

THEN people get short on topics of conversation they say to me, "Sooper, you ought to write a book." And I always say, "I book," And I always say, "I got no time." Anyway, superintendents of police don't write books. They know too much. And, besides, I can't spell. Never could. There was a woman down at Wembley who used to throw my uneducation in my face every time I pinched her husband. He was educated. Wrote five hands, all different. And there was a lady down in Kent who used to report me regular to the chief commissioner because I didn't say "my lady" to her—wife of a city sheriff or something. Anyway, she never asked me why I didn't write a book. She knew I was low.

In my young days police constables didn't have to do much more than read and write. The only etiquette they were supposed to know was never to give backchat to their superiors or argue with a man who threatened to punch 'em on the nose. But nowadays, when everybody's gone scientific and lots of policemen speak French, a chap like me would have no chance of promotion.

I got where I got on merit, as I was explaining to Mr. Frank Dewsbury one night. I often tell people this, otherwise they wouldn't know, but would be thinking I got my promotion because the chief was sorry for me.

Mr. Dewsbury is a man I respect very highly. Once upon a time I didn't respect him, because he was a stockbroker and wasn't rich. I used to think he drank or abused other good habits, but apparently there was nothing wrong with him. He had a house in Elsmere Gardens, and some nights when I had nothing better to do I used to go in and have a chat with him. That's how I discovered he didn't drink—I'd take four whiskies to his two. So you might say he was almost a tectotaler. He was a tall young man, nearly as tall as me, a good looker, a bit of a boxer, and he was an officer in the Territorials. He had a high respect for me-in fact, he was as intelligent a young man as you could wish to meet.

BUT he wasn't rich. So far as I could discover, there are quite a lot of people on the Stock Exchange who haven't got a million. He was one of them. His uncle was Mr. Elijah Larmer. I was sorry to hear this, because Larmer and I have never been boy friends. He is a man as old as me, but he hasn't worn as well.

Larmer owns most of West Kensington-land and estates to him are what back gardens are to me and you. He lives on the out-skirts of my division in a big, dirtylooking house that is so surrounded by shrubs and trees that you can hardly see it from the roadway. Rich? That man could buy the Bank of England and still have enough money left to buy a lunch.

Illustrated

SKIDMORE

ву Т. D.

The first time I met him professionally was twelve years ago. He was the kind of man who liked to have a lot of ready money at his hand. I don't say that he distrusted banks, but in the estate agent's business, especially in his early days, most of the deals were done with ready money. He had a big strongroom built in his basement, and he often had as much currency as a hundred thousand pounds in that saferoom of his. And naturally, being the mean old fellow, when he had that strongroom made he got the cheap-est builder and the cheapest safe maker and used cut-price material.

Mean? He was so mean he used to count the pits in an orange. When they put the new heating into St. Asaph's Church he went twice a day to save his own gas.

As I say, I came into touch with him over this new strongroom of his. It was only a strongroom to a child with a wooden spade. When Harry Pinford went after it with a kit of tools it was the

weakest strongroom you could imagine. They cut a hole through the strongest part of it one night and got away with

eight thousand pounds.
"What are the police for?" he says "What are the police for?" he says to me (I was acting inspector at the girl, Miss Margaret Pinder, the daugh-

time) when I went to see the job. "Are they ornaments? I pay rates and taxes to be protected. Look at that strongroom! Burgled under the nose of the police!"

Miss Pinder, a very pretty girl, called at

my lodgings one

night

I pointed out that it was under his own nose too. I showed him the rotten lock on the kitchen door and the cheap fastenings on the pantry window and the burglar alarm that didn't go off because he'd been too mean to keep the batteries in order. He reported me for impertinence and threatened to have me broken. He got so that he used to think I was responsi-ble. I took Harry about three weeks afterward, but he'd planted the money. Larmer was like a lunatic when he didn't get his eight thousand back. He had a new steel door fitted and new burglar alarms.
"My uncle," said Mr.

Dewsbury, "is difficult."
He was being very

difficult with young Dewsbury, who was his uncle's broker. Larmer did quite a lot of specu-

lating on the Stock Exchange and made money. And he had quite a number of friends who also did their business through Frank Dewsbury.

ter of a man who had once caught old Larmer over a law deal. Larmer didn't know anything about the engagement for a long time. When he did he sent

for Frank.

"What's this dam' nonsense about the Pinder girl?" he said. "I'd sooner see you dead than married to the daughter of that old crook Joe Pinder."

of that old crook Joe Pinder."

"I'm very fond of her," said Frank.
"In fact, I'd sooner be dead than not marry her. Be reasonable, Uncle Elijah—Betty is not responsible for her father's actions. Besides, he's dead."

"Naturally he's dead," snarled old Larmer, who had a working arrangement with Providence, "but his daughter's alive! Didn't Joe Pinder play the

ter's alive! Didn't Joc Pinder play the dirtiest trick on me? Wasn't he a crooked-minded twister? . . . " And so forth and so on.

HAPPENED to drop in to dinner the night after. There was Frank pretending not to care, and there was Betty, a very pretty, straight-backed girl who wasn't crying over the business but was looking rather serious. There was a sort of aunt there too. She spoke at intervals, saying the things she'd like to do to Mr. Larmer. Most of 'em were strictly illegal.

"He's taking his business away from me, and I suppose his friends will do the same," said Frank. "He's also cutting me out of his will—"
"That doesn't mean a lot," said Betty.

"He told you he was only leaving you a thousand pounds—all his money is going to mental hospitals."

"If I had my way with him," said the aunt, who was a God-fearing woman who wore a gold cross around her neck and a copper cross on her waist, "I'd boil him in oil. A man like that doesn't deserve to live."

She was Betty's aunt.

I've naturally got a very soft place for young people. They want all the sympathy that we old chaps can give 'em. They're so darned foolish. I never see a young man that I don't think of him as an oyster who's mislaid his shell. At the same time, I never thought I should lower myself to be sorry for a stockbroker. He was a good soldier—he was in the war at sixteen—and a good amateur theatrical player, and they tell me the way he handled a tennis racket would make Lenglen look like Cousin Jane from the country. But I doubt if he was a good stockbroker. I don't know what kind of brain you've got to have to be a good stockbroker, but he

hadn't got it. I knew that the minute me he wasn't a millionaire.

I didn't see him again for nearly a month, but I heard through my sergeant, who wastes time picking up items about honest people that he ought to be using in the pursuit of his duty, that young Mr. Dewsbury was having a bad time.

My gergeant-it was Martin at the time-got very friendly with Mr. Dewsbury and used to call in every other night-not that that meant anything: he'd go almost anywhere for a free

"He knows quite a lot about police work," Martin told me. "I've never seen a man so interested—I think he's

going to write a book."

About a week after this I saw Mr.

Dewsbury and Martin up west. It appeared that Dewsbury was very anxious to see some of the underworld. There's a special brand of underworld round the Tottenham Court Road that's just there to be seen. It doesn't mean anything, and whenever I show visitors round and take 'em to this exhibition, I always feel as though I'm deceiving innocent children. It's like being asked to take a man to see the dangerous snakes at the zoo and showing him the lizard house.

"But he knows as much about the game as I do," said Martin.

"Soho didn't mean anything to him, so I took him along to the Grandes and let him take a look at one or two of the boys. And, Sooper, Jim Mosker is in town—he slipped out as I went into the bar, but I saw him."

Now, where Jim Mosker is "Dowsy" Lightfoot is, and naturally all my interest in Mr. Dewsbury's first course in criminal jurisprudence got off the car and made way for Jim and his snaky

Jim Mosker was one of the cleverest safe blowers in Europe: a nice, quietspoken man who could prove an alibi in three languages. He hadn't been in town for I don't know how long. Jim wasn't one of these vulgar, haphazard burglars that only go after the stuff when they're short of money and generally get caught with the goods because they haven't taken the trouble to reconnoiter the ground. Jim went after the big money in a big way. He'd take a year to prepare, and preparation with Jim meant the last button on the last gaiter, as Napoleon said. If it wasn't Napoleon it was Bismarck.

 $B_{\rm work}^{\rm EFORE\ Jim\ Mosker\ did\ the\ actual}$ the knew the Christian names and family history of every clerk, cashier, messenger and office boy at the bank -he generally worked banks. He knew just what the manager's private trouble was, her name and what worried her.

His partner was another kind. "Dowsy" Lightfoot supplied any violence that the combination required. He had no conscience, no pity and no eyelashes. He was a pale, hairless man without feeling.

At the earliest opportunity I looked up Jim and found him at the Grandes which is a sort of high-class club for low-class people. It was run by Wilkie Meed, an old-time boxer, and it was very well conducted, for Wilkie still packed a punch that hurt. In a way, it was rather a healthy sort of place: you never saw funny people there, and a fellow who strolled in one night and asked for a shot of dope was taken to the hospital under the impression he'd had it. Just honest-to-God thieves, confidence men, screwsmen, but always the élite of the profession.

I found Jim sitting at a corner table in the big bar, and of course that clever sergeant of mine was all wrong when he said that Jim thought he had missed being seen.

"How are you, Sooper?" said Jim, getting up and shaking me by the hand. "Sit down and have a drink." when the waiter had come over, he said: Vermouth, with just two drops of absinthe and a little water."

And mind you, he hadn't seen me for six years—what a memory!

"I saw a fellow here the other night: they tell me he's your sergeant, Martin. I didn't like to talk to him because he had a friend of mine with him."

"How's Dowsy?" I asked, for there was no sign of the snake man.

Jim smiled. He was a chubby little man who wore rimless glasses.

"Dowsy? He's coming over tomorrow night. I'm getting rather tired of Paris, Sooper. This is the good little town, only you people won't leave me

"He's a man named Dewsbury. I met him three months ago in Paris. A very nice fellow." He shrugged his shoulders. "I don't care two hoots whether he knows my sad story or not," he said, "but it might hurt his feelings if he had a heart-to-heart talk with you and heard I was a naughty boy.'

"Where did you meet this Mr. Dewsbury?" I asked.

He'd met him at a big restaurant just off the Bois. Somebody introduced him, and they had driven out in Jim's car to Enghien and had a little gamble at the

"It was a very mild affair," said Jim, "and there was no private séance afterward. No, I liked the lad; there's something very straightforward and Eng-

And then Dowsy got a bit unpleasant and whipped in a quick one.
"It wasn't quick enough for this Dews-

bury man, who ducked and landed Dowsy a short-arm jab under the heart that laid him out. Naturally enough, when the tumult and the shouting died, we got together like brothers, and that's how we come to meet him. And that's a fact. Of course the head waiter said he didn't put Dewsbury at our table at all, but he'd just sat down and wouldn't be moved. The whole proceedings were very queer."

KNEW Mr. Dewsbury often went to Paris. He had a great friend there, an estate agent who did a lot of business with old Larmer, his uncle. Just about then trade was brisk, for some of the Russian nobility who had saved a bit of money were buying estates in England. Dewsbury told me this when saw him the next night.

He was very cheerful except that he spoke about his uncle and Betty Pinder.

He had already bought a house at Purley when old man Larmer came.

"The moral is, Sooper," he said, with a little laugh, "never count your wedding presents till after the wedding!"

He told me his business had dropped to nothing and that every time he met Elijah, as he frequently did, the old man got him by the

buttonhole and told him a new one against Joe Pinder.

"I should hate to hang for Uncle Elijah," he said.

I asked him where he got his interest in crime, and he took me by the arm and led me back to his house. I'd never examined his library before, and I was sur-prised to find the number of books he had on the subject—almost as many as that bird I got hung over the Big Foot murder.

He told me that when he was in the trenches during the war he read nothing else, and he proved that he wasn't talking stuff when he told me the full history of Jim Mosker.

"Oh, yes, I knew them the moment I spotted them in Paris. I liked Jim, but the skinned oneugh!"

"You didn't by any chance sit down at that table knowing they were coming and that Dowsy would start something?" I asked. "Maybe I did," said Mr. Frank

Dewsbury very carelessly. "I thought it was a good way of getting acquainted. I tried the Sullivans first, but they're half-wits. Jim Mosker's got brains." I didn't ask him why he tried to

get acquainted with the Sullivans, who are just second-class thieves.

I'd already reported Mosker's presence in my district. He came twice to see Dewsbury. Miss Pinder evidently heard about it because she called at my lodgings one night.

'You're a great friend of Frank's, aren't you? And I'm a little worried, Superintendent. Frank is the dearest fellow in the world, but he's awfully generous and broad-minded, and I've got a feeling that it isn't good for him to be seen about with Mr. Mosker.

"You've met Mosker?" I asked.

She nodded.

Yes; I don't (Continued on page 36)



alone. All the time you think I am do- never have come to England unless. ing something unlawful."

"I don't know what this fellow hit him

with, but I think it had iron in it'

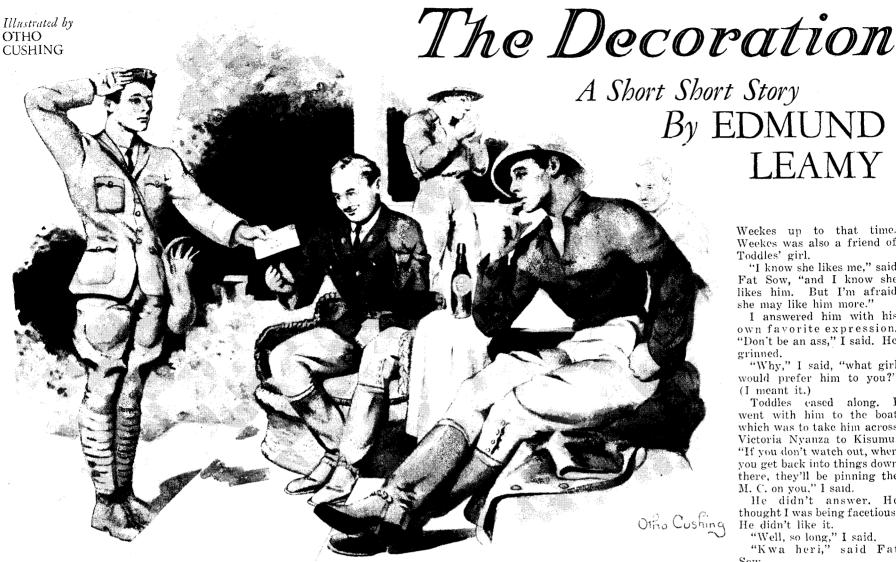
He went on in this way for a long time, and I let him have his spiel. knew he'd been in France and Berlin, but he was not on the books, and it was no business of mine to connect him with that big jewel robbery in Friedrichstrasse or an unpleasant little affair in

'What's this joke about the gentleman who was with Martin being a friend of yours?" I asked.

Jim smiled quickly.

After we'd had a couple of drinks Jim began to get truthful and surprising.
"I don't know why I lie to you,

Sooper," he said, in his frank, boyish way, "but here's the whole strength of Dewsbury and how we met him. It was in a restaurant, but nobody introduced us. Dowsy had had four drinks and was full of danger. When we got to the restaurant we found Dewsbury sitting at our table. We were so late that the head waiter had handed over our park and told him he could sit there.



The mail arrived and Toddles grabbed excitedly at a letter addressed to himself

ODDLES wanted a decoration, a military decoration. He dreamed of the Victoria Cross—the highest honor England confers on her fighting sons-or the Military Cross, a lesser glory. Of course it was ridiculous, for Toddles was corpulent and sweaty under the African sun.

He had a plantation in Uganda, but six months after the World War broke out he abandoned his place and sailed for England. A few of his friends saw him off and laughed. Fancy "Fat Sow" going to London to enlist!

But we who laughed didn't know his dreams.

You see, there was a girl-there usually is—and Toddles wanted to be a hero in her eyes. Which is the way of young

men, fat or lean, or in between.

He arrived in England and joined the colors, a tear in his eyes as he took the oath. And then short leave. And a girl proud and smiling.

Old Fat Sow a soldier—laughable! She kissed Toddles. "When you win your spurs you'll find me waiting," she said a fittle hysterically, the last night they were together before he went to camp, and kissed him again.

And Toddles took that-rightly-to mean a decoration.

He was too late for the much prized

Mons Star-but no man is ever too late for the V. C. or the M. C.

He got a commission, suddenly found himself singled out for detail to an officers' training school and there got his

star as a second lieutenant.

Then the British War Office—which sometimes did rational things-ordered him back to Uganda.

You know the language and the ways of the black men out there," said the pompous individual who gave him his marching orders, "and you're a good parade-ground officer. We are transferring you to the depot at Bombo, pro-

moting you to first lieutenant, and there you will be occupied drilling and train-

"But I don't want to—to drill or tr-train recruits," stammered Toddles. came all the way from there to fight."

He might as well have saved his breath. The next issue of the Official Gazette contained the news of Toddles' transfer and his promotion.

The night before he sailed he got slightly blotto. His vain girl had been unnecessarily cruel: "I should think if ou had argued your case well enough they would have let you go to France.

That stung. Toddles took it as a reflection on his personal courage. But with the able assistance of "Johnny With the able assistance of Johnny Walker" he later cheered up. He had plenty of friends in Africa. There was fighting out there too. He'd do a little wangling and in no time he'd find himself attached to a combatant unit. He tumbled into bed later to dream of capturing, single-handed, German positions, and awoke with a bad head the next morning, just as the M. C. was being pinned on his now not quite so fat chest.

It must be said that the regimental headquarters at Bombo, Uganda, is a nice post. There is comfort there and good food and better wines. Also it is not too far from the club in Kampala and the flesh pots. Many a lad would have been glad to be assigned to the post, war or no war. But Toddles had no sooner arrived than he began pulling wires. Among those whom he approached was myself. "Help me," said Toddles, "to get in the war."

"M'lad," said I, "what's the matter

with Bombo?"

"Don't be an ass!" said Toddles.
So I did what I could, and in due course Toddles was sent down into the field resplendent in new khaki and flushed with high hopes.

To everyone's amazement he proved to

be a good soldier, always ready for dirty jobs, and they couldn't keep him from colunteering for every bit of extra-

dangerous work which cropped up.
"In fact," said his colonel one night at the club. "I think the chap's a bit batty.

Batty or not, Toddles was a brave man. Once he led a charge, with only a walking stick as a weapon, and came through miraculously. Another time, alone and single-handed, he captured a machine-gun nest and took five prison-Still another time, when the battalion was cornered, he slipped through the enemy lines, disguised as a Shenzi native, and brought reënforcements. For this last he won his captaincy and a spell of leave.

He came up to my place to spend his furlough, and one night he waxed bitter.
"Dann it all." said Toddles, in his

cups, "does a blighter have to get himself blotted to get a ribbon on his chest?" (And so I learned what was bothering Fat Sow.)

In the morning he did not remember that he had shown his hand. . . .

THE following night a young captain named Weekes dropped in for dinner. He was the man who had succeeded Toddles at Bombo.

I didn't care particularly for Weekes, but in Africa one ran an open house, especially during the days of the war.
Toddles and he didn't hit it off.
"Fawncy," said Weekes, adjusting his monocle and peering at Toddles—

'fawncy your jumping out of Bomboto muck it in the gubba."

"Yes." said Toddles, unconsciously imitating him—"just fawncy."...
I was glad that Weekes went home

Two days later Toddles returned to his regiment. But before he left he told me something I had not known about awarded the Military Cross!

Weekes up to that time. Weekes was also a friend of Toddles' girl.

LEAMY

"I know she likes me," said Fat Sow, "and I know she likes him. But I'm afraid likes him. she may like him more."

I answered him with his own favorite expression.
"Don't be an ass," I said. He grinned.
"Why," I said, "what girl

would prefer him to you?" (I meant it.)

Toddles eased along. I went with him to the boat which was to take him across Victoria Nyanza to Kisumu. "If you don't watch out, when you get back into things down there, they'll be pinning the M. C. on you," I said. He didn't answer. He

thought I was being facetious.

He didn't like it.
"Well, so long," I said.
"Kwa heri," said Fat

The next news I had of him he was dreadfully wounded. He had been on a reconnais-

sance patrol. And, as was usual with him, he had left his men behind in safety. He had walked blindly into a trap. Carrying a couple of Mills bombs and a rifle, he had taken cover and had returned the fire of forty men.

Somehow he had driven them off. They had never guessed there was no one with him. And a black corporal of his own battalion had found him later.

Toddles had been shot through the shoulder, several times through the left arm, once in the right leg, and a bullet

had plowed its way along his chest. He was not expected to live. But live Toddles did, and survived to be sent back to Bombo with only one arm and a waistline considerably shrunken. There he found himself subordinate to Weekes, who was now acting adjutant.

The situation, of course, was intolerable, and I went out one night to dinner with him at the mess to talk things over. He wanted more than anything else to be returned to the field, where

lay that decoration.
"Hang it all," he said, "the left arm's nothing. I don't have to hold a rifle. It'd be different if I were an askari on special duty."

The mail arrived while we were at

Toddles grabbed excitedly at an envelope addressed to himself, tore it across, skimmed through it hurriedly. then handed it to me and sort of slumped in his chair.

Dully I read it. Toddles was being retired from the service. On his breast would never shine the decoration he had craved! As I sat silently biting into my cigar, wondering what to say, a shrill, excited voice made us all look -Weekes speaking:

up—Weekes speaking:
"I say, chaps, what do you know!"
Quoting from a letter: "'For meritorious service in drilling and equipping native recruits for the field,' I've been