

The Story of Amaroff the Pole

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters

Mr. Phillips, an artist, informed by Inspector Peace of the mysterious death of a sculptor, consents to try and identify the victim, whom he finds to be Amaroff, a Pole.

Later he goes to Amaroff's studio and finds Inspector Peace in conversation with Mr. Nicolin, head of the Russian Service in London. There are two men replacing some papers in a desk. One, unseen by the rest of the party, takes an impression of a key.

Mr. Phillips is invited by the inspector to join him in making further inquiries. They met, Sergeant Jackson, who hands the inspector the address of a club where Amaroff is said to have called often to see Greatman, the proprietor, and informs him that Greatman's private room has a sanded floor—Amaroff was said to have been killed in a room with a sanded floor and removed on a coster's barrow.

We were drawing nearer to our game; the scent was growing stronger. Ad-dington Peace leant a little forward, with a twist in his jaw that raised a ripple of muscles under the skin.

"Continue, if you please," he said. "The room is at the rear of the club, and there is a back staircase to the yard behind, where costers store their barrows when not in use. It fits in with what you told us to inquire for, don't it, sir?"

"Yes." The inspector's stick recommenced its interlacing circles on the floor; and we sat and watched, as if thereby he were disentangling his sordid story. So still were we all that the bartender poked his luminous nose from his cage in the hope that we had gone. He withdrew it with remarks on the police force which were distinctly audible, and opposed to the complimentary. Suddenly the inspector turned to me with a motion of half-apology, as if at the neglect of a guest.

"There are times, Mr. Phillips," he said, "when evidence runs in absurd contradictions. Observe the present case, in which you are so good as to interest yourself. We have it from the Russian police that Amaroff is their man, and that in their opinion—they being well qualified to judge—he was murdered by Nihilists. We now learn that he was apparently on intimate terms with Nihilists, and we have good reason to believe that he was strangled in one of their clubs. What do you gather from that?"

"They discovered his treachery, and took an excusable revenge," said I.

"A sound conclusion. And now let us suppose that Amaroff was not a police spy at all; being, in fact, a dangerous Nihilist. What then?"

"Why set yourself such a puzzle?" "Not for amusement," he said, with his quiet smile. "And now I propose a little experiment. You must introduce us to this club. Jackson, the door-keeper will know you, and pass us in. Afterwards you will go to the back entrance in the yard you spoke of, and wait. It should be easy to conceal yourself."

"Yes, sir. Am I to stop Greatman if he comes out?"

"No. Stop nobody. We had better be going."

By B. Fletcher Robinson

The square lay desolate and lonely in the bleak moonlight. We crossed it, and stopped at a house in the shadows of the farther side. At our knock a slide flew back, and, in the gush of light, a hairy face examined us curiously.

"Vat is et?" he said. The serjeant stepped forward and whispered. The man was sufficiently satisfied, for he dropped the slide at once, and the door swung back to admit us; the hairy-faced porter bowing a welcome in polite submission. The inspector led the way up the stairs, and I followed at his heels. The serjeant had disappeared.

It was a broad, low room in which we found ourselves, the rafters of the roof unhidden by the plaster of a ceiling. Round the walls on benches ranged behind tables a dozen men sat smoking and drinking. The chatter of talk faded away as we entered. In silence they stared at us, calmly, judiciously, without fear or curiosity. I could not have imagined a more

composed and resolute company. I felt that I carried myself awkwardly, as an impertinent intruder should; but the inspector sauntered across the room to a bar on the further side as calmly as if he were the oldest and most valued member in the club.

A pale-faced man with a stained and yellow beard rose from his seat behind the glasses. His eyes were fixed on Peace with a weak, pathetic expression like a dog in pain.

"Good evening, Mr. Greatman," said the inspector. "Can I have a word with you?"

"Yes, sir, if you will kindly step into my private room," he answered in excellent English, opening a hatch in the bar. "This is the way, sir, if you will follow me."

We walked after him down a short passage and stopped before the darkness of an open door. A spurt of a match and the gas jet flared upon a bare chamber, hung with a gaudy paper and furnished with half a dozen wooden chairs set round a deal table in the

center. In place of a carpet, our feet grated upon a smooth sprinkling of that grey sand which may still be found in old-fashioned inns. It was here then, if the detectives were not mistaken, that this crime had found a climax, this sordid murder not thirty hours old.

"If you would like a fire, gentlemen," suggested Greatman. "I can easily fetch some coals."

"Pray do not trouble yourself," said the inspector, politely. "My name is Peace, of the Criminal Investigation Department, and I called to inquire if you can tell me anything concerning the murder of the sculptor, Amaroff."

"I know nothing." "That is strange, seeing that he was strangled in this very room."

"Here?" cried the Pole, with a stare of unbelief changing into sudden terror. "Here—in my room."

"So I believe," said Peace. The man swayed for an instant, grasping at the back of a chair, and then dropped to the ground, moaning, his face covered with his hands. In that crouching figure before us was written the extremity of despair.

"Come, come, Greatman, pull yourself together," said the inspector, tapping him kindly on the shoulder. "If you are innocent, there is no need to make all this fuss."

"It was Nicolin who lied to me," he cried, looking up with bewildered eyes.

"Very probably," said Peace, "it is a habit with him."

"Yet it was I, miserable that I am who made the meeting between them. Before Heaven, it was with the innocence of a child. If those my comrades of the club but knew—"

He hesitated, his eyes searching the room in sudden terror.

"Oblige me by seeing that we have no comrades already at the keyhole. Mr. Phillips," said Peace.

There was no one at the door; no one in the dark passage; and when I returned I found that Peace had lifted the caretaker to a chair, where he sat in a crumpled heap.

"You can trust us," the detective was saying. "Believe me, Greatman, it will be best for yourself that you hide nothing."

And so with many fierce cries and protestations, this poor creature began his story.

It was Nicolin, it seemed, who had discovered that Greatman, the caretaker of the Brutus Club, was one and the same with the forger Ivan Kroll, of Odessa, who had been wanted by the Russian police for close upon twelve years. But having a shrewd head on his shoulders, Nicolin made no immediate use of his knowledge. For forgery a man might be extradited from England. Once in Russia the charge would be altered to nihilism, and then—Siberia. It was not pleasant for the caretaker of a nihilist club to be at the mercy of a black-bearded spy lounging on the step outside. "It was that which drove me to the brandy" said poor Greatman, alias Kroll.

(Continued on Page 7)



The Importance of Shoe Comfort for the Growing Child

THE human foot, from childhood to old age, is called upon for greater physical endurance than any other portion of the body. It is therefore obvious that great care should be taken to keep the feet physically perfect.

The selection of Shoes for young children is not an easy task. The parent can only judge by appearance, and too often the child suffers pain and becomes nervous and irritable from ill-fitting shoes.

Buster Brown Shaping Last Shoes have solved the problem for parents who are interested in their children's future foot comfort. By adopting this Last System, the child's foot grows uniformly at all ages of development. The change in shape of the Last is made gradually and the foot is kept free from blemishes.

Begin now to buy Buster Brown Shaping Last Shoes and insure shoe comfort and shapely maturity of your children's feet.

Buster Brown Shaping Last Shoes are made for Boys and Girls from four to sixteen years.

Ask Your Dealer for These Shoes



St. Louis

Brown Shoe Company, Inc.

(Manufacturers)

U. S. A.

