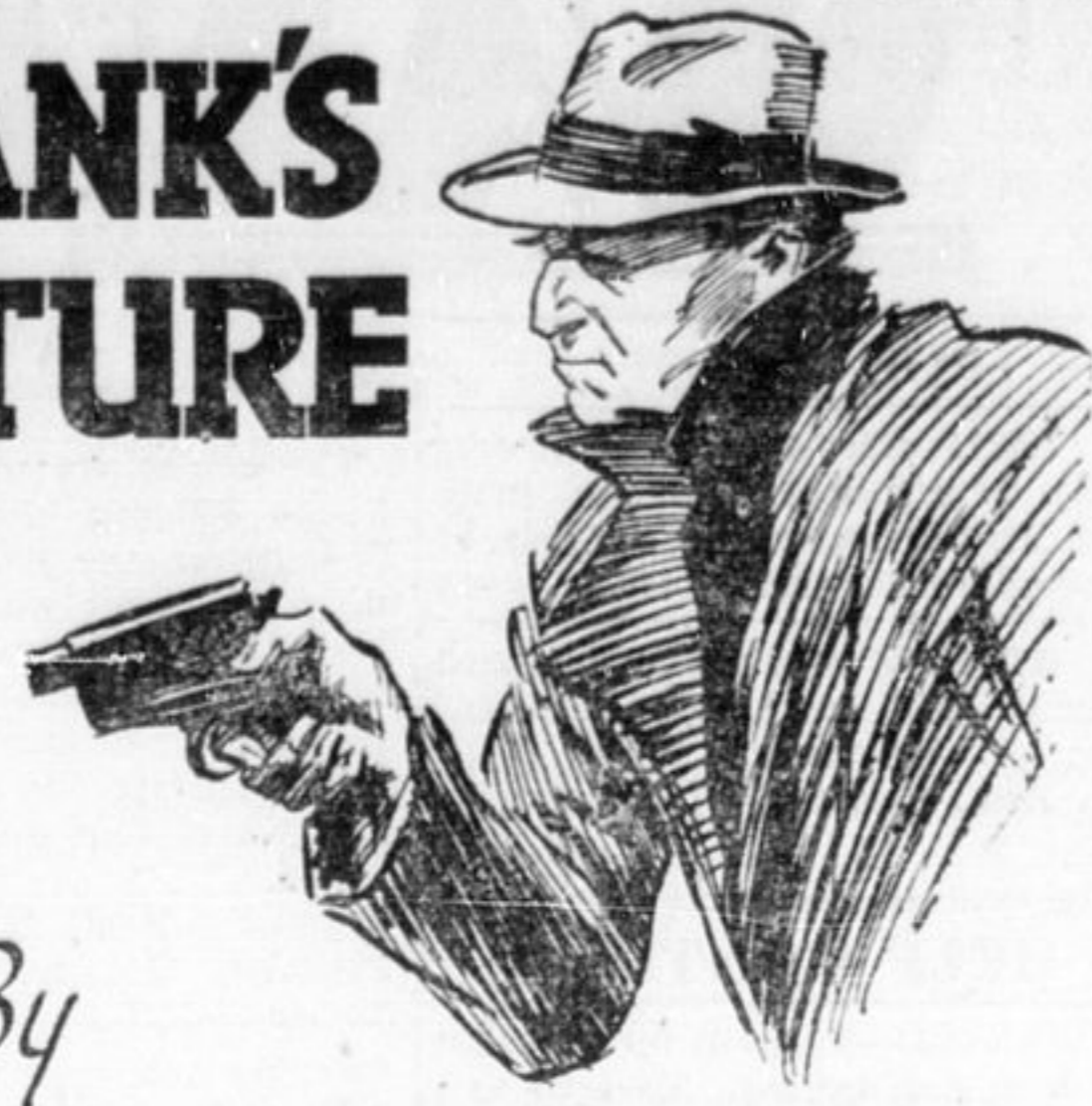


BROCKLEBANK'S ADVENTURE



By R. A. J. WALLING

AUTHOR OF "THE MAN WITH THE SQUEAKY VOICE," ETC.

CHAPTER IX COMPOUNDING A FELCONY

More than once during that astonishing evening Brocklebank doubted whether Tolefree had taken the right line about Wolston Manor. The explanation of Brocklebank that he had invented for the detection of Sir Henry Worth was unquestionably thin.

That Brocklebank had been wandering about Surrey on Sunday evening looking for the residence of Ackerton, and had stumbled on Wolston Manor, found it in the hands of a gang of desperadoes, and been knocked insensible and left to come to his senses on one of Sir Henry's beds; it was the sort of thing you could hardly have told to the Marines with any chance of getting it believed.

Yet that was the yarn over which Sir Henry Worth fumed as they climbed the hill and went through Woldingham. He sat beside an immaculately dressed chauffeur in the front seat of a large and expensive car. Tolefree and Brocklebank, in the back, could see his sanguine neck bulging over his collar and imagine his scarlet face and his bolting blue eyes.

"Which window, sir—which window?" exclaimed the lord of the manor. Brocklebank stepped back and looked along the terrace. He pointed to the window of the dining room.

"That one, I think. I won't be sure."

"Humph!" said Sir Henry, who had followed him. "And then?"

"And then?—well I rang the bell. In a little while the door opened a few inches and a man looked out—"

"What man? What sort of a man? Describe him."

"Not easy. A nondescript man. Middle aged, I should say. A weasel of a man, with a pronounced cockney accent."

cent. He asked me what I wanted. "And what did you say?"

"I said I was looking for Sir Arthur Ackerton's place. Wase this it—and if not, could he direct me?"

"Well—?"

"He invited me inside, to wait in the hall while he inquired. In a minute, he came back, asked me to follow him, and set off towards a sort of corridor. When I got to the corner I suddenly saw the universe going up in sparks, and that was all I knew about it till I woke up this morning lying on a bed in an upper room with this bump on my head bargaged up. Then, as I said before, I found the house empty and not a soul on the whole place. I worked my way back to the main road, discovered where Sir Arthur's house lay and went there—only to learn that he was abroad. I took the train back to London, and requested Mr. Tolefree to take up the matter. Doubtless, Sir Henry, you're anxious to know why I didn't at once inform the police—"

"Well—alloy my anxiety, sir."

"It's quite simple. Things in the relations between Ackerton and myself—well, undesirable to tempt the police to get curious about them, especially as Ackerton is abroad. Oh, nothing dishonourable, I assure you—merely, inconvenient to enter into explanations."

"Well—you say so," said Sir Henry Worth, with a touch of scepticism. "But, mind you, I'm not going to consider your convenience for a moment if I find any damage has been done to my place. You'll just have to tell the police. That bump on the head's your own affair, but Wolston Manor's mine."

"Quite so, Sir Henry," said Tolefree, mildly.

"An outrage—a damned outrage!" He was fishing for keys in his pocket. "You don't know what an outrage, Tolefree. Here, I go away for a fortnight at Eastbourne for the benefit of my wife's health, and I leave this place in charge of a man—"

Tolefree whistled. "It's just possible—" He stopped.

"What's possible?"

"That he may have been in whatever mischief was afoot."

"I should damwell think so!"

Sir Henry turned the key in the lock and swung open the door. The two followed him into the hall.

"Now, sir," said he, "show me what happened."

Brocklebank went to the corner of the short passage leading to the dining room.

"Your man was ahead of me—a few feet. I'd got as far as this when I was hit. That's all. Then—do we go upstairs?"

"Just a moment. You say there was a light in the dining room and the suggestion was that people were there?"

"One person, at any rate," said Brocklebank, "or the man wouldn't have been conducting me here—unless," as a flaw in his story suddenly struck him, "that was part of the trap—?"

"Humph!" said Sir Henry. The scepticism in his tone deepened. "Let's go upstairs. . . Which room?" he asked.

ed, as they reached the bedroom corridor. Brocklebank led the way there. And then he had his own surprise. The bed on which he had lain in his clothes was re-made and the edderdown placed upon it.

The apoplectic septic walked over and stared down at the bed.

"And this is where you say you were lying?"

He jerked round to Brocklebank.

"This," said Brocklebank, "is where I lay."

"Humph!" said Sir Henry. "And then you went all over the house, eh? Just show me where."

They went into the corridor.

"This door was just open," said Brocklebank. "I looked in. The room was empty. The other doors were closed. I did not try them."

"Why?" Sir Henry exploded.

"Naturally: how was I to know who might be there? You're forgetting my rather unpleasant experience, aren't you? I wasn't keen on getting another pigeon's egg on my head. I crept about as silently as I could. Went downstairs, first—"

"Well, show me, sir."

"I opened the door, and went outside."

"Very well—go on."

Brocklebank fastened back the door. "I saw the stables over there, wondered whether some servant might be about, and went to explore."

"Explore again," said Sir Henry.

In the yard . . . the car stood there. The chauffeur, sitting on the running board, watched the procession as it followed the wall . . .

"I found everything locked up except this garage. I looked in. It was empty," said Brocklebank.

Sir Henry looked over his shoulder, passed him, and went in. He stood for a moment at the corner where Brocklebank had propped Mr. Norrie.

He walked to the window-sill and picked up what was left of the garden line. He gazed for an instant in Brocklebank's eyes.

"What next?"

"I went back to the house, came to the conclusion that it had been abandoned, went through it room by room, and found that I was right. No one there. I took the liberty of having a bath. And then I felt hungry, and prospected for food."

"You did, did you? I fear you must have found my hospitality somewhat lacking in warmth, sir."

"I found only a few scraps of biscuit at the bottom of a tin in the pantry, and two glasses of water—"

"Show me—show me!" said Sir Henry.

In the pantry . . . an empty biscuit tin. "Humph!" came the ritual word.

In the kitchen, nothing—not even a glass on the table.

"It's as if you'd never been here," said Sir Henry.

"But I was. The place has been cleaned up since. That's where I sat and had my breakfast—"

"Mr. Brocklebank, it seems to me you can't prove that you were ever in this house at all! Or that the whole thing wasn't a dream, or a hallucination. Tolefree, can you make sense of it?"

"Not a penworth," said Tolefree. "Still, I believe Mr. Brocklebank's telling the truth. There are certain little indications, Sir Henry. By the way, Mr. Brocklebank what you thought would be a suitable payment for the breakfast you took?"

"Gosh, yes! I'd forgotten that, Tolefree. Unless it's been cleared away as well, you'll find a shilling on the corner of the table where I sat," Brocklebank pointed.

Sir Henry took two steps, peered, picked up a coin, looked at it suspiciously.

"But you might—no, you couldn't have—"

"What?" asked Brocklebank.

"No—I apologize. Never mind. I accept the evidence. You haven't been near that corner since we came in. Well, Tolefree—why didn't they take the shilling when they cleared up?"

"Pretty plain, isn't it? A shilling can be marked. If I were on a secret job in such circumstances, I should certainly be wary of coins left about so casually."

"Ye-es? I suppose you would, Tolefree." Sir Henry handed the shilling back to Brocklebank. "Well, sir," said he, "that's conclusive. And what the devil does it mean, Tolefree?"

"Seems to me that your house was being used for some unknown reason by unknown people who were anxious not to have their presence broadcast. Mr. Brocklebank interrupted them. They panicked, and took a violent course with him in a hurry, but were sorry for it afterwards. Your servant must have been in the game, whatever it was. They probably left him to watch Brocklebank off the premises and then clean up."

that I can see. Nothing valuable for them to take, anyway."

"That's a question I can't answer, Sir Henry, but come to the dining room a moment," said Tolefree. "You'll be able to read clearly enough what happened, though why—that's another question." He moved out from the kitchen. Worth and Brocklebank followed him. In the dining room . . .

"It's quite clear," said he, "as you perceive, that at least five persons were here, and that they had a meal."

"Where's your evidence?"

"Why, here!" Tolefree pulled out the chair Stubbs had occupied. "Look at the floor. Your man tidied up, but he didn't sweep the carpet. You'll find there the remains of a meal. It's rather dark, but—wait."

The Significance of Bread Crumbs

He took out his torch and switched the light to the floor. Three specks of white showed, just visible and no more. Sir Henry's face grew redder as he crouched to look.

"Might be anything," said he.

"It's only one thing, Sir Henry," Tolefree picked up the white specks, placed them on the shining table, shone his light close to them. "Breadcrumbs. Fairly fresh. Wait—on that one a trace of yellow. Mustard. The man who last sat on that chair ate sandwiches—or a sandwich. Under four other chairs you'll see similar evidence. Come round."

The wrathful proprietor of Wolston Manor bent to look at a few microscopic crumbs under each of the four chairs.

"Sandwiches," said Tolefree, solemnly. "And—beer. Undoubtedly beer." Sir Henry frowned at him. "Yes, and bottled beer," he continued, "undoubtedly bottled. The beer was lively, for it frothed over and was spilt on the carpet. Down here, Sir Henry, and smell."

Tolefree was on his knees, putting his nose to the ground. Worth was beside him, his neck bulging over his collar, endeavouring to get his nose down too.

"No doubt about it, Sir Henry. They borrowed your dining room for a supper party. And then, for some reason or other, they had a rough house. Come here and I'll show you."

They went to the doorway and Tolefree directed his torchlight to the carpet there and went to his knees again.

"Spot of blood," said he. "Someone was hurt. Yes—by jove! and it's still damp."

He showed a stain on the finger he pressed into the carpet. Sir Henry Worth seemed nearer to apoplexy than ever. When Tolefree got up he stood with bolting eyes in a purple face, regarding his dining room carpet.

"Police!" said he at last. "Brocklebank or no Brocklebank, I'm going to call in the police!"

"Of course, I expected you would, Sir Henry. But," said Tolefree, pocketing his torch, "is there any need to drag in Mr. Brocklebank—at any rate, for the present? He's anxious to be kept out of it until he can see Sir Arthur Ackerton. And you've evidence enough of unlawful proceedings without him."

Sir Henry's face turned gradually from purple to red as he thought this over.

"Well—perhaps," said he. "But if they can't get on without him—"

"Oh, then—" said Tolefree. "But I guess they'll get after the little squirt and soon discover the company he's been keeping and what wickedness they specialize in." Tolefree looked out over the silent, deserted lawn to the thick fringe of trees. "Just the place for a bunch of conspirators to be sure of an absolutely private meeting."

The perquisition of Wolston Manor came to a sudden end.

"I'll think it over, Tolefree," said Worth. "Let you know to-morrow what I've done. Much obliged to you for putting me wise. Wait till I get hold of Mr. Benson, that's all! Now—where shall I take you two?"

Tolefree and Brocklebank left the car at the corner of the lane. They refused to put Sir Henry Worth to the trouble of taking them back to London. Here he was 20 miles on the road to Eastbourne. They would find their way to the station and return by train. They walked towards Woldingham.

"Now," said Brocklebank—

Now perhaps Tolefree would try to make sense of the farce. Why all this play-acting? Made Brocklebank feel a fool if he didn't look one. Tell thirteen lies to the dozen? Was it just to spoof this old pot-belly into believing him the world's best detective—with his crumbs and his blood spots that he knew all about beforehand? And how did all this help him, Brocklebank, on the road to Pamela?

"You can bet Sir Henry Worth would have been only too delighted if he'd told him the exact truth—but that if we had 'twould have been good-bye to our chance of coming up with your friends before Thursday."

"What!" cried Brocklebank.

"No mistake, Brocklebank. I'd wager my watch Sir Henry Worth knew exactly what was going to happen in his dining room last night—up to the point where you came in and upset the apple-cart. I'll bet now that he gets after his little squirt all right—not to hand him over to the police, but just to discover from him what did happen after you turned up."

"You mean—he's in it too?" The astonished Brocklebank stopped in the road.

Tolefree nodded. "To this extent—"

that he means to be in it if it comes off, but will be completely out of it if it don't. I know my Worth."

"Well, I'm damned!" said Brocklebank, as they moved on.

"Oh yes—and he knows me. That impulsive, sanguinary manner of his makes a jolly good bluff to cover a cool, calculating financier. My dear chap—a man such as Worth looks to the naked eye would never have screwed Wolston Manor and a Rolls Royce out of a reluctant world. The joke is that Sir Henry Worth was never more disgusted in his life than when I told him on the telephone of the outrage at Wolston Manor. And he's agonizing to know just how much I know, for on that depends the question whether he's going to get a share of the £100,000 boodle or not."

"I didn't see—" Brocklebank began.

"Oh, but consider! What would you have done if you'd learned that some gang of toughs had been using your fine house as Liberty Hall in your absence? Come down from London without saying a word to a soul about it? Gone all over the place with me and done your damdest to prove there was nothing in it? Dreams, hallucinations—you remember?"

"Well—perhaps—"

(To Be Continued)

Dog Bites Children at South Porcupine

Youngster's at School Attacked by Little Dog. Services of Doctor Needed.

South Porcupine, Ont., Dec. 12, 1936. (Special to The Advance)—A little dog caused a great commotion in the school yard on Friday at noon, just before the children went into afternoon session.

Some little girls were sliding and one fell down. The little dog came barking and jumping around, and when the child fell started pulling at her coat and legs. He forgot himself when the children started screaming and pulled and tugged harder than ever, biting through the clothes and bruising the hip and legs of Mary Elizabeth Pearce, and jumping and biting little Clara-Clare and Noreen White. The three little girls, hysterical with fright and pain, rushed into school and a teacher sent for Dr. Smith who bandaged the children and quieted their fears.

Today they are feeling a little sore and still nervous but no serious developments are feared. The little dog, after doing the damage, ran home and nobody is quite certain to whom he belongs.

Girl Guides in Timmins

Girl Guides in Timmins

The 9th I.O.D.E. Rangers held their regular meeting last Wednesday evening. The first company letter for the 2nd Lone Guide Co. was completed. Such a letter is to be compiled every month.

The Rangers decided to make a Christmas party for the Girl Guides in the Hollinger Recreation hall on Dec. 28th. A meeting will be held on Dec. 16th at 11 Main avenue to make plans for this party.

Games were played and the Guides then went to their corners where the Patrol Boxes were inspected. The standing of the respective patrols to the end of November is as follows:—

Table with 2 columns: Patrol Name and Points. Bluebell Patrol 530, Orchid Patrol 530, Forget-Me-Not Patrol 505, Heather Patrol 491, Poppy Patrol 485.

A trophy will be given at the beginning of the year to the patrol with the highest marks.

A circle was formed for campfire and many songs sung. Since next Friday will be the last meeting till after Christmas Carols will be sung, during campfire. The meeting closed with "Taps."

Brownies

The 46th I.O.D.E. Brownie Pack held their regular meeting on Friday evening in St. Matthew's Church hall. The Fairy Circle was formed and the attendance and inspection taken by acting Brown Owl Bailey.

Games were played and then the corner, work was done for the first class badge and others passed some second class tests.

A Christmas party will be held next week in place of the regular meeting. The Pack Howl brought the meeting to a close.

Probs.—Partly cloudy and somewhat colder to-night. Scattered snow flurries Tuesday.

As A Gift Suggestion Presenting Coronation A CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT IN COMMUNITY PLATE. 50 Piece Coronation Service for 8 \$49.75. Contents: 8 Teaspoons, 8 Dessert Spoons, 8 Hollow Handle Knives, 8 Forks, 8 Butter Spreaders, 8 Salad Forks, 1 Butter Knife, 1 Sugar Spoon—in FREE Coronation Chest. "Coronation" in Community Plate! A new design of regal beauty in a chest of regal splendour. Wrought to a loveliness like that of hand-made silver, "Coronation" breathes simple dignity and good taste. A masterpiece—worthy, indeed, to bear the name "Community Plate"—and to commemorate our Empire's greatest national event. HUNDREDS OF GIFTS OF DISTINCTION Sparkling diamonds, gleaming silver, glittering crystal, quality leather goods, fine watches, delicate china, hammered pewter, these are in the true spirit of Christmas and live through many years to come. Initials engraved on suitable gifts without charge. OPEN EVENINGS UNTIL CHRISTMAS C. A. REMUS 17 Fine St. N. Jewellers Phone 190

Iroquois Falls Stag Proves Big Success

Event Under Joint Auspices of Shriners and K. of C.

Iroquois Falls, Ont., December 14, 1936. (Special to The Advance)—A sum of money definitely in excess of that received last year was realized Wednesday evening at the joint Shriners and Knights of Columbus turkey stag, held in the town hall. The money will be used, part at Christmas, and part throughout the year to bring cheer and relief to distressed families.

Whenever the name of a needy family in the community is brought to the attention of the fund trustees, the circumstances are carefully and confidentially investigated by the trustees, and a grant made if there is need. The committee in charge wishes to thank the general public for the manner in which they responded. Special door prizes of one turkey were won by A. Leroux, E. Manion, E. Tardiff, G. J. Reid, J. Gauthier.

Sport coats, donated by the Abitibi

Trv The Advance Want Advertisements

Mercantile Department, were won by F. Carn and F. McGrath. The ladies attended in large numbers from 5.00 to 8.00 p.m. to mark the first time the affair has been thrown open to the ladies. The committee in charge included T. H. Wilkes, chairman, George Laroque, G. L. Cameron, J. R. Spence, Parker Faler, M. J. Smith, C. D. Morrison, Tom McDonald, Jim Cameron, Ted Watson, J. Tremblay and H. McEwan. A slight error occurred on the Iroquois election report in Thursday's Advance. In the first paragraph it was stated, due to the omission of some types, that Mayor Hogg replaced Councillor Ed Lavallee. Obviously this was a mistake; Mayor Hogg replaced G. L. Cameron, who did not run, and Mr. Lavallee was replaced by Alvin Elliott on the council. A man by the name of Cleuthier was arrested locally at the request of Timmins police Friday, charged with having stolen a packcase from a friend in Timmins. He was turned over to Timmins police by Provincial Constable J. A. Stringer Saturday.

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