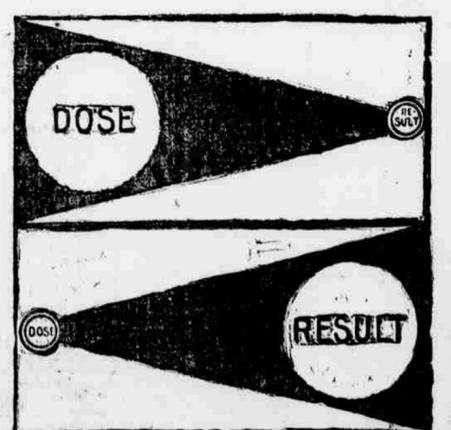
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