

PROFESSIONAL BRETHREN

BY GEORGE E. WALSH

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CHAPTER I.

LHAVE a partiality for balls and receptions and invariably try to make it a practice to be in the vicinity when one is in progress. There are always so many people coming and going that a stranger on the premises seldom attracts attention. It is an excellent time for inspecting basement windows, cellar doors and outbuildings.

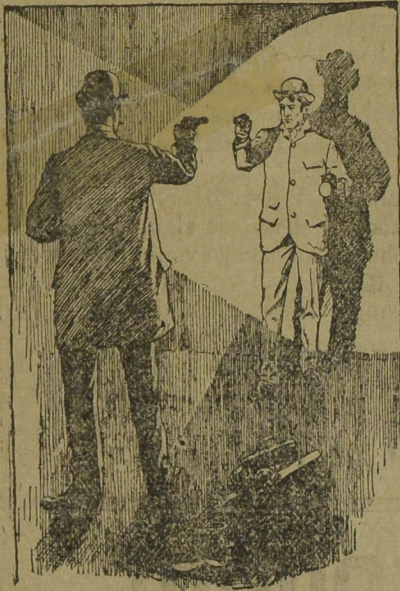
In a general way servants are more careless on such nights about locking up, and the hostess and her guests always bring out their best jewels and leave them loose on bureaus and mantelpieces after retiring. It may not have struck the casual observer that people sleep much more soundly after a ball than ordinarily. They are a longer time in retiring, but when everything is finally quiet about the house it would take nothing less than a pistol shot to rouse them. I suppose they are completely exhausted and after the excitement of the evening do not dream of burglars.

One March night I waited until after 3 o'clock for one of these festivities to draw to a close. It was cold and raw outside in the shrubbery, and I grew impatient at the lateness of the guests in taking their departure. The house was a large, old fashioned mansion just outside of the city limits, and from its general air and appearance I knew that considerable wealth in the shape of solid silverware and family heirlooms was contained in it. Following the custom of the day, the hostess would, I thought, bring all these relics from their hiding places and show them to her guests.

It was anticipation of a rich haul that kept me from giving up the job in disgust, for I was tired and exhausted with several nights' unlucky ventures, and my patience seemed sorely tried.

When the lights finally went out, I breathed easier and felt my courage returning. Everything promised to run smoothly. I had succeeded in disposing of the watchdog earlier in the evening and had discovered an unfashioned window opening into the coal-room in the cellar, which I believed the servants would not think to lock so late at night.

I waited a good hour after the last flickering light had disappeared. Then I crept softly up to the house, and, concealed in its shadow, listened for sounds. There was none, except those



I saw that I was looking into the mouth of a revolver.

strange, almost inexpressible voices which seem to come from nowhere in the dead of night. I do not know that anybody has ever noticed them, but I

it before I could go any farther. By groping around on the shelves I succeeded in getting a pretty fair supply of food—milk and cream in abundance, good cheese, several mince pies, some cake and cold meat.

The night was early yet for my work, and I did not regret the time I spent in eating of that cold but tempting repast. I would have felt better had I discovered a bottle of good wine, but in its absence the fresh milk was a fair substitute.

The door leading from the dairy room to the basement laundry was not locked, and I quietly entered the latter place. I now ventured to open a little the slide of my dark lantern, and by means of it I found the stairs leading to the ground floor. The servants' quarters were above me, and to avoid arousing any one I removed my shoes.

The house was spacious and roomy, and I had to take note of my surroundings as I proceeded, so that I might find my way back again without blundering. It is a poor general, I have always thought, who burns his bridges behind him. More than once this careful habit of mine has saved me from unpleasant complications.

When I passed from the kitchen into the dining room, I was greatly surprised not to find any solid pieces of silver. Even many of the expensive pieces of bric-a-brac that are usual to such houses were gone. It looked as if the hostess had anticipated robbery and had stripped the tables and mantelpieces of every small article of special value.

Although disappointed, I made my way upstairs, hoping to find some loose jewelry at least on the bureaus. There were signs of the feast and entertainment all about the hall and rooms, but I was unable to find anything that appealed to my tastes. I passed from one bedroom to another, with about the same result. I could hear the regular breathing of the occupants of the house, and a distant noise in the rear told me that one man was a good snorer. So long as that rhythmic sound continued I felt that I was safe from all alarms.

After making a detour of the rooms I finally entered a small chamber that was used for storing linen and trunks. It occurred to me that possibly the missing things were packed away in this room. I closed the door gently behind me and turned on the slide from my lantern.

As I did so I was suddenly startled by the bright ray of some light shooting out of the darkness. Instantly I grasped my revolver and directed my light toward the spot. The result of this movement was to produce a queer combination.

I saw that I was looking into the mouth of a revolver held in the hands of a man who was inspecting me by the aid of a dark lantern similar to my own. My own revolver was covering the place where his heart should be.

The discovery must have been simultaneous, for we both flashed the light of our lanterns into each other's face and gazed long and silently. Neither wore a mask, and in the uncovered eyes there was cool, deadly resolve written. It would have been foolhardy for either to shoot, for the life of the other would have been instantly sacrificed. I waited a full minute or two for the man to speak.

"Well," I said finally, unwilling to bear the strain of silence longer, "you seem to be ahead of me tonight, and I

Almost Racked to Pieces.

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bag back and forth, I succeeded in identifying the object as a tin pan.

As I was afraid to use my dark lantern outside, I lowered myself cautiously into the basement. Instead of the coal bin I found myself in the dairy room of the house. The odor from newly made butter, fresh milk and cream cheese gave me such an overpowering appetite that I had to satisfy

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That old copybook maxim finds its most forceful application in the waste of vitality, which is called "burning the candle at both ends." A woman is often tempted beyond her strength by domestic or social demands. Some day she awakens from this waste of strength to the woeful want of it. She has become weak, nervous and miserable.

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most congratulate you upon the neatness of your work. I haven't found a thing behind you."

The man was not inclined to answer at first, but I continued in a reassuring voice:

"We may as well call a truce. It would be folly for either of us to shoot. I don't want to get you in trouble any more than myself."

I had been struck by the fine, handsome features of the man, but when he spoke in a well modulated, musical voice I was further puzzled. He did not look like one of my set.

"What kind of a truce do you want?" he asked. "You see I have you covered with my revolver and could kill you in an instant."

"But you fail to notice mine," I answered. "A very slight pressure of the trigger would send a bullet through your heart."

I thought he turned a trifle paler, but his voice was steady and unquavering.

"I admit that and accept the situation. But tell me what terms you propose for your truce."

"Simply these: We should go into partnership at least for tonight. I have had as much trouble in getting into the house as you, and I have run just as much risk, but you got ahead of me and made a complete job. I admire the way you have done the work. Even I couldn't do it better, and I don't think you belong to the class I!"

"Never mind that," he interrupted impatiently. "Stick to your terms and be quick."

"Well, to come straight to the point," I added, a little nettled at his abrupt ways, "I propose that we divide the plunder you have collected. For your extra trouble you take two-thirds and I one-third. Is that fair?"

He remained silent a moment and then said: "If I agree to such a bargain, nothing further will ever be said of tonight's work?"

"Not a word."

"And you will never recognize me if you should happen to meet me on the street or anywhere else?"

I did not like this part of the bargain, for I believe that every one should be placed on the same level in such a business and that one man should not set himself up to being better than another, but I finally assented, with the exception of one slight qualification:

"Not unless we happen to meet under similar circumstances again. Then I might recall to you this meeting."

"I don't think that is likely to occur," he replied firmly.

Then in a firm, measured voice he added:

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Arctic Rink.

Skating hours will be as follows, (ice permitting):

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
MONDAY	10 to 12.30	3 to 5.30	7.45 to 10
TUESDAY	10 to 12.30	3 to 5.30	7.45 to 10
WEDNESDAY	10 to 12.30	3 to 5.30	7.45 to 10
THURSDAY	10 to 12.30	3 to 5.30	7.45 to 10
FRIDAY	10 to 12.30	3 to 5.30	7.45 to 10
SATURDAY	10 to 12.30	2.30 to 5.30	7.45 to 10

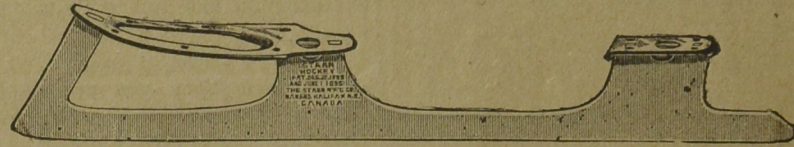
Band Tuesday and Thursday evenings and Saturday afternoons. The management reserve the right to appropriate any of the foregoing hours for Hockey, Carnival or other attractions.

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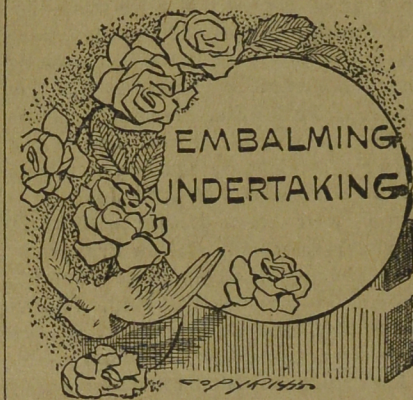
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