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# The Queer Little Box

An Eastern Scheme of Vengeance

"Hello, my bold Ralph," cried Judge Joseph Marcellus to the young sailor who stood twirling his cap by the desk. "Back again, safe and sound, hey, from the glowing East? I'm glad to see you."

"Don't go, Cronkite," said the young Purvis, son of the housekeeper at the Underglades, and, like her, devoted to the Merediths. He's an able seaman, and a very able one, too, I warrant, aboard the full-rigged iron ship *Dirigo*, which makes such famous runs in the East India trade.

"What can I do for you, my lad?"

"You told me, Judge, to let you know if I ever caught sight or sound of Mr. Jim," Ralph began hesitatingly.

"What's my soul, so I did," reflected the Judge, his face settling into concern. "Is it possible that vicious creature still lives to hate and plot? Sit down, Ralph, sit down; and do you, Abe, give the closest attention."

"You must remember something of that mysterious fire at the Underglades two years ago. It burst out without apparent cause in the room where Fritz Meredith lay bedridden. The doors had all been fastened."

"Of course, it was hushed up, but there is no doubt that James Meredith was the perpetrator of the outrage. He fled across the seas, we all hoped forever."

"Isaac or revengeful," asked the detective.

"Both, for there is an irresponsible strain that shows itself now and again in the Merediths, with selfish interest added. James Meredith has always been fanatically minded, full of strange devices, delighting in the abdominal and the cruel."

"He hated the uncle who had benefited him so much and forgiven him so often because his uncle would not bear of his marrying his pretty cousin, Madge, Fritz Meredith's only child. Besides, he would come into a contingent inheritance at his uncle's death. Where did he see Mr. Jim, Ralph?"

"We were so short handed at Bombay that the captain grabbed at whatever the crimps fetched for the home voyage," answered the young sailor. "There was a lean, lanky hand among them, with a black beard, who reminded me of somebody, I couldn't tell who, though he looked like a Lascar, he was that yellow."

"He acted like a Lascar, too, squatting by himself when off duty and mumbling the Lord knows what. He fought shy of me in particular, and besides we stood different watches and didn't swing near by. But all the same one morning when he was washing down the deck I caught sight of his upper arm. It was as white as mine, Judge, and on it were those same initials tattooed I seen when a boy. Oh, it was Mr. Jim, all right, and that was why I came directly we were paid off, especially after the way he lit out last night."

"Do you mean that he has gone from the ship, that you don't know where he is?"

"Yes, Judge; we made the bar just after sunset last night, and so had to drop anchor at lower quarantine. This morning this Lascar chap—Lol something, I never could catch the name he called himself, but Mr. Jim, your Honor, he truly was—was missing. He must have hid off in some passing skiff along with his queer little box."

"Why queer?" asked Abe Cronkite.

"Because, sir, it was all wrapped up in Eastern coarse cloth and no one could get a glimpse of it. One of my mates vowed there was something alive in it, but there were enough rats squeaking and scuttling through the fo'c'sle to make him think that."

"This is too serious a matter for any digression, Abe," said Judge Marcellus severely. "James Meredith is back for no good purpose. He must be watched and guarded against."

"The family at Underglades is practically helpless, with Mr. Fritz Meredith a confirmed invalid still confined to his room and only his daughter Madge under the care of Laipis's good mother, with the servants. You must go down there in some capacity. Let me think; what was it I heard from that nice jolly girl? Oh, yes; she wrote that her father insisted on her having a household of company and that there was going to be a masked ball for them this Friday night and wouldn't I lend dignity to the occasion."

"Let me see, that will be day after tomorrow. I think I just will. You go down right away, Abe, with Ralph, so as to advise me when I come. His mother and he between them will manage to find some place for you in the house where you will attract no notice and be able to discern and discern the slightest move on the part of this infernal villain."

"And your mother, Ralph, that I depend upon her and your Mr. Fritz Meredith must not be alarmed and I would not mar my pretty Madge's pleasure for anything."

II.

Among the decorators, caterers, musicians and additional servants who now thronged the old house at the Underglades the presence of so reserved and retiring a man as Abe Cronkite attracted little or no notice. Mrs. Purvis vouched for him and that was sufficient to enable him to come and go as he will, with no other comment than that the quiet Mr. Rylance was employed by the fat and asthmatic housekeeper to keep a sharp eye on everything.

Such was Madge Meredith's understanding and she approved of it, for by his very manner the detective managed to suggest and impart helpfulness and confidence. Within twenty-four hours he was a fixture in the household.

It was natural then for Ensign Mark Slocum of the navy to look up pleasantly if inquiringly when this quiet Mr. Rylance followed him to his room on his return from a stroll through the plantation with Madge Meredith.

"Let me say, sir," said the detective without other preliminary than a careful closing of the door, "that I recognize in you a young man of character, force and ability who is sincerely in love with Miss Meredith."

"What the deuce!" interjected the astounded Slocum.

"One moment, please, sir. And that

then he will proceed against Slocum.

"In fact, I have provided, so far as I can, against some such mad course on his part."

The Judge nodded in approval.

"I wish I might always remember, Abe," he said, "how much wiser you are than I am. Now, what do you want me to do, my man? I am at your command."

"You are always too good to me, Judge," replied Cronkite with a genuine feeling. "Now then to business. You can take an important part, indeed a most important part; for we both earnestly wish, don't we, that that bedridden old man upstairs, that all those jolly young folks downstairs shall be kept from even a suspicion of alarm."

"Go, then, to the ball room; mark the music already in sounding. Land dignity to the festive scene. You will not find Miss Meredith and Mr. Slocum there for the present at least. I depend upon you to save their absence from comment or even notice."

Cronkite was right. The lovers were not present among the festive scenes which the Judge was about to adorn with his dignity. They were seated side by side on the bench in the grove, all appearances deep in confidential talk. Slocum, at the expected sounds in the clump of trees in the rear looked back and caught a glimpse of a figure, fantastic, lurking and listening. He threw his arms around Madge, drawing her face to his breast.

"Now is our time, darling," he pleaded in impassioned tones. "Your father will never consent to our marriage. Amid all the jollity at the house our absence will not be noted for hours. At that time we will be man and wife. Wait, I beseech you, here until I run over to my rooms and get my money and papers; and then just a short walk through the plantation to the garage, and off we speed to the marrying person."

Evidently Madge whispered her consent, or gave it by her silence; for Slocum sprang up and away with a rapacious air. She raised her head, she looked after her lover, hurrying down the level path lightly, confidently.

"Somebody's coming here until I run in the trees at the side, a satanic shape in red and black such as during the Middle Ages added terror to a masque of death. Though fully apprised, though as stout of heart as she was loving, Madge could not stifle a cry of alarm. Then a hand was laid on her arm, then a voice said:

"Don't fear, Miss Meredith. I will be on their heels to prevent, to save, to secure. Wait patiently for soon your troubles and dangers will be over. It was the quiet Mr. Rylance, who fleetly disappeared among the trees."

IV.

Into the darkness of the remote and deserted lodge hurried Mark Slocum. He dashed up the stairs and into the front room which had been prepared for him; he made a light and the pistol, with every muscle strained for quick action, behind the closed door.

Up the stairs now crept that grotesque shape, it passed on the threshold listening, to draw the slide of a dark lantern, with coarse Eastern cloth, to bring from the red cloak's fantastic folds a stout rope over into a running from its foot the death head's snarling from its face. The feeble rays struck the tawny skin, the haggard lineaments, the deepest eyes sparkling with madness. It was the face of the Lascar, of James Meredith.

Cronkite waited on the landing below until Meredith had adjusted the nose on his arm and the rope ends to his left hand. He waited until he had breathlessly turned the knob and moved the door ajar; then even as he drew himself for a frenzied spring he was up and upon him, forcing him through the door and down on the floor, where Slocum also fell upon him. In an instant the nose was over James Meredith's shoulders and a struggle about with the rope he lay helpless to him and a gasp like some nightmare monster.

Cronkite stepped out into the hall. He raised the box gingerly at arm's length, yet with silent intensity. Then with an awed nod he called Slocum to him.

"Listen," he said, "I was right. Look!" And he showed how a slit in the cloth exposed a trap that might be raised. "Don't you see? It's got up. 'Re would have made it bite you."

"Great God! Such devilishness is beyond belief," Slocum gasped back. "What are you going to do?"

"Wait, they both must be watched like enemies of mankind." And down the stairs went Abe Cronkite.

Slocum did wait and watch between the silent, motionless man and the box all aquiver with horror. Now and again, just as a sharp sound, he was given for all his blood. Again he was back in the sickly soldier's bed of Bombay. Again he was listening to sobbing tales of how death in its most savage form was lurking beneath the streets, in the walls of house and in the crevices of the docks. Why didn't Cronkite come? He would be even grayer to go away from the ledge that he had been to sail from that city of the plague.

At length Cronkite did come up the stairs slowly, like one tired and hot. For the moment he stood gazing at James Meredith, who blinked back at him in impotent rage. Then with a shrug of his broad shoulders he turned away.

"By to-morrow, when he has been committed as hopelessly insane," he said to Slocum, "there will be no one who will believe or heed him, should he rave of what we know to be true."

He picked up the box gingerly. Being it at arm's length, he led the way down the stairs and into the cellar. A fire was blazing in the terrace. He swung open the furnace door. He tossed the box into the very midst of the eager flames.

Then it was that the two men looked on the contents of the queer little box for the first and last time. As the fabric vanished like a breath, a great gray rat, gaunt and worn as if already half consumed by some internal fever, leaped and squealed even as it was licked up and devoured by the voracious heat.

"Mrs. Why?—do you keep your books long?" Mrs. Why?—Not very. I tried to get the last one to stay long enough for me to get a snowball of her for a souvenir, but she was too quick for me.—Chicago News.

## THE BRIGHTEST DAY FOR EVERY WOMAN

### Comes With Good Health Through the Use of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills

Her brightest day for every girl and every woman is the day when she looks well, feels well and is well, not with most of the fair sex such days are rare. Instead they suffer from a painful languor, have a terrible weakness in the back, headaches that make everything seem blurred, and a ceaseless itching in the limbs. These and other trials afflict girls and women through the lack of rich, red blood nature is calling for. Dr. Williams' Pink Pills have given the joy of real robust health to thousands of women who are happy to-day because these pills actually make the rich, red blood that makes weak ones well, and strong. This statement has been proven over and over again. Here is further proof from Mrs. C. J. Brook, Hamilton, N. Y., who says: "After a busy term on second-class work, followed only by a short time of relaxation, and a strenuous two and a half months' normal course, in March, 1906, I began teaching school. I had a heavy rural school, with a large attendance, and consequently a large number of grades, thus I found the work a great nervous strain. This added to the overwork of study, previous to condition, soon resulted in a 'run down' condition. When vacation time came I did not pay much attention to my condition, as I thought the holidays would fully restore me, but as I resumed work again I soon found this was not the case. One morning, when I came to breakfast everything reeled before me, and I almost fainted away. The lady with whom I was boarding advised me to take Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. She always spoke very highly of them, her daughter having used them with the most beneficial results following a severe attack of inflammatory rheumatism. I decided to take her advice, and had only taken a few boxes when I began to improve in health, and such an appetite as I had. I rapidly gained weight, my face had a healthy glow, and I gained in weight. I have since often recommended Dr. Williams' Pink Pills to others, who have needed them, with equally beneficial results, and I believe the Pills to be a standard remedy for the ills for which you recommend them."

You can get these Pills from any medicine dealer or by mail at 50 cents a box or six boxes for \$2.50 from The Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

### DAMNING EVIDENCE.

"Malam," says the agent of the black hand, "we have a photograph of you and Count de Gargyle riding in an automobile. Send ten thousand dollars to us or we will publish the picture."

"What care I?" laughingly says the lady. "The Count is a gentleman in every way, and, besides, he is going to marry my daughter. There can be no scandal connected with any riding with him."

"That's not the point. It was a 1908 model car."

With a low moan, the unfortunate woman sank to the floor, after giving a feeble indication that on reviving from her faint she would write a check for the hundred money.

### SORTIES.

Mrs. Willis (at the Ladies' Aid Society)—Now, what can we do for the poor boys at the front?

Mrs. Willis—I was reading to-day where the soldiers are always making sorties. Now, why can't we get the recipes for those things and make them ourselves and send them to the boys?

Edith—It always takes two to make a quarrel between a married couple. Slobbs—Yes, usually a wife and a mother-in-law.

## OPERATION HER ONLY CHANCE

### Was Cured by Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound

Lindsay, Ont.—"I think it is no more than right for me to thank Mrs. Pinkham for what her kind advice and Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound has done for me. When I wrote to her some time ago I was a very sick woman, suffering from female troubles. I had inflammation of the female organs, and could not stand or walk any distance. At last I was confined to my bed, and the doctor said I would have to go through an operation, but this I refused to do. A friend advised Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, and now, after using three bottles of it, I feel like a new woman. I most heartily recommend this medicine to all women who suffer with female troubles. I have also taken Lydia E. Pinkham's Liver Pills and think they are fine."—Mrs. FRANK EMBLEY, Lindsay, Ontario.

We cannot understand why women will take chances with an operation or drag out a sickly half-hearted existence, missing three-fourths of the joy of living, without first trying Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

For thirty years it has been the standard remedy for female ills, and has cured thousands of women who have been troubled with such ailments as displacements, inflammation, ulceration, fibroid tumors, irregularities, periodic pains, backache, indigestion and nervous prostration.

## THE POSTMASTER TELLS HIS FRIENDS

That they should use Dodd's Kidney Pills for Kidney ills.

He Had Backache For a Long Time But Dodd's Kidney Pills Cured It. That is Why He Recommends Them. Dymont, Ont., May 16.—(Special.)—John Oldberg, postmaster here, and well known throughout this entire neighborhood, is telling his friends that Dodd's Kidney Pills are the cure for all forms of Kidney Disease. And when they ask how he knows, this is the answer he gives:

"I was troubled with Backache for a long time and Dodd's Kidney Pills cured it. That's why I recommend Dodd's Kidney Pills to all sufferers from Kidney Disease."

And the postmaster is not the only one in this neighborhood who has found relief from his Kidney ills in the old reliable remedy, Dodd's Kidney Pills. Others there are whose Rheumatism has been relieved, whose Urinary Troubles have been cured. For if the disease is of the Kidneys, or caused by the Kidneys being out of order, Dodd's Kidney Pills never fail to cure it.

### LACE UBIQUITOUS.

Sort and Manner of Using Proclaim Best Models.

Flirt lace is first, though the shadow blades and the flimsier meshes are found included with work that is very foreign to them, and they make a background not only for trimmings, but for veils, jackets, caps and all the other accessories that the lace counters provide.

Deep bands of flit or point Venice at the hem of a lingerie gown will raise it indubitably from the passe to a model of this season's style.

Many beautiful imitations of all the finest laces are on the counters, and some of them are very cunningly imitated. The flirts are being used for lingerie suits and gowns, and also the imitation point Venice bands which come in wide and narrow widths.

Point Milan is a recent revival, and from its airy texture is suited to bathings and other flimsy materials. It might sometimes be mistaken for a passing shopper at a lace counter for Valenciennes.

One of the modish uses for narrow and medium width lace bandings is as wired bows on summer hats. On a wide rever of soft flimsy lace, with the other rever of cloth or silk, is a finish seen in some of the handsome street costumes.

The lace rever is always very wide at the top, running well onto the shoulder. Deep frills of lace are also beginning to be seen on sleeves. A novelty seen at one lace counter was a little jacket with wide turned back revers, very short fronts and long, straight Directoire tails.

### MOTHER'S DREAMS.

(Ottawa Citizen.)

Every mother dreams of great things for her child. Never yet did any mother bend over her sleeping child but she dreamed dreams of strength of manhood, of largeness of attainment, of some uniqueness of effort. Ever has come to her maternal sight the fair vision of a life strong, noble, helpful, good. No cloud of doubt has ever crossed the fair sky of her radiant dream.

No one can rightly compute the subtle influence of the mother's aspiration for good and greatness in her child. It is a very font of evolution, stimulating to divine things. It is not in the power of human mind to reckon the good that has come to the world by the wishing of mother-love.

If mother-love could but have the willing as well, we might safely prophesy a speedy evolutionary elimination. But other influences have crept in, destroying the possibility of fulfillment. And with the removal of these, is to be found our best observance of Mothers' Day.

The greatest tragedy of human life is the throwing of a mother's child, cherished and cared for and devoted with infinite tenderness and affection, into the maelstrom of the modern world, to be tossed about like a chip upon an angry sea, and too often cast high upon the barren sands of failure. There is no greater descent than that from the mother's arms to the ignoble clay.

It is impossible to regard a wasted or a ruined life without memory or vision of the mother standing dimly behind it. One cannot forget the fact of all her dreaming and prophetic ecstasy. And one cannot view such ruin without glimpsing these ruined hopes as well.

This, then, must be our task—to give to every child the chance to realize the wish and dream of the mother; to give to every mother the care, the environment wherein she shall dream the highest and noblest dreams of success and attainment and goodness for her child; to give to every home the assurance of safety and comfort whereby mother-love shall be able to exercise most fully the privileges of willing good to her child.

### FOAM ON THE SCHOONERS.

(Montreal Star.)

The strike in Munich over beer reminds us that, while we are worrying about reciprocity and marriage laws and that sort of thing, the people of the Bavarian capital are dealing with the realities of life. They have sent a man to prison for six weeks, and committed five of his waiters to keep him company for part of his sentence, beside fining them handsomely; and all because he did not fill his "steins" as some high-toned Munich is usually called, with a beer; but an atrocious outrage, such as this find committed, does raise it to the very centre of the Hofbrau.

### THEY SCORE OCCASIONALLY.

(Philadelphia Record.)

The story runs that a militant suffragist, while speaking in Yorkshire last summer, was interrupted by a farmer who said, "If they wor in the proper place, lass, thee'd be up in the field yow, helpin' ta mak' hay instead of bleatherin' there."

"Thank you, sir," retorted the fair speaker. "And if you were in your proper place you'd be eating it."

### HOW AUTHORS WROTE.

Pope Thought Best When in Bed—Victor Hugo Wrote Standing.

Alexander Pope, who was the literary pontiff of his time, thought best when in bed. Whenever a thought came to him he would jot it down on a scrap of paper. His servant often found bedclothes and floor covered with white bits containing aphorisms which have now become hackneyed quotations.

Victor Hugo wrote "Les Miserables" standing up, an attitude which Hawthorne also assumed when he wrote many of his romances.

Chair or sitting on the arm of a secretary's chair were Napoleon's favorite positions while dictating to Bourrienne, a position which he varied now and then by patting that scribe on the head or pulling his ears.

Sir Walter Scott could while reclining on a lounge dictate to two amanuenses, who frequently had to stop writing, so tiring, the dictated passages heeded to them.

Balzac, in a monk's robe, frequently wrote from midnight till noon, taking draughts of strong coffee when drowsiness attacked him, and thus shortening his life by many years, no doubt.

William Morris made one of his favorite translations from the Greek while riding on the steam-cars. Walk Whitman and Horace Traubel, original in all things, were most original in the position they took while thinking. They were wont, so Mr. Traubel says, to climb upon a pile of lumber and lie down upon their backs. In that way each found out what the other's best thoughts were.—From the Boston Globe.

### SAVING LIFE IN THE FAMINE.

Rev. E. E. Lobenstein, writing to The Christian Herald from famine-stricken China, says:

"It is a constant surprise to see the fortitude of the people in the face of death. It is true that there has been much robbery and theft throughout the famine district, and that the country has been kept from breaking loose in lawlessness only by the strong hand of the ruler. In one city alone the police have either decapitated or hung in wooden cages over three hundred people since last fall, and the number is not much less in other cities; still, in view of the fact of the awful suffering of the people, and of the additional fact that even the theft of a few loaves of bread is sufficient to cause a man to be hung, it is a constant miracle that the country is as peaceful as it is." Mr. Lobenstein adds that up to the present time the relief afforded to over 300,000 persons in four large districts during the last two and a half months has amounted to only a fraction of a cent a day per head. Imperfect as has been the relief work, it has undoubtedly resulted in a large saving of life. They have kept alive somehow."

### Are You Subject to Nervous Headaches?

In primitive days, when little or nothing was known about Medicine, a favorite remedy supposed to have a virtue for headaches was Smelling Salts. To-day we know smelling salts are useless. The cause of nervous headaches can always be traced to an unbalanced condition of the stomach, which is immediately reflected over the whole nervous system. Many prescriptions have more or less efficacy, but the one that can be depended upon to cure quickly is Nervine. Twenty drops in sweetened water gives immediate relief. To say it quickly falls to express the result. This is the quality of Nervine strikes the stomach, its strengthening influence is felt. You feel better, brighter, free from oppressive nervous sensations. Nothing better to brace up when you come in at night tired and cold, nothing more certain to maintain you in perfect health. You can use Nervine inside or outside and in a thousand ways you'll find it invaluable in your home.

### CHECKING BABIES.

A fashionable Pittsburg church has established a complete playroom with reliable nurses where you can check your baby just as you do your hat and overcoat before going in.

Everybody knows that a baby is the finest thing in the world, and that he who goes through life without leaving one behind dies very poor indeed, a lady writes.

But many women have felt that their hearts would grow much fonder of their babies if they could be absent from them occasionally, though ever so seldom.

Manifestly, every family cannot have a nurse of its own, for then only half the world's women could be mothers, for the other half would have to be nurses.

But we could share our nurses.

It would be a good idea to have public nurseries, preferably in the home districts. The youngsters would be in charge of graduate nurses of the highest professional standing. They would be masters of the art of keeping children at healthy play.

But don't think we are proposing public mothers as a substitute for the old-fashioned kind, as we hear some "new" or "may be just fresh" women protest. Not even an angel from heaven could take the place of a child's mother as his principal guide, for the angel, however much wiser she might be, could not love the child half so much.

But we do think that every mother should have what only a few privileged mothers with employed nurses have now: the opportunity to go shopping, and to the theatre or a party occasionally, and know that her baby is in good hands while she is away from her darling. She knows that she is giving her little one's life if she leaves him long in the house; and she doesn't feel sure that her neighbor will keep baby away from the stove, the wash boiler, and other dangerous things if she leaves the child in the neighbor's care.

### MORE BARGAIN STOCK.

(Exchange.)

Shops—My wife offered to bet me a box of cigars against a pair of gloves that she wouldn't get angry for a month but I refused to bet."

Nops—Afraid you'd lose, eh?"

Shops—No; afraid I'd win."