

PAUL BECK THE RULE-OF-THUMB DETECTIVE

BY M'DONNELL BODKIN

CABINET SECRETS

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THE Right Honorable James Brandal opened his Times with eager fingers, glanced down the front page, and flung the paper so violently on the hearth rug that it frightened the big fluffy white Persian cat into hysterics.

"Again," was all Mr. Brandal said, but his wife, who sat alone with him at the comfortably appointed breakfast table, seemed to understand. She came round to where he sat. With one hand laid gently on his shoulder, and the other playing with his crisp curls, now decked with gray, she looked down upon him with loving sympathy shining in her soft, dark eyes.

"Well, Fanny, I'll try to take it quietly," he said, in answer to her silent, tender pleading; for patience. But the cloud was still heavy on his strong, clever face; for worries will worry in spite of man's will.

He could not sit still for the life of him. Leaving his breakfast unattended, he began pacing the room restlessly.

"We have had some rough times together," Fanny broke out again, "since that day ten years ago when you trusted yourself to the briefcase of a man who is now Home Secretary of England, but I don't think you ever saw me so upset before. Just listen to this: I picked up the paper, smoothed it out and read:

"We are able to state on absolutely unimpeachable authority that at the Cabinet meeting yesterday it was resolved to take the whole time of the House from Monday to Friday, next, to discuss the proposed bill for the measure of whom one was Lord Weldon, Secretary of Foreign Affairs."

"Absolutely true, darling—that's the devil of it."

"But, Jim," touching the paper, "does it really matter so very much?"

"This particular disclosure does not matter very much—it hardly matters at all. But it is the fifth time within the last month that Cabinet secrets have been betrayed to the Times, quite plainly by a member of the Cabinet. The last was a matter of vital importance."

"It's very horrible, of course, dear, but you can't help it; and I don't see why you should worry about it. It does not affect you."

"But it does affect me, Fanny, most vitally. It affects my position, my hopes, my honor. I hardly know how to tell you, darling, but I feel there is a growing suspicion amongst my colleagues in the Cabinet that I am the traitor."

"You Jim, you!" There were tears in her dark eyes, but the light of her anger flashed through them. "Who dares to suspect you?"

"The Prime Minister himself, I greatly fear, Lord Weldon, I'm almost certain."

"I don't believe it; I cannot believe it. You are too sensitive. I met Lord Weldon the night before last at a ball at the Duchess of Southdown's. He was most courteous, sat out with me for more than an hour, and spoke ever so kindly of you."

"Lord Weldon is always civil to a beautiful woman. You needn't blush, Fanny; you must know you were the best looking woman in the room, not excepting the lively little Duchess herself. His lordship is too straight—I'll do him that justice—to let the wife see he distrusted the husband. You remember, Fanny, I was very rough on him in the House when I was graduating below the gangway; too rough, I think now, though I meant it at the time. He has behaved very well to me. I knew he was in favor of my inclusion in the Cabinet, and he has been most civil since we were colleagues. But these things leave their sting, in spite of a man. He wouldn't be human if he hadn't a lurking prejudice against me, however hard he may strive to stifle it. I'm the youngest, the newest, and the poorest member of the Cabinet. The others are tested veterans whose character and position set them above reproach. The disclosures began the week after I joined. I declare, Fanny, I'm half inclined to suspect myself on the evidence."

He dropped into a chair with a short laugh that had no mirth in it. She read in his face anxiety—at least deepening into shame; and the shadow in his eyes, was reflected in her own; but she was still true to the woman's role of comforter.

"Courage, Jim," she whispered softly, "the truth must prevail. You have never yet failed to face trouble or danger bravely—don't fall now, for my sake."

The Right Honorable James Brandal was not the only one sorely troubled by this treason in the Cabinet. The Prime Minister was broken-hearted about it. Six weeks of the harassing anxiety of this shameful treachery had told more on his health and spirits than fifty years' fair and square political conflict.

On the afternoon of the same day he was pacing his private study in Downing Street impatiently, as Mr. Brandal paced his breakfast room, oblivious of the important papers that lay open on his desk, entreating attention, when a timid knock came on the door.

In obedience to a curt "come in," a servant entered with a card.

It was a clear sign how sharp was the strain on his nerves, that the Prime Minister—usually the gentlest of men—turned impatiently on the servant.

"Did I not tell you, William, expressly," he began, "that on no account was I to be disturbed? Oh!"—with a quick glance at the card—

"Lord Weldon. Show him up at once."

A moment later Lord Weldon came softly into the room. A very handsome man was Lord Weldon, of about fifty-five years of age, with iron-gray hair, but a fresh, clear complexion, and younger even than he was. There was none of the arts or affectations of the elderly fop about him, and no man had more gracious manners. He was still a bachelor. The jest ran amongst his intimates that Weldon dare not marry for fear of society suicides.

There was a shadow on the genial face as Lord Weldon closed the door carefully behind him.

"You have seen that wretched paragraph, of course, Charles?" said the Prime Minister, nodding in the direction of the Times, which lay crumpled up in a corner of the room.

"I'm sorry to say I have very much worse news than that for you, Arthur. You are being betrayed at home and abroad. I have positive knowledge that certain war measures which were but recently discussed in the Cabinet have been disclosed to high officials in the German Government."

"It's terrible, terrible!" said the Prime Minister, pacing the room in a very ferment of rage. "Never before has the honor of British statesmen been so degraded in the face of the world. Never before has the British Cabinet harbored a sordid spy. We cannot let this matter rest, Charles. What is to be done about it? Have you any notion what's best to be done? It is plain to me, we must either purge the Cabinet of this traitor or find some pretext for resignation, and let the Tories in. There would be no treason in their Cabinet."

"No, you cannot do that, Arthur. You have too big a majority in the House, and a bigger still, as you know, in the country. The Tories couldn't carry on for a day. There would be a general election, as a matter of course, and a general election would send you back stronger than ever."

"Then the one thing left is to catch the spy."

"That's easier said than done, I'm afraid. Have you formed any suspicion who the man is?"

"The thing is so horrible, so utterly vile that I hate to whisper suspicion of any man, even in my own mind."

"Remember, Arthur, that disgraceful as the offense is, some member of the Cabinet is unquestionably guilty. We must, no matter what the cost, find the way of his detection." Lord Weldon spoke with a stern gravity quite out of keeping with his usual easy graciousness.

"There is one man," said the Prime Minister in a low voice, with manifest reluctance, "at whom suspicion seems to point. Cannot you guess his name?"

Lord Weldon shook his head.

The Prime Minister, though they were alone in the room with closed doors, came a step nearer and whispered the name.

"Brandal!" said Lord Weldon, in a tone of absolute amazement. "It is quite impossible he should stoop to this."

"Impossible he should say that any member of the Cabinet should so degrade himself. But remember, as you said just now, there must be some one? Who is less impossible?"

"I cannot believe it is Brandal. I should as soon suspect myself."

"But why, Charles—why?" urged the Prime Minister, stirred to something like eagerness by his incredulous contradiction. He is the latest member, for one thing, and the treachery has begun since his appointment.

"Put it on the lowest ground, Arthur. I would not risk it. Brandal has gone out and is bound to go farther. You have too big a majority in the House; he is the best debater, except one, in the House of Commons."

"Except none, Charles. I have no false modesty, and no false vanity, I hope. Brandal is the most powerful speaker I have ever heard in the House."

"He has a tremendous hold on the people."

"Deservedly, I should say; or, rather, I should have said six weeks ago. He has stuck to his principles through thick and thin, through evil report and good, and there is no denying that he has, to a large extent, forced them upon us."

"Well, but is such a man likely to risk his great career by petty treason, to give his enemies—for he has bitter enemies, we know—such a handle against him?"

"The danger may seem slight, and the temptation is great. I hate to say it, but Brandal is the only poor man in our Cabinet."

"But it is not the poor that are always greedy. Brandal has never shown any love for money. He married the fair maid of Erin, as she was called, without a farthing. There is no corner in the man's character, Arthur, for suspicion to lay hold of."

The Prime Minister laid his hand kindly on his friend's shoulder.

"Charles," he said, "the generosity of your character blinds you. This man has frequently and fiercely attacked you, therefore you feel bound to defend him. He is your sole rival for my place, which, in the course of nature, I cannot hold much longer; therefore you instinctively and chivalrously uphold him. If you had not pressed me on his behalf, he would not now be in the Cabinet. I wish he were not."

"Don't say that Arthur; you'll find me right."

"I cannot even say I hope you are right. If it isn't Brandal, it's some one else. The matter must be tested, and I have taken the first step."

"There's a man here in London whose methods in running down criminals and imposters are curiously unlike those of the rest of the profession. He acknowledges no theory of detecting except the Rule of Thumb. I confess that the reports of his naive handling of certain cases have got under my skin. This man, Paul Beck, is coming here this morning at my request. I'm going to give him the job of finding the leak in Parliament."

Lord Weldon had heard of Mr. Beck and expressed his approval of the Prime Minister's action. He was interrupted by the entrance of the servant with Mr. Beck's card. The Prime Minister motioned his friend to remain, and Paul Beck was shown in. The Rule of Thumb detective was as usual unhurried and quite obviously unaffected by the importance of an interview with England's Prime Minister. But with characteristic bluntness he came straight to the point, after he had acknowledged the brief introduction to Lord Weldon.

"You have sent for me, sir, I take it, to tell me of the trouble in the Cabinet, I suppose, the whole town is talking of it."

The Prime Minister winced as if he had been stung, and for a moment or two could hardly trust himself to speak.

Then he turned to the imperturbable detective with that impressive dignity that so well became him.

"I have heard," he said, "you have already engaged in matters of great delicacy and of great public importance, and that your discretion has been equal to your ability."—Mr. Beck acknowledged the compliment with a deprecatory smile—"but never before, let me assure you, in a matter of deli-

us here at two o'clock to-morrow?" said the Prime Minister.

"I cannot promise any progress," said Mr. Beck, "but I'll come without fail."

The Times editor, Mr. McDougal, stood with his back to the cheerful fire in his own private office, gazing fixly at Mr. Beck, who had unfolded his delicate mission with his customary simple candor.

"So you want to know the name and address of our subterranean correspondent," said Mr. McDougal at last very slowly. "Well, I cannot give them. Mind, I don't say, I would if I could, but simply I cannot for the best of all reasons—I don't know them myself."

"But you have his letters," Mr. Beck persisted, "you might give me a peep at one of them."

"Certainly," said Mr. McDougal, laughing. He crossed from the fireplace to his desk at the window, unlocked a drawer, took out a letter, and handed it to Mr. Beck.

"That is the very first we had from him," he said.

Mr. Beck gravely unfolded the letter. It was a plain sheet of common typewritten paper; no name, no address; no distinct mark whatever, except a little cross with red ink at the top. It began and ended abruptly:

"To the Editor of The Times:"

Whenever you receive a communication with the small red cross at top, be sure it is genuine, and publish immediately."

"There was a most interesting item of news enclosed," said the editor.

"We did not publish it. We were sorry afterwards, because it proved to be correct in every detail. Since then we have trusted the red cross. We have had half a dozen revelations,

guilty, no device is shabby that convicts him. It is an additional recommendation, in my opinion, that there is an off-chance of making a fool of the Times."

"But who is to give the false account to Brandal—there, I've let his name out now," cried the Prime Minister, irritably. "I for one will have nothing to do with that. I could not if I tried."

"Then I will," replied Lord Weldon, "if you wish it. I don't share your suspicions, Arthur, and I think the suspected man is entitled to the opportunity of vindicating his character."

"An accurate account appears, he's right of it. At the Cabinet Council, you know, the day after to-morrow, we are to consider the inclusion of compulsory purchase in our English Land Bill. There is intense excitement on the question; it's just the one to tempt a spy. If you can keep Brandal away from the meeting, I'll undertake the rest."

"I'll have no difficulty at all in providing him with an urgent appointment elsewhere," said the Prime Minister.

Mr. Beck rubbed his hands in placid enjoyment of their adoption of his plan.

"It's a step in the right direction," he said, "and it may lead us straight to the heart of the mystery. This is Tuesday. There is nothing for me to do, I fancy, until the Thursday's Times appears."

But Mr. Beck proved quite mistaken in this prophecy. Early on Wednesday he found himself knocking impatiently at the door of Lord Weldon's private house, which was only a short distance from the Prime Minister's residence.

"His lordship is not risen yet," said the footman.

"All right, I only want you to take him a note at once; it is most urgent," and Mr. Beck offered him a note which he had brought written and directed.

Lord Weldon got the note on a salver with his coffee in bed. It ran—

"My Lord, I think it essential that I should have an interview to-day with Prime Minister as soon as possible. I did not like to disturb him, so I have taken the liberty of calling on your lordship. Kindly let me have a line to say if you can see him soon to arrange it."

On a blotting pad in his bed Lord Weldon wrote:

"Dear Mr. Beck I will see the Prime Minister immediately. If you will kindly call back at about twelve, I will let you know the result."

Mr. Beck smiled a gratified smile as he read the note, and departed apparently well pleased.

At twelve o'clock he received an appointment to meet the Prime Minister and Lord Keldon at Downing Street at two. When he opened his business it seemed hardly worth the fuss he had made about it. It was no more than a suggestion that the Times letter box should be watched by a policeman in plain clothes.

"Well, it can be arranged, of course," said the Prime Minister, a little testily, "but I do not see what possible good it can do. We cannot arrest every man that drops a letter in."

"Besides," chimed in Lord Weldon, "if the letter is dropped in by Brandal he convicts himself."

"You were quite right to mention it, Mr. Beck," said the Prime Minister, "but the detective looked a little crestfallen. 'You will excuse me now, but this is one of my busy days.'"

"That's a hint for me, too," said Lord Weldon, laughing. "Can I give you a seat, Mr. Beck; my carriage is waiting."

At the corner of Trafalgar Square, Mr. Beck suddenly remembered an urgent appointment, so Lord Weldon put him down, nodding affably from the open window as he drove away.

Mr. Beck waited till the brougham had disappeared through the traffic in the direction of Piccadilly, then instantly hailed a taxi and drove straight back to Downing Street.

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"That may be, but it is quite impossible that I should take any personal part in the miserable affair."

"Then," said Mr. Beck, with a quiet earnestness that gave dignity to his homely face and figure, "you must forgive me if I decline to have further hand in the business. I will not knowingly make myself the instrument of the punishment of the innocent and the triumph of the guilty. Let me repeat, the wise words of Lord Weldon. 'It's a trial I ask for, not a conviction.' The man suspected—and suspected, too, on such strong proof—is at least entitled to his trial."

"Have your own way," said the Prime Minister reluctantly, after a moment's pause. "I feel there is justice in what you say, though the task you have set me is most repugnant to my feelings."

The Cabinet Council was held in due course the next day, and the Right Honorable James Brandal, Home Secretary, was unavoidably absent on urgent official business. After a very animated discussion, it was resolved that the principle of compulsory purchase should be introduced into the Land Bill, and the Government should stand or fall by its adoption or rejection.

Mr. Brandal went down to the House before the dinner hour in time for an important division.

Very soon he became sensitively alive to the fact that his colleagues of the Cabinet were strangely cold and reticent in their manner to him—with one exception.

Lord Weldon was cordiality itself, insisted on their dining together, and after dinner gave him the arranged account of the proceedings at the Cabinet Council with great particularity of detail.

"I'm bitterly disappointed, I must confess," said Brandal. "I knew you were against it, my lord, of course. But I thought there was a strong majority in favor of the principle of compulsory purchase. I'm convinced it's the only remedy for agricultural depression and the over-crowding of our towns. I wish I had been there."

"It could not have altered the result, my dear Brandal," said Lord Weldon. "There was a big majority. What are you off so soon?"

"Well, yes. I feel a bit done up and depressed, and I'd best get straight home. I have asked the Whips; there is no danger of a division tonight."

But he did not go straight home. As he went past the door of the library, an attendant met him with a note from the Prime Minister himself, requesting to see him for a moment in his private room.

It was a brief interview. Mr. Brandal came out from it more cheerful but more bewildered than before.

"A most extraordinary mistake," he muttered to himself, as he lighted his cigar with one of the paper spills provided for the legislators in the dressing room close to the Palace Yard.

Then he walked home at a brisk pace to work off his excitement and curiously enough passed the Times office on his way.

Next morning the political devotees

were flustered by the following announcement prominently printed in the Times:

"We are glad to be able to announce an absolutely unimpeachable authority, that at the Cabinet Council held yesterday, it was decided by a substantial majority, after a very animated discussion, that the principle of compulsory purchase should not be included in the Land Bill which the Government are pledged to introduce early this Session. The Right Honorable the Home Secretary, who is understood to favor this revolutionary principle, was absent from the meeting."

Then followed a long article in cordial approval of the supposed decision, denouncing the radical revolutionists who "were eager to devastate the fair fields of England and uproot her ancient aristocracy, whose wealth and privileges were the best guarantee for the stability of the Constitution and the integrity of the Empire."

A good deal of quiet enjoyment was manifest amongst the members of the Cabinet—especially of the more advanced section, at this announcement. It was plain the Times had been badly hoaxed.

But Lord Weldon wore a look of deep distress; the Prime Minister was grave and stern, and James Brandal utterly bewildered. The Prime Minister had met him as he entered the House, and made an appointment after question time in his own room.

"You have seen the Times?" said Lord Weldon softly to the Prime Minister as they sat together on the front bench at question time. There was a touch of genuine distress in his voice. "I could not have believed it possible."

"Nor I," replied his chief. "I have asked Brandal to meet me in my room when questions are over. I desire that you also shall be present."

"I wish you could excuse me. It will be a most painful interview for me."

"I have no doubt; but your presence is essential, and painful duties must be performed."

When Lord Weldon reached the Prime Minister's room, he was a little surprised to find Mr. Paul Beck also there, standing modestly in the background.

"Mr. Brandal and Lord Weldon," the Prime Minister began abruptly, and plainly laboring under strong emotion, "I have summoned you here on a matter in which you are both deeply interested. You are aware that for some time past the Cabinet has been disgraced by a sordid spy and traitor who sold its secrets."

"Don't be too hard on him, Arthur," Lord Weldon whispered. But the Prime Minister went on, with growing anger. "That treason ends here and now. Through the skill and zeal of this gentleman, to whom I desire to convey my deep personal gratitude, that despicable traitor has been exposed. You, Charles Langcote, Viscount Weldon, are the man!"

Lord Weldon would have spoken then, but the Prime Minister turned upon him imperiously, with a burning flash in his deepest eyes that awed him into silence.

"Denial is useless," he said, "the proofs of your treason are conclusive. Tell him"—he beckoned to Mr. Beck—"tell him what you know."

"You see, my lord," said Mr. Beck sweetly, "the word or two you carelessly let drop, showing you knew how the letter had reached the Times letter box, set me thinking. The subterranean correspondent spelt 'immediate' with one 'm' in the typewritten letter which was shown me in the office. I managed to coax a little note from your lordship with the same word misspelt the same way. Then I felt pretty safe. It was not likely that two members of a Cabinet would make that blunder. But to make sure doubly sure, I took the liberty of asking the Prime Minister—"

"Yes, my Lord Weldon," broke in the Prime Minister. "I did the rest. After you gave James Brandal the false account of the Cabinet proceedings, I gave him the true. You published the false account to convict him of treason, and you have convicted yourself."

No word had Lord Weldon to answer, the sudden shock of the exposure had so stunned him. He leaned with trembling hands against a chair, and his face was as the face of the dead.

But there was no pity in the Prime Minister's stern voice. "False friend and treacherous colleague," he said, "I regret that public interests forbid the exposure and punishment of your crime. But on two conditions only can that exposure be averted. You must, of course, instantly resign your place in the Cabinet, and in the House; and you must write over your own name a full confession of your offense."

"For what purpose?" gasped out Lord Weldon; his first words since the blow struck him.

"To be retained by the man whose ruin you sought; to be retained as a memento, of a peril overpassed, and a security for the future."

He pointed to the door, and Lord Weldon crept through it like a whipped hound.

"Mr. Brandal," said the Prime Minister to the Home Secretary, with a look of touching humility on his grand old face. "I have to beg your forgiveness for having wronged your honor, even in my thoughts."

Then as the Home Secretary and the detective passed from the room together, Mr. Brandal whispered to Mr. Beck: "Come and dine with me tonight—only ourselves. My wife must thank the man who saved her husband."

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Then followed a long article in cordial approval of the supposed decision, denouncing the radical revolutionists who "were eager to devastate the fair fields of England and uproot her ancient aristocracy, whose wealth and privileges were the best guarantee for the stability of the Constitution and the integrity of the Empire."

A good deal of quiet enjoyment was manifest amongst the members of the Cabinet—especially of the more advanced section, at this announcement. It was plain the Times had been badly hoaxed.

But Lord Weldon wore a look of deep distress; the Prime Minister was grave and stern, and James Brandal utterly bewildered. The Prime Minister had met him as he entered the House, and made an appointment after question time in his own room.

"You have seen the Times?" said Lord Weldon softly to the Prime Minister as they sat together on the front bench at question time. There was a touch of genuine distress in his voice. "I could not have believed it possible."

"Nor I," replied his chief. "I have asked Brandal to meet me in my room when questions are over. I desire that you also shall be present."

"I wish you could excuse me. It will be a most painful interview for me."

"I have no doubt; but your presence is essential, and painful duties must be performed."

When Lord Weldon reached the Prime Minister's room, he was a little surprised to find Mr. Paul Beck also there, standing modestly in the background.

"Mr. Brandal and Lord Weldon," the Prime Minister began abruptly, and plainly laboring under strong emotion, "I have summoned you here on a matter in which you are both deeply interested. You are aware that for some time past the Cabinet has been disgraced by a sordid spy and traitor who sold its secrets."

"Don't be too hard on him, Arthur," Lord Weldon whispered. But the Prime Minister went on, with growing anger. "That treason ends here and now. Through the skill and zeal of this gentleman, to whom I desire to convey my deep personal gratitude, that despicable traitor has been exposed. You, Charles Langcote, Viscount Weldon, are the man!"

Lord Weldon would have spoken then, but the Prime Minister turned upon him imperiously, with a burning flash in his deepest eyes that awed him into silence.

"Denial is useless," he said, "the proofs of your treason are conclusive. Tell him"—he beckoned to Mr. Beck—"tell him what you know."

"You see, my lord," said Mr. Beck sweetly, "the word or two you carelessly let drop, showing you knew how the letter had reached the Times letter box, set me thinking. The subterranean correspondent spelt 'immediate' with one 'm' in the typewritten letter which was shown me in the office. I managed to coax a little note from your lordship with the same word misspelt the same way. Then I felt pretty safe. It was not likely that two members of a Cabinet would make that blunder. But to make sure doubly sure, I took the liberty of asking the Prime Minister—"

"Yes, my Lord Weldon," broke in the Prime Minister. "I did the rest. After you gave James Brandal the false account of the Cabinet proceedings, I gave him the true. You published the false account to convict him of treason, and you have convicted yourself."

No word had Lord Weldon to answer, the sudden shock of the exposure had so stunned him. He leaned with trembling hands against a chair, and his face was as the face of the dead.

But there was no pity in the Prime Minister's stern voice. "False friend and treacherous colleague," he said, "I regret that public interests forbid the exposure and punishment of your crime. But on two conditions only can that exposure be averted. You must, of course, instantly resign your place in the Cabinet, and in the House; and you must write over your own name a full confession of your offense."

"For what purpose?" gasped out Lord Weldon; his first words since the blow struck him.

"To be retained by the man whose ruin you sought; to be retained as a memento, of a peril overpassed, and a security for the future."

He pointed to the door, and Lord Weldon crept through it like a whipped hound.

"Mr. Brandal," said the Prime Minister to the Home Secretary, with a look of touching humility on his grand old face. "I have to beg your forgiveness for having wronged your honor, even in my thoughts."

Then as the Home Secretary and the detective passed from the room together, Mr. Brandal whispered to Mr. Beck: "Come and dine with me tonight—only ourselves. My wife must thank the man who saved her husband."



Lord Weldon Got the Note and a Salver with His Coffee in Bed.

some of them important, some of them sensational, but all of them accurate. The subterranean correspondent is now an accredited member of the staff."

"Do you pay him for this?"

"Well, yes; and a pretty stiff price, too; but you must excuse me from going into details. I know the money passes, but I haven't the faintest notion into whose hands."

Mr. Beck turned the letter carefully over, as if he half hoped to find the writers' name there.

"Might I see the envelope?" he asked, after a pause.

"Certainly; but it won't help you. It's a common envelope, and I've written it, and dropped by private hand into our letterbox. No postmark, you see."

"I see," said Mr. Beck. "Well, I won't waste any more of your valuable time."

"You will pardon me for not being more explicit, Mr. Beck," said the editor. "You see this thing helps us from the press and political point of view. It gives us exclusive and important news, and it hurts the Government. I could not give the man away."

"Don't mention it," said Mr. Beck. "Besides, I'm not sure that you have not put me on the right track."

With this parting shot he passed out leaving the editor puzzled and uncomfortable.

"You don't seem to have made much advance," said Lord Weldon, when this interview was related with perfect frankness next day.

"That's as it may be," said Mr. Beck, "one can never be sure."

"Could we catch the letters to the Times in the Post Office?" suggested the Prime Minister. "It's a hateful expedient, of course, but desperate diseases need desperate remedies."

"I understand the letters are dropped in by private hand," said Lord Weldon.

"Your lordship has guessed quite rightly," said Mr. Beck; "the Post