

THE BROWN MAN'S SERVANT.

BY W. W. JACOBS.

Author of "Many Cargoes."

SYNOPSIS.

A sailor brings a valuable diamond to the proprietor of a pawnshop in the Commercial Road, in London. They retire to an inner room, and the sailor offers the diamond to the proprietor for £500. The proprietor offers a small sum, but the sailor sticks to his price, and the proprietor goes off to bring a friend for consultation. They return, and say the sailor has come back and warns the pawnbroker that the diamond has been stolen by himself and three others, one of them a Burmese man. He himself has gained sole possession of the stone, and his movements are dogged by the Burmese and another of his late companions. He notices the proprietor to look out for them. The next day both of them, display the proprietor, demand the stone, call on the proprietor, and threaten the proprietor with death, if he does not give up the jewel. He ignores their threats.

PART IV.

The Burmese paused, and the pawnbroker noticed that his face had changed, and in place of the sardonic good humor which had before possessed it, was now distorted by a devilish malice. His eyes gleamed coldly, and he snapped them quickly at the speaker. "Well, what do you say?" he demanded.

"This," said the other. "He leaned over the counter, and taking the brown man's skin by the throat in his great hand, flung him reeling back to the partition, which shook with his weight. Then he burst into a laugh as the being who had just been threatened with a terrible and mysterious death changed into a little weak old man, coughing and spitting as he clutched at his throat and fought for breath.

"What about your servant, the devil?" asked the proprietor, maliciously.

"Unless you when I am absent," said the brown man, faintly. "Even now I give you one more chance. I will let you see the young fellow in your shop die first. But no, he has not offended. I will kill—"

He paused, and his eyes fell on the cat, which at that moment sprang up and took its place on the counter. "I will kill you," said the brown man. "I will send the devil to worry it. Watch the cat, and as its death is so small yours be—"

"Unless," said the other, regarding him mockingly.

"Unless tonight before ten o'clock you mark on your door post two crosses in chalk," said the other. "Do that and live. Watch the cat."

He pointed his lean, brown finger at the animal, and still feeling at his throat, stepped softly to the door and passed out.

With the entrance of other customers, the pawnbroker forgot the annoyance to which he had been subjected, and attended to their wants in a spirit made liberal by the near prospect of fortune. It was certain that the stone must be of great value. With that and the money he had made by his business, he would give up work and settle down to a life of pleasant ease. So liberal was he that an elderly Irishwoman forgot their slight difference in creed, and blessed him fervently with all the salutes in the calendar.

His assistant being back in his place in the shop, the pawnbroker returned to the little sitting room, and once more carefully looked through the account of the sailor's murder. Then he sat still trying to work out a problem, to hand the murderers over to the police without his connection with the stolen diamond being made public, and

stepping down, saw that he had trodden on the dead cat.

At ten o'clock that night the pawnbroker sat with his friend discussing a bottle of champagne, which the open-eyed assistant had procured from the public house opposite.

"You're a lucky man," said his friend, as he raised his glass to his lips. "Thirty thousand pounds! It's a fortune, a small fortune," he added, correctively.

"I shall give this place up," said the pawnbroker, "and go away for a time. I'm not safe here."

"Safe?" queried his friend, raising his eyebrows.

The pawnbroker related his adventures with his visitors.

"I can't understand that cat business," said his friend, when he had finished. "It's quite farcical; he must have poisoned it."

"He wasn't near it," said the pawnbroker. "It was at the other end of the counter."

"Oh, hang it," said his friend, the more irritably because he could not think of any solution to the mystery. "You don't believe in occult powers and all that sort of thing. This is the neighborhood of the Commercial Road; open, nineteenth century. The things you see and say indoors they can't hurt you here. Why not tell the police?"

"I don't want any questions," said the pawnbroker.

"I mean just tell them that one or two suspicious characters have been hanging round lately," said the other. "If this precious couple see that they are being watched, they'll probably quit. There's nothing like a uniform to scare the guilty."

"I won't have anything to do with the police," said the pawnbroker, firmly.

"Well, let Bob sleep on the premises," suggested his friend.

"I'll have Bob fixed up for him," said the other.

"Why not tonight?" asked his friend, briefly. "Didn't you hear him snut up?"

"He was in the shop five minutes ago," said his friend.

"He left at ten," said the pawnbroker.

"I'll swear I heard somebody only a minute or two ago," said his friend, starting.

"Nerves, as you remarked a little while ago," said the proprietor, with a grin.

"Well, I thought I heard him," said his friend. "You might just secure the door, anyway."

The pawnbroker went to the door and glanced round the dimly lighted shop as he did so.

"Perhaps you could stay tonight, yourself," he said, as he returned to the sitting room.

"I can't possibly, tonight," said the other. "By the way, you might lend these cut-throats hanging round, visiting in a somewhat perilous pleasure. They might take it into their heads to kill me, or to shoot whether I have got the stone or not."

"Take your pick," said the pawnbroker, going to the shop and returning with two or three second-hand revolvers and some cartridges.

"I never fired one in my life," said his friend, dubiously. "But I believe the chief thing is to make a bang. Which'll make the loudest?"

On his friend's recommendation, he selected a revolver of the service pattern, and, after one or two suggestions from the pawnbroker, expressed himself as qualified to shoot anything but a chimney pot and a paving stone.

"Make your room door fast tonight, and tomorrow let Bob have a bed there," he said earnestly, as he rose to go.

"By the way, why not make those chalk marks on the door just for the night? You can laugh at them tomorrow!"

"I'm not going to mark my door for all the assassins that ever breathed," said the other, however, as he rose to see the other out.

"Well, I think you're safe enough in the house," said his friend; "heavily dressed, and taking in a shaver of imagination like myself it's quite easy

"The brute's gone mad," said the assistant, whose face was white. "It's flying about upstairs like a wild thing. Mind it don't get in; it's as bad as a mad dog."

"Oh, rubbish," said the proprietor. "Cats are often like that."

"Well, I've never seen one like it before. I'm not going to see that again."

The assistant came downstairs, scuffling along the passage, hit the door with his head, and then dashed upstairs again.

"It must have been poisoned, or else it's mad," said the assistant. "What's he been eating, I wonder?"

The pawnbroker made no reply. The suggestion of poisoning was a welcome one. It was preferable to the sinister hints of the brown man. But even if it had been poisoned it was a very singular coincidence, unless, indeed, the Burmese had himself poisoned it. He tried to think whether it could have been possible for his visitor to have administered poison undetected.

"It's quiet now," said the assistant, and he opened the door a little way.

"It's all right," said the pawnbroker, half ashamed of his fears; "get back to the shop."

The assistant complied, and the proprietor, after sitting down a little while to persuade himself that he really had no particular interest in the matter, rose and slowly went upstairs. The staircase was badly lit, and half way up he stumbled on something soft. He gave a hasty exclamation, and

stepping down, saw that he had trodden on the dead cat.

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and crouched there, breathing heavily and trying to think. He tried to think where he had put the matches, and remembered there were some on the window sill. The room was so dark that he could not see the foot of the bed, and in his fatigues he had barred himself in the room with the leathern reptile which was to work the brown man's vengeance.

For some time he lay listening intently. Once or twice he fancied that he heard the rustle of the snake over the dingy carpet, and he wondered whether it would attempt to climb on to the bed. He stood up, and stretching his body to the utmost, tried to get his revolver from the drawers. It was out of reach, and as the bed creaked beneath his weight a faint hiss sounded from the floor and he sat still again, hardly daring to breathe.

The cold rawness of the room chilled him. He cautiously drew the bedclothes toward him and rolled himself up in them, leaving only his head and arms exposed. In this position he began to feel more warm, and until he thought struck him that the snake

might be inside them. He fought against this idea and tried to force his nerves into steadiness. Then his fears suggested that two might have been placed in the bed. At this his fears got the upper hand, and it seemed to him that something stirred in the clothes.

He drew his body from them slowly and stealthily, and taking them in his arms, flung them violently to the other end of the room. On his hands and knees he now traveled over the bare bed, feeling. There was nothing there. In this state of suspense and dread time seemed to stop. Several times he thought that the thing had got on the bed, and to stay there in suspense in the darkness was impossible. He felt it over and over again. At last, unable to endure it any longer, he resolved to obtain the matches, and stepped cautiously off the bed; but no sooner had he reached the floor than he felt the devilish writhing thing on the floor become invested with supernatural significance. Then, dimly at first and hardly comprehending the joy of it, he saw the window. A little later he saw the outlines of the things in the room. The night had passed and he was alone.

He raised his frozen body to its full height, and expanding his chest, planted his feet firmly on the bed. He clenched his fists and felt strong. He and himself, he bent down and scrutinized the floor for his enemy, and set his teeth as he thought how he could tear his bare feet through the carpet, but first he would put on his boots. He leaned over cautiously, and lifting one to the bed, put it on. Then he bent down and put on the other, and, as if by lightning, something issued from it and, coiling round his wrist, ran up the sleeve of his shirt.

With starting joyballs, he held his breath, and stiffening into stone, waited helplessly. The tightness round his

arm relaxed as the snake drew the whole of its body under the sleeve and wound round his arm. He felt its head moving. It came wriggling across his chest, and with a mad cry, the wretch clutched at the front of his shirt with both hands and strove to tear it off. He felt the snake in his hands, and for a moment hoped. Then the creature got its head free, and struck him smartly in the throat.

His head relaxed, and the snake fell at his feet. He bent over and, with a careless now that it bit his hand, and, with bloodshot eyes, dashed it repeatedly on the rail of the bed. Then he hung it to the floor, and, raising his heel, smashed its head to pulp.

His fury passed, he strove to think, but his brain was in a whirl. He had heard of sucking the wound, but one puncture was in his throat, and he laughed discordantly. He had heard that death had been prevented by drinking heavily of spirits. He would do that first, and then obtain medical assistance.

He ran to the door, and began to drag the furniture away. In his haste the revolver fell from the drawers to the floor. He looked at it steadily for a moment, and then, taking it up, he almost mechanically began to load more clearly, although a numbing sensation was already steling over him.

"Thirty thousand pounds!" he said, slowly, and, applying his cheek lightly with the cold barrel.

Then he slipped it into his mouth, and, pulling the trigger, crashed heavily to the floor.

(The End.)

HE HUNG LISTENING OVER THE SHAKY BALUSTERS.

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WITH A STIFLED CRY, SPRANG HASTILY BACKWARD.

lurked there, he closed the door and locked it. Then he opened the window gently and listened. The court below was perfectly still. He closed the window, and, taking of his coat, hurried to the door with all the heaviest furniture in the room. With a feeling of perfect security he complacently regarded his handiwork, and then, sitting on the edge of the bed, he began to undress. He turned the lamp down a little and reloaded the empty chambers of his revolver, placing it by the side of the bed, and, having done so, he turned back the clothes and was in the very act of getting into bed when he fancied that something moved beneath the clothes. As he paused it dropped light; by from the other side of the bed to the floor.

At first he sat with knitted brows, trying to see what it was. He had only had a glimpse of it, but he certainly had an idea that it was alive. A rat, perhaps. He got out of bed again, with an oath, and, taking the lamp in his hand, peered cautiously round the door, and he walked around the room in this fashion. Then he stooped down, and, raising the dirty bed hanging, peered beneath.

He almost touched the wicked little head of the brown man's devil, and with a stifled cry sprang hastily backward. The lamp shattered against the corner of the drawers, and falling in a shower of broken glass and oil at his bare feet, left him in darkness. He threw the fragments of glass and what remained of his hat from him, and, quaking as though, gained the bed again

and crouched there, breathing heavily and trying to think. He tried to think where he had put the matches, and remembered there were some on the window sill. The room was so dark that he could not see the foot of the bed, and in his fatigues he had barred himself in the room with the leathern reptile which was to work the brown man's vengeance.

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RAILROAD TIME-TABLES

PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD.

Schedule in Effect June 14, 1895.

Trains Leave Wilkes-Barre as Follows 7.30 a. m., week days, for Sunbury, Harrisburg, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, and for Pittsburgh and the West.

10.15 a. m., week days, for Hazleton, Pottsville, Reading, Norristown, and Philadelphia; and for Sunbury, Harrisburg, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington and Pittsburgh and the West.

3.17 p. m., week days, for Sunbury, Harrisburg, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington and Pittsburgh and the West.

3.17 p. m., Sundays only, for Sunbury, Harrisburg, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh and the West.

6.00 p. m., week days, for Hazleton and Pottsville.

J. B. WOOD, Gen'l Pass. Agent. S. M. PREVOST, General Manager.

LEHIGH VALLEY RAILROAD SYSTEM.

Anthracite Coal Used Exclusively, Insuring Cleanliness and Comfort. IN EFFECT NOV. 15, 1896.

TRAINS LEAVE SCRANTON: For Philadelphia and New York, via D. & H. R. R. at 6.45, 7.45 a. m., 12.05, 1.35, 3.35, 4.45, 5.45, 6.45, 7.45, 8.45, 9.45, 10.45, 11.45 a. m., 1.55, 2.55, 3.55, 4.55, 5.55, 6.55, 7.55, 8.55, 9.55, 10.55, 11.55 a. m., 1.05, 2.05, 3.05, 4.05, 5.05, 6.05, 7.05, 8.05, 9.05, 10.05, 11.05 a. m., 1.15, 2.15, 3.15, 4.15, 5.15, 6.15, 7.15, 8.15, 9.15, 10.15, 11.15 a. m., 1.25, 2.25, 3.25, 4.25, 5.25, 6.25, 7.25, 8.25, 9.25, 10.25, 11.25 a. m., 1.35, 2.35, 3.35, 4.35, 5.35, 6.35, 7.35, 8.35, 9.35, 10.35, 11.35 a. m., 1.45, 2.45, 3.45, 4.45, 5.45, 6.45, 7.45, 8.45, 9.45, 10.45, 11.45 a. m., 1.55, 2.55, 3.55, 4.55, 5.55, 6.55, 7.55, 8.55, 9.55, 10.55, 11.55 a. m., 2.05, 3.05, 4.05, 5.05, 6.05, 7.05, 8.05, 9.05, 10.05, 11.05 a. m., 2.15, 3.15, 4.15, 5.15, 6.15, 7.15, 8.15, 9.15, 10.15, 11.15 a. m., 2.25, 3.25, 4.25, 5.25, 6.25, 7.25, 8.25, 9.25, 10.25, 11.25 a. m., 2.35, 3.35, 4.35, 5.35, 6.35, 7.35, 8.35, 9.35, 10.35, 11.35 a. m., 2.45, 3.45, 4.45, 5.45, 6.45, 7.45, 8.45, 9.45, 10.45, 11.45 a. m., 2.55, 3.55, 4.55, 5.55, 6.55, 7.55, 8.55, 9.55, 10.55, 11.55 a. m., 3.05, 4.05, 5.05, 6.05, 7.05, 8.05, 9.05, 10.05, 11.05 a. m., 3.15, 4.15, 5.15, 6.15, 7.15, 8.15, 9.15, 10.15, 11.15 a. m., 3.25, 4.25, 5.25, 6.25, 7.25, 8.25, 9.25, 10.25, 11.25 a. m., 3.35, 4.35, 5.35, 6.35, 7.35, 8.35, 9.35, 10.35, 11.35 a. m., 3.45, 4.45, 5.45, 6.45, 7.45, 8.45, 9.45, 10.45, 11.45 a. m., 3.55, 4.55, 5.55, 6.55, 7.55, 8.55, 9.55, 10.55, 11.55 a. m., 4.05, 5.05, 6.05, 7.05, 8.05, 9.05, 10.05, 11.05 a. m., 4.15, 5.15, 6.15, 7.15, 8.15, 9.15, 10.15, 11.15 a. m., 4.25, 5.25, 6.25, 7.25, 8.25, 9.25, 10.25, 11.25 a. m., 4.35, 5.35, 6.35, 7.35, 8.35, 9.35, 10.35, 11.35 a. m., 4.45, 5.45, 6.45, 7.45, 8.45, 9.45, 10.45, 11.45 a. m., 4.55, 5.55, 6.55, 7.55, 8.55, 9.55, 10.55, 11.55 a. m., 5.05, 6.05, 7.05, 8.05, 9.05,