

thankful, madam, that you have come to your senses even at this last moment! There is not an instant to lose. Where is the letter?"

She darted across to a writing desk, unlocked it and drew out a long blue envelope.

"Here it is, Mr. Holmes. Would to heaven I had never seen it!"

"How can we return it?" Holmes muttered. "Quick, quick, we must think of some way! Where is the dispatch box?"

"Still in his bedroom." "What a stroke of luck! Quick, madam, bring it here!"

A moment later she had appeared with a red, flat box in her hand.

"How did you open it before? You have a duplicate key? Yes, of course you have. Open it!"

From out of her bosom Lady Hilda had drawn a small key. The box flew open. It was stuffed with papers.

Holmes thrust the blue envelope deep down into the heart of them, between the leaves of some other document. The box was shut, locked and returned to the bedroom.

"Now we are ready for him," said Holmes. "We have still ten minutes. I am going far to screen you, Lady Hilda. In return you will spend the time in telling me frankly the real meaning of this extraordinary affair."

"Mr. Holmes, I will tell you everything," cried the lady. "Oh, Mr. Holmes, I would cut off my right hand before I gave him a moment of sorrow! There is no woman in all London who loves her husband as I do, and yet if he knew how I have acted—how I have been compelled to act—he would never forgive me, for his own honor stands so high that he could not forget or pardon a lapse in another. Help me, Mr. Holmes! My happiness, his happiness, our very lives, are at stake!"

"Quick, madam; the time grows short!"

"It was a letter of mine, Mr. Holmes, an indiscreet letter written before my marriage—a foolish letter, a letter of an impulsive, loving girl. I meant no harm, and yet he would have thought it criminal. Had he read that letter his confidence would have been forever destroyed. It is years since I wrote it. I had thought that the whole matter was forgotten. Then at last I heard from this man Lucas that it had passed into his hands and that he would lay it before my husband. I implored his mercy. He said that he would return my letter if I would bring him a certain document which he described in my husband's dispatch box. He had some spy in the office who had told him of its existence. He assured me that no harm could come to my husband. Put yourself in my position, Mr. Holmes! What was I to do?"

"Take your husband into your confidence."

"I could not, Mr. Holmes, I could not! On the one side seemed certain ruin; on the other, terrible as it seemed, to take my husband's paper; still in a matter of politics I could not understand the consequences, while in a matter of love and trust they were only too clear to me. I did it, Mr. Holmes! I took an impression of his key. This man Lucas furnished a duplicate. I opened his dispatch box, took the paper and conveyed it to Godolphin street."

"What happened there, madam?"

"I tapped at the door as agreed. Lucas opened it. I followed him into his room, leaving the hall door ajar behind me, for I feared to be alone with the man. I remember that there was a woman outside as I entered. Our business was soon done. He had my letter on a desk. I handed him the document. He gave me the letter. At this instant there was a sound at the door. There were steps in the passage. Lucas quickly turned back the drugget, thrust the document into some hiding place there and covered it over."

"What happened after that is like some fearful dream. I have a vision of a dark, frantic face, of a woman's voice, which screamed in French: 'My waiting is not in vain. At last, at last, I have found you with her!' There was a savage struggle. I saw him with a chair in his hand; a knife gleamed in hers. I rushed from the horrible scene, ran from the house, and only next morning in the paper did I learn the dreadful result. That night I was happy, for I had my letter, and I had not seen yet what the future would bring."

"It was the next morning that I realized that I had only exchanged one trouble for another. My husband's anguish at the loss of his paper went to my heart. I could hardly prevent myself from there and then kneeling down at his feet and telling him what I had done, but that again would mean a confession of the past. I came to you that morning in order to understand the full enormity of my offense. From the instant that I grasped it my whole mind was turned to the one thought of getting back my husband's paper. It must still be where Lucas had placed it, for it was concealed before this dreadful woman entered the room. If it had not been for her coming, I should not have known where his hiding place was. How was I to get into the room? For two days I watched the place, but the door was never left open. Last night I made a last attempt. What I did and how I succeeded you have already learned. I brought the paper back with me and thought of destroying it, since I could see no way of returning it without confessing my guilt to my husband. Heavens, I hear his step upon the stair!"

"The European secretary burst excitedly into the room."

"Any news, Mr. Holmes, any news?" he cried.

"I have some hopes."

"Ah, thank heaven!" His face became radiant. "The prime minister is lurching with me. May he share your hopes? He has nerves of steel, and yet I know that he has hardly slept since this terrible event. Jacobs, will you ask the prime minister to come up? As to you, dear, I fear that this is a matter of politics. We will join you in a few minutes in the dining room."

The prime minister's manner was subdued, but I could see by the gleam of his eyes and the twitchings of his bony hands that he shared the excitement of his young colleague.

"I understand that you have something to report, Mr. Holmes?"

"Purely negative as yet," my friend answered. "I have inquired at every point where it might be, and I am sure that there is no danger to be apprehended."

"But that is not enough, Mr. Holmes. We cannot live forever on such a volcano. We must have something definite."

"I am in hopes of getting it. That is why I am here. The more I think of the matter the more convinced I am that the letter has never left this house."

"Mr. Holmes!"

"If it had it would certainly have been public by now."

"But why should any one take it in order to keep it in this house?"

"I am not convinced that any one did take it."

"Then how could it leave the dispatch box?"

"I am not convinced that it ever did leave the dispatch box."

"Mr. Holmes, this joking is very ill timed. You have my assurance that it left the box."

"Have you examined the box since Tuesday morning?"

"No. It was not necessary."

"You may conceivably have overlooked it."

"Impossible, I say."

"But I am not convinced of it. I have known such things to happen. I presume there are other papers there. Well, it may have got mixed with them."

"It was on the top."

"Some one may have shaken the box and displaced it."

"No, no; I had everything out."

"Surely it is easily decided, Hope," said the premier. "Let us have the dispatch box brought in."

The secretary rang the bell.

"Jacobs, bring down my dispatch box. This is a farcical waste of time, but still, if nothing else will satisfy you, it shall be done. Thank you, Jacobs; put it here. I have always had the key on my watch chain. Here are the papers, you see—letter from Lord Merrow, report from Sir Charles Hardy, memorandum from Belgrade, note on the Russo-German grain taxes, letter from Madrid, note from Lord Flew-ers—Good heavens! What is this? Lord Bellinger! Lord Bellinger!"

The premier snatched the blue envelope from his hand.

"Yes, it is it—and the letter is intact. Hope, I congratulate you."

"Thank you! Thank you! What a weight from my heart! But this is inconceivable—impossible. Mr. Holmes, you are a wizard, a sorcerer! How did you know it was there?"

"Because I knew it was nowhere else."

"I cannot believe my eyes!" He ran wildly to the door. "Where is my wife? I must tell her that all is well. Hilda! Hilda!" He heard his voice on the stairs.

The premier looked at Holmes with twinkling eyes.

"Come, sir," said he. "There is more in this than meets the eye. How came the letter back in the box?"

"The importance of advertising. Time was when advertising was regarded as 'blowing one's own horn,' and there have been in it at times fakes and frauds, just as there have been in other lines of business. All that has changed very perceptibly in the past three or four decades. Business men have realized that the world is too large to ask the people in it to hunt around and find out for themselves what the manufacturer makes and what the merchant has to sell. The possible consumer must be found and told about what is for sale and why he should buy it. That is all there is to advertising.—Indianapolis Star.

"The Black Weeds Are Not Always the Strongest Ones. Probably there is not one smoker in a thousand who would not be surprised and, in fact, incredulous if he were told that the color of a cigar is absolutely no guide to its strength. Yet such is the case and a fact well known to cigar manufacturers and importers. The belief of smokers that cigars of dark shade are stronger and those of a lighter shade are milder is, in point of fact, as fallacious as it is general. This is but one of many delusions harbored by consumers of tobacco which practical cigar men have smiled at and indulged from time immemorial.

A maker of Havana cigars uses but one grade or blend of tobacco in the body or filler of his cigars. Exactly the same stock is used in his chongas as in his perfectos, in his claros as in his maduros. After the cigars are made, however, his 'selector' takes them in hand and classifies them according to the relative shades of the wrappers. This is done to effect a uniformity in the appearance of each box of cigars and to enable the dealer to readily indulge the whims of the self-deluded smoker.

Inasmuch as the wrapper constitutes not more than one-fourth of the cigar, it will readily be seen that the degree of its strength or mildness is very inconsiderable in effect. In this connection, however, it is interesting to note that tobacco tradesmen versed in the intricacies of the industry rigidly bar the light colored wrapper from their own smoking tables, knowing that it generally indicates that the leaf was prematurely cut and improperly cured and that it imparts the flavor and burn of the cigar. Cubans, who, by the way, are notably partial to mild tobacco, avoid smoking light colored cigars just as they avoid eating a green orange or an unripe banana.

The prejudice of these natives and of tobacco tradesmen is a logical one and serves to throw into bold relief a peculiar misconception of facts which is both amusing and embarrassing to vendors of the fragrant weed.

Whether cigar smokers will ever awaken to the fact that a dark cigar is if anything milder and invariably sweeter and more aromatic than a light cigar remains to be seen.—Tobacco Leaf.

AT A MAORI FEAST. An Odd Welcome and a Slip on the Part of the Cook. Telling of his experience at a Maori feast, the New Zealand correspondent of London Public Opinion says:

The Maori girls did a pretty welcoming dance, singing and dancing slowly backward all the way till we got to the inclosure around the meeting house (whare puna), where the speeches were to be made. Then the older people cut amazing capers, shouted themselves hoarse and made the most repulsive faces you ever saw by way of welcome to their chief. Chins were put for us on the veranda of the whare, which was prettily decorated with beautiful palms.

After some time of this and the presentation of mats, etc., we were invited into the whare to lunch. It was laid most correctly on big tables with cloths, but the menu consisted of roast duck, chicken, beef and sucking pig and, so it is said, potatoes, peas and kumara (sweet potatoes), cooked in a Maori oven. I chose cold duck, with peas and potatoes. The duck arrived quickly, but the Maori girl who brought it said, with broad smiles, 'The potatoes aren't cooked yet!' So my lunch consisted of duck, bread and two oranges. Just as I finished the potatoes arrived in pretty plaited green flax baskets.

OUR IGNORANCE. That It Is Very Real the Things We Don't Know Prove. After all are we not still ignorant of much which we feel we ought to understand? Apart from the great laws of electricity, light and heat, about which we know something, but certainly not all, are we not almost hopelessly ignorant of some of the laws which govern the lives of animals? Do we know, for instance, what is the law which makes it possible for a bee carried five or six miles from her home, blind in a dark box, to find her way back to the hive? What is the sense exercised by the antennae of the virgin moth which, set out in a muslin box on a lawn, attracts suitors from woodlands scattered away in all the country round? What is the attraction felt or choice decided upon by the tendrils of the climbing plant which turns aside from the smooth wall to catch at and wrap round the nail or the ledge or the projection which is to help it upward? All that is unknown, hardly even guessed at, and if there is so great an ignorance of what can be seen, is it logically to be argued that there is not a greater ignorance of what is unseen? One thing at least is certain—the reality of that ignorance.—London Spectator.

Does a Burglar. It appears that the monarchies of bees, well governed as they seem to be, are afflicted nevertheless by organized criminal classes—sneak thieves and highway robbers. Some of these robber bees go in strong bands to pillage and are able to storm and sack a hive. After the slaughter they carry all the provisions home. Some colonies of bees never work; they live entirely by robbery and murder.

There are also thieves who creep unperceived into strange hives to steal honey. If successful they return afterward with hordes of burglar bees, break open the honey safes and carry away the contents. But the most curious fact is that these bees can be artificially produced, according to Buchner, by feeding the larvae upon honey mixed with brandy.—London Tit-Bits.

MAGIC IN TIBET. Feats of the Wonder Workers of the Land of Mystery. India and neighboring countries are the home of mystery and the black arts. Even in the centers of civilization there are fortune tellers and wonder workers to whom supernatural powers are attributed by those who seem superstitious belief. Says a writer: "Tibetan peddlers have affirmed over and over again that, living in the mountains near the city of Lassa, there are men possessing extraordinary powers, distinct from and far higher than the ordinary lamae."

"These men cure the sick by giving them rice to eat which they crush out of the paddy with their hands. They perform many other remarkable feats. We are told that a young Bengali in 1882 testified before a number of respectable witnesses that while traveling in Tibet, in the neighborhood of the lake of Manasarawara, he met one of these men accompanied by a number of chelas, or pupils. The master saluted him and, finding that he had nothing to eat, gave him some ground grain and tea."

"As the Bengali had no means of obtaining fire the master called for some fuel and kindled it by simply blowing on it with his mouth. He also cured a shepherd who was brought to him suffering from rheumatic fever, then and there, by giving him a few grains of rice crushed out of the paddy which he had in his hand."

THE COLOR OF CIGARS. COLOR OF CIGARS. The Black Weeds Are Not Always the Strongest Ones.

Woman's Dress. But, my dear, good Odo, a woman's husband is not the man a wife dresses for. She makes herself as attractive as she can for everybody worth knowing. You must be an extraordinary person if you suppose that I am going in for the red and green transformation treatment for you—simply for you. A woman who is really a woman and not a hockey player has to watch the fashion as closely as a cook watches a pot, and the married woman of the present day must do all she can to look like the unmarried woman of yesterday. It is the married women who are the most popular with men. It is the married women who control politics, the army, literature and the stage. Therefore can't you see how necessary it is for them to do all they can to remain attractive? Red hair and green eyes? Yes. Blue teeth and amber eyes if necessary or black teeth and white eyes.—London World.

THE CENTO. What the Word Strictly Means and What It Means in Poetry. A cento is strictly a coat made of patches. In poetry it is a piece wholly composed of verses or passages taken from different authors and so placed together as to form a new poem with a fresh meaning of its own.

According to the rules laid down by Ausonius, author of the famous "Nuptial Cento," the pieces may be taken from one poet or from several. The Empress Eudoxia wrote a life of Christ in centos taken from Homer, and Alexander Ross used Virgil for the same purpose.

The following are modern instances: I only knew she came and went (Lowell) Like troutlets in a pool (Hood). She was a phantom of delight (Wordsworth). And I was like a fool (Eastman). "One kiss, dear mad," I said and sighed (Coleridge). "Out of those lips unshorn" (Longfellow). She shook her ringlets round her head (Stoddard). And laughed in merry scorn (Tennyson). Just a Hint. "John," she said softly, "have you been saying anything about me to mother lately?"

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