THE ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND

(Continued from Page Seven.) "It was clamped to the floor. Did

you ever see a bed fastened like that before? "I cannot say that I have." "The lady could not move her bed. It must always be in the same relative

position to the ventilator and to the rope-for so we may cell it, since it was clearly never meant for a bell-

dimly what you are hinting at. We are only just in time to prevent some subtle and horrible crime."

"Subtle enough and horrible enough, When a doctor does go wrong, he is and he has knowledge. Palmer and move, and there reared itself from ing a decision," Mr. Patton added. Pritchard were among the heads of among his hair the squat diamondtheir profession. This man strikes shaped head and puffed neck of a even deeper, but I think, Watson, that loathsome serpent. we shall be able to strike deeper still. But we shall have horrors enough be-

away, and then, suddenly, just at the what has happened. stroke of eleven, a single bright light shone out right in front of us.

the middle window." As we passed out he exchanged a few words with the landlord, explain- upon it. ing that we were going on a late visit to an acquaintance, and that it was possible that we might spend the night our 'aces, and one yellow light twinkto guide us on our sombre errand.

There was little difficulty in entering process of official inquiry came to the our way among the trees, we reached dangerous pet. The little which I had the lawn, crossed it, and were about yet to learn of the case was told me to enter through the window, when by Sherlock Holmes as we traveled out from a clump of laurel bushes back next day. there darted what seemed to be a hideous and distorted child, who threw lawn into the darkmess.

vice upon my wrist in his agitation.

"That is the baboon."

our plans. would see it through the ventilator.

in that chair.

on the corner of the table. Holmes had brought up a long thin cane, and this he placed upon the bed matches and the stump of a candle. Then he turned down the lamp, and

we were left in darkness. How shall I ever forget that dreadful vigil? I could not hear a sound, yet I knew that my companion sat in the same state of nervous tension in which I was myself. The shutters haps she might escape every night for cut off the least ray of light, and we a week, but sooner or later she must waited in absolute darkness. From outside came the occasional cry of a night-bird, and once at our very window a long drawn cat-like whine, indeed at liberty. Far away we could hear the deep tones of the parish clock, two and three, and still we sat wait-

metal. Some one in the next room had lit a dark-lantern. I heard a gentle sound of movement, and then all was light and attacked it." silent once more, though the smell grew stronger. For half an hour I sat with straining ears. Then suddenly another sound became audible-a very small jet of steam escaping continualheard it, Holmes sprang from the bed, struck a match, and lashed furiously with his cane at the bell-pull.

"You see it, Watson?" he yelled "You see it?" But I saw nothing. At the moment when Holmes struck the light I heard a low, clear whistle, but the sudden glare flashing into my weary eyes

with horror and loathing. He had ceased to strike, and was gazing up at the ventilator, when sud. denly there broke from the silence of the night the most horrible cry which I have ever listened. It swelled up louder and louder, a hoarse yell of pain and fear and anger all mingled in the one dreadful shriek. They say that away down in the village, and even in the distant parsonage, that cry raised the sleepers from their beds. It struck cold to our hearts, and I stood gazing at Holmes, and he at me, until the last echoes of it had died away into the silence from which it

"What can it mean?" I gasped. "It means that it is all over," Holmes answered. "And perhaps, after all, it is for the best. Take your pistol, and we will enter Dr. Roylott's room."

With a grave face he lit the lamp and led the way down the corridor. Twice he struck at the chamber door without any reply from within. Then he turned the handle and entered, I at his heels, with the cocked pistol in my hand. It was a singular sight which met our eyes. On the table stood a dark-

lantern with the shutter half open, SCORES OF MANUFACTURERS throwing a brilliant beam of light upon the iron safe, the door of which was ajar. Beside this table, on the wooden chair, sat Dr. Grimesby Roylott clad in a long gray dressinggown, his bare ankles protruding beneath, and his feet thrust into red heelless Turkish slippers. Across his lap lay the short stock with the long lash which we had noticed during the day. His chin was cocked upward and his eyes were fixed in a dreadful, rigid stare at the corner of the ceiling. Round his brow he had a peculiar yellow band, with brownish speckles, which seemed to be bound tightly round his head. As we entered he made neither sound nor motion. "The band! the speckled band!"

whispered Holmes. I took a step forward. In an in-

"It is a swamp adder!" cried Holmes; 'the deadliest snake in India. He has fore the night is over; for goodness' died within ten seconds of being bitsake let us have a quiet pipe, and turn ten. Violence does, in truth, recoil our minds for a few hours to some- upon the violent, and the schemer falls into the pit which he digs for an-About nine o'clock the light among other. Let us thrust this creature the trees was extinguished, and all back into its den, and we can then was dark in the direction of the Manor remove Miss Stoner to some place of Two hours passed slowly shelter, and let the county police know

As he spoke he drew the dog-whip swiftly from the dead man's lap, and "That is our signal," said Holmes, throwing the noose round the reptile's springing to his feet; "it comes from neck, he drew it from its horrid perch, and carrying it at arm's length, threw it into the iron safe, which he closed

Such are the true facts of the death of Dr. Grimesby Roylott, of Stoke Mothere. A moment later we were out on ran. It is not necessary that I should the dark road, a chill wind blowing in prolong a narrative which has already run to too great a length, by telling ling .n front of us through the gloom | how we broke the sad news to the terrifled girl, how we conveyed her by the morning train to the care of her good aunt at Harrow, of how the slow the grounds, for unrepaired breaches conclusion that the doctor met his gaped in the old park wall. Making fate while indiscreetly playing with a

"I had," said he, "come to an entirely erroneous conclusion which itself upon the grass with writhing shows, my dear Watson, how danger limbs, and then ran swiftly across the ous it always is to reason from insufficient data. The presence of the gyp "My God!" I whispered; "did you sies, and the use of the word 'band, which was used by the poor girl, no Holmes was for the moment as doubt to explain the appearance which startled as I. His hand closed like a she had caught a hurried glimpse of Then he broke into a low laugh, and cient to put me upon an entirely wrong scent. I can only claim the merit that "It is a nice household," he mur- I instantly reconsidered my position when, however, it became clear to I had forgotten the strange pets me that whatever danger threatened which the doctor affected. There was an occupant of the room could not a cheetah, too; perhaps we might find come either from the window or the I confess that I felt easier in my mind drawn, as I have already remarked to when, after following Holmes's ex- you, to this ventilator, and to the ample and slipping off my shoes, I bell-rope which hung down to the bed. found myself inside the bedroom. My The discovery that this was a dummy. companion noiselessly closed the shut- and that the bed was clamped to the ters, moved the lamp onto the table, floor, instantly gave rise to the suspiand cast his eyes round the room. All cion that the rope was there as a was as we had seen it in the day time. bridge for something passing through Then creeping up to me and making a the hole, and coming to the bed. The trumpet of his hand, he whispered into idea of a snake instantly occurred to my ear again so gently that it was all me, and when I coupled it with my that I could do to distinguish the knowledge that the doctor was furnished with a supply of creatures from "The least sound would be fatal to India, I felt that I was probably on the right track. The idea of using a I nodded to show that I had heard. form of poison which could not possi-"We must sit without light. He bly be discovered by any chemical test was just such a one as would occur to a clever and ruthless man who "Do not go asleep; your very life had had an eastern training. The rapmay depend upon it. Have your pis- idffy with which such a poison would tol ready in case we should need it. I take effect would also, from his point will sit on the side of the bed, and you of view, be an advantage. It would be sharp-eyed coroner, indeed, who I took out my revolver and laid it could distinguish the two little dark punctures which would show where the poison fangs had done their work. Then I thought of the whistle. Of beside him. By it he laid the box of course he must recall the snake before the morning light revealed it to the victim. He had trained it, probably by the use of the milk which we saw, to would put it through this ventilator not even the drawing of a breath, and at the hour that he thought best, with the certainty that it would crawl down open-eyed, within a few feet of me, the rope and land on the bed. It might or might not bite the occupant, per-

fall a victim. "I had come to these conclusions before ever I had entered his room, An inspection of his chair showed me that which told us that the cheetar was he had been in the habit of standing on it, which of course would be necessary in order that he should reach the it fails. which boomed out every quarter of ventilator. The sight of the safe, the an hour. How long they seemed, those saucer of milk, and the loop of whipquarters! Twelve struck, and one and cord were enough to finally dispel any doubts which may have remained. The metallic clang heard by Miss Stoner was obviously caused by her stepthere was the momentary father hastily closing the door of his gleam of a light up in the direction of safe upon its terrible occupant. Havthe ventilator, which vanished im- ing once made up my mind, you know mediately, but was succeeded by a the steps which I took in order to put strong smell of burning oil and heated the matter to the proof. I heard the creature hiss, as I have no doubt that you did also, and I instantly lit the

"With the result of through the ventilator." "And also with the result of causing it to turn upon its master at the other gentle, soothing sound, like that of a side. Some of the blows of my cane came home, and roused its snakish ly from a kettle. The instant that we temper, so that it flew upon the first person it saw. In this way I am no doubt indirectly responsible for Dr. Grimesby Roylott's death, and I cannot say that it is likely to weigh very heavily upon my conscience.'

THE END

A hot July sun focused its rays made it impossible for me to tell what through a flaw in the window pane it was at which my friend lashed so upon the bed on which a sevensavagely. I could, however, see that months old child was sleeping in Benhis face was deadly pale, and filled wool, West Virginia. The bed was set afire and the baby burned to death.

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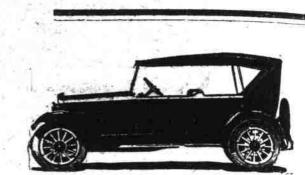
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