

HALT!
WHO GOES THERE?
A MYSTERY STORY
By Robert E. Howard

PROLOGUE.

A blazing sun blazed out of a blazing sky and blazed down blazingly on a blazing expanse of blazing, barren sand, in a blazing desert.

Naught was to be [seen] except sand dunes. And yet, aha! A long caravan of camels emerged from behind a sand dune and meandered along the ancient desert trail which was ancient beyond the memory of man. Aye, it was even said that the trail had been made before William Jennings Bryan began to run for president.

The Tuareg chieftain looked about him with a sneer on his handsome face. With contempt he gazed at the sand dunes. Somehow he felt superior to them. Presently the caravan stopped by an ancient city, half-hidden beneath the sands of the desert. It was almost in ruins. A very ancient city; it had been deserted long before Congress began to discuss the immigration problem, even.

The Tuareg dismounted from his camel and entered his tent. A slave girl offered him a chaw of Beech-nut from her own private plug. He kicked her with a harsh tone of voice.

Seating himself on an expensive divan from Bokhara, he reflected meditatively. "Durn it," he soliloquized.

Chapter I—"Awhare!"

"One million dollars," mused the Colonel.

"Exactly, my dear Colonel," returned Hawkshaw, the great detective, wittily.

"But the details of the crime?"

"As follows," Hawkshaw replied. "The night watchman of the Stacksuhkale bank, London, was knocked unconscious and a million dollars in American thrift-stamps as well as one million pounds of sterling and a box of fine cigars were taken."

"The villain!" exclaimed the Colonel indignantly. "And cigars as expensive as they are."

"How are you going to go about finding the guilty person?" asked the Colonel.

"In the following manner," answered Hawkshaw. "Let us first begin by deduction. Let us say, for example, that three persons have robbed the bank. You, I, or the Khedive of Egypt. Now it is impossible that you could commit the robbery because at the time the robbery was committed you were playing a foursome of tiddledy-winks with the duke of Buckingham."

"That's true but how did you know?" exclaimed the Colonel.

"My dear Colonel," answered Hawkshaw, "I saw the crumbs on your opera hat. Now, as for myself, I could not have done the robbery because I was in a theater in Drury Lane. I almost distinctly remember the play even. It was called 'The Store-keeper of Venice' and was written by a fellow named Shooksbeer or something, who is a native of Algeria.

"Then, consider the Khedive of Egypt, he could not have committed the robbery because he was on his sugar-moon, I mean his molasses-moon, with his 99999999999999999999th wife,

hunting social lions, lounge-lizards, zebras and other big game, in the wilds of Schenectady, New York. And, having eliminated myself, you and the Khedive, do you see what this points to?"

"No," the Colonel answered.

"It indicates that the robbery was done by someone else!" said Hawkshaw, dramatically.

"Indeed!" exclaimed the Colonel in admiration. "Awhaw! Wonderful!"

"I shall now," Hawkshaw continued, "go into the street and arrest everyone I meet. To each I shall put the question: "Did you rob the Stacksuhkale bank or did you not?" and I shall be governed by their answers."

Chapter II—The Anarchist.

"CURSES!" hissed Alexichsky Grooglegoofgiveimoffaswiftskykickovitchinsky-therearovitchsky.

"Curses!" Alexichsky, etc., kissed [hissed] again even more hissier than before. "This nation of England shall fall or my name is not A'sky Majimp." (Giving the correct pronunciation of the name Alexichsky, etc.)

The anarchist, with great stealth, then placed a bomb under a girls' school.

"There," he hissed, "that be a defeat to the accursed burgwasso!"

After going several blocks he stopped with an enraged look in his coat pocket.

"Ten billion imprecations!" he hissed, "I forgot to light the fuse."

He walked on through London.

Presently the anarchist came to a palatial mansion in the slums which was the clubhouse of all the anarchists in London.

He walked up to the door and rang the old fashioned door knocker.

"Giff der pass-vord," hissed a voice from within.

"The wages of sin are a mansion on Riverside Drive," answered the anarchist. The door swung open and he entered. There were several members of the Anarchist Club in the club room, engaged in anarchist past times, such as swigging ginger-ale, playing marbles for keeps, growing whiskers and cussing the bourgeoisie.

Feeling in a reckless mood, Alexichsky spent a nickel for ginger-ale and offered to bet three cents either way on the next Olympic games. One of the club members, Heinie Von Shtoofe, then made a speech.

"Vass iss?" he began eloquently. "Vot iss der nation goming do evn der cost of hog-iron, I mean pig-iron iss gone up two cents on der vard, alretty yet? Und vot for iss so may Irisher loafers getting chobs ven white men like me can't, yet? I haf meet a Irisher on der street und I say, 'Get outd of mine way, you no-good bumf!' Und look at der black eye vot he giffs me. Dey say dot Irishers is such goot fighters. Bah! Dot makes me tired feel. Vhy, over to Gretchen's vedding, dot drunken O'Hooligan come in und tried to raise it a rough-house und me und my cousin, Abie, und Ludvig und Hands und four or five others, vhy ve pretty threw dot Irishman right outd of der house! I vont never go to Ireland."

The anarchists applauded and then Alexichsky proposed a toast, "Down with everything! Long live Lendnine and Lopesky and hurrah for Russia!"

Chapter III
"Brittania Rules the Waves"

As Alexichsky the anarchist walked down Piccadilly Circus, he glanced about hoping to see a bank that he could rob.

As he came into another street, two men accosted him, one a tall, thin man, and the other a short, stocky man.

"Aha!" said Hawkshaw, for it was he. "Methinks yon unshaven Russian with the cannibalistic face has the guilty look of a first-class criminal."

The detective stopped Alexichsky, "Wait a moment, my friend, pause while I gaze on your un-handsome visage and ask you a question or three or four."

"What do you want?" asked Alexichsky, having swiftly selected a fiendish sneer from his extensive collection of mocking smiles, derisive leers, glares, dirty looks, unholy mirth [mirth], chuckles, diabolical stares, etc.

"Did you rob the Stacksuhkale bank?" asked Hawkshaw.

"No," answered Alexichsky.

"Dern it," said the Colonel, "Baffled again."

"Hold on," said Hawkshaw, "My Russian friend, you are under arrest."

The Russian was seized by policemen and Scotland Yard detectives.

"Brittania rules the waves," said Mr. Hawkshaw, "another triumph for Scotland Yard."

He addressed Alexichsky, "I knew you were telling a falsehood because when you denied robbing the bank, you raised an eyebrow and wiggled your toes. Also, I had suspicions of you when you asked the inspector of Scotland Yard if they found a set of burgler's tools in the Stackuhkale bank. You said they were yours and if they were found to deliver them to the Anarchist's Club-house. I delivered them myself, disguised as a rear admiral of the Swiss army. Then when I saw the million dollar notes and thrift-stamps in your vest pocket, I took a chance and arrested you."

"Curses," cursed Alexichsky.

"The way you robbed the bank was in the following manner," said Hawkshaw. "You came to the bank, disguised as a king of the South Sea islands. You climbed up the fire escape and down one of the marble pillars of the bank front. Then, having taken an impression of the key-hole with wax, you filed out a key to fit, from a cigar made in Dusseldorf, Germany. Then you entered and robbed the bank. Is that correct?"

"No, the watchman had left the door open and I went up the back steps and walked in," answered the Russian.

EPILOGUE.

The Eskimo floundered through the deep snow and kicked an iceberg out of his way. Reaching his igloo, he unharnessed his team of whales from his sled and entered the igloo.

Snow covered the land, yards deep. Here and there mighty icebergs reared up toward the sky.

For it was mid-summer in northern Alaska.
