The Man Who Knows.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS:—Richard Hatteras, an Australian is left to fend for himself at a tender age. He amasses a competency and determines to see England. In Sydney, where he goes to take boat, he rescues Miss Wetherell from thugs. She with her father is on the same boat. They fall in love. Her father objects; they become secretly engaged. After a brief stay, her father is forced to return to Australia. Hatteras is entangled in a plot surrounding the inquest of Beckenham, whose father, the Duke of Glenbarth, sends his son on a charge of his tutor, Mr. Baxter, to see the world. The head of the plot is Dr. Nikola, who has as agent Baxter, Eastover and Prendergast. Hatteras sails to Australia on the boat in which Beckenham starts, out of his trip. They both disembark at Port Said and are imprisoned by Dr. Nikola. After three weeks they are liberated and find that Nikola has sent some one off to persecute Beckenham in Australia. The Beckenham in Australia. They follow and find the impersonator the guest of the vice-regal house in Sydney; Beckenham disappeared. Hatteras alarmed exposes the impostors, who flee, Miss Wetherell is abducted by Nikola.

CHAPTER II Continued.

"I remember him," he said. "They sat in No. 5 down the passage. I remember, and the man you mention entered a nobbler of rum for his friend and a whisky for himself."

"That's the fellow we want," said the Inspector. "Now tell me, have you ever seen him before?"

"Never once," said the barman, "and that's a solemn fact because if I had I couldn't have forgotten it. His figurehead wouldn't let you do that. No sir, to-night was the first night he's over been in the Canary Bird."

"Did any one else visit them while they were in the room together?"

"Not as I know of. But I'm not so certain. Yes; I remember seeing a tall, good-looking chap come down the passage and go there. But it was some time, half an hour maybe, after I took in the drinks."

"Did you see him come out again?"

"No. But I know the barkeeper got very drunk, and had to be carried out to the carriage."

"How do you know that?"

"Because I saw the other two doing it."

The Inspector turned to me.

"Not very satisfactory, is it?"

"No," I answered. "But do you mind letting us look into No. 5—the room they occupied?"

"Not at all," said the landlord. "Will you come with me?"

So saying he led the way down the passage to a little room on the right-hand side, the door of which he threw open with a theatrical flourish. It was in pitch darkness, but a few seconds later the gas was lit, and we could see all that it contained. A small table stood in the centre of the room, and round the walls were ranged two or three wooden chairs. A small window was at the further end, and a fireplace opposite the door. On the table was a half-smoked cigar and a torn copy of the Evening Mercury. But that was not what we wanted, so I went down on my hands and knees and looked about the floor. Presently I described a small ball of paper near the grate. Picking it up I seated myself at the table, and turned to the barman, who was watching my movements attentively.

"Was this room used by another people after the party we are looking for left?"

"No, sir. There was only in either of these two bottoms."

"You are quite certain of that?"

"Perfectly certain."

I took up the ball of paper and unrolled it and spread it out upon the table. To my disgust it was only the back half of an envelope, and though it had a few figures dotted about upon it, it was of no possible use to us.

"Nothing there?" asked the Inspector.

"Nothing at all," I answered bitterly, "save a few incomprehensible figures."

"Well, in that case, we'd better be getting up to the station and see if they've discovered anything."

"Come along, then," I answered. "We must be quick though, for we've lost a lot of precious time, and every minute counts."

I took up the Evening Mercury and followed him out to the cab, after having sincerely thanked the proprietor and the barman for their courtesy. The Inspector gave the driver his orders and we set off. As we went we discussed our next movements, and while we were doing so I idly glanced at the paper I held in my hand. There was a lamp in the cap, and the light showed me the bottom right-hand corner and the blue india-rubber stamp mark, "E. Maxwell, stationer and newsagent, 23, Ipswell Street, Woolahra."

"Stop the cab!" I almost shouted. "Tell the man to drive us back to the Canary Bird as fast as he can go."

The order was given, the cab turned round, and in less than a minute we were on our way back.

"What's up now?" asked the astonished Inspector.

"Only that I believe I've got a clue," I cried.

I did not explain any further, and in five minutes we had brought the landlord downstairs again.

"I'm sorry to trouble you in this fashion," I cried, "but life and death depend on it. I want you to come and see No. 5 again."

He conducted us to the room, and once more the gas was lit. The strip of envelope lay upon the table just as I had thrown it down. I seated myself and again looked eagerly at it. Then I sprang to my feet;

"I thought so!" I cried excitedly, pointing to the paper; "I told you I had a clue. Now, Mr. Inspector, who wrote those figures?"

"The man you call Nikola, I suppose."

"That's right. Now who would have bought this newspaper? You must remember that Thompson only left his box to come in here."

"Nikola, I suppose."

"Very good. Then according to your own showing Nikola owned this piece of envelope and this Evening Mercury. If that is certain, look here!"

He came round and looked over my shoulder. I pointed to what was evidently part of the gummed edge of the top of the envelope. On it were these three important words, "—swell Street, Woolahra."

"Well," he said, "what about it?"

"Why, look here!" I said, as I opened the Evening Mercury and pointed to the stamp-mark at the bottom. "The man who bought this newspaper at Mr. Maxwell's shop also bought this envelope there. The letters 'swell' before 'street' constitute the last half of Ipswell, the name of the street. If that man be Nikola, as we suspect, the person who served him is certain to remember him, and it is just within the bounds of possibility he may may know his address."

"That's so," said the Inspector, who was struck with the force of my argument. "I know Mr. Maxwell's shop, and our best plan will be to go on there as fast as we can."

Again thanking the landlord for his civility, we returned to our cab and once more set off, this time for Mr. Maxwell's shop in Ipswell Street. By the time we reached it it was nearly three o'clock, and gradually growing light.

As the cab drew up alongside the curb the Inspector jumped out and rang the bell at the side door. It was opened after awhile by a shock-headed youth, about eighteen years of age, who stared at us in sleepy astonishment.

"Does Mr. Maxwell live at the shop?" asked the Inspector.

"No, sir."

"Where then?"

"Ponson Street—third house on the left-hand side."

"Thank you."

Once more we jumped into the cab and rattled off. It seemed to me so anxious and terrified was I for my darling's safety, that we were fated never to get the information we wanted; the whole thing was like some nightmare, in which, try how I would, to move, every step was clogged.

A few minutes' drive brought us to Ponson Street, and we drew up at the third house on the left-hand side. It was a pretty little villa, with a nice front garden and a creeper-covered verandah. We rang the bell and waited. Presently we heard some one coming down the passage, and a moment later the door was unlocked.

"Who is there?" cried a voice from within.

"Police," said my companion as before.

The door was immediately opened, and a very small sandy-complexioned man, dressed in a flaring suit of striped pyjamas, stood before us.

"Is anything wrong, gentlemen?" he asked nervously.

"Nothing to affect you, Mr. Maxwell," my companion replied. "We only want a little important information, if you can give it us. We are anxious to discover a man's whereabouts before daylight, and we have been led to believe that you are the only person who can give us the necessary clue."

"Good gracious! I never heard of such a thing. But I shall be happy to serve you if I can," the little man answered, leading the way into his dining-room and opening the shutters with an air of importance his appearance rather belied. "What is it?"

"Well, it's this," I replied, producing the piece of envelope, and the Evening Mercury. "You see, these letters on the top of this paper, don't you?" He nodded, his attention at once secured by seeing his own name. "Well, that envelope was evidently purchased in your shop. So was this newspaper."

"How can you tell that?"

"In the case of the envelope, by these letters; in that of the paper by your rubber stamp on the bottom."

"Ah! Well, now, and in what way can I help you?"

"We want to know the address of the man who bought them."

"That will surely be difficult. Can you give me any idea of what he was like?"

"Tall, slightly foreign in appearance, distinctly handsome, sallow complexion, very dark eyes, black hair, small hands and feet."

As my description progressed the little man's face brightened. Then he cried with evident triumph—

"I know the man; he came into the shop yesterday afternoon."

"And his address is?"

His face fell again. His information was not quite as helpful as he had expected it would be.

"There I can't help you, I'm sorry to say. He bought a packet of paper and envelopes and the Evening Mercury and then left the shop. I was so struck by his appearance that I went to the door and watched him cross the road."

"And in which direction did he go?"

"Over to Podgers' chemist shop across the way. That was the last I saw of him."

"I'm obliged to you, Mr. Maxwell," I said shaking him by the hand. "But I'm sorry you can't tell us something more definite about him." Then turning to the Inspector: "I suppose we had better go off and find Podgers. But if we have to spend much more time in rushing about like this we shall be certain to lose them altogether."

"Let us be off to Podgers', then, as fast as we can go."

Bidding Mr. Maxwell good-bye we set off again, and in ten minutes had arrived at the shop and had Mr. Podgers downstairs. We explained our errand as briefly as possible, and gave a minute description of the man we wanted.

"I remember him perfectly," said the sedate Podgers. "He came into my shop last night and purchased a bottle of chloroform."

"You made him sign the poison book, of course?"

"Naturally I did, Mr. Inspector. Would you like to see his signature?"

"Very much," we both answered at once, and the book was accordingly produced.

Podgers ran his finger down the list.

"Brown, Williams, Davis—ah—! here it is. 'Chloroform: J. Venneage, 22, Calliope Street, Woolahra.'"

"Venneage!" I cried. "Why that's not his name!"

"Very likely not," replied Podgers; "but it's the name he gave me."

"Never mind, we'll try 22, Calliope Street on the chance," said the Inspector. "Come along, Mr. Hatteras."

Again we drove off, this time at increased pace. In less than fifteen minutes we had turned into the street we wanted, and pulled up about a hundred yards from the junction. It was a small thoroughfare, with a long line of second-class villa residences on either side. A policeman was sauntering along on the opposite side of the way, and the Inspector called him over. He saluted respectfully, and waited to be addressed.

"What do you know of number 22?" asked the Inspector briefly. The constable considered for a few moments, and then said:

"Well, to tell you the truth, sir, I didn't know until yesterday that it was occupied."

"Have you seen anybody about there?"

"I saw three men go in just as I came on the beat to-night."

"What were they like?"

"Well, I don't know that I looked much at them. They were all pretty big, and they seemed to be laughing and enjoying themselves."

"Did they! Well, we must go in there and have a look at them. You had better come with us."

We walked on down the street till we arrived at No. 22. Then opening the gate we went up the steps to the hall door. It was quite light enough by this time to enable us to see everything distinctly. The Inspector gave the bell a good pull and the peal re-echoed inside the house. But not a sound of any living being came from within in answer. Again the bell was pulled, and once more we waited patiently, but with the same result.

"Either there's nobody at home or they refuse to hear," said the Inspector. "Constable, you remain where you are and collar the first man you see. Mr. Hatteras, we will go round to the back and try to effect an entrance from there."

We left the front door, and finding a path reached the yard. The house was only a small one, with a little verandah at the rear on to which the back door opened. On either side of the door were two fair-sized windows, and by some good fortune it chanced that the catch of one of these was broken.

Lifting the sash up, the Inspector jumped into the room, and, as soon as he was through I followed him. Then we looked about us. The room however, was destitute of furniture or occupants.

"I don't hear anybody about," my companion said, opening the door that led into the hall. Just at that moment I heard a sound, and touching his arm signed to him to listen. We both did so, and surely enough there came again the faint muttering of a human voice. In the half-dark of the hall it sounded most uncanny.

"Somebody in one of the front rooms," said the Inspector. "I'll slip along and open the front door, bring in the man from outside, and then we'll burst into the room and take our chance of capturing them."

He did as he proposed, and when the constable had joined us we moved towards the room on the left.

Again the mutterings came from the inside, and the Inspector turned the handle of the door. It was locked, however.

"Let me burst it in," I whispered.

He nodded, and I accordingly put my shoulder against it, and bringing my strength to bear sent it flying in.

Then we rushed into the room, to find it, at first glance, empty.

Just at that moment, however, the muttering began again, and we looked towards the darkest corner; somebody was there, lying on the ground. I rushed across and knelt down to look. It was Beckenham; his mouth gagged and his hands and feet bound. The noise we had heard was that made by him trying to call us to his assistance.

In less time than it takes to tell I had cut his bonds and helped him to sit up. Then I explained to the Inspector who he was.

"Thank God you're found!" I cried. "But what does it all mean? How long have you been like this? and where is Nikola?"

"I don't know how long I've been here," he answered, "and I don't know where Nikola is."

"But you must know something about him!" I cried. "For Heaven's sake tell me all you can! I'm in awful trouble, and your story may give me the means of saving a life that is dearer to me than my own."

"Get me something to drink first, then," he replied; "I'm nearly dying of thirst; after that I'll tell you all I can."

Fortunately I had had the foresight to put a flask of whisky into my pocket, and I now took it out and gave him a stiff nobbler. It revived him somewhat, and he prepared to begin his tale. But the Inspector interrupted;

"Before you commence, my lord, I must send word to the Commissioner that you have been found."

He wrote a message on a piece of paper and despatched the constable with it. Having done so he turned to Beckenham and said—

"Now, my lord, pray let us hear your story."

Beckenham forthwith commenced.

To be Continued.

ENGLAND'S QUEER ASSETS.

GAUTRIES AND GRUMMETS, CAMELS AND SOOT ON THE LIST.

Ruby-Mines in Burmah, Also—The Most Expensive Hawser in the World—Eight Thousand Trained Elephants, Thousands of Pigeons and Thousand of Cats.

Go and tell the average man in the street that he is part owner of the richest ruby-mines in the world, and he will laugh you to scorn, says London Answers.

The mines in question are situated in Burmah, and came into our possession when that country was annexed by us in 1885. True, John Bull has leased the working of them for a term of years to a private syndicate; but the mines themselves are as much his as is St. Paul's or Westminster Abbey.

Most people think there are no catacombs save those near Rome. This is a mistake. John Bull owns some very fine ones. They are situated in Malta, near the town of Civita Vecchia, and run for miles underground. Unlike the Italian Government—which, of course, owns the Roman catacombs—John charges nothing to the people visiting his catacombs, and so, naturally, derives no direct pecuniary benefit therefrom. But there is a hole in the ground in Gibraltar, which brings him in several hundred pounds a year. It is called St. Michael's Cave, and goes straight down into the bowels of the mountain for at least fifteen hundred feet—far below sea-level. How much further it goes no one knows, for no one has ever succeeded in reaching its extreme depth, which is, perhaps, the reason why so many curious people pay their half-crowns to try. Anyhow, that queer little national asset has been worth between £400 and £600 to John every year for many decades past.

Eight pairs of callipers, 120 yards of shalloon about the same quantity of fearnought, eleven pinstocks, and seventeen gautries—so runs the first lot in a catalogue of a

RECENT SALE OF CONDEMNED

Admiralty stores. How many Britons would have any idea of what these things are—their own property, mind? Not many, it is to be presumed. Callipers are a species of compasses, made with curved legs, for measuring the diameter of round bodies—such as shots, masts, etc. Shalloon is a worsted substance used by Marines; while fearnought is a thick sort of woollen stuff used for lining porthoples. Gautries are wooden frames on which barrels are placed; and grummets—mentioned lower down on the list—are stout rings of twisted rope used by artillery-drivers. A pinstock is a species of water trough.

John owns the biggest and most expensive hawser in the world. It is kept at Sheerness, and would be used, should war break out with any Continental Power, to block the passage of the Medway River, to a hostile fleet. This Titan among wire-ropes is as big round as a sugar hogshead, over three hundred and fifty yards in length, weighs nearly six hundred tons, and cost about £30,000. Similar hawsers are also kept in readiness to stretch

BETWEEN THE FORTS,

guarding the mouth of the Mersey, and at other places.

All the flotsam and jetsam from the unnumbered thousands of wrecks that have been cast away on his shores during the past five or six hundred years is his—if he could only get at it. There is enough wealth hidden under sand and rock, within the three-mile limit all round the British Isles, to pay the cost of the Boer War two or three times over, in addition to carrying on for a year or two the ordinary government of the country. Think how nice it would be to have no taxes whatever, direct or indirect, to pay next year! To be able to buy tobacco at sixpence a pound, whiskey at eightpence a bottle, and bitter at a halfpenny a glass. All this could easily be done if only this one asset of John's could be promptly realized.

John owns enough animals and birds to stock half a dozen Zoos. In India alone he possesses more than eight thousand trained elephants. They are used solely for military purposes—moving heavy pieces of ordnance, drawing huge transport-trains along mountain roads, and so on. In nearly every village in certain districts in India also is a curious little ferret-like animal, which belongs to him. It is called a mongoose, and is kept there by Government to destroy

THE VENOMOUS SERPENTS

which play such havoc among the barefooted and careless natives. On Ascension Island are numbers of his turtles. Needless to say, however, he never gets to taste one of them. They are reserved for the delectation of Royalty and my lords of the Admiralty.

Carrier-pigeons by the thousand are his; and he pays some hundreds of pounds every year for cat's-meat for the sustenance of his two or three thousand cats. These latter are for keeping down the mice in the Government clothing and other stores, and the vote for their maintenance is solemnly passed every year by the House of Commons. John Bull's stock of camels is not now nearly so large as it once was. During the operations against the Mahdi in 1884-5 he owned over 250,000 of the ungainly but useful brutes; now not more than a fifth of that number are his.

Tons of canned and preserved provisions, wine, whiskey, and medical comforts are deposited every year by John on

VARIOUS UNINHABITED ISLANDS

throughout the world. They are intended for the sustenance and relief of possible castaways. It has been estimated that this curious little asset is never worth at any one time—having in consideration the cost of carriage, difficulties of landing, etc.—less than £10,000.

Undoubtedly, however, John Bull's queerest asset is a quantity of soot, which comes to him annually from out the palace chimneys of the Maharajah of Kishengarh. Many years ago one of these chimneys caught fire, and, as the building was contiguous to certain Government stores, his Highness, was politely requested to sweep them a little more regularly and frequently. To this very reasonable request the maharajah demurred. He never had had his chimneys swept, he protested and, besides, he had no chimney-sweep on his suite of retainers. Finally, the Government, to save any bother, undertook to see the work done, receiving in return the resultant soot; and, as the labour cost little or nothing, while the soot was highly esteemed by the Hindoo agriculturist, there has always been a small surplus of profit to the Government's credit. Last year this surplus amounted to thirty-eight rupees—say, £2 6s.; so that each John Bull was in pocket therefrom to the tune of about sixty-nine five-millionths of a penny. And all because the Maharajah of Kishengarh objected to see to the sweeping of his own chimneys.

WELL GUARDED SECRETS.

British Cabinet Proceedings Kept Carefully by Ministers.

The British Cabinet is the most important secret society in the world and no meeting is held that can compare for gravity of possible issue with a Cabinet Council. The room in Downing Street where the Cabinet meets is large and furnished with the severity of a city counting house. The members having assembled the sound-proof doors are closed, and under no circumstances are they re-opened except at the bidding of the Prime Minister. Occasionally a messenger is seen to leave the House carrying a despatch box, every document in which bears the inscription; "Most secret; for the use of the Cabinet." Immediately after the close of the Cabinet the Premier sends by special messenger to the sovereign a full account of its deliberations. And this is the only record of the Cabinet that is kept.

ONLY ONE BREACH.

Only once within half a century has a Cabinet Minister deliberately broken his solemn oath of secrecy. It is a romance of the days of the Corn laws. A beautiful and fascinating lady cajoled a Minister into telling her what decision Sir Robert Peel and his colleagues had arrived at, and then sold the information to The Times. The misguided Minister tendered his resignation, but it was not accepted.

Perhaps the Cabinet's record in preserving a great secret was furnished by the resignation of Mr. Gladstone. For three months the secret was kept intact. One day the veteran statesman appeared at Downing street. He who had attended more Cabinets than any other man of his time, and had in four successive Ministries presided over the deliberations of his colleagues, had come to bid them farewell. He knew it, but the outside world was ignorant of the fact, and was kept in ignorance, in fact, from December to March. The scene when the last farewells were said in the Council Chamber was almost pathetic one.

AN EPISODE.

One of the Ministers present on that historic occasion narrowly escaped some time previously inadvertently revealing a Cabinet secret of supreme importance. He went to his club to write a letter, and left on the table the secret draft copy of the Home Rule bill printed for the use of the Cabinet only. Shortly after his departure a fellow member of the club had occasion to use the same table and found the document lying on it. This gentleman was himself the private secretary to a Cabinet Minister. He realized in a flash the consternation that would be caused if the contents of the document got abroad, and inclosing the paper in an envelope and carefully sealing it, he called a cab and drove at once to Downing street. One can imagine with what relief the Minister received the missing document.

78 per cent of English electors vote on an average. In France 81 come to the polls, but in Switzerland and in Sweden the usual average is only 40.

MORE MEN THAN WOMEN.

STATISTICS SHOW MILLIONS MORE MALES THAN FEMALES.

Some Men Must Stay Bachelors Europe Is the Only Continent in Which There Is a Preponderance of Women.

There are 15,300,000 men in this world who would have to remain single though all women on earth should become married. In other words, there are 5,300,000 more men than women in this world.

The total population of the earth is estimated at about 1,700,000,000. More than one-half of them have been actually counted, while the other half is roughly estimated. Statisticians have investigated the question of the numerical strength of the two sexes, and their estimates involve 1,283,000,000 souls, or about 55 per cent of the total population of the earth. According to their estimates Europe has a population of 345,000,000, with 3,066,000 more women than men. Asia has a population of 835,000,000, with a male plurality of 16,000,000. Africa with a population of 200,000,000 has about 1,000,000 more women; in America, which has a population of 102,000,000, there are about 1,000,000 more men than women; the plurality of men in Australia with a total population of 5,000,000 is about 550,000.

IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES

According to the statistics there are 63,000,000 more men than women in the world, giving the male majority of 15,300,000. Europe is the only continent with a preponderance of women.

The preponderance of women in the population is the same in Italy, Bulgaria, Servia, Montenegro, and in Spain. In Belgium there are about 500,000 more women than men. In Great Britain, Norway, Russia and Sweden women show a majority of 1,000,000. In Germany there are 639,000 more women than men. In France the majority of women is 1,000,000. In Russia there are 2,000,000 more women than men.

SOME CAUSES.

It has been contended that more women than men are born, but this is not a probable explanation. In Australia, where the population is the most scattered, there are more men than women. Hunting, fishing, and even those occupations of a pastoral character are invariably followed by men. In the great industrial centres there is a preponderance of women. Other causes have influenced the proportion of the sexes in different countries. The laws of succession, and the conditions of marriage, and the rights of women, have had their influence. In Christian countries, and in Europe, there are more women than men. In Asia, Africa, and America, the reverse is the case. The climate has much to do with the matter. Dry and warm climates have more men than women, while the opposite is the case in cold and wet climates.

DISTRIBUTION.

Heavy rainfall is the cause of Liverpool and other districts in the north of England being the most populous districts in the world. In Great Britain and Ireland there are about 30,000,000 people living within a radius of sixty miles from London. In Europe there are 400,000,000 people living within a radius of sixty miles from Paris. In the United States there are about 50,000,000 people living within a radius of sixty miles from New York