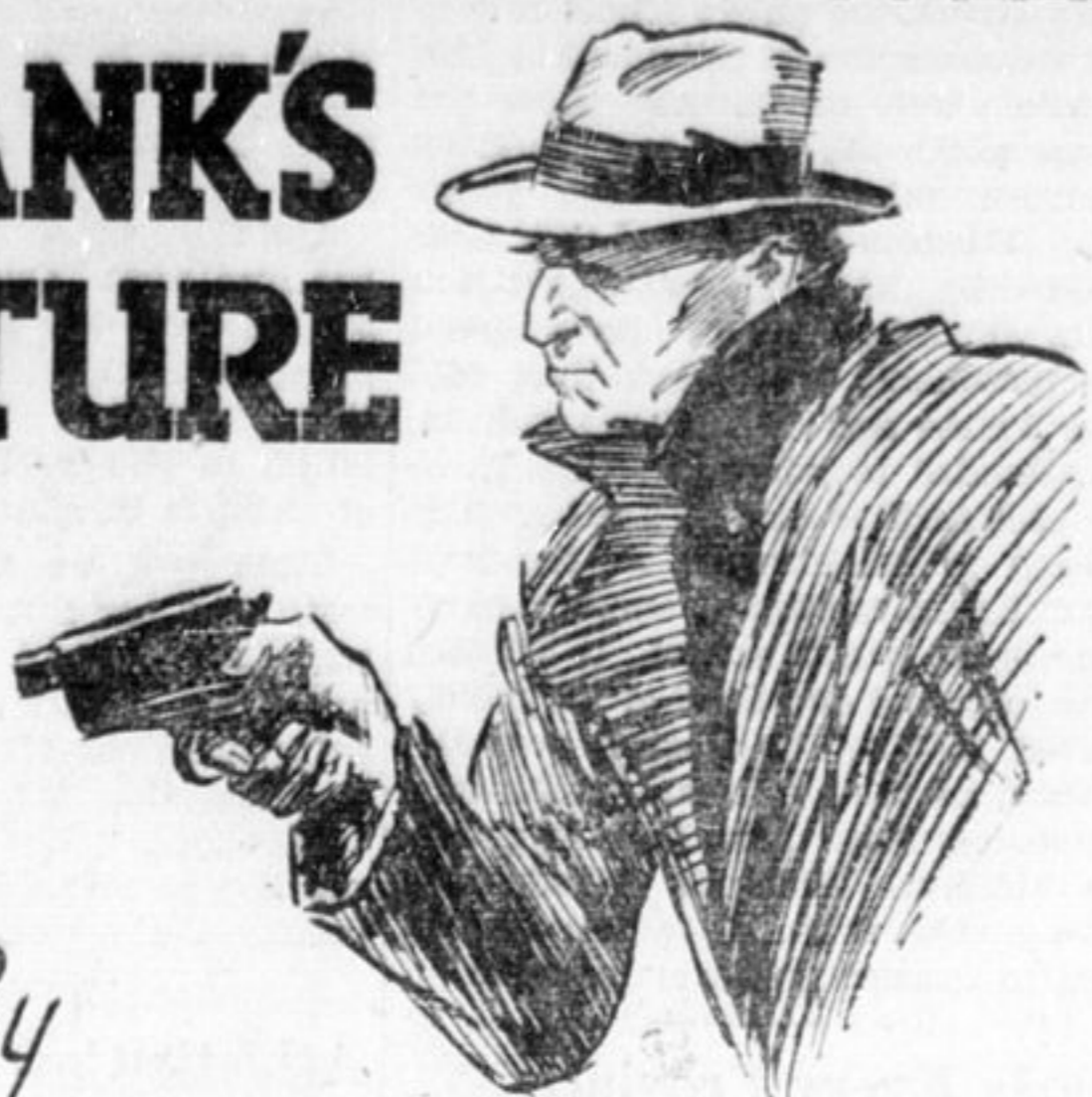


BROCKLEBANK'S ADVENTURE



By **R. A. J. WALLING**

AUTHOR OF "THE MAN WITH THE SQUEAKY VOICE," ETC.
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CHAPTER I DANGER SIGNALS

The great express of the P.L.M. thundered through the darkness down the valley of the Rhone. Brocklebank sat alone in the corner of a first-class compartment, physically comfortable but suffering severe mental unease.

He was about to engage in his first skirmish in Harrison's fantastic private war.

He had been quite easy in his mind when he landed the night before from the crowds at Cherbourg, and in the trenches at St. Lazare, in his hurried journey across Paris to the Gare de Lyon where he caught the ten o'clock train, and all through the hours of daylight swooping down through France.

But just after the stop at Avignon, when the silhouette of the Castle of the Popes had melted into the purple sky, Brocklebank went into the restaurant car for a late dinner and there, in the furthest corner, eating his last grape and drinking the last of his wine, was the middle-aged man with the narrow eyes and the close-clipped grey moustache. No doubt about it, Brocklebank had never seen him in the flesh before. But he could make no mistake. This was the man whose photograph Harrison had shown him in New York, who was part of the reason, and perhaps the main part, why Brocklebank sat in the Marseilles express this late summer evening. It made him uneasy because he could not determine whether the man was conscious of him or not. He looked up when Brocklebank entered. No recognition in his eyes. But that might mean nothing. Those narrow eyes were extremely sophisticated behind the scanty eyebrows under the thinning hair.

He took no notice of Brocklebank as he passed out of the car. But Brocklebank remembered that he had left his suit-case locked in the compartment. After what he had seen in New York, he wondered whether the narrow-eyed man might be curious about its contents. That would involve ugly conclusions—for example, that his departure from New York had been observed and cabled to England, that his destination and the object of his journey were known, and that Pamela Harrison was in the danger her uncle had imagined but hardly feared. It seemed unlikely, but it might be true. If it were true, the narrow-eyed man would not find what he wanted in Brocklebank's suitcase. He might come to the conclusion that Brocklebank had it on his person. And if so...

He hurried through his dinner and returned to his corner. There were still nearly two hours to go in the train, and then that drive late at night down to the quay at La Joliette. Brocklebank was taking no chances. He shot up the

blinds on the corridor side of the compartment and pulled out of his pocket an automatic pistol. He looked at the dull, steely-blue thing with distaste. He had never fired a shot in his life. When Harrison pressed it on him he objected, but Harrison said, "You needn't fire it because you've got it; still, you never know when it may be useful for purposes of coercion."

Well, so it was; you never did know anything. How could he have known a fortnight ago that he'd now be in the rapid on the way to Marseilles? Or that a partly bald man with narrow eyes and a little moustache would be travelling with him? Or any of the weird things that happened simply because he went down to Battery Park that Saturday afternoon?

He pictured it all now, as he sat, with the automatic or his knee, staring at the corridor windows. It was the hot and airless afternoon when you could hardly breathe in New York, that had driven him to Battery Park. There, at any rate, a man who could not afford a sea trip could get a breeze off the sea.

New York lay behind him, stretching from this tip of Manhattan Island northward for many miles. The supremely exciting city of the earth; the most exotic of all mankind's creations; with a good-humoured, casual city, hospitable and indifferent, kindly and cynical, friendly and inimical, but fascinating in all its moods. It had treated a stray Englishman well enough in its offhand way till the great depression came and turned it in upon itself. Stray Englishmen had to share the late of hundreds of thousands of Americans and men of all nations whom the New Baghdad had lured into its arms. Brocklebank, with youth and an understanding imagination, had no grouch. Old Waechter had kept him till it became a choice between Brocklebank and a man who had been with Waechter for 20 years. Then he would not have stayed if he could.

That was three months ago. The five hundred dollars he possessed when he shook hands with old Waechter had dwindled to two hundred. He had made up his mind to hang on in New York till he had no more left than would buy him a second-class passage home. Always in this amazing place there was a chance that something might happen. He smiled now at the vague platitude as it passed across the mirror of his memory. But time heaped up and the dollars diminished.

A big Atlantic transport boat passed down from her dock on the Hudson, headed for the Narrows and the Atlantic and England.

Next Saturday, perhaps... At four o'clock he began to think of returning to Twenty-third Street, east

about in his mind for ways of travelling, rejected the elevated because it ran through so many back streets, the subway because of the weather, the street car because of the noise, a taxi because it would cost him a dollar. He would walk.

Away from Battery Park the streets were as quiet and peaceful on a Saturday afternoon as the city of London. Their regular inhabitants had deserted them.

Up Broadway and through the Grand Canyon? No—he turned away from that immense cavernous alley into by-streets on the East, seeking a route less awesome in the Saturday silence. He had not gone five hundred yards before something happened.

It was on a curve in a narrow street, one of the few streets in that rectangular city that failed to be dead straight. A tall, white-haired man came from an office building. A prowling Yellow Cab approached up the other side. The man whistled and beckoned. The driver switched round to cross to his prospective fare. At that moment Brocklebank reached the corner of an alley exactly as a second man stepped out, raised his arm with a gun at the end of it, and took deliberate aim.

Brocklebank, unseen immediately behind him, dashed in and hit up his arm.

The man swore and turned upon him. Brocklebank, within an ace of death, slashed a heavy fist upward, true to the point. The gun clattered to the pavement, and the gunman with it, stretched on his back, arms spread.

The tall man and the taxi reached the corner together. The tall man gave one look at the prone figure and another at Brocklebank. He stopped and picked up the gun.

Half a dozen people were running towards them.

"You want to be in this?" said the tall man.

"Not a bit," said Brocklebank. A wallet of bills had appeared in the tall man's hand.

"Let's get out!" said he. "Driver, Canal Street. Come on, sir!"

Brocklebank was in the cab. The tall man had his foot on the running board. "Hi!"

The half-dozen people had arrived, and promised soon to be half a hundred.

"Had a fit or something," said the tall man. "Going to call the ambulance. Get on, driver."

"Hi, hi!" shouted the crowd.

"Up Pine Street. Step on it!" said the tall man, sliding back the window between him and the driver.

The taxi gathered speed, swerved across the street, took the first left-hand turn. Thirty seconds after Brocklebank had swung his arm the shouting crowd was out of sight and hearing.

A rapid step in the corridor interrupted Brocklebank's reflections. A man passed the door without looking or stopping. Brocklebank caught sight of his uniform cap. An idea occurred to him. He rang.

"Do we stop at Arles?" he asked the conductor.

"In ten minutes, monsieur."

"The time to send a telegram?"

"Just, monsieur."

"Wait a moment."

Brocklebank scribbled on a page of his notebook:

"Guichard fils, Cafe du Rat, La Joliette, Marseilles. Meet me 22-45 Gare St. Charles.—Brocklebank."

He added five francs to the fee. It was worth it. Guichard would know how to deal with a pair of narrow eyes and a clipped moustache—none better. He felt easier as he leaned back in his corner, pulled out the gun again, rested it on his knee and resumed the thread of his memories.

But for the white-haired man he might have almost forgotten by now the prone figure on the pavement and he would certainly not have been riding in the rapid from Paris to Marseilles with a revolver in his hand.

He had twisted round to look out at the back window while the cab sped on block after block to the corner of Pine Street. Not until they were in Broadway and passing City Hall Park did he relax his vigil. Then he sighed, looked at the automatic, dropped it in his pocket.

"Well, sir," he said, "my guardian angel sent you along just in the nick of time."

"Glad to help," said Brocklebank.

The white-haired man looked curiously at him.

"Englishman, of course?"

"Englishman—yes. But why of course?"

"Stigmata well marked," he replied. "We must be better acquainted. I'm going to walk a block and take another cab. Are you too busy—?"

"Never less busy, unfortunately," said Brocklebank.

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"Ah! Then—come and talk over a tea-cup, will you?"

"Delighted," said Brocklebank, and it was a fateful word.

The driver drew in to the sidewalk at the Canal Street corner. The white-haired man paid him off. They set out together, picked up another cab at Grand Street, and in 20 minutes were standing in the lobby of a Park Avenue apartment house, waiting for the elevator.

At the 12th floor the white-haired man stood aside for Brocklebank, followed him on to a landing with two doors, opened with a latch-key the one on the right, and ushered his guest into a flat.

POLICE NOT WANTED

If Brocklebank had all the stigmata of an Englishman, he thought in the white-tiled bathroom as he washed his hands, pulled his tie straight and ran a brush over his hair, they were equally marked in the man he had presumably saved from death half an hour ago.

A service flat, he concluded, when he had rejoined his host in a small sitting-room where a coloured girl was already putting out the tea equipage.

The white-haired man seemed to have difficulty in getting down to business. There was a lot to be explained. Particularly why, having just escaped violent death, having at his mercy the man who tried to murder him, and at his command a witness of the attempt, his first and most urgent impulse was to remove both himself and his witness from the scene. Glancing from the window to Brocklebank, guessing at the latter's reactions, he waited for him to open the subject...

But Brocklebank could play possum with the best.

The white-haired man finished his tea, turned away from the window, set down the cup. He produced a packet of cigarettes.

"I never met a less inquisitive man," said he, pushing a chair towards him.

"No?" said Brocklebank, seating himself. "If I may say so, I never met a less communicative man."

A smile passed over the rosy face.

"Don't you think we might stop being so excessively British?"

"I do," said Brocklebank.

"Ev' joye—by joye!" exclaimed the white-haired man. Brocklebank raised his eyebrows at this display of excitement. "You give me an idea, young man! But never mind that. For me to speak—you're right. Before I do, will you answer a question or two?"

"Depends on the questions, Mr.—"

"Yes, yes, of course. You'll see they're not unreasonable. The first is: Were you there by chance this afternoon?"

"Absolutely the merest chance." He stated the motive of his walk and his route.

"Never saw me before? Never heard of me? Don't know who I am?"

Brocklebank thrice shook his head.

"Didn't know that fellow you laid out? Never saw or heard of him before either?"

"Certainly not," said Brocklebank. "I'm walking along the street. I see you hail a taxi, and I'm wishing I could afford a taxi myself. A man steps out from the corner almost on my toes and points a gun at you. I bump up his arm. He snarls and jumps around to attend to me with the gun. It's either him or me for it—"

"And you instantly and scientifically put him to sleep!" He sighed. "I envy you that punch. And that's really and truly all there is to it?"

"I must admit to a consuming curiosity to know what it's all about."

"Naturally—naturally. Why don't I tell you what it's all about? But that's just the point—I can't. I can only thank you for saving my life."

"Please don't."

"Do you care to tell me your name?"

"No reason why not. I'm William Brocklebank—"

He paused and looked up expectantly.

"Thanks, Brocklebank," said the

white-haired man. "I'm going to be frank. I can't tell you my own name. I can give you the name I carry here, but it's a mere nom de guerre. The few people who know me in New York call me Harrison. I sign as George Harrison. My passport's in that name. But it's a cloak. I tell you that candidly. It sounds fishy to you?"

"Not necessarily. All according to the reason why you wear the cloak."

"Good. The reason is that for some little time past and to come my own name's dangerous to me—not for any disgraceful cause, Brocklebank. I beg you to believe that. You saw me this afternoon in a danger that I'd never dreamed about—"

"Our friend with the gun, then, must have got inside Mr. Harrison's cloak?"

"He probably knows nothing of Harrison. I had no idea he was in New York, or that anyone suspected me to be in New York."

"But you know him?"

"I never saw him before, but I've heard of him."

"The police—" Brocklebank suggested. "Wouldn't the police have been able to dispose of him if you'd—"

"Quite so. And why didn't I? That's blinding curiosity. I'll tell you directly as much as I dare. For the moment the answer is that to have called in the police would have been to unlock Mr. Harrison. And that's the last thing in the world I want. Before I go on, answer a few questions about yourself. William Brocklebank, an Englishman, aged about 26 or 27—?"

"Near enough."

"Yes. Good education—probably a public school—?"

Brocklebank nodded.

"Travelled a bit. Speaks French?"

"I had two years at the Sorbonne," said Brocklebank.

"Has been in New York how long?"

"Just over four years."

"Now I'm going to be personal. Well-educated young Brocklebank, with all that background, after four years in New York—in business?"

"Real estate—with a man named Waechter in Fourth Avenue, just below here."

"Are you with him now?"

"No."

"I suppose you got squeezed out in the depression. Any objection to tell-

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me about it?" Brocklebank had no objection. In a few brusque sentences he related the state of his fortune. "And when you've spent your last hundred on the voyage home, what then, Brocklebank?"

"Oh—Kismet. If nothing turns up here before I go and nothing turns up

in England when I get there I'll go and live with my mother down in Gloucestershire and dig her garden for her."

"Yes? I wonder. I wonder." Harrison had a habit of repeating himself.

"What d'you wonder about?"

"Whether a couple of thousand would be of any use to you before you start agricultural operations."

Brocklebank stared and frowned.

"Mr. Harrison—you aren't thinking by any chance that I'd accept a gift of money from you, are you?"

"Steady, steady!" said Harrison. "Do I seem such a fool as that? Of course I don't think so. But you're out of a job. If I could put you on to a job, how would that strike you?"

"If it wasn't a fake job—another cloak, shall I say—"

Harrison broke into his attractive smile.

"I must think how to put it. You're just a bit inclined to go off half-cock, aren't you? Well, listen to me, and listen through, and don't decide till I've said all by piece. Smoke another?"

Brocklebank lit a cigarette and leaned back in his chair.

"No more questions about what happened down there this afternoon. If you ask I can't answer 'em. But I want a commission—urgent one—undertaken at once, and I'm willing to pay two thousand dollars for it and carry all expenses. A simple matter—anyway, for a man of your temperament with a punch like that. Any particular cause for hanging around New York?"

Brocklebank promptly signified that there was no cause whatever.

"Could you be at Marseilles by the 20th September?"

"Marseilles? Gosh!" Brocklebank started forward in his chair.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

ible, that should reach through the hair and over the scalp, if they merely ride over the hair they don't do enough.

Now then, how to brush is the next step. Up and out. Never flat and down except when you are ready to dress the hair. Brushing flat and down may pull the hair, may even upset the wave. But brushing strand by strand up and out and manoeuvring the brush so that you really form a semi-circle over the scalp and through the hair that acts as scalp treatment and cleanser in one.

And do keep your brush clean. Otherwise its value is lost.

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BE BEAUTIFUL

By **ELSIE PIERCE**
FAMOUS BEAUTY EXPERT



Screen stars know the value and benefit of hair care. OLIVIA DE HAVILLAND always brushes her hair the well-known hundred strokes night and morning.

If Your Brush is Good and Clean Wield It—It's the First and Best Way to Keep Hair in Condition.

Last may have been "best of all" in childhood games. But in the matter of hair care the first is the most essential step in keeping the hair and keeping it in condition. That first is the hair brush.

A few unfounded prejudices against hair brushing exist. At the bottom of the whole attitude, I suspect, is laziness. But some women hesitate to brush the hair because they feel it will interfere with the wave or setting. Others on seeing a few hairs on the brush rush to the conclusion that brushing pulls out or encourages the hair to fall out.

Properly done brushing will actually prolong the life of the wave. And as for hair falling, any hairs that come out are just as well out because they are dead hairs ready for the fall. Providing the hair follicle is normal and healthy there should be a new baby hair at the root.

We know of no harm that brushing does. But what good? It cleanses the hair of surface dust and grime distributes the oil evenly along the hair-shaft, polishes the hair increasing the normal lustre of the coat. A single brushing session will often soften hair that has become quite dry, harsh and brittle.

If you aren't accustomed to brushing the hair, do start at once to form the habit. And don't be alarmed if the scalp feels a bit hurt. It will tingle. It should. That indicates that the blood is rushing to the surface, that circulation is speeding up a bit. Which is exactly what you want because the health of the scalp and hair depends on the nourishment from the blood stream.

Up and Out

Let's take for granted that your brush is a good one. It should be. It is one

of the wisest investments and second only to the toothbrush in dire necessity.

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