

BULL-DOG DRUMMOND

The Adventures of A Demobilized Officer Who Found Peace Dull

by **CYRIL McNEILE**
"SAPPER"
Illustrations by **IRWIN MYERS**
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"COME ON, BOYS!"

Synopsis.—In December, 1913, four men gather in a hotel in Berne and hear one of the quartet outline a plan to paralyze Great Britain and at the same time seize world power. The other three, Hocking, American, and Steinman and Von Gratz, Germans, all millionaires, agree to the scheme, providing another man, Hiram Potts, an American, is taken in. The instigator of the plot gives his name as Comte de Guy, but when he leaves for England with his daughter he decides to use the name Carl Peterson. Capt. Hugh (Bull-Dog) Drummond, a retired officer, advertises for work that will give him excitement, signing "Sapper." As a result he meets Phyllis Benton, a young woman who answered his ad. She tells him of strange murders and robberies of which she suspects a hand headed by Peterson and Henry Lakington. Drummond decides to go to The Larches, Miss Benton's home. Peterson and Lakington stop his car and look him over.

CHAPTER II—Continued.

"He's so motionless," answered Hugh. "The bally fellow hasn't moved a muscle since I've been here. I believe he'd sit on a hornet's nest, and leave the inmates guessing. Great gift, Mr. Lakington. Shows a strength of will but rarely met with—a mind which rises above mere vulgar curiosity."

"It is undoubtedly a great gift to have such a mind, Captain Drummond," said Lakington. "And if it isn't born in a man, he should most certainly try to cultivate it. Shall we be seeing you this evening?"

Drummond shrugged his shoulders. "I'm the vaguest man that ever lived," he said lightly. "I might be listening to nightingales in the country; or I might be consuming steak and onions preparatory to going to a night club. So long. . . . Hope you don't break down again so suddenly."

He watched the Rolls-Royce start, but seemed in no hurry to follow suit. And his many friends, who were wont to regard Hugh Drummond as a mass of brown not too plentifully supplied with brains, would have been puzzled had they seen the look of keen concentration on his face, as he stared along the white dusty road. He could not say why, but suddenly and very certainly the conviction had come to him that this was no hoax and no leg-pull—but grim and sober reality. In his imagination he heard the sudden sharp order to stop the instant they were over the hill, so that Peterson might have a chance of inspecting him; in a flash of intuition he knew that these two men were no ordinary people, and that he was suspect. Two thoughts were dominant in his mind. The first was that there was some mystery about the motionless, unnatural man who had sat beside the driver; the second was a distinct feeling of relief that his automatic was fully loaded.

THREE.

At half-past five he stopped in front of Godalming postoffice. To his surprise the girl handed him a wire, and Hugh tore the yellow envelope open quickly. It was from Denny, and it was brief and to the point:

"Phone message received. AAA. Must see you Carlton tea day after tomorrow. Going Godalming now. AAA. Message ends."

With a slight smile he noticed the military phraseology—Denny at one time in his career had been a signaller—and then he frowned. "Must see you." She should—at once.

He turned to the girl and inquired the way to The Larches. It was about two miles, he gathered, on the Guildford road, and impossible to miss. A biggish house standing well back in its own grounds.

"Is it anywhere near a house called The Elms?" he asked.

"Next door, sir," said the girl. "The gardens adjoin."

He thanked her, and having torn up the telegram into small pieces, he got into his car. There was nothing for it, he had decided, but to drive boldly up to the house, and say that he had come to call on Miss Benton. He had never been a man who beat about the bush, and simple methods appealed to him—a trait in his character which many a boxer, addicted to tortuous cunning in the ring, had good cause to remember. What more natural, he reflected, than to drive over and see such an old friend?

He had no difficulty in finding the house, and a few minutes later he was ringing the front-door bell. It was answered by a maidservant.

"Is Miss Benton in?" Hugh asked with a smile which at once won the girl's heart.

"She has only just come back from London, sir," she answered doubtfully. "I don't know whether . . ."

"Would you tell her that Captain Drummond called?" said Hugh as the

maid hesitated. "That I happened to find myself near here, and came on chance of seeing her?"

Once again the smile was called into play, and the girl hesitated no longer. "Will you come inside, sir?" she said. "I will go and tell Miss Phyllis."

She ushered him into the drawing-room and closed the door. It was a charming room, just such as he would have expected with Phyllis. Big windows, opening down to the ground, led out on to a lawn, which was already a blaze of color. A few great oak trees threw a pleasant shade at the end of the garden, and partially showing through them, he could see another house which he rightly assumed was The Elms. In fact, even as he heard the door open and shut behind him, he saw Peterson come out of a small summer-house and commence strolling up and down, smoking a cigar. Then he turned round and faced the girl.

Charming as she had looked in London, she was doubly so now, in a simple linen frock which showed off her figure to perfection. But if he thought he was going to have any leisure to enjoy the picture undisturbed, he was soon disillusioned.

"Why have you come here, Captain Drummond?" she said, a little breathlessly. "I said the Carlton—the day after tomorrow."

"Unfortunately," said Hugh, "I'd left London before that message came. My servant wired it on to the post-office here. Not that it would have made any difference. I should have come, anyway."

An involuntary smile hovered round her lips for a moment; then she grew serious again. "It's very dangerous for you to come here," she remarked quietly. "If once those men suspect anything, God knows what will happen."

It was on the tip of his tongue to tell her that it was too late to worry about that; then he changed his mind. "And what is there suspicious," he asked, "in an old friend who happens to be in the neighborhood dropping in to call? Wherefore your telephone message? What's the worry?"

She bit her lip and drummed with her fingers on the arm of the chair. "If I tell you," she said at length, "will you promise me, on your word of honor, that you won't go blundering into The Elms, or do anything foolish like that?"

"At the present moment I'm very comfortable where I am, thanks," remarked Hugh.

"I know," she said; "but I'm so dreadfully afraid that you're the type of person who . . . who . . ."

She paused, at a loss for a word. "Who bellows like a bull, and charges head down," interrupted Hugh with a grin. She laughed with him, and just for a moment their eyes



"It's Very Dangerous for You to Come Here," She Remarked Quietly.

met, and she read in his something quite foreign to the point at issue. In fact, it is to be feared that the question of Lakington and his companions was not engrossing Drummond's mind, as it doubtless should have been, to the exclusion of all else.

"They're so utterly unscrupulous," she continued hurriedly, "so fiendishly clever, that even you would be a child in their hands."

Hugh endeavored to dissemble his pleasure at that little word "even." "I don't know whether . . ."

"I will be discretion itself," he assured her firmly.

"I suppose I shall have to trust you," she said. "Have you seen the evening papers today?"

"I looked at the ones that come out in the morning labeled six p. m.; before I had lunch," he answered. "Is there anything of interest?"

She handed him a copy of the Planet. "Read that little paragraph in the second column." She pointed to it, as he took the paper, and Hugh read it aloud.

"Mr. Hiram C. Potts—the celebrated American millionaire—is progressing favorably. He has gone into the country for a few days, but is sufficiently recovered to conduct business as usual." He laid down the paper and looked at the girl sitting opposite. "One is pleased," he remarked in a puzzled tone, "for the sake of Mr. Potts. To be ill and have a name like that is more than most men could stand. . . . But I don't quite see . . ."

"That man was stopping at the Carlton, where he met Lakington," said the girl. "He is a multi-millionaire, over here in connection with some big steel trust; and when multi-millionaires get friendly with Lakington, their health frequently does suffer."

"But this paper says he's getting better," objected Drummond. "Sufficiently recovered to conduct business as usual."

"If he is sufficiently recovered to conduct business as usual, why did he send his confidential secretary away yesterday morning on an urgent mission to Belfast?"

"Search me," said Hugh. "Incidentally, how do you know he did?"

"I asked at the Carlton this morning," she answered. "I said I'd come after a job as typist for Mr. Potts. They told me at the inquiry office that he was ill in bed and unable to see anybody. So I asked for his secretary, and they told me what I've just told you—that he had left for Belfast that morning and would be away several days. It may be that there's nothing in it; on the other hand, it may be that there's a lot. And it's only by following up every possible clue," she continued fiercely, "that I can hope to beat those fiends and get daddy out of their clutches."

Drummond nodded gravely, and did not speak. For into his mind had flashed suddenly the remembrance of that sinister, motionless figure seated by the chauffeur. The wildest guesswork certainly—no vestige of proof—and yet, having once come, the thought stuck. And as he turned it over in his mind, almost prepared to laugh at himself for his credulity—millionaires are not removed against their will, in broad daylight, from one of the biggest hotels in London, to sit in immovable silence in an open car—the door opened and an elderly man came in.

Hugh rose, and the girl introduced the two men. "An old friend, daddy," she said. "You must have heard me speak of Captain Drummond."

"I don't recall the name at the moment, my dear," he answered courteously—a fact which was hardly surprising—"but I fear I'm getting a little forgetful. You'll stop and have some dinner, of course."

Hugh bowed. "I should like to, Mr. Benton. Thank you very much. I'm afraid the hour of my call was a little informal, but being round in these parts, I felt I must come and look Miss Benton up."

His host smiled absentmindedly, and walking to the window, stared through the gathering dusk at the house opposite, half hidden in the trees. And Hugh, who was watching him from under lowered lids, saw him suddenly clench both hands in a gesture of despair.

It cannot be said that dinner was a meal of sparkling gaiety. Mr. Benton was palpably ill at ease, and beyond a few desultory remarks spoke hardly at all; while the girl, who sat opposite Hugh, though she made one or two valiant attempts to break the long silences, spent most of the meal in covertly watching her father. If anything more had been required to convince Drummond of the genuineness of his interview with her at the Carlton the preceding day, the atmosphere at this strained and silent party supplied it.

As if unconscious of anything peculiar he rambled on in his usual inconsistent method, heedless of whether he was answered or not; but all the time his mind was busily working. He had already decided that a Rolls-Royce was not the only car on the market which could break down mysteriously, and with the town so far away, his host could hardly fail to ask him to stop the night. And then—he had not yet quite settled how—he proposed to have a closer look at The Elms.

At length the meal was over, and the maid, placing the decanter in front of Mr. Benton, withdrew from the room.

"You'll have a glass of port, Captain Drummond?" remarked his host, removing the stopper, and pushing the bottle toward him. "An old pre-war wine which I can vouch for."

Hugh smiled, and even as he lifted the heavy old cut glass, he stiffened suddenly in his chair. A cry—half shout, half scream, and stifled at once—had come echoing through the open windows. With a crash the stopper fell from Mr. Benton's nerveless fingers, breaking the finger-bowl in front of him, while every vestige of color left his face.

"It's something these days to be able to say that," remarked Hugh, pouring out himself a glass. "Wine, Miss Benton?" He looked at the girl, who was staring fearfully out of the

window, and forced her to meet his eye. "It will do you good."

His tone was compelling, and after a moment's hesitation, she pushed the glass over to him. "Will you pour it out?" she said, and he saw that she was trembling all over.

"Did you—did you hear—anything?" With a vain endeavor to speak calmly, his host looked at Hugh.

"That 'night-bird'?" he answered easily. "Eerie noises they make, don't they? Sometimes in France, when everything was still, and only the ghostly green flares went hissing up, one used to hear 'em. Startled nervous sentries out of their lives." He talked on, and gradually the color came back to the other man's face. But Hugh noticed that he drained his port at a gulp, and immediately refilled his glass.

Outside everything was still; no repetition of that short, strangled cry again disturbed the silence. With the training bred of many hours in No Man's Land, Drummond was listening, even while he was speaking, for the faintest suspicious sound—but he heard nothing. The soft whisper-

ing night-noises came gently through the window; but the man who had screamed once did not even whimper again. He remembered hearing a similar cry near the brick-stacks at Guinchy, and two nights later he had found the giver of it, at the edge of a mine-crater, with glazed eyes that still held in them the horror of the final second. And more persistently than ever, his thoughts centered on the fifth occupant of the Rolls-Royce.

It was with almost a look of relief that Mr. Benton listened to his tale of woe about his car.

"Of course you must stop here for the night," he cried. "Phyllis, my dear, will you tell them to get a room ready?"

With an inscrutable look at Hugh, in which thankfulness and apprehension seemed mingled, the girl left the room. There was an unnatural glitter in her father's eyes—a flush on his cheeks hardly to be accounted for by the warmth of the evening; and it struck Drummond that during the time he had been pretending to look at his car, Mr. Benton had been fortifying himself. It was obvious, even to the soldier's unprofessional eye, that the man's nerves had gone to pieces, his daughter's worst forebodings were likely to be fulfilled. He talked disjointedly and fast; his hands were not steady, and he seemed to be always waiting for something to happen.

Hugh had not been in the room ten minutes before his host produced the whisky, and during the time that he took to drink a mild nightcap, Mr. Benton succeeded in lowering three extremely strong glasses of spirit. And what made it the more sad was that the man was obviously not a heavy drinker by preference.

At eleven o'clock Hugh rose and said good night.

"You'll ring if you want anything, won't you?" said his host. "We don't have very many visitors here, but I hope you'll find everything you require. Breakfast at nine."

Drummond closed the door behind him, and stood for a moment in silence, looking round the hall. It was deserted, but he wanted to get the geography of the house firmly impressed on his mind. He stepped across toward the drawing-room. Inside, as he hoped, he found the girl.

She rose the instant he came in, and stood by the mantelpiece with her hands locked.

"What was it?" she half whispered—"that awful noise at dinner?"

He looked at her gravely for a while, and then he shook his head. "Shall we leave it as a night-bird for the present?" he said quietly. Then he leaned toward her, and took her hands in his own. "Go to bed, little girl," he ordered; "this is my show. And, may I say, I think you're just wonderful. Thank God you saw my advertisement!"

Gently he released her hands, and walking to the door, held it open for her. "If by any chance you should



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hear things in the night—turn over and go to sleep again."

"But what are you going to do?" she cried.

Hugh grinned. "I haven't the remotest idea," he answered. "Doubtless the Lord will provide."

The instant the girl had left the room Hugh switched off the lights, and stepped across to the curtains which covered the long windows. He pulled them aside, letting them come together behind him; then, cautiously, he unbolted one side of the big center window. Silently he dodged across the lawn toward the big trees at the end, and leaning up against one of them, he proceeded to make a more detailed survey of his objective, The Elms. It was the same type of house as the one he had just left, and the grounds seemed about the same size. A wire fence separated the two places, and in the darkness Hugh could just make out a small wicket-gate, closing a path which connected both houses. He tried it, and found to his satisfaction that it opened silently.

Save for one room on the ground-floor the house was in darkness, and Hugh determined to have a look at that room. There was a chink in the curtains, through which the light was streaming out, which struck him as having possibilities.

Keeping under cover, he edged toward it, and, at length, he got into a position from which he could see inside. And what he saw made him decide to chance it, and go even closer.

Seated at the table was a man he did not recognize; while on either side of him sat Lakington and Peterson. Lying on a sofa smoking a cigarette and reading a novel was a tall dark girl, who seemed completely uninterested in the proceedings of the other three. Hugh placed her at once as the doubtful daughter Irma, and resumed his watch on the group at the table.

A paper was in front of the man, and Peterson, who was smoking a large cigar, was apparently suggesting that he should make use of the pen which Lakington was obligingly holding in readiness. In all respects a harmless tableau, save for one small thing—the expression on the man's face. Hugh had seen it before often—only then it had been called shell-shock. The man was dazed, semi-unconscious. Every now and then he stared round the room, as if bewildered; then he would shake his head and pass his hand wearily over his forehead. For a quarter of an hour the scene continued; then Lakington produced an instrument from his pocket. Hugh saw the man shrink back in terror, and reach for the pen. But what impressed him most in that momentary flash of action was Peterson. There was something inhuman in his complete passivity. Even as he watched the man signing his name, no trace of emotion showed on his face—whereas on Lakington's there shone a fiendish satisfaction.

The document was still lying on the table, when Hugh produced his revolver. He knew there was foul play about, and the madness of what he had suddenly made up his mind to do never struck him; being that manner of fool, he was made that way. But he breathed a pious prayer that he would shoot straight—and then he held his breath. The crack of the shot and the bursting of the only electric light bulb in the room were almost simultaneous, and the next second, with a roar of "Come on, boys," he burst through the window. At an immense advantage over the others, who could see nothing for the moment, he blundered round the room. He timed the blow at Lakington to a nicety; he hit him straight on the point of the jaw and he felt the man go down like a log. Then he grabbed at the paper on the table, which tore in his hand, and picking the dazed signer up bodily, he rushed through the window onto the lawn. There was not an instant to be lost; only the impossibility of seeing when suddenly plunged into darkness, had enabled him to pull the thing off so far. And before that advantage disappeared he had to be back at The Larches with his burden, no light weight for even a man of his strength to carry.

But there seemed to be no pursuit, no hue and cry. As he reached the little gate he paused and looked back, and he fancied he saw outside the window a gleam of white, such as a shirt front. He lingered for an instant, peering into the darkness and recovering his breath, when with a vicious phut something buried itself in the tree beside him. Drummond lingered no more; long years of experience left no doubt in his mind as to what that something was.

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Week-end means the end of the week, but by extension, the period from Friday night to Monday morning. In England the term is also used attributively, as the week-end holidays, and from this has sprung the verbal phrase "to week-end," meaning to employ the week-end as a holiday season. A well-known authority in alluding to the expression, week-end, says: "This brief holiday has got into serious history. No less an authority than Dr. R. S. Gardiner notes in his 'Oliver Cromwell' that 'Oliver—if he invented nothing else—may be regarded as the inventor of that modified form of enjoyment to which hard-worked citizens have in our day given the name of the week-end.'"

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