

The Murder in X. Street

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Rupert Lascelles has been dining too freely, a fact that accounts for his extraordinary mistake about the time. He had steered a fairly successful course down the Strand, avoiding the few passengers who were still loitering in that never deserted thoroughfare, and now paused at the corner of X. Street. Here, seeking support against a convenient lamp-post, he fumbled with his watch chain, and at last succeeded in snapping open the case of his gold hunter repeater.

At this moment a rough, uncouth man, who had been lurking under the shadow of the houses, came across and addressed him:

"Wot's the time, guv?" he asked.

"Pasht two," replied Lascelles.

"Ho! is it?" said the rough man, making a deft grab at his watch. The next moment Lascelles found himself alone.

Now, it appeared afterwards that Lascelles had made a mistake in his estimate of the time, since he had mistaken the long and short hands of his watch for each other, a mistake which caused him to believe that the time was between 55 and 57 minutes later than it actually was. (What was the real time?)

For a moment Lascelles was too startled to grasp the fact that he had been robbed, then, pulling himself together with an effort, he started down X. Street in a belated chase after the pickpocket, who had by this time safely made his escape.

At the bottom of the street, however, Lascelles saw two men bending over some object on the ground, and, believing that one of them was his late assailant, he slowed down and approached them cautiously, with the

result that he was enabled to overhear the following extraordinary conversation which was being held between them:—

Said the first: "I will take from the red things such as are round."

"Very good," said the first, "but, of course, anything that is not round, even in your original portion, comes to me."

"That is hardly fair," replied the second. "If I agree to that you must let me have all the red hot round things that are golden."

"Done," cried the first, "on condition that you give up from all you are at present entitled to everything which is neither silver nor gold."

"An easy condition," said the second, "for everything I am entitled to is silver."

As they laughed and shook hands on the bargain, Lascelles lurched forward: "Shay, ol' pals," he observed, "what was the swag, anyway?"

"You'd better ask the readers of What's On," replied the thieves, making off hurriedly.

At this dramatic moment a series of heart-rending shrieks broke the silence of the night, and a book was thrown furiously from an upper window.

"Murder! Murder!" came the appalling and inhuman yell.

"Thine hour is come, oh, execrable hag!" replied a firm but courteous voice. "Thou worthy spouse of Ahab! I am not employed in the royal household—far from it! But permit me to take the liberty!"—and he plunged her after the book. A grey-headed, wizened, monkey-like mass fell upon the pavement with a resounding plunk.

"Life is not extinct," exclaimed Lascelles, sober in a moment. Run, one of you, and get a word of seven letters which spells the same forward and backwards."

But it was useless. The victim of the dastardly outrage was as dead as mutton.

The question then most seriously arose—How dead is mutton? But Lascelles easily showed to the satisfaction of the bystanders and Mr. Algernon Ashton, that it was as dead as anything can be.

“Why!” he said; “I can easily think of six words implying death or burial whose initials form the word ‘mutton.’ ”

With a muttered curse, Robert Caldwell slunk away!
What six words can you suggest?