

nervous but defiant office-boy.

"You can't see the editor nor any of the staff," he announced.

"We insist on seeing the editor or some responsible person," said the Prime Minister, and the deputation forced its way in. The boy had spoken truly; there was no one to be seen. In the whole suite of rooms there was no sign of human life.

"Where is the editor?" "Or the foreign editor?" "Or the chief leader-writer? Or anybody?"

"In answer to the shower of questions the boy unlocked a drawer and produced a strange-looking envelope, which bore a Khokand postmark, and a date of some seven or eight months back. It contained a scrap of paper on which was written the following message:

"Entire party captured by brigand tribe on homeward journey. Quarter of million demanded as ransom, but would probably take less. Inform Government, relations, and friends."

"There followed the signatures of the principal members of the party and instructions as to how and where the money was to be paid.

editorial department the way was barred by a well-known Nonconformist divine, made its way to the offices of the paper. At the door leading to the Foreign Secretary, four leading financiers, and a sometime definite and drastic must be done. A government came to the conclusion that *Intelligencer's* leaders, and then one day the disavowing the sentiments expressed in the *Daily* positively garruous in the course of perpetually accounted a rather reticent man, became a different view. The Foreign Secretary, hitherto thought it before; the men in Downing Street took articles and bought the paper as he had never ambiguity. The man in the street enjoyed the East, it had not acquired the art of diplomatic else the *Daily Intellicencer* had learned in the important Powers into mobilisations. Whatever nearly turned the autumn manoeuvres of six articles appeared, couched in language which change took place. Blunt, forcible, outspoken in the realm of foreign affairs that a startling policy and outlook were not departed from. It was maintained, but at any rate the general lines of aforesight standard of excellence was scarcely from what had been a fairly arduous journey. The unnatural in the work of men who had returned

newspaper circulation. Other editorial staffs were which lent quite a new meaning to the phrase heralded an era of restlessness in the Press world Montmartre. The migration was a brief one, but it began with the stampede of the entire staff of one suddenly displayed itself in the managing and editorial staffs of certain London newspapers. It

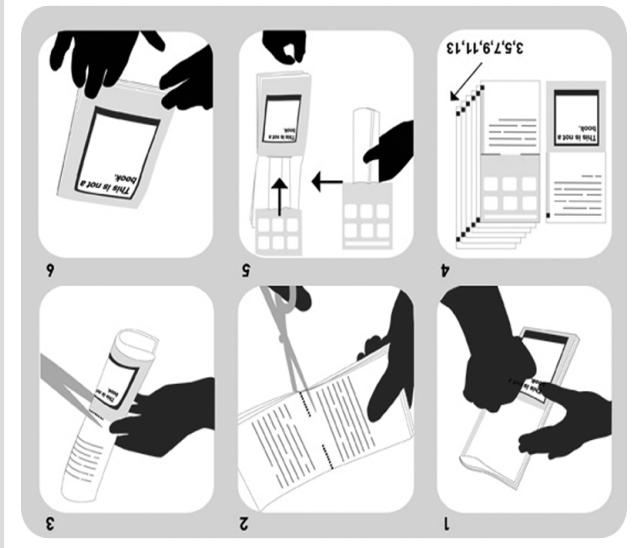
the banks of the Seine and the heights of Mexico. I mean the wanderer fever which in this country while you were away in the wilds perhaps the most striking instance of it occurred occasions tally noticeable," said Sir Lulworth;

"In human affairs the same phenomenon is suddenly impulsive to trek and migrate that breaks out now and again, for no apparent reason, in communities of hitherto stay-at-home animals."

"One of the most remarkable things in the fauna. occurring in the North American and Old World comparing and contrasting allied types of animals from Mexico. The latter was interested in in company with his nephew, recently returned in progress through the Zoological Society's Gardens Sir Lulworth Quayne was making a leisurely

# The Yarkand Manner

Saki (H H Munro)



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**The Yarckand Manner**

not slow to imitate the example that had been set them. Paris soon dropped out of fashion as being too near home; Nurnberg, Seville, and Salonica became more favoured as planting-out grounds for the personnel of not only weekly but daily papers as well. The localities were perhaps not always well chosen; the fact of a leading organ of Evangelical thought being edited for two successive fortnights from Trouville and Monte Carlo was generally admitted to have been a mistake. And even when enterprising and adventurous editors took themselves and their staffs further afield there were some unavoidable clashings. For instance, the *Scrutator*, *Sporting Bluff*, and *The Damsels' Own Paper* all pitched on Khartoum for the same week. It was, perhaps, a desire to out-distance all possible competition that influenced the management of the *Daily Intelligencer*, one of the most solid and respected organs of Liberal opinion, in its decision to transfer its offices for three or four weeks from Fleet Street to Eastern Turkestan, allowing, of course, a necessary margin of time for the journey there and back. This was, in many respects, the most remarkable of all the Press stampedes that were experienced at this time. There was no make-believe about the

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industry', ranks among the best of the recent Bakru on 'What Cobdenism might do for the camel well. The series of articles which commenced at the long outward journeys of the paper during carrying on the usual features of the paper during arrangements made for transmitting copy and admitted that to a certain extent the genuineness of its pilgrimage, and it must be was determined to give no loophole for cavil at the accustomed restaurants. The *Daily Intelligencer* the art editor lunching as usual at their You chanced to see the principal leader-writer or edited and brought out at Lisbon or Innsbruck if information that such a paper was being carried out. You were not impressed by the idea was falling somewhat into disrepute from "Well, you see," said Sir Lulworth, "the migration half-hearted manner in which it was occasionally undertaken that such a paper was being it?" said the nephew.

"That was doing things rather thoroughly, wasn't it?"

"That was doing things rather thoroughly, wasn't it?"

"The Drang nach Osten; an intelligent and efficient office-boy was all that was left in the alluded to as the Drang nach Osten; an intelligent and so forth, all took part in what was popularly sub-editors, leader-writers, principal reporters, under-taking; proprietor, manager, editor,

"Deserted hive of editorial industry."

"That," said Sir Lulworth, "was the most brilliant stroke of all. To the wife or nearest relative of each of the missing men he forwarded a letter, copying the handwriting of the supposed writer as well as he could, and making excuses about vile pens and ink; in each letter he told the same story, varying only the locality, to the effect that the writer, alone of the whole party, was unable to tear himself away from the wild liberty and allurements of Eastern life, and was going to spend several months roaming in some selected region. Many of the wives started off immediately in pursuit of their errant husbands, and it took the Government a considerable time and much trouble to reclaim them from their fruitless quests along the banks of the Oxus, the Gobi Desert, the Orenburg steppe, and other outlandish places. One of them, I believe, is still lost somewhere in the Tigris Valley."

"And the boy?"

"Is still in journalism."

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Transcribed from the 1914 John Lane, The Bodley Head edition by David Price,

contributions to Free Trade literature, while the views on foreign policy enunciated 'from a roof in Yarkand' showed at least as much grasp of the international situation as those that had germinated within half a mile of Downing Street. Quite in keeping, too, with the older and better traditions of British journalism was the manner of the home-coming; no bombast, no personal advertisement, no flamboyant interviews. Even a complimentary luncheon at the Voyagers' Club was courteously declined. Indeed, it began to be felt that the self-effacement of the returned pressmen was being carried to a pedantic length. Foreman compositors, advertisement clerks, and other members of the non-editorial staff, who had, of course, taken no part in the great trek, found it as impossible to get into direct communication with the editor and his satellites now that they had returned as when they had been excusably inaccessible in Central Asia. The sulky, overworked office-boy, who was the one connecting link between the editorial brain and the business departments of the paper, sardonically explained the new aloofness as the 'Yarkand manner.' Most of the reporters and sub-editors seemed to have been dismissed in autocratic fashion since their return and new ones

for the non-appearance --" the boy accounted to the relatives all those months "But," interposed the nephew, "how on earth did reverted to the wonted traditions of the paper." their old footing. The articles on foreign affairs notice, and gradually things were put back on and brought home, in twos and threes to escape pinning captives could be sought out, ransomed, was apposite to keep the paper going till the as possible; an interim staff, pledged to secrecy, "Of course the whole thing had to be kept as quiet own composition.

The articles on foreign affairs were entirely his articles that was held in reserve for emergencies. possible of the large accumulation of special sub-editing he could, and made as much use as necessary, engaged new reporters, did what errant newspaper staff. So he drew the editorial and other salaries, forged what signatures were advantagous object as the preparation of an it. No one is a hero to one's own office-boy, and office-boy-in-charge, who had quietly suppressed "The letter had been directed to the

department, and perhaps a note of latitude not seemed to have crept into the editorial noticeable. A certain Oriental carelessness ordinary events of the day not much change was thing. In home affairs, social questions, and the "Ah!" said Sir Lulworth, "that was the exciting did they show the influence of the new style?" "And the contents of the paper," said the nephew, "And the contents of the paper was not popular." luxuries. The Yarkand manner was not such on minds and temperaments unused to such effect of high altitudes and Eastern atmosphere seclusion. People began to talkunkindly of the hermit-souled revolutionaries from their self-imposed nothing short of a Royal command would drag the through of the editorial letter-box, it seemed as if bear of her hospitality into the unresponsible hosts of Twentieth Century London flung the to the returned wanderers. The most brilliant pre-migration days, and the same experience was encountered by those who made social overtures the human bustle and democratic simplicity of mystic and Tibetan and forbidden had replaced the medium of cut typewritten notes. Something presented, issuing its instructions solely through immediate associates remained an unseen engaged by letter, to these the editor and his