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OF HEADQUARTERS :

BY MARCIN BARBER

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Miss Holcomb knitted her brows Her perplexity made her slow and hesitating of speech.

"I cannot say that," she answered. "Sometimes I thought she cared more for Mr. Griswold, and then again I would feel certain she preferred Mr. Sands. In the main, however, I always believed that Mr. Sands held her affections; while Mr. Griswold simply pleased her with his atten-

"Possibly Mrs. Missioner didn't know her own mind?" the detective "Perhaps not," agreed Miss Hol-

"Did she ever make any remarks to you that led you to believe she cared

more for one than for the other?" "None that I recall." "Miss Holcomb, do you know the history of the Maharanee diamond?"

he suddenly fiered. A quick spark of memory kindled were vaguely outlined in his mind. her mind, and with the first flash, saw them as a floating mist, she understood the import of his ques

"Mrs. Missioner told me the history of the stone," she said. "I believe there was some scandal connected with its purchase in India. She told me that when her husband obtained it there was some talk of it having been stolen from a temple and that the provincial native government tried to regain possession of it. Mr. Missioner succeeded, however, in retaining it as part of his collection.

"What opportunity did the Indian servant have of obtaining the neck

"None at all," she answered hopelessly, "unless he broke into the saie, and I believe that was not done." "Mrs. Missioner informed me that on one occasion, when the necklace was lving on the table, the servant entered the room with a box. You were in the room at the time. Was he close enough to the table to touch the necklace?"

"I remember the incident very well," she replied. "I took the box from him at the door and he turned around and went downstairs. I do not believe he was within ten feet of the table at any time."

"I don't know what to think." Britz said, after some reflection, "Al most as soon as a new clew bobs up. it falls down and I have to begin all over again. I have no more questions to ask to-day.

Fitch accompanied the detective out of the prison, begging vainly for some word of encouragement. Britz answered his questions with monosyl lables, as if he feared to commit himself with regard to the outcome of his investigation. Just before parting however, Britz said:

"Every line that develops in this case, you can rest assured, will be followed to the end. So far, nothing has been discovered that changes the aspect of the case in the slightest de-

The detective walked to Headquarters and entered the office of the

"Has Donnelly or Carson reported anything new?" he inquired. "Nothing." answered the Chief

And you? "Nothing that throws any light on

"Britz," the Chief remarked, though delivering some weighty con clusion. "I think you're working on the wrong hypothesis. You seem to have decided that Miss Holeomb is innocent. If you will survey the case as it stands, you will have to acknowledge that absolutely everything in it points to her guilt. I do not undertake to say what her motive was in stealing the jewels, unless it was sim ply the feminine lust for ornaments I feel certain, also, that she was not alone in the crime. My belief is that she took the necklace out of the safe turned it over to Dr. Fitch, or some one else, to have the duplicate made,

and then returned the false jewels to the safe." "But where were the paste gems made?" inquired Brits. "That's for you to find out," snapped

"I have personally visited every manufacturer of paste gems in this city and in Philadelphia. Boston,

Buffalo and Washington. My men I have been to all the places in the smaller cities. Manufacturers in all the other cities of the country have on," the detective said. been visited by the local police, and I The next twenty-four hours Britz receiving daily reports of the move on a trail, but that was not Britz's manner put the girl at her case. ments of Sands, Griswold, the butler, method. Crime mysteries were to him | "I took the liberty, Miss March," he | not approved by Forrest audiences.

"Why do you think Logan will dis went over the ground already cov- short course in social knowledge." cover anything? Has the real neck ered, and then swept the outlook with His smile robbed the reply of flip from a younger man would have cal lace ever been abroad?"

wrong scent." he baited,

ever left her possession.

the pastes."

Britz returned. ing the lines of your own deduction. | can begin!" he murmured. and then had the counterfeit sent back did he become aware of his presence. "I'm not sure it will," said Britz. you say? Do you know, Mr. Britz, here in four weeks? You don't give

"The crime was not conceived and tions in the detective. executed in a day," Britz returned. "Have obtained original drawings. "It is the work of long thought and Will sail to-morrow with them," the that if Dorothy's breath had not alcareful planning. The duplicates may message from Logan read. have been made any time within five He opened the second envelope and years. The substitution was made read the contents half a dozen times, tectives were more original than since the expert saw the necklace fif- as if to stamp them indelibly on his teen months ago. A man like Rans- mind. come would have detected the paste Trawings for duplicates take

at a glance. I saw him yesterday and he informed me the stones he saw

"Then, following your line of rea soning, we must conclude that the or ginal was out of the possession of Mrs Missioner without her knowledge long duplicate made? And if that is the case, then only one person could have succeeded in the crime. The secretary was the only one who had access to the safe, and she also would have known Mrs. Missioner's plans we enough to enable her to judge the length of time she could withhold the necklace without detection. Of course the theft would have been discovered at once if Mrs. Missioner wanted to wear the necklace while it was gone

stolen from the safe," Britz sald in "Then how was the substitution made?" queried the other. "I don't know," repited the detec tive gloomily. "I have yet to disco-

"The original stones were neve

the time of the substitution. "It seems to me," said the Chies "you have still to discover a goo many things with regard to this cas-As a matter of fact, you're as The at sea as on the day you took charge. "I have only begun to throw out m lines." Britz declared, "l'll land th fish before I'm through, and it won

be Miss Holcomb. As the detective left the office. could not bein a feeling of depression with possibilities but charged with d lusive signs of beckoning trails that he instinctively knew led to nowhere He was still treading lightly it mazes of the case. One false ster might be fatal, and he preferred to remain in a crouching attitude watchfulness, ready to spring from

cover at the proper moment.

Much as he deplored his enforce inactivity, he nevertheless had fat h in the final outcome. A quick menta survey of the case convinced him that the first necessity was to find the the compact brilliance of the diamond decorous little outbursts, of only in Paris, Britz believed, was the theatre was Detective-Lieutenant art of manufacturing paste gems suffi- | Britz, of Manning's staff.

thently through three weeks of tor somebody. ment for the first cablecgram. It nervous fingers.

ginal out of the safe without immedi-

into the Chief's room. "Read it!" he exclaimed. The Chief's eyes drank in the words.

but his brain failed to grasp their down the aisie, and presented the card anderlying meaning. "I don't see that this proves any thing," he remarked.

"It proves everything," volleyed Britz. "It proves that the thief was a clever draughtaman. It proves that Missioner." he spent weeks sketching the necklace, stone by stone, and it proves. "It proves all that," agreed the

to see the necklace a sufficient num-

"I will find someone who had alreturned confidently

"And if you do, what will it mean?"

the keen searchlight of his mind.

to drag forth the culprit. Then he a poor teacher." crime in the action of each possible

satisfactory conclusion. The other day you said you were con- In his preoccupation he did not obthey got it to Paris, had it duplicated, quarters. Not until the visitor spoke monds."

them any time for the manufacture of subordinate said. The first cablegram aroused no emo-

imanufacturer by young woman. Gave name of Elinor Holcomb."

Britz dismissed the visitor, left the house, and hastened to the office of Fitch. Taking the important cablegram from his pocket, he handed to the physician. The doctor's eyes lingered on each word. His face paled, his eyes bulged forward, a vioent tremor ran up and down his

"This is awful!" he groaned "It's great news for you and Miss Holcomb." the detective smiled. Fitch eyed him in perplexity. detective met his inquiring game steadtly, and, slowly folding the cable-

gram, he said "It proves beyond question she had no part in the crime. "How?" Fitch demanded eagerly.

"If Miss Holcomb had been clever mough to plan the theft, she'd have known better than to go about Paris ordering the duplicates. Also, if she had taken the diamonds, she'd never have permitted one of them to remain in her room in Mrs. Missioner's house. No, whoever stole those gems deliberately tried to throw sucpicion on her."

"But who could have conceived such dastardly orime?" Fitch blurted, a wave of anger sweeping his frame. "Whoever it was," Brits returned. either was actuated by enmity toward the young woman, or knew enough about the Missioner household to realize that suspicion would naturally fall on her, and therefore he decided to use her as a cloak to hide his own identity. However, I now have something to work on, something that will produce quick results. Dr. Fitch. you may tell Miss Holcomb that in my calculations she is entirely eliminated from participation in the crime. You may inform her also that the hund for the thief has begun."

Before the physician recovered from the pleasant shock of the detective's words. Britz was hurrying down

> CHAPTER X. Dorothy March Talks

Matinee girls in the Forrest Theamaker of the paste stones. Wheever tre differ from their sisters of other made the duplicate Maharanee would New York playhouses in that they are surely recall having done to. There factore serious than anybody in the were few European firms that could letening audiences. Caramels, marshhave made the stone. It was doubtful [mailows, chocolate creams, are forbidwhether any American manufacturer den by the unwritten law of their could have turned out a substitute to cuit. The utmost nourishment one of fool the eyes of Mrs. Missioner, even them can allow herself is a salted alfor a night. It is hard enough to get | mond nibbled surreptitiously between in a small paste gem; infinitely more gloved applause. It is not the sort of difficult is it to manufacture a coun gathering in which one would expect terfelt Maharance. Britz knew that to find the busiest sleuth of the headwhoever copied the cut and luster of quarters staff, especially with a great that marvelous stone was an expert diamond mystery on his hands. Yet of high caliner. No fain shimmer of on one of those warm January after glass could have avoiled to deceive noons that make the metropolis won-Mrs. Missioner. The laboratory fire | der if it is being metamorphosed into that gleamed from the duplicate was a winter resort, one of the most inthe work of years of experiment, and terested auditors in the select little

ofently developed to bring forth a sat- | On the surface, that is to say in istactory duplicate of the Maharanee. reality, he was not listening to a word Three weeks at least, must elapse of the Thespian culture that trickled before word would come from Logan over the footlights. But if his ears The emissary sent abroad was himself were unoccupied, not so his eyes. His a diamond expert. Before entering glance circled the auditorium like a the Detective Bureau he had been a ramrod swung on a swivel, resting on foreign agent of the United States | the stage at long intervals in a per-Department. If the dupli- functory way. Manning could have neckisce was manufactured told in a moment that his alert lien. acroad. Logan would find the manu- tenant was not at all interested in the taccurer without delay. Brits had unfolding of the attenuated plot on taith in his man, and he waited impa- | the boards; that Britz was looking for

Britz found the somebody he sought came finally, and he opened it with when his gaze fell on a slim little figure in the trimmest of dove-colored "Missioner necklace manufactured gowns, sitting in the afth row off the from drawings by three frms. Origi- centre aisle. Instantly his last prenal never in possession of manufactiense of attention to the play vanished. Keeping his eves on the grav Brits let the telegram flutter to the curves of the girl in the fifth row, he quitted his post at one side of the "I knew it!" he burst forth. "They house and walked slowly to the main curtain fell on the first act. Meanatedly replacing it with the duplicate." | while, he scribbled on a card, slipped | of an usher, and indicated the object of his interest. When the curtain fell soon how the author has succeeded on the first act, the usher hurried to the girl in gray.

"If Miss March," read the young woman, "will spare a few minutes to Brits, of Headquarters, she will con-

Dorothy gathered her wrap, glasses, Miss March?" and programme quickly, and followed too, that he went to Paris to have the the usher to the back of the theatre. The youth led her to the famous detective, whom though she had heard Chief. "But who had the opportunity of him through Doris Missioner, she beheld for the first time. She had expected to see a man whose cleverness ber of times and long enough to make was writ large on his exterior; she the sketches? Who but Miss Hoi- was disappointed by the almost com- you're in society, Miss March, and most as good an opportunity." Britz self-introduction with the sweetness ofinseparable from her mignon features, and, at his request, strolled with him to a corner of the lobby, where they "It will mean something to work seated themselves on softly tinted prettiness as a shadowy background

bent-wood chairs "You wished to see me?" inquired feel absolutely sure that the dupli- spent in the quiet of his home, his Dorothy. It was a banal question, a poor teacher." cates were not made in this country. mind focused on the problem before and a flush finged her cheeks as the Logan is on the way to Paris now, and him, trying to map out his line of pro- realized its superfluousness could not Britz protested, hitching his chair until we hear from him I don't think cedure. Plan after plan he discarded escape the greatest detective in New around to gaze at her more directly. we are safe in venturing any opinion as worthless. He could have struck | York. But Britz seemed not to notice | Over his shoulder he saw curious as to the identity of the thief. I am out blindly in the hope of stumbling it, and the simple directness of his eyes, and he realized their tate at the

and the Indian servant, but they show scientific problems to be solved by said pleasantly. "because I saw you scientific means. Step by step he across the orchestra, and I need a lingly

"Mrs. Missioner had it with her on By a process of elimination he tried "Fancy!" said Dorothy. She was so discussion of the play, and we touchthe other side, but I don't know that it to sift the real thief from the group of utterly at sea as to the detective's pur- | ed on author hip, the founder of the suspects on whom his mental efforts pose she could think of nothing else Four Hundred, the War with Spa a. The Chief's lips coiled into an were concentrated. He was unable to say save, "I fear you have sought and a dozen other subjects." Funny

turned, looking at her with respectful stand the society men of to-day, are "Wait till we hear from Paris," criminal, but he could come to no admiration. "You see, you're a so not as accomplished, even if they are ciety girl, and I know nothing of so- as talented, as the beaux of good "You're 'way off the trail," the Chief "More information, more information, more information, more information, more information, more information. persisted. "You're not even follow- tion is needed before the real work to know." | now, I'd be willing to bet a box of Mr. Britz. I'll be glad to do so." Doro | men who can draw anything excep vinced the necklace was stolen within serve the door open and the servant thy volunteered. "Especially if it will | checks." the last month. How do you suppose show in a subordinate from Head- belp you to find Mrs. Missioner's dia-

"Two cablegrams for you, str." the "It may, however, save me from seek- I think you win."

This shift of subjects was so abrupt ready been coming in catches, she ciety men. She wondered absently, if Frenchman. Analoie — Anatole — ph, the type was worth studying. "Why yes," her heattatin

came. "I believe the considered one of the best hits of the season. Very elevating you know, and-well, dif

"Modern, Miss March?" "It has two periods. The first deals with the life of to-day, the second harks back to the early Victorian period, with, I understand, an abrupt return to the present."

She was chatting quite easily with the detective now. Had she been reared in Mulberry Street instead of on Murray Hill, she could not have felt

more natural. Now, this society subject-by the way, Miss March." Brits switched again, "is there as much difference between social life then and now?" "Oh; a great deal, I should say." Her eyes twinkled. "Of course I can-

not speak with authority-from persensi observation." "I wouldn't ask you to tell me anything about Ward McAllister from personal observation, Miss March," said the sleuth. His gallantry on occasion was the wonder of the Central

Dorothy looked alarmed. Could it be great detectives wasted time on compliments, too? But a side glance at the detective's serious expression. reassured her. It was manifest even to a debutante he had no idea of making an impression along that line. She laughed frankly and looked at him again in the friendliest way.

"I know you don't want to ask me about anything so recent as the Spanish War," she said, "now, do you?" "Candidly, I don't," he rejoined. "To tell you the plain truth, I don't know exactly what I wish to ask nor how to ask it, but I have an idea you can help me, and I'm sure you will for Mrs. Missioner's sake.

"And Miss Holcomb's?" asked the girl eagerly. "She, too, you know, is a dear friend of mine.' "And Miss Holcomb's," answered the Headquarters man warmly. "Let me say, too, my dear young lady, as one old enough to be your-your-"

"Don't say my brother, Mr. Britz." interposed Dorothy mischievously. "I -I-well, I don't really see how I can be a sister to anybody else." She felt impelled to treat this strangely natural man naturally—she, who despite her inexperience, could freeze presumption with a glauce, felt that way. It was a tribute to his adaptability.

Britz laughed. "Miss March." he said with more heartiness in his tone than had colored it in many a day. "if I were not so busy, it would be a delight to be an elder brother to you. But I guess you're not interested in my impulses. and we were talking of the play."

"Oh, yes, 'the play's the thing,' Dorothy countered with keen relish of the situation. If subtlety was his intention, she would show him what woman-Dorothy was all of nineteen a woman could do. "I never would have supposed," she added, allowing herself full measure of mischief "that a famous detective could be a matinee man."

Britz winced. His ready good nature parried her shafts, however, and it was with the same slow smile that he replied

"Does the author reconcile the manners of the two periods, or, is the piece one of those problem plays that leave everything to the audience? You see, Miss March," he went on. "Mulberry Street gets to Broadway occasionally.

"I don't know, Mr. Britz." She tried to recall the advance notice of the production. "This is the first time I've soon it. I dare say the playwright has bridged the gap some

"It's a wide gap to bridge," observed the detective thoughtfully. "From reading nineteenth century novels. I should say it would be hard for the writer to hold interest with such a groundwork for his plot. wouldn't have dared to take the ori- exit, whence he watched her until the Things were so different fifty years

"Exactly what my grandfather He picked up the message and burst a liberal tip into the receptive hand says." Dorothy retorted, fun flashing in that mignon face. "But we'll know she added. "The orchestra is nearing the end of this selection.'

"Even their amusements were different," mused Britz, "Instead of golf, tennis, autoing, yachting, they had archery, croquet, sketching, and fer a favor and serve her friend, Mrs. square dances-I don't suppose anybody in society sketches nowadays,

"I'd hardly say that." she replied. There are a few talented men-"And many women-

"Oh, almost all women are more or less artistic," said Dorothy with conto the men on that account." "The venture to say-well, of course, mouplace appearance of the man who I'm not." Britz apologised, "but still faced her. But she acknowledged his I feel pretty certain you can't think

> "Of course, if you don't think I can think, Mr. Britz," said Dorothy with mock indignation that accented her emphasizes a jewel, "why, you can't expect-but I told you you'd find me

"Now, Miss March, Miss March," soon must end. Lobby firtations were "Well, Mr. Britz?" This challeng-

"Well, Miss March," and his smil led caressing, "we've started with "Kind o' looks as if you're on the sought to discern the motive for the "Well, I don't know, now," Brits re. about to say that from all I under "If there's anything I can tell you. | bonbons you don't know half a dose;

Then, meditatively, "Half a dozen,

ing them in the wrong place. You "You don't know as many as six?" seemed to enjoy the play, Miss Britz inquired, as if the fate of empires hung on his winning the wager that as yet was only a hypothesis. "It's humiliating, isn't it?" she sa'd naively. "But I don't. There are two might have gasped. It was evident de- or three, though-Teddy Lorimer and Mr. Griswold, and that queer little

(To be continued

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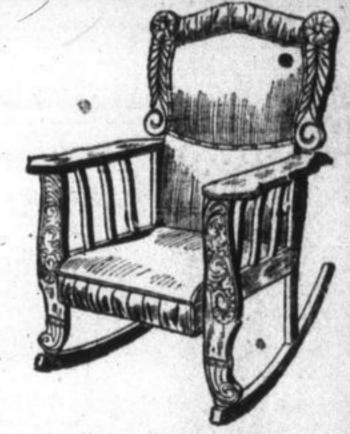
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