The Robbery at the Tower

AN ADVENTURE OF PETER CREWE—"THE MAN WITH THE CAMERA EYES"

By **HAROLD CARTER**

After the adventure of the Box of Borneos, which I have already described, and which Peter Crewe was enabled to solve by his peculiar optical powers, we struck up a warm friendship. It was arranged that we should work together in the future for the solution of any similar difficulties which might come to me in the course of my professional career. We had arranged to catch the next steamship for America, but on the day before she sailed there occurred in London a robbery of such a mysterious character that neither of us could resist the temptation to remain and lend our aid to the discovery of the criminal.

Everybody remembers how the famous Gwyn jewels were stolen from the Tower of London. These emeralds, which had a historic rather than any especial intrinsic value, had been presented by Charles II. to his famous favorite, and were preserved in a small chamber in the Tower, where were stored miscellaneous treasures of secondary importance not usually placed on public exhibition. They were kept in an isolated building, a round turret which ran straight up to a height of seventy feet, and was absolutely inaccessible from the outside, the brick walls affording not the slightest foothold. In fact there was no direct access to this tower at all, since it connected with the main building by a series of passageways, intricate, and entirely unapproachable except from the centra building, 200 yards away, which was guarded by a file of soldiers. This turret had a small barred window overlooking the road, 60 feet up. It was too high for any thief to throw up a grappling hook; in short nothing but a fireman's ladder could have gained access to it from the outside.

Yet in spite of this the window was entered from the outside, a bar was removed from the mortar setting, and the thief gained entrance, obtained possession of the emeralds, and calmly descended, unobserved. The robbery was not discovered until the following day, by which time the perpetrator of the crime had got safely away.

The daring nature of the crime excited all London. It was certain that no ladder had been used to gain admittance. While the tower was ungarded, persons were continually passing and repassing in the road beneath, and any such device would have been speedily detected, the more so inasmuch as any ladder placed against the wall would have been set at such an angle that it would have blocked the sidewalk underneath.

On the third day after the robbery the emeralds were discovered in the pawnshop of a notorious "fence" in Whitechapel region. They had been left there by an Italian, the man confessed, when threatened with prosecution. Neighbors of the pawnbroker confirmed this statement. An itinerant organ grinder, accompanied by a monkey, had been seen to enter the pawnshop on the day after the robbery. His monkey seemed to be sick, one neighbor added. It was wrapped in blankets and lay listlessly on the top of the organ. It was an extremely large animal and those who saw it had received the impression that it was a chimpanzee, but nothing of it could be seen, since it was swathed from head to foot.

Other witnesses confirmed this statement. It was, furthermore, known that an Italian organ-grinder had been seen in the vicinity of the tower for several days before the robbery. Although he had chosen the worst place for the plying of his trade, and had taken in practically nothing, he had cheerfully ground out his tunes day after day at the base of the turret. His monkey, however, lay on the top of the organ, just as the other witnesses had described, and never stirred a muscle. Some children, who had tried to pet it, were angrily "shooed" away by the organ-grinder, who asserted that the animal was sick.

That was all that could be learned. All the itinerant organ-grinders in London were promptly investigated by the police, but no man with such an animal was found. Although the jewels had been recovered, fear of other daring robberies of a similar kind impelled the authorities to prosecute their search in the most vigorous manner.

"The first thing to do," said Crewe to me, when we had agreed to do our best to unravel the mystery, "is to look at the turret."

We went thither accordingly and found a curious crowd standing in a solid phalanx at the base of the tower, gazing up at the brick walls, while a couple of policemen stolidly moved them on whenever their numbers became too great for street traffic to pass. It seemed impossible that anyone could have scaled those walls without a ladder.

"Do you suppose the man sent his monkey up?" I hazarded.

Crewe smiled and shook his head.

"A monkey might possibly be able to find a foothold in the bricks," he said. "But how could it have sawn out the iron bar? Apart from this, no monkey could be trained to bring down any article its trainer wished for. No, Langton, ingenious as your theory is, we must dismiss it from the realms of possibility."

The sun was shining—a rare thing in London—and Crewe, having carefully inspected the base of the walls, now fell back to some distance and proceeded to take them in as a whole. He fixed both eyes unwinkingly upon the tower, so that every detail should impress itself upon either retina.

"And now," said Crewe, "we will take our photograph from the other side." And we moved round, and once again he focussed his eyes upon the brick work.

"That's all," he said, as the sun went behind a cloud. "I think the discovery will not prove so difficult as it appears."

"Hindeed!" said one of the policemen on duty, who overheard this remark. "May I ask, sir, if you can furnish any clue?"

"Tell the governor of the tower," said Crewe, smiling, "that the robbery was not committed by an Italian at all, but by a South American, whom you people would doubtless confuse with Italians, seeing that there are not more than half a dozen in England."

"A South American!" repeated the other policeman stolidly. "And doubtless, sir, his monkey was also a South American," he continued, with clumsy sarcasm.

"You are quite right," said Crewe calmly. "His monkey was not a monkey, but it certainly was a South American."

"And you get all, all this from hinspecting the brick walls, sir?" the policeman asked.

"Every bit," said Crewe.

"You don't 'appen to know more about this affair than you have told us, sir?" said the policeman.

I pulled Crewe away. "If you awaken suspicion in the minds of these addle-pates you will find yourself arrested on suspicion," I whispered.

We moved off, the policemen following us with suspicious glances. It was not until we were upon the outskirts of the crowd that I breathed freely. "Crewe," I said, "it does not do to prod the British policeman. Now tell me, were you serious in what you said about the South American and his monkey?"

"I was never more serious," Crewe answered. "But I said that it was not a monkey. Tell me, Langton, what you saw on the tower."

"I saw a series of well-fitted bricks," I answered, "offering good foothold for a fly and possibly for a small monkey, but certainly not for a man."

"But what did you see on the bricks in the shape of markings?"

"A few mosses, which some scientist might label and classify."

"Tush!" said Crewe petulantly. "This is what I saw." He stopped, produced a pencil and a piece of paper from his pocket, and began to trace a series of three-pointed marks like hen's tracks.

"There was a well-ordered series of these," said Crewe, "commencing upon the nineteenth layer of bricks from the bottom, and thence running, with a slightly oblique movement, clear up to the window." He closed his eyes. "I am looking at them now," he continued. "At intervals corresponding, roughly, to every four of these tracks, there are slight but well-defined depressions in the surface having the rough outline of a shoe. Fragments of brick have crumbled here and there under the pressure of hobnails. In other words, Langton, our South American friend did ascend that turret, walking up its surface as a fly might walk. What is the inference?"

"That he threw a rope up over the bars and climbed, pulling himself up hand over hand. Therefore he is a sailor," I said, with a sudden light.

Crewe looked at me in great amusement.

"My dear Sherlock Holmes, you are quite wrong," he answered. "Ingenious, but speculative. We are dealing in exactitudes and there is no possible evidence to show that the man threw up a rope or is a sailor."

At the juncture a newsboy came past yelling a special edition of an evening newspaper. "Murder at Notting Hill! Murder at Notting Hill! Full description of scenes of 'orror," the vendor called. Crewe stopped to purchase a copy, unfolded the damp sheet, and read from under a staring headline:

"A dastardly murder was committed in the early hours of this morning at Notting Hill. The residence of Mr. Walter Deans, a retired tradesman, was entered, and valuables to the amount of more than a thousand pounds were taken, and the owner was shot down while endeavoring, as is supposed, to defend his home. The body of Mr. Deans was discovered by his servants about eleven o'clock lying across the fireplace in his bedroom, which was in confusion, as though it had been minutely ransacked. No clue has yet been discovered as to the identity of the murderer, although a foreign-looking man had been observed lurking in the vicinity recently. Mr. Deans' house stands alone in extensive grounds; it is a perfectly plain brick structure, and the robber appears to have entered through the window of the third story, on which is Mr. Deans' bedroom, though how he contrived to effect an entrance without foothold remains for the present a mystery."

"I suspected as much," said Crewe. "The fellow is so emboldened by the success of his first attempt that unless he is caught a series of crimes will follow. We must get him this afternoon."

"You think it was the same man?"

"Undoubtedly," said Crewe. "But, to make sure, let us take the train for Notting Hill immediately."

We arrived there an hour and a half later. The grounds were packed with an immense throng, whom the police were ineffectually endeavoring to disperse. Crewe stopped and focussed his eyes upon the building.

"What's your business 'ere?" demanded a policeman roughly. "Move on there!"

Crewe turned abruptly and left the grounds. "The same tracks," he muttered. "Now, Langton, we must catch this fellow tonight."

"Will you not tell me the significance of the markings?" I asked.

"Not now, Langton. I want to bend every effort to apprehending the murderer. Luckily this will not be difficult. Since the police imagine him to be an Italian, he will have no incentive to disguising his true nationality. You know the Spanish quarter?"

"Bloomsbury," I said.

"We shall find him there. These people would rather die than live outside their own neighborhoods. Watch for a man with a sack."

"A sack?" I queried.

"Yes," said Crewe impatiently. "He will not dare to maintain the organ-grinder fiction; nor will he venture to leave the creature in his room. We must search the streets until we find him."

At Tottenham Court Road we took an omnibus and, seated upon the roof, observed the streets narrowly. Nothing escaped Crewe's observant eyes. When he had passed through the Bloomsbury district we descended, Crewe hailed a hansom, and for an hour or more we drove slowly up and down the squalid thoroughfares, Crewe's eyes registering every human being among the moving mass of pedestrians. Suddenly he signaled to the driver and leaped out.

"Follow that man!" he exclaimed.

In front of us, some two hundred yards' distance, a swarthy fellow of Spanish or Italian origin was strolling leisurely through the streets. He was attired in the corduroys and overalls of a working man and had a small sack slung over one shoulder.

"We must not let him escape," Crewe muttered. It was growing dark and we hastened our footsteps until we were almost abreast of him. Then we followed him, now on this side of the road, now upon that, while he pursued his course through Bloomsbury, into Seven Dials, thence through Covent Garden and along the waste of half-erected buildings on Kingsway, the new County Council thoroughfare. At a signal from Crewe we fell back a little.

"How do you know that is the man?" I questioned hurriedly.

"He bears the mark of the beast," Crewe returned.

"The beast?"

"Look at his collar."

I crept up more closely and suddenly perceived, upon the cheap celluloid collar that the man wore, the identical hen-track—three finger marks, clearly outlined—that Crewe had drawn upon the paper. A sudden sense of horror almost overcame me. I fell back again and waited for Crewe to join me.

"What are you going to do?" I whispered.

"Seize him—at an opportune moment."

It was night now, and the thoroughfare, which was not yet installed with street lamps, was so dark that we could discern our man only as a shadow moving among shadows. He stopped before the flank of a new building from little cells in whose walls lights gleamed fitfully. I knew it to be one of the County Council structures for the housing of poor persons, but could not imagine for what purpose the robber intended breaking in.

He hesitated a moment, then moved round toward the end of the block. And suddenly I was enlightened. As though emerging out of squalor into fairyland, I saw before me the splendid new Wemyss hotel, fronting upon the Strand. Now the robber's purpose was made clear. If he could ascend that blank wall of the lodging house for fifty feet and more—if, like a fly, he could climb that apparently impassable structure, he could gain the unlit back court of the hotel and have each tier of rooms at his mercy, while their occupants were dining or enjoying themselves at some place of entertainment. It was a daring conception, for the inclosed courtyard, dominated by a bare brick wall, was wholly unguarded, being deemed unenterable.

As we crouched in the shadows we saw the robber glance swiftly round. The thoroughfare was apparently deserted; nobody was likely to pass through on any honest purpose. Stealthily he opened the sack, plunged in his arm, and drew out some furry creature of large size—a monkey, and yet not a monkey, for instead of chattering and leaping this thing lay apparently lifeless in his arms. The man deposited it carefully in a recess between two angles of the building and then began pulling out of the bag what seemed like an unending cord.

"By God, I was right!" I heard Crewe mutter. I was trembling with excitement; yet for the life of me I could not see what the man intended to do.

Presently he appeared to come to the end of the cord. He pulled off his coat and waistcoat and made it fast around his waist. Then, picking up the creature in his arms, he placed it against the side of the building.

To my astonishment the thing began to move. The strange black creature climbed higher and higher against the blank wall of the lodging house. Higher and higher yet it went, apparently walking upon the perpendicular slope, until the topmost window was attained. Then I saw the burglar jerk the rope. The animal disappeared. A moment afterward and he was hauling himself up the wall, hand over hand, with perfect ease and apparently perfect security.

Crewe crept forward and drew a revolver from his pocket. "Halt!" he said quietly to the man in the air. "Halt, or I fire. Come down!"

I saw a struggle upon the perpendicular wall. The clinging man grasped at the rope, missed it, seemed to lose his foothold, and suddenly fell some twenty feet in the air. The loose rope tightened with an awful shock; the body quivered an instant, and then began to swing like a pendulum from side to side along the flank of the building. At every turn the rope rose higher around him. It was slipping upward from his waist, where he had fastened it, toward his throat, one arm having slipped through the noose in the struggle. At every turn the body assumed an attitude more and more perpendicular; finally, with a sudden shock the noose slipped round the neck and the corpse swung evenly at the rope's end, the vibrations gradually lessening until the body hung limp and loose and lifeless, its one free arm dangling, the other pinned by the rope to the neck, the forearm waving weakly around the head. Nothing that we could have done could have saved him. Twenty feet at least above our heads that dreadful drama was enacted in the air.

"He has but anticipated his fate," said Crewe. "Poor devil! His ingenuity undid him. Let us go, Langton; there is no purpose to be served by our remaining here."

On the following morning all London was agape over the latest mystery. A policeman, according to the account, had found the body of man suspended from an upper window of a tenement house by a rope of prodigious length. He had cut him down, but the suicide had evidently been dead for several hours. The rope was ingeniously knotted around the window bars; yet it had not been fastened from within, the window being bolted and the room having been unoccupied for more than a week previously.

Another item in the same newspaper passed without notice; yet the two were indissolubly connected.

"Early this morning," it ran, "while going to work, John Jarvis, a plumber, noticed a strange beast in the Strand. It was suspended from a window sill, and at first seemed to be dead, but was subsequently found to be sleeping. The beast was noosed and taken to the police station, where it was discovered, after some investigation, to be a harmless sloth of the armadillo type. Its final destination will probably be the Zoological Gardens."

Crewe looked up at me.

"The greatest mystery," he said, "is how the creature contrived to knot the rope round the window bars so that it held up the body of the burglar after it had departed upon its nocturnal prowlings in search of food."

"Crewe," I said, "you have not ex plained anything of the mystery t me as yet. I do not know how th burglar entered the tower, nor ho you knew him to be a South Amer can, nor the meaning of the her tracks."

Crewe started. "My dear Langton forgive me," he pleaded. "I will d so at once. Do you know anythin about the habits of the sloth?"

"I never heard of such an anima before today," I answered.

"Just so," Crewe answered, smilin "Now if you, an educated American know nothing of this animal, it safe to say that nobody else does, ex cept, here and there, some natura ist. Is it not reasonable, therefor to assume that the man who owne it was intimately acquainted with it in other words that he was a den zen of South America, the continen in which the sloth has its habitat And if that deduction were not lo ical enough, we have the testimon of the pawnbroker and his neighbo to the effect that the man was a Italian—the generic term in Englan for all southerners of swarthy com plexion."

"Yes," I said, "granted the sloth, will admit that its owner was pro ably a South American. But wh gave you the idea of its being sloth, and how does it come into th story?

"Why," said Crewe, "I saw marks upon the brick work of th tower, and also at Notting Hill. Th sloth has only three toes, and marks are as much like hen-track as anything in the world. You hav undoubtedly seen a sloth's feet at th Zoological Gardens when you were boy."

"Undoubtedly; but they have e tirely escaped my recollection."

"That is the difference betwee us," said Crewe, smiling. "But, continue, the sloth has acquired th remarkable habit of hanging by toes from the branches of tree With its head down, its heavy bo suspended by its slender paws, sleeps happily all through the da awakening only at night, when it pu sues it insect prey. When suspend in this manner nothing can dislod it; in fact, the sloth seems able defy the laws of gravitation. weight of a ton, affixed to its bod would not pull it downward or d turb it in its ecstatic slumbers. the other hand, by unclasping t paws and pulling upward, the slo can be easily and harmlessly moved from its resting place. And our organ-grinder had a sloth place of a monkey. The plan of d playing it in the streets openly, und the guise of a sick monkey, was brilliant conception, and shows that our criminal was a man of a hi degree of mentality.

"The rest of the picture, Langto you can fill in for yourself. Havi discovered the most convenient ho for his enterprise, the burglar taches a long rope around the cre ture, coiling the other end arou his body, and places it upon the wa Our sloth, feeling the smooth surfa beneath him, and being unable sleep perpendicularly, conceives t idea that he is upon the stem of peculiarly high and smooth pa tree, at whose summit he may ho to find a comfortable branch fr which it is his delight to feed. ascends as long as the rope holds o When he reaches the level of t window, his master maneuvers h against the bars, feeling which, a imagining them to be branches, t sloth promptly fastens himself by t feet, lets his head fall, and pass into a delicious slumber.

"We now have our sloth firmly fixed to the bars. No weight, pulli from below, can dislodge him. other words, the burglar has chored his rope outside the windo of the room to which he desires gain admittance. Now, aided darkness of one of these perpetu London fogs, he ascends the ro bracing himself against the bri walls, reaches his destination, effe his haul, and then descends in t same way, afterward pulling do the animal, probably through so slip-knot arrangement. It was a m ingenious contrivance, Langton, and our robber had not wrongly adjust his rope, so that it slipped round throat and strangled him, he m have scrambled up out of reach managed to elude us."

He was hauling himself up the wall.

Physical Strength.

There is no known drug that add in the slightest degree to strength or vigor of the human bo and no "tissue-builder" on earth cept food. The only universally liable "bracer" is exercise in the o air and sleeping with your windo open, and the only permanent ton to the body are fresh fruit, red m and green vegetables. A dollar's wo of cream contains ten times "strength" of any dollar-bottle of to ever invented. Eat plenty of r foods, the best you can raise or b and you'll have little need of eit patent foods or patent medicines. A remedy which universally, or even the majority of all cases, produces sense of exhilaration and impro ment is perfectly safe to contain "cheater" of some sort, usually eit alcohol or opium.—Woods Hutchins M. D., in the Delineator.

Few Arrivals.

"He says the first thing that co into his mind."

"That being the case, I presu there are long intervals of time which he says nothing."

Similar Sensations.

"Meet any icebergs on your w across?"

"No; but several of us tried to f with a Boston girl who was on boar