

Extract from  
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# THE STRANGE AFFAIR AT CHEQUERS.

ENACE FROM MASKED VILLAINS  
OF ALL THE THRILLERS.

IMAGINARY 'PHONE CALL.

*Sir James Barrie was in a characteristically whimsical mood  
his speech at the Newspaper Press Fund dinner in London last  
night.*

**Using his wineglass as telephone receiver, Sir James  
carried on an imaginary conversation with Lord Byng  
at Scotland Yard.**

*"They want to know if the Premier (who was one of the  
guests at the dinner) has got a gun," said the author of "Peter  
Rab" to a convulsed audience. "The streets are seething with  
men in masks—they have broken out of every detective story the  
Premier has ever read, and are after him!"*

STORIES FROM THE "YARD."

NUMBER ONE IS IN THE  
GRAVEST DANGER."

SIR JAMES, who responded to  
the toast of "Journalism,"  
said:—

"If Shakespeare had come to  
London nowadays I suppose he  
could have become a journalist.

"You know I don't think he would  
have written plays; he would have  
turned them into novels, thrillers for  
which Mr. Baldwin admits a dark  
partiality.

"'Hamlet,' if written in these days,  
could probably be called 'The Strange  
Affair at Elsinore.' How hard on me  
I have to make a speech when I know  
that the Prime Minister would far  
rather I told him a detective story.

"At that moment the telephone bell  
rang," said Sir James, picking up his  
wineglass and listening.

"MOST ASTOUNDING CASE."

"Hallo, hallo. Yes, I'm here. I'm  
speaking, who are you?—It's Scotland  
Yard—the Yard asks you as a favour,  
ladies and gentlemen, not to wipe  
your glasses, as the waiters are plain-  
clothes men taking finger prints.

"Who? No. 1? Oh!" (Looking  
at Mr. Baldwin.)

"Yes, he is here. He is in great  
danger. They want to know if he has  
a gun. They say it is the most as-  
tounding case the Yard has ever had.

"A complete change has come  
over London since we sat down to  
dinner. The streets are seething  
with men in masks and princesses  
with daggers in their stockings. They  
have broken out of every detective  
story No. 1 has ever read, and all of  
them are after him.

"He will never return to Downing  
Street alive unless I can bring him.  
He and I must leave the hotel first  
and alone, and, as soon as we two  
leave, it is to be blown up.—End of  
Chapter I. of "The Strange Affair at  
Chequers."

"LONDON IN MY EYE."

"When I was interrupted—by Lord  
Byng—," continued Sir James, "I was  
about to say that some Pressmen have  
discovered that I am an old-timer, and  
asked me to speak about my own  
journalistic days.

"Of course, London was in my eye.  
I had sent a few articles to the most  
glorious editor I have ever known,

£10,000 GIFT.

Major Astor, who presided at  
the dinner, announced a gift of  
£10,000 to the Newspaper Press  
Fund from Lord Rothermere.

The original manuscript of Sir James  
Barrie's "The Twelve Pound Look"  
was sold during the evening for 2,300  
guineas to Mr. Gabriel Wells.

A blank canvas, presented by Mr.  
Philip de Laszlo, on which he offered  
to paint a portrait of the purchaser,  
was sold to the Hon. Peter Larkin,  
High Commissioner for Canada, for  
1,100 guineas.

A letter addressed to the Admiralty  
by Oliver Cromwell in 1655 was pur-  
chased by Sir James Barrie for 150  
guineas. A drawing by Sir William  
Orpen fell to Lord Derby for 200  
guineas.

During the evening Mr. S. Smeed, the  
secretary, said the total received for the  
fund was £27,000.

It was also announced that the Stock  
Exchange Mutual Subscription Fund  
(the Derby "sweepstake") had in-  
creased its donation to 1,000 guineas.

smoke of this banqueting hall? If the  
smoke were to clear away too much,  
which of us would not be the first to  
shiver?

The street of lodgings that we used  
to pace waiting hungrily for the post-  
man with the proofs, which are editors'  
love-letters—would we, even for the  
prize of living our lives differently,  
writing our works differently, would we  
if we could resume those paces on  
flagstones that are perhaps still  
indented with our shoes? Yes, for that  
prize I know one of us who would.

"Undimmed hours! Yes, let us hope  
so. And yet, could memory so beguile,  
if in the present that shivering fit were  
on us?

"It is on a good many in Fleet-street  
to-night. That is why we are here.

"But so comfortably here. Perhaps  
the gifts we give are just dope to our-  
selves so that we may not shiver."

MR. BALDWIN'S TILT.

Mr. Baldwin, who proposed the toast  
of "Journalism," said, "Until I was  
nearly 50 I never knew a journalist ex-  
cept my cousin, Kipling, who left that  
great profession early, being assured  
by his proprietor that in no circum-  
stances and in no profession could he  
ever hope to earn more than £400 a  
year.

"Conceive with what pleasure I come  
here feeling that if I am able to draw  
on my overdraft to help your Fund I  
may be helping Mr. Lloyd George in  
his old age.

"If I can feel I have made it possible  
for him in years to come to have a  
little broccoli for his supper, I shall  
feel I have not lived in vain."  
(Laughter.)