

THE BURGLAR AND THE PUBLIC HOUSE.

'A fine public-house,' said Blanco Watson, the humorist.

'Yes,' I replied, looking at the building we were approaching, 'but a strange position—away from the high road, and surrounded by villas.'

'A very strange position. We will rest in the public-house, and I will tell you how it came to be built in such a very strange position.'

I smiled, and followed him into the saloon bar. We sat at one of the tables, and were silent for a time, he thinking and I watching him.

'The story begins,' he said presently, 'with a burglary committed by a certain Bill Jones one night long ago.'

'Bill was a young member of his profession. Hitherto he had not attempted anything very big, but continued success in small things had made him bold. On this night he broke into the country house of a well-known actress, in the hope of carrying off her jewels.'

He succeeded in getting the jewels and was leaving with them when he found that the slight noise he had made had attracted attention. A servant girl met him at a turn of the stairway and began to shriek. He rushed by her and to the window through which he had entered. As he passed through it again he heard doors being opened, and knew that the house was fully aroused.'

'I understand,' I said. 'Bill escaped. The actress employed a detective. The detective built this public-house in an out-of-the-way place, hoping that Bill, as an out-of-the-way young man, would call in one day for a drink. Curiously enough, Bill did.'

Blanco Watson frowned. 'This is an intellectual story,' he said; 'it does not depend on coincidences.'

'I will continue. Bill avoided the first pursuit by a long run across country, and then walked toward his home, not daring to use the railway. He kept to the by-roads as much as possible, and at the close of the next day had reached the neighbourhood of London.'

'A spade lying inside a field gate suggested to him the advisability of hiding the jewels until he had arranged for their sale. After making sure that he was not observed, he entered the field and picked up the spade. A tree of peculiar growth stood just beyond him. In the manner of fiction, he counted twenty steps due north from the tree, and then dug a deep hole, placed the jewels in it, and filled it up again.'

He arrived safely home that night, but was arrested in the morning. The servant girl had given an accurate description of him to the police, and they had recognised it.

'In due course he was tried. The evidence against him was very strong. The servant girl swore that he was the man she met on the stairs; some



THE DUKE OF MANCHESTER. SEE 'ILLUSTRATIONS.'

of the villagers swore that they had seen him near the house previously to the burglary. He was found guilty and sentenced to seven years' penal servitude.

'Bill behaved very well in prison, and at the end of five years was released on a ticket-of-leave. He decided to wait until the ticket had expired, and then to get the jewels and leave the country. But a day or two after his release he walked out to look at the field.'

'There was no field. During the five years he had been in prison the estate of which the field was part had been built upon. He wandered about the houses in despair. But, as he turned a corner, he saw something which suggested hope. Behind some railings was a tree of curious growth.'

'It was the tree twenty steps due north of which he had buried the jewels. He recognised it immediately and ran toward it. Again he was in despair. A yard or two north of the tree was a chapel, and the jewels were under the chapel. He leaned

against the railings, covering his face with his hands.'

'It happened presently that the head deacon of the chapel, a kindly old man, came down the road. He saw Bill standing like one in trouble, and stopped and asked what was the matter and whether he could help.'

'For a few moments Bill did not know what to reply, but then he spoke well. He said that once he had been a burglar, but that he had learned in prison that burglary is wrong; that now he was trying to live an honest life, but that, as he had no friends, it was not easy.'

'The old man was touched. He had found Bill leaning against the chapel railings, and Bill had said that he had no friends. Was it not his duty as head deacon of the chapel to be a friend to Bill? Clearly it was.'

'He took Bill home with him; he was a bachelor, and there was no one to restrain his benevolence. They had supper and talked together. The deacon found Bill intelligent and fairly well educated and offered him employment. He was a builder in the neighbourhood, he explained, and had a vacancy in the works. Bill gratefully accepted the offer, and began his new career on the following Monday.'

'Months passed. Bill had changed wonderfully. He had forgotten his old habits and learned new ones. The deacon was delighted. Not only was Bill the best of his workmen, but he

was the most regular attendant at the chapel.'

'Bill longed for the jewels, and he worked hard because he knew money would help him to get them. He attended the chapel because while there he was near the jewels, the seat he had taken being just twenty steps due north from the tree. At first he had meditated digging down through the floor one night, but the chances of detection were great and he had given up the idea.'

'Years passed. The deacon had become an invalid, and Bill practically managed his business. He was an important man at the chapel, too, and was often entrusted with a collection-box. One day the deacon died. Soon afterward it was known that, having no near relatives, he had left his property to his friend, William Jones.'

'I see!' I exclaimed. 'Bill—' Blanco Watson shook his head. 'Bill was Bill no longer,' he said. 'He had become a man of wealth. At the next election of deacons he was one of the successful candidates. In future we must refer to him as Mr Jones, and not as Bill.'

'Mr Jones was a most energetic deacon. He introduced new members and he persuaded old ones to attend more regularly. He started a young men's literary society and a series of Saturday entertainments. He made the chapel the most popular in the district; and then, at a New Year's business meeting, he struck boldly for the jewels.'

'The chapel was too small, he said in the course of an eloquent speech. They must erect another on a larger site. There was but one such site in the neighbourhood. They must secure it before others did. He himself would undertake the building operations, charging only what they cost him. He would also purchase the old chapel. The net expenditure need not be very great.'

'The proposal was well received, and a committee, with Mr Jones as chairman, was appointed to consider the details. Their report was very favourable, and at another business meeting it was decided to carry out the proposal.'

'The necessary funds were subscribed or guaranteed. Contracts were made with Mr Jones. In the spring of that year the building operations were commenced, and by the autumn they were finished. The congregation removed to the new chapel. Mr Jones purchased the old one at a high price and entered into possession.'

'And then,' I said, 'I suppose he got the jewels?'

Blanco Watson laughed. 'No,' he said, 'he did not. He broke up the floor himself, counted the steps due north from the tree again, and dug. He did not find the jewels. He counted the steps again, and dug deeper. He did not find them. Then he tried other places, but, although he kept on until he had tried everywhere beneath the floor, he never found the jewels.'

'Why, what has become of them?' 'I cannot say. It is possible that when the foundation was being laid a workman had discovered and appropriated them. Again, it is possible that there were two trees of similarly curious growth, and that the one outside the chapel was not the one Mr Jones first saw. Again—'

'And what has the story to do with the public-house? But I can guess.'

'Of course you can. Mr Jones was very angry with the chapel members. He considered that, by false pretences, they had led him into buying the old chapel dearly and building the new one cheaply. He resigned his deaconship and then sought a way to be revenged on them. He found one. On the site of the old chapel he built a public-house—this public-house in which we have sat so long.'



DEVICE FOR UNLOADING BUNCHES OF BANANAS.



CARTS WAITING FOR THEIR LOADS.

Nervous, excitable women have now another good reason to attain self-control. An eminent French doctor maintains that just as hysteria causes nutritive disorders in other parts of the body, so can it cause nutritive changes in the teeth. These changes he describes as an atrophy, beginning as an erosion of the enamel in small spots, with rounded forms and smooth edges, and exposing the underlying tissue in the centre. The destruction of the enamel is followed by the dentine becoming very friable, which now rapidly breaks down and is absorbed.