

COLONEL THORN-
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Colonel
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Secret
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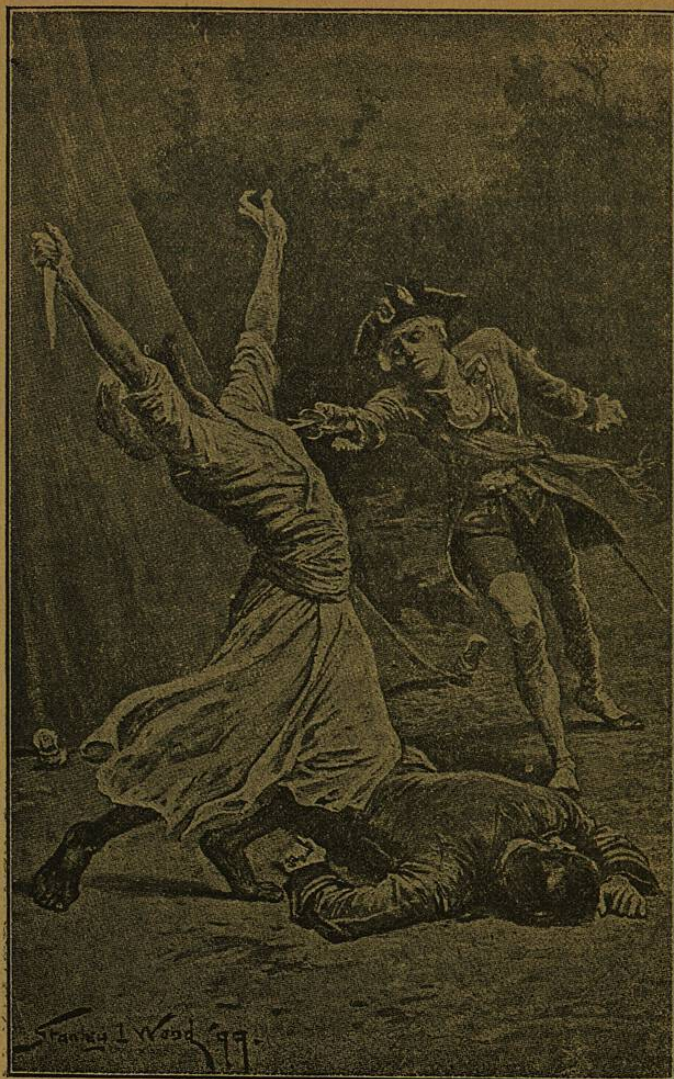
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"BEFORE HE COULD STRIKE AGAIN, I HAD RUN HIM THROUGH."
Colonel Thorndyke's Secret. —Frontispiece.

COLONEL THORNDYKE'S SECRET

BY

G. A. HENTY

AUTHOR OF "BY PIKE AND DYKE," "THE LION OF ST. MARK,"
 "THE CAT OF BUBASTES," "BY ENGLAND'S AID,"
 "RUJUB THE JUGGLER," ETC.



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PUBLISHERS' INTRODUCTION.

"COLONEL THORNDYKE'S SECRET" is a story so far out of the ordinary that it will not be inappropriate to speak a few words regarding the tale and its unusually successful author, Mr. George Alfred Henty.

The plot of the story hinges upon the possession of a valuable bracelet of diamonds, stolen from a Hindoo idol by a British soldier in India. This bracelet falls into the possession of Colonel Thorndyke, who, shortly afterward, is sent home to England because of his wounds. The secret concerning the bracelet is told to the Colonel's brother, a country squire, and the treasure is left to younger members of the Thorndyke family.

As is well known to-day, the theft of anything from a Hindoo temple is considered an extraordinary crime in India, and when this occurs it becomes a religious duty for one or more persons to hunt down the thief and bring back the property taken from the heathen god.

The members of the Thorndyke family soon learn that they are being watched. But this is at a time when highwaymen are numerous in this part of England, and they cannot determine whether the work is that of the "knights of the roads" or that of the Lascars after the famous bracelet. A mysterious death follows, and the younger members of the family are almost stunned, not knowing what will happen next. They would give the bracelet up, but do not know where it is hidden, the secret having been in the sole possession of the member now dead.

In this quandary the young hero of the tale rises to the occasion and determines to join the London police force and become a detective, with the hope of ultimately clearing up the mystery. Thrilling adventures of a most unusual kind follow, and at last something of the mystery is explained. The bracelet and other jewelry are unearthed, and it is decided to take the bracelet to Amster-

dam and offer it to the diamond-cutters at that place. But the carrying of the bracelet is both difficult and dangerous. How the mission is brought to a conclusion, and what part the Lascars played in the final adventure, will be found in the pages that follow.

It can truthfully be said that Mr. Henty is easily the most popular of all English story-tellers, his books for boys enjoying a circulation of from a hundred and fifty thousand to two hundred and fifty thousand per year. His tales are all clean, and although some are full of exciting situations and thrilling to the last degree, they are of a high moral tone, while the English employed is of the best.

The present story is of peculiar value as giving a good insight into country and town life in England over a hundred years ago, when railways and telegraph lines were unknown and when the "knights of the road" were apt to hold up any stagecoach that happened to come along. It also gives a truthful picture of the dark and underhanded work accomplished at times by those of East Indian blood, especially when on what they consider a religious mission.

COLONEL THORNDYKE'S SECRET.

CHAPTER I.

SQUIRE THORNDYKE, of the Manor House of Crawley, was, on the 1st of September, 1782, walking up and down the little terrace in front of the quaint old house in an unusually disturbed mood. He was a man of forty-three or -four, stoutly and strongly built, and inclined to be portly. Save the loss of his wife four years before, there had been but little to ruffle the easy tenor of his life. A younger son, he had, at his mother's death, when he was three-and-twenty, come in for the small estate at Crawley, which had been her jointure.

For ten years he had led a life resembling that of most of his neighbors; he had hunted and shot, been a regular attendant at any main of cocks that was fought within fifteen miles of Crawley, had occasionally been up to London for a week or two to see the gay doings there. Of an evening he had generally gone down to the inn, where he talked over, with two or three of his own condition and a few of the better class of farmers, the news of the day, the war with the French, the troubles in Scotland, the alarming march of the Young Pretender, and his defeat at Culloden—with no very keen interest in the result, for the Southern gentry and yeomen, unlike those in the North, had no strong leanings either way. They had a dull dislike for Hanoverian George, but no great love for the exiled Stuarts, whose patron, the King of France, was an enemy of England.

More often, however, their thoughts turned upon local topics—the holding up of the coach of Sir James Harris or Squire Hamilton by highwaymen; the affray between the French smugglers and the Revenue men near Selsea Bill or Shoreham; the delinquencies of the poaching