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(THE NARRATIVE RELATED THROUGHOUT BY NIPPER.)

CHAPTER I.

THE DANCE OF THE WANDERERS.

"PHEW! These two-steps are a bit faggish—what?"

The Hon. Douglas Singleton mopped his brow with a silken handkerchief, and sat down on one of the luxurious lounges which bordered the magnificent saloon of the steam yacht Wanderer.

"You can't expect anything else on an evening like this," remarked De Valerie, who was already cooling down. "We've got two dozen electric fans going, but they don't cool the air much. I think I shall tell the steward to bring about half a dozen blocks of ice down from the refrigerator."

The air was certainly rather humid, but, nevertheless, everybody in the Wanderer's saloon was enjoying the evening tremendously.

The occasion was rather an interesting one. Lord Dorrimore's party, having reached the banks of the Majarra, a tributory of the Amazon, was taking things rather easy.

On the morrow certain members of the party would set out in Dorrie's airship across the forest, in an endeavour to find some trace of Colonel Kerrigan. The object of the trip to the Amazon was really to search for the lost explorer. Up till now, the search had been fairly successful, Dorrie being lucky enough to find some traces of the colonel.

His lordship had come prepared for any eventualities. He had brought with him the small airship of the most durable character—which was capable of flying over a very wide radius at a great speed. Moreover, it could carry quite a number of passengers, and it was a very safe airship, too.

The voyage out to the Amazon had not been without incident, and all the members of Lord Dorrimore's party had enjoyed themselves tremendously.

The Amazon itself had been left behind, and the yacht now was on quite a small river—a stream which was practically unexplored, which was almost in virgin condition.

Owing to the services of Douglas Fairbanks, we had been able to find traces of the lost explorer almost at first.

Douglas Fairbanks, I had better explain, was a small Indian boy, and Dorrie had given him the name of the famous film star because the little chap made a great display of his teeth when smiling. Dorrie had only mentioned the name in fun at first, but it had stuck to the native ever since.

We had already made a short trip into the forest, our destination being a native village. Here, the Indians, introduced by Douglas Fairbanks, had been able to give us some very useful information concerning Colonel Kerrigan.

What they told us made it almost certain that the colonel was not dead, as the story had got about. It seemed that he had constructed a box-kite arrangement, and, sustained by this precarious contrivance, he had allowed himself to float up with the wind, in order to cross a deadly swamp.

The inference, therefore, was that the colonel had crossed the swamp, and had been unable to return. In that case he was imprisoned on the firm land beyond the morass.

According to many tales we had heard, this swamp extended for hundreds of miles, and formed a kind of circle. In the centre there was situated a huge tract of land which no man had ever been able to reach.

It was cut off from the rest of the world, so to speak. Owing to the swamp, it was practically impossible for any expedition to get across, and therefor this tract of land in the centre remained absolutely unexplored. What it contained we did not know. Whether there were human beings there, either savages or partly civilised—all this remained a mystery.

But it seemed likely that from this trip we should be able to learn much. For, with the aid of the airship, we should be able to cross the swamp with ease. And then we should be able to see the real truth with our own eyes. The airship had already made one short trip, and it had proved itself to be thoroughly airworthy and reliable.

It was a vessel of a new type of construction, and Dorrie's order had been specially executed. This craft was really the first of its kind to be turned out by the inventors, and it was not yet known to the world in general.

By what we had seen of it, the airship was really the last word in aircraft construction.

Included in the party was Miss Janet Kerrigan, the twin sister of the lost colonel. It was really owing to her that Lord Dorrimore had come on this trip. For Aunt Janet had dreamed many times of a wonderful city in the wilderness—she had seen her brother standing with outstretched hands, appealing for assistance.

This vision—or dream, or whatever you like to call it—had occurred to Aunt Janet not once, but hundreds of times. And she had so impressed Dorrie with her story that he had thought it worth while to fit up this expedition.

Nelson Lee also was in agreement with it, and so we had come to the Amazon to search for this dream city—to look for Colonel Kerrigan, who was dead to the world. Whether we should succeed in our quest remained to be seen.

On the morrow the first real attempt would be made to probe the mysteries of the great swamp. And to-night we were holding a little celebration. A dance had been arranged, and everything was gay and lively.

The evening was simple glorious, stars shining like great lamps up in the deep purple sky. A dead calm reigned, and the air was rather sultry—although this was not surprising considering we were in the tropics.

Down below, in the big saloon, everything was light and life. Electricity blazed out on every hand, a piano was being delightfully played by Lady Helen Tregellis-West, and the saloon was thronged with dancers.

There were several young ladies in the party—Violet Watson, for instance, and Ethel Church. Then there was young Heath's sister, Irene, and Frinton, of the Sixth, had his sister with him, too. Miss Dorothy was quite a nice girl, and she could dance to perfection.

But the belle of the party was undoubtedly Miss Violet. She was an extremely pretty girl, and Watson was justly proud of his sister. Naturally, there were not enough girls to go round, and many of the juniors were compelled to dance in pairs. The same applied to the other members of the party.

Iced drinks, ice cream, lime juice were, of course, plentiful. It was highly necessary to have something cooling in this climate.

In spite of their aid, it was almost impossible to keep cool.

Edward Oswald Handforth was having a fine time. He really believed that he could dance—although nobody else among the juniors thought so. The manner in which Handforth lumbered round during the waltzes was rather comical—and he had some difficulty in

getting a young lady partner. They objected to having their pretty feet trodden by Handforth's huge extremities.

Everybody was very happy and content, and the dance was proceeding joyously. It was the first real social evening we had had since arriving in the Amazon region.

Needless to say, Fatty Little was beating his own record. He not only consumed a terrific amount of food, but he was keen on the fruit, too.

Pineapples were like apples to him, and bananas disappeared at a most surprising rate.

Fatty much preferred the refreshments to dancing, and he spent most of the time in sitting on one of the lounges, putting all manner of good things into his ample interior.

"This is what I call a jolly evening!" he declared, as he peeled a banana, and listened to the strains of a waltz. "I'm enjoying myself immensely!"

"So I see, my son," I grinned, as I strolled by. "The marvellous thing is that you don't burst all the buttons off your trousers!"

"Why, I've hardly started yet!" grinned Fatty. "This fruit is only just a little preliminary, to give a decent appetite for supper!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Dear old boy, this is simply staggerin', it is, really!" exclaimed Sir Montie Tregellis-West. "I'm feeling rather worried about Fatty, you know."

"Why?" I asked.

"Well, my dear fellow, I don't think he'll last long if he keeps on at this rate ——"

"You needn't worry about that," I grinned. "Fatty can eat six times this amount, and never turn a hair. I say—hold on——"

I broke off as I observed that Fatty Little had just thrown down a banana-skin on the floor. It slithered along and went really farther than he intended. Now, personally, Fatty had performed the action unconsciously, and never realised it might cause a disaster.

Anyway, it did!

Handforth, by some extraordinary piece of luck had secured Miss Violet as partner, and he was waltzing round the saloon with her in a manner which he thought to be quite graceful. Actually, it was quite the opposite.

Handforth was doing his best, however, and Miss Violet was struggling bravely with him.

And then, before I could even give a warning, Handforth's heel touched a corner of the banana skin. The next second Handforth gave a wonderful exhibition of performing the back somersault.

He went over beautifully, nearly dragging Miss Violet with him, and his head came in violent contact with the floor.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Everybody yelled—they simply could not help it.

Handforth sat up, looking somewhat dazed. He saw Fatty Little calmly demolishing the banana, the peel of which he suspected had been hidden on the floor. Handforth's brains were not absolutely of the finest quality, but it did not need much concentration for him to realise that Fatty was the actual culprit.

"Oh, did you hurt yourself?" asked Miss Violet, looking somewhat ruffled.

"Not—not at all!" gasped Handforth, struggling to his feet. "I—I slipped, you know!"

"Yes, I think you did!" said Miss Violet sweetly. "I'm awfully sorry!"

"Don't mention it," growled Handforth, giving Fatty Little a glare which was intended to bore holes through him. "It was that beastly banana skin on the floor—some chap ought to be slaughtered for being so careless!"

Handforth was looking very red—especially when he saw that almost everybody in the saloon was looking at him, and smiling. Edward Oswald hated to be made a laughing stock of. And in this case he was all the more furious because his partner happened to be Miss Violet.

The waltz concluded a moment later, and Handforth vanished—in order to set himself straight.

Two or three minutes later he returned, and I noticed that he was wearing a clean collar, and his tie had been altered. He walked straight over the saloon over to the lounge on which Fatty was sitting.

Handforth was looking quite amiable now, and he sat next to Fatty for some little time before speaking. Taking a glance at Miss Watson, he turned to the fat junior, and plucked him on the shoulder.

"Hallo! What's the matter?" asked

Fatty, who was in the middle of a slice of pineapple.

"Just a minute!" said Handforth mysteriously. "I want you, Fatty!"

"Sorry! I'm busy now——"

"I can't help that," interrupted Handforth. "Come on deck—you absolutely must! It's a matter of great importance, Fatty!"

"What the currant bun are you getting at?" asked Fatty.

"You'll understand if you come with me," said Handforth, looking very solemn. "Come on, you fat ass!"

"I'm not going to move from here ——"

"You'd better!" interrupted Handforth again. "You don't seem to realise that it's a matter of vital necessity. You must come on deck, Fatty—and the time's getting on, too. Great pip!" he added, with another glance at his watch. "Come on! We must hurry!"

He grabbed hold of Fatty Little's hand, and the latter was unable to remain without creating a scene. So he accompanied Handforth up the gorgeous companion, and the pair mounted on to the dark deck.

Fatty was rather puzzled, and he wondered why on earth Handforth wanted him alone.

It was not many seconds before he found out.

"Well, what's the mystery about?" asked Fatty. "What's the idea of bringing me out here, Handy? You know jolly well I was in the middle of that pineapple——"

"Rats to the pineapple!" said Handforth grimly. "I've brought you out here for one reason, you fat porpoise!"

"Why—what——"

"Take that!" yelled Handforth abruptly.

Biff!

Handy's fist thudded into Fatty Little's face before the fat junior could dodge. The next second Fatty went over backwards with a thud which nearly broke a hole through the deck. He lay on his back like a newly-landed fish, and Handforth stood over him.

"That's for chucking the banana peel under my foot when I was dancing with Miss Violet!" he explained. "I couldn't very well slaughter you down in the saloon—that's why I brought you up here!"

"Ow!" roared Fatty. "Yarooh! Oh, great crumpets!"

"Perhaps you won't be so funny next time!" said Handforth.

He turned on his heel, and strode away, leaving Fatty rather dazed, and in considerable pain. Handforth was always a fellow of impulse, and on this occasion he had acted up to his character.

It was rather hard on Fatty, however. Little had not intended to make Handforth trip up in the ballroom—he had merely carelessly thrown the banana skin on the floor, and it was quite by bad luck that Handforth had trodden upon it.

Fatty struggled to his feet, and he nursed his nose tenderly.

"The rotter!" he exclaimed. "I'll make him jolly well pay for this!"

Fatty was in earnest, and he remained on deck for some moments, scheming out dark plots whereby he could make Handforth pay. It was not long before Fatty hit upon an idea which met with his approval.

Then he descended to the saloon, and consoled himself with a few oranges. By this time a two-step was beginning, and Fatty went over to the corner where Timothy Tucker was idly watching the dancers. T.T. had made one or two attempts at dancing during the evening, but he was really worse than Handforth.

"I say, Tucker," said Fatty. "What about this dance?"

"Really, my dear sir, I am fascinated," he said, blinking up at Fatty. "The position is this. I am resting at the moment——"

"Blow that!" said Fatty. "I want this dance, and I'd like you to be my partner, Tucker."

T.T. beamed.

"My dear sir, I am highly complimented!" he said, rising to his feet gracefully. "I am delighted to find that my dancing capabilities are fully appreciated. I will willingly give you this dance, my dear Little. Now, let me see, how does it go? One—two—three, one—two—three—left behind right aside ——"

"You silly ass!" said Fatty. "That's not the right time for a two-step. I don't think it's the right time for anything, if it comes to that. You needn't worry about your step, my son. I'll lead you right—trust to me!"

He grasped Timothy Tucker, and the next moment the pair were executing a

dance which was certainly not a two-step, and which caused a large amount of amusement among the onlookers.

Fatty was very light on his feet, considering his size, but Timothy Tucker, who was thin and lank, was fearfully clumsy. His big feet were everywhere they ought not to be, and he murmured constantly while he was dancing—probably he was attempting to keep the right time.

"By Gad!" murmured Lord Dorrimore, as he was watching. "This is deucedly funny, you know. I can see those two coming a frightful cropper before long!"

"I'm afraid you're right, Dorrie," smiled Nelson Lee. "However, it does not matter—they're enjoying themselves."

But Fatty was not dancing because he liked dancing. He had a dance with a sinister object in view. And it was not long before he carried his plan into execution.

Within a moment or two he saw that Handforth, who was dancing with Church, would dance within a few inches of him, and Fatty got ready.

The next moment the fat junior seemed to have an extraordinary burst of energy. For he swung Timothy Tucker round in a dizzy fashion, and T.T. protested weakly.

"My dear sir, I must protest for——"

"It's all right, you ass! Dry up!" hissed Fatty.

He whirled round with greater violence than before, and at that very second Handforth drew level. Fatty Little's scheme acted perfectly. His big bulk prodded into Handforth with a biff which was like that of a battering ram.

Handforth was sent flying across the floor as though he had been shot from a gun. With all Fatty Little's huge weight behind him, it was utterly impossible for him to stay his progress.

He went backwards, waving his arms like mill-sails. He valiantly endeavoured to keep his balance, but this was impossible. And a further disaster was destined to occur.

Now, as ill-luck would have it, at that very moment, a steward came walking briskly through the doorway with a huge tray in his arms.

This tray contained a large assortment of ice creams, blanc manges, jellies, and all manner of other dainties.

"Look out!" roared Pitt.

"Hoi!"

"Stand out of the way there!"

But there was no time to give the steward to move, and Handforth was quite incapable of staying his progress. Flying backwards, on the point of collapsing, he came into collision with the tray at a terrific speed.

Crash!

Handforth, tray, steward, all went down in one heaped mass of confusion. The dance came to an end abruptly, and everybody stared round.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my goodness!"

"Poor old Handy!"

"It jolly well serves him right!" said Fatty Little callously. "This is even better than I hoped for!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth sat up, fortunately unhurt, and everybody literally screamed with mirth.

Handforth himself was practically invisible. He sat there, with the remains of the tray round him, and he presented an extraordinary spectacle. A black-currant jelly was shattered over his head, ice-creams were all over his waistcoat, and his face was nearly hidden by blanc manges. His eyes were completely bunged up, and he was roaring at the top of his voice.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The steward scrambled to his feet, rather scared, and a bit hurt. It was not possible to have Handforth's full weight charging into one without being hurt in some way or other.

"I'm awfully sorry, sir!" said the steward nervously. "I—I couldn't move——"

"You—you clumsy idiot!" roared Handforth. "What the dickens do you mean by standing there——"

"It's all right, Jenkins," said Lord Dorrimore, strolling up. "It wasn't your fault. You couldn't help it. You'd better clear this mess up as soon as you can."

"Yes, sir!" said the steward promptly.

"What about me?" said Handforth. "I—I'm smothered!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Personally, I can't understand it!" exclaimed Dorrie, regarding Handforth

with mild surprise. "Was that a special dance you were doing, Handforth? Were you attempting to give us a few steps in something new? I must say that I don't quite like the style of it—particularly when you finish up by converting yourself into a fair imitation of a jellied ice-cream!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I didn't do it on purpose!" roared Handforth. "How was I to know the silly ass was coming through the doorway with that load of stuff? Somebody bumped into me——"

"Yes, I did!" said Fatty Little, with much delight. "It was very important, Handy—a matter of vital necessity!"

Handforth glared.

"You—you——"

Words failed him, and he fled amid a perfect roar of laughter. But Fatty had had his own back, and he was feeling quite content.

It was not long before everybody knew about Handforth's little ruse on deck. And when we learned that Fatty's swollen nose was caused by Handforth's fists, we realised that matters had been evened up quite satisfactorily.

But Handforth did not think so.

In his own cabin he was raving. When Church and McClure went there, in order to console him, they found their leader muttering all sorts of dire threats against Fatty, and Handforth would not see reason.

"I'm going to slaughter the fat porpoise!" he glared. "By the time I've done with him he will want to go back to England—he won't want to live any more! All he'll want to do will be to lie down and die!"

"Now, look here, Handy, don't be an ass!" said Church. "You biffed him on the nose, and he only——"

"If you're going to start preaching to me, Walter Church, I'll biff you on the nose, too!" bawled Handforth, at the top of his voice. "I'm not going to stand any lecturing from you, my son! I know what I'm doing—and I know what I'm going to do to Fatty!"

"But why can't you be sensible——"

"If you don't dry up, I'll pitch you out of this cabin on your neck!"

"There's no need to tear your hair about it!" said McClure. "You biffed Fatty, and Fatty biffed into you. What's the difference? It's all ended up. There's no need to start it afresh. Why not let it pass, Handy?"

But Church and McClure might have well stood talking to the atmosphere. Their words had no impression whatever on the great Handforth. And, a few minutes later, he charged out on deck with his sleeves well pushed up.

As it happened, I was just strolling along the deck with Montie and Tommy. And Handforth bumped right into us.

"Where's Fatty?" he demanded hoarsely.

"Down below, somewhere," I said. "But you're not going to him, Handy——"

"Yes, I am," interrupted Handforth. "You mind your own business!"

"The affair's over, there's nothing more to be said," I interfupted. "You're not going to cause any more confusion to-night, Handy. We've had a jolly decent evening, and there's no reason why it should be spoilt."

"You can argue till you're blue in the face—but it won't make any difference to me!" glared Handforth. "I'm going to find Fatty, and I'm going to half slaughter him——"

"There's only one thing to do," I said patiently. "Come on, you chaps, grab him!"

A dozen hands seized Handforth on the spot. He glared at us, helpless.

"You silly asses!" he roared. "What's the idea?"

"It's simply this," I said firmly. "We're not going to release you until you promise us, on your word of honour, that you won't search for Fatty, and cause any trouble."

"I won't promise anything of the sort!" roared Handforth.

"All right, then—you'll stop with us," I said. "We're not going to have any more commotion on board."

I was quite determined, but it took Handforth at least five minutes to realise that there was no escape. And he was reluctantly compelled to give us his word that he would let Fatty off, and we released him.

And so the evening finished up without any unpleasantness, and everybody went to their cabins, quite content and satisfied. And we all wondered what the morrow would bring.

Somehow, we all felt that a great deal of excitement was near at hand.

CHAPTER II.

OFF INTO THE UNKNOWN.

"BEGAD! Doesn't she look simply rippin', old boys?" asked Sir Montie Tregellis-West. "Doesn't she look just lovely?"

It might have been supposed that Sir Montie was referring to some particularly charming member of the fair sex. But this was not the case.

Montie was standing on deck, and he was gazing across the water to the spot where Lord Dorrimore's airship was moored. And the Adventurer—as the airship was named—undoubtedly did look very splendid as she hovered there in the morning sunlight.

The airship was not in its original mooring place. At first Lord Dorrimore had placed her near the river bank, sheltered by the trees. But he had not considered this a safe anchorage. For, in the event of a sudden tropical storm, it would probably go very hard with the light craft.

And so something special had been provided. Moving up the river for a mile, we had come upon a small island, right in the centre of the stream. It was bare but for a few bushes and tropical plants. And, right in the centre of this little island, a huge post had been erected.

This post had been brought in sections, and it was especially made for Dorrie's airship. It stood at a great height, and it was strengthened by many cables, secured in every direction.

And the nose of the airship was anchored to the top of the post, the latter being on a kind of a swivel. The result was that when a wind blew, the airship would turn its nose to it, and always remain the way of the wind, no matter how the latter roared.

In the highest gale, no harm could possibly come to the craft, and we all felt safe concerning her.

The anchorage was absolutely secure, and no mishap could occur. It was not a new idea, of course, for the same system is used for the naval and military dirigibles. Only these, of course, are on a much larger scale.

"Yes, Montie, she looks fine," I agreed. "It won't be so long now before we're off. By Jingo! I wonder what we shall find beyond that terrible swamp? I wonder if it's all a myth about that city, or whether we shall really make some surprising discoveries!"

Montie shook his head.

"Dear fellow, I'm not worrying my head about it," he exclaimed. "It's too much of a task, begad! I'm shockin'ly sorry we can't all go, you know."

"Well, you're one of the lucky ones," I said. "You're coming on the trip with us, Montie."

"Exactly, dear boy," agreed Tregellis-West. "I'm thinking of the other poor fellows who will be left behind. It's rather rough on them."

"Oh, I don't know," I said. "It's not reasonable to suppose that everybody can come on a trip of this sort. The airship can only accommodate a certain number of passengers, and we don't want to overcrowd her!"

Sir Montie nodded.

"Yes, dear boy, I suppose you're right," he agreed. "Still, I feel a bit rotten about the others, you know."

The others, as a matter of fact, were rather sorry for themselves. But it was quite impossible for the whole crowd to go. They realised this, and they accepted the inevitable with quite a good spirit.

The party which had been chosen to make the trip consisted of Nelson Lee, Lord Dorrimore, Umlosi, Tregellis-West, Watson, Handforth, Tom Burton, and myself. There would also be James Stanley Kerrigan, and two engineers. And we were due to start almost at once.

We should not be gone for long, of course. It was reckoned that the airship would arrive back at the yacht easily by the early evening—and probably before. But during that time it was our intention to thoroughly explore the big swamp from above, and, if it was at all within our power, we should ascertain what lay beyond that deadly morass.

Everybody was on deck, waiting to see us off, and there was a sensation of excitement in the air.

Somehow, we all instinctively knew that this trip was to be something very much out of the common.

The only member of the air party, as you might say, was Umlosi. He stood against the rails, looking at the Adventurer, and shook his head doubtfully.

"Don't you like it, Umlosi?" I asked, smiling.

The giant Kutana chief turned to me.

"Wau! I am sorely troubled, O Manzie!" he confessed. "N'Kose, my master, has expressed the wish that I should go with him, and with you, on the strange and wondrous kraal which thou seest before thee. I am filled with misgiving, O my son. Methinks it would be better to travel through the forest on foot!"

"That's all very well, as regards the forest, Umlosi," I said. "But what about the swamp? We can't travel across that on foot, you know. And you needn't be scared about the airship, it's as safe as this yacht, practically speaking. Once you get used to it, you'll enjoy the trip tremendously."

Umlosi shook his head again.

"Methinks thou art merely calming my fears, O my master," he exclaimed in his rumbling voice.

"Fear?" I repeated. "Hallo! I didn't know that you knew what fear was, Umlosi!"

He smiled.

"I am afraid of no man who walks this earth, O Manzie," he replied. "I will do battle with any man who will raise his spear against me. I will willingly fight a dozen men—and, I will beat them!"

"Well, what's the trouble?"

"I am a warrior, O nimble one—a man who likes the forest, and who fights with mine enemies," rumbled Umlosi. "But this is not so. As thou wilt understand, I am afraid. I go into the sky on a strange ship which is filled with an even stranger gas. I go on this ship which makes weird and wondrous noises, and which rises to the clouds, ay, and through the clouds! Wau! It is all very marvellous, but I fear for my safety and thine, Manzie."

I laughed.

"There's no need for you to be afraid, old man," I grinned. "This is simply as safe as the yacht itself. We sha'n't meet with any disaster—if that's what you mean. I'd far rather be in the air than on the ground in this region. You trust yourself to Umtagati, and he'll see that everything is O.K."

"It is even as thou sayest, Manzie," said Umlosi. "I am placing my trust in thy master, the wizard."

There was not much time for further conversation, for the launch was ready to take us off to the airship, where many members of the crew were already busy at work. The preparation did not take long.

And soon, with many expressions of goodwill, and good luck from the other fellows on board, we started out for the airship's side.

It did not take us long to get on board. The vessel was now resting upon the specially constructed floats which lay in the river. All we had to do, therefore, was to glide up in the launch, and step straight into the airship's car.

This was quite roomy and extremely comfortable. It had been built especially for a tropical climate, and there was no enclosed cabin. A kind of wide deck ran all round the engine-house, with polished brass railings and guard. It was possible to walk all the way round, taking observations from any point of the compass. And we could lean over, and look directly down at the ground beneath.

"My hat! This is great!" exclaimed Handforth, as he found himself in the airship's car. "I didn't think it was half so big as this, you know! When do we go up?"

"There's no need to be so impatient, Handy," muttered Tommy Watson. "We shall go up when everything's all right. The best thing we can do is to stand still and be quiet."

This was excellent advice, but Handforth took no notice of it. He kept asking all sorts of unnecessary questions, but as nobody took any notice of him, it didn't matter much.

Nelson Lee was in full charge—he was the official pilot, so to speak. Lord Dorrimore simply remained a passenger. He didn't take responsibility for anything, pleading that he was entirely ignorant on all mechanical matters.

Young Stanley Kerrigan, of the Third Form, was open-eyed with wonder at everything he saw. Speech was quite impossible to him, for he was too filled with awe to find his tongue. He stood there, on the little platform, watching everything with intense interest.

Buzz-z-z-z!

The engines commenced to hum musically, and the propellors whistled as they cut through the air. And then the mooring ropes were cast aside, and the Adventurer rose clear, and soared aloft.

"Hurrah!"

A cheer came from the yacht's decks, and we looked down, and saw everybody standing there, waving. We were now practically over the vessel, and we had a splendid view. The airship was rising higher and higher every moment, and soon she circled gracefully round over the river.

Higher and higher we went, until we had attained at least two thousand feet.

Then, with the sun's rays held off by the big box of the envelope, we set off across the forest, losing sight of the yacht after the first minute or two.

The dense forest looked very different from the sky. We were gazing down upon the tree-tops, upon tangled masses of foliage, and here and there, through our binoculars, we could see crowds of monkeys playing about among the branches, gesticulating and jabbering. And the birds to be seen were of the most gorgeous plumage and colour. This forest, however, did not extend far.

For the character of the country soon began to change, and we saw small lagoons of water here and there—most of them choked and infested with caymans. The ground was getting swampy already.

It must not be forgotten that we were travelling at a speed which approximated ninety or a hundred miles an hour—for the airship was a very fast vessel. We therefore traversed as much space in half an hour as it would take on foot during the course of two or three days. The advantages of an airship in this country were so obvious that it is a marvel to me that no other expeditions have equipped themselves with aircraft.

But they are expensive articles, and Lord Dorrimore was a millionaire. It didn't matter a toss to him whether he had one airship or half a dozen. He could easily afford them. Before many years elapse, I expect there will be many airships and aeroplanes in Brazil. The only drawback to aerial travel is the entire lack of adequate landing ground.

"Here's the swamp!" exclaimed Dorrie, pointing. "By gad! It seems to be quite all right from this distance. But I dare say it's a little different down there."

"We will descend much lower, and examine it closely," said Nelson Lee. "There can be no danger in doing that."

He gave instructions to the engineers, and almost at once the airship commenced descending in a long, speedy glide. And very shortly afterwards we were rushing over the forest at a height which could not have been more than fifty or a hundred feet. We seemed to be right on the tree-tops, and we could see everything to perfection.

And now we were directly over the deadly swamp.

On our first trial trip we had flown over it at a great height, but now it was different. We could see everything clearly. And we were provided with first-hand information. We were eye-witnesses.

"No wonder it is impossible for any human being to cross this horrible swamp!" said Handforth, looking down. "By George! What a ghastly place!"

"Rather!" said Watson.

"Dear old boys, can you see the snakes?" asked Sir Montie. "Look! I can see at least a dozen in one spot!"

Sir Montie was not exaggerating.

The place was indeed a deathtrap. I have seen many swamps in my time—I have crossed many a swamp—but this awful tract of land was utterly and positively ghastly.

At first glance it seemed all right. From a good distance there was very little to choose between the forest and the swamp. But down here, flying over it at less than a hundred feet, we could see the deadly character of the ground.

The trees, for the most part, were small and straggling. There were no stately giants, as in the forests; it was simply one reeking mass of creeping, crawling vegetation and reptile life.

The ground, in most places, was simply nothing better than mud, with pools of wicked-looking water here and there. And over all this grew the dense tropical growth. Gorgeous flowers grew in this place of death, and the creepers and lianas were bewildering in their beautiful colours and shapes.

But it was nothing more or less than a death-trap—a morass which it was impossible for human being to set foot on. To even attempt to cross it on foot would be fatal. No man could possibly proceed more than a few hundred yards before he was engulfed and drawn down into those slimy, snake-infested depths.

It was the same for the natives as it was for white men. No human being, no matter of what race, could

possibly cross that swamp. It was a place of reptile and insect life alone.

No matter in which direction we looked we could see snakes of all varieties—from giant anacondas to small green snakes and other kinds. There were lizards, too, and reptilian objects which we could not name—which we had never seen before. It was like a nightmare rather than anything else.

I am certain that there were monsters in that swamp which no human eye had ever gazed upon before.

We were fascinated and horrified all at the same time. We could not keep our eyes from the place—we simply stared at it in wonder and in awe and horror.

And so we sped on, mile after mile, at the same rapid speed.

After some time we ascended to a higher altitude, for we discovered that some highly unpleasant fumes were coming up from the swamp—fumes which made our senses reel, and which sickened us. The whole country was poisoned. It was impossible for any human being to live there, quite apart from the insect life and the reptiles. Strange and deadly gases were oozing up from the swamp on every hand.

"Ugh!" exclaimed Handforth, with a slight shudder. "What's going to happen if the engines go wrong, and we come down in this place?"

"We shall all die in about half an hour—that's what'll happen!" I said grimly. "But you needn't be afraid of that, Handy. Even if the engines do fail, we shall be all right. This is a lighter than air craft, and we can drift with the wind back to the forest. But these engines are reliable, and they won't fail."

"My hat!" said Watson. "I hope not!"

It seemed that the swamp would never end. The minutes passed, and we did not decrease our speed, but still on every side there was nothing but the same drab, dismal scene to witness.

And then, in order to obtain a better view, Nelson Lee ordered the airship to be taken extremely high, and we were soon climbing into the sky quickly and smoothly. At last we were fairly shivering with the cold, for we had attained a height of something like ten thousand feet. And from there we could see for hundreds of miles in every direction.

The swamp was nearly at an end, for we could see rocky ground in the dim distance ahead.

But, to right and left, the mire extended as far as the eye could see. But, on our own tracks we could just faintly discern the Amazon, like a thin white pencil line on the horizon.

"It seems that the stories we have heard concerning the swamp are quite true," remarked Nelson Lee. "It appears to extend in a circular form—a band about a hundred miles wide stretching away in a gigantic circle, leaving in the centre a tract of land which is entirely cut off from the rest of the world."

"That's about the size of it, old man," agreed Lord Dorrimore, nodding. "We're just comin' to that piece of land now—an' I don't mind admittin' that I'm infernally interested. By what I can see, the ground becomes rocky soon, and then rises up."

"Exactly," said Nelson Lee, gazing through his binoculars. "But what lies beyond the rocky region, Dorrie? That is the main question."

His lordship nodded.

"And it's a question we'll find an answer to if we're lucky," he observed. "What's your opinion, coalbox?" he added, turning to Umlosi.

"Thou art using a strange term, O, N'Kose!" rumbled Umlosi. "But thou art asking what is in my mind? Methinks it is difficult to answer thee, my father. We shall see many wondrous sights, and we shall meet with many wondrous adventures; but it is not for me to anticipate. There will be fighting, and blood will flow; but we shall conquer. I have spoken!"

"You have!" agreed Dorrie. "You've spoken about blood, too, by the way. I generally notice that you manage to be pretty cheerful on such occasions as these. Well, let's hope that the lost blood will be the property of the enemy—whoever he happens to be!"

We had, by this time, almost reached the further end of the great swamp, and in the short distance below—and ahead—we could see rocky ground rise up towards a fairly high ridge. What lay beyond this ridge we did not exactly know, for it was all hazy and blurred.

And just then our attention was attracted by something else—something which we could hardly believe at first.

In any case, it drove all thoughts of the landscape out of our heads, and we gave no attention whatever to the ground.

For we saw something in the sky!

Handforth was the first to spot the object, and he was looking at it for some few moments before he spoke. Then he clutched at my sleeve, and pulled me round.

"I say, Nipper, there's a queer bird over there!" he remarked "You might hand me your binoculars. I'd like to have a squint through them!"

"Which bird?" I asked.

"That one over there—right in the sky!" said Handforth, pointing. "Can't you see it?"

I couldn't. Though I searched the sky in the direction that Handforth indicated, I could see nothing except the deep blue heavens, and here and there an occasionally white fleecy cloud. Handforth, meanwhile, was focussing the binoculars, and he stared through them eagerly.

I watched him, and wondered why he was getting so excited. For his face had suddenly become flushed, his fingers quivered as he held the glasses, and, finally, he turned to me with gleaming eyes.

"Great pip!" he exclaimed huskily. "It's—it's not a bird at all!"

"Not a bird?" I repeated. "Then what is it?"

"An—an aeroplane!" gasped Handforth. "A real, modern aeroplane!"

CHAPTER III.

THE MYSTERIOUS ENEMY.

"AN aeroplane!"

"Begad!"

"Souse my scuppers!"

We all stared at Handforth, who was looking thoroughly startled.

"Draw it mild, Handy!" I grinned. "There's no need to let your imagination run riot, you know There aren't any aeroplanes in this region——"

"I tell you it's an aeroplane!" bawled Handforth excitedly.

"Really, my boy, I think you must be mistaken," said Nelson Lee, coming up. "I have heard your words, and I can hardly credit that your statement is true. You must remember that we are in the wilds—hundreds of miles from civilisation and, at least, several thousand miles from any spot where there is likely to be a modern aeroplane. Moreover, you have indicated that this machine is coming from the direction of the unknown land!"

"That's right, sir!" agreed Handforth. "Have a look for yourself, if you don't believe me! Why, great pip! You can see the giddy thing without any glasses now!"

We all turned instinctively, and gazed out into the bright sky—out in the direction where the mysterious dream city was supposed to lay. And we saw something in the sky—not a speck now, but something black and distinct. It was too steady to be a bird, and it was growing larger every second.

I grabbed my binoculars from Handforth's fist, levelled them, and then searched the sky.

For a moment or two I was unsuccessful, and then an object came into sharp relief within the vision of the glasses. I lost it momentarily, found it again, and then held the binoculars steady.

There, clear and distinct, was an aeroplane—a single seater scout biplane of the tractor type.

There was no mistake about it. I could see the whirling propellor, and I could even distinguish the struts between the planes. The machine was painted red all over—wings and everything. And it was coming directly towards the airship at a terrific speed.

"Well, I'm hanged!" I ejaculated, in amazement.

"Well, am I right?" demanded Handforth.

"Yes!"

"There you are! I told you so!" said Handy triumphantly.

"Upon my soul!" said Nelson Lee. "This is indeed surprising, my boys! I am totally at a loss to understand where this aeroplane has come from, and why it should be here—in this terribly dangerous region. There is no safe landing ground whatever. Moreover, it is difficult to understand how this machine got here, and where it started from!"

Everybody on board the airship was thunderstruck. All the available pairs of binoculars were levelled at the

mysterious stranger, and it was very soon quite needless to use glasses at all.

For the aeroplane came nearer and nearer, until we saw its outline clearly by the naked eye. It was flying straight towards us at a higher altitude than we were. And we suddenly observed that the propellor was slowing down and the aeroplane itself was gliding. The pilot had stopped his engine, and was coming down towards us.

"Well, this is really amazing," remarked Dorrie. "I didn't expect to exchange greetings with any other airmen over unexplored Brazil. I wonder who on earth the fellow can be!"

The circumstance was undoubtedly staggering. To come across a modern aeroplane over this wilderness was something which we had never dreamed possible. Even by airship there was a certain amount of risk attached to the undertaking. But to an aeroplane the proposition seemed absolutely foolhardy.

If the engine happened to fail, there would be no hope whatever for the pilot. He would be compelled to land—and to land probably on rough ground, where he would meet with disaster at once. And, even supposing that he happened to make a safe landing, there would be no hope of getting assistance, and the pilot would die of starvation and exposure.

But we were too interested in the craft itself to conjecture much concerning its reason for being there. It was now quite close, and when within two or three hundred yards it proceeded to circle round us, for, of course, we were going at a much slower speed.

The Adventurer was capable of travelling at something like eighty or ninety miles an hour, and that was taking it easily, too, for the airship was a fast one.

But this scout biplane was of the very latest type—a regular speed merchant. It was shooting through the air at nothing under a hundred and forty miles per hour, and we could hear the agressive roar of its powerful engine above the steady hum of our own motors.

We watched it intently. The machine, as I have already said, was red all over. Its design was very similar to that of a Bristol Scout, and it was a single seater. We could just distinguish the pilot's head over the cock-pit.

The man was attired in ordinary airman's clothing, with a complete covering over his head. It was impossible to distinguish the man's features, or to see what he was like.

Dorrie and Nelson Lee made several signs—they were waving their hands, and other things to attract the pilot's attention. But the fellow did nothing—he made no reply whatever.

He simply circled round us, growing nearer and nearer with every circle. And he remained crouched in the cock-pit, not giving us the slightest attention. We might have been non-existant, for all the notice he took of us.

"This is jolly strange, sir," I remarked, touching the guv'nor's arm. "Who can the chap be, and why doesn't he wave to us—or something?"

"My dear boy, it's no good asking me riddles of that description," said Nelson Lee. "I am at as great a loss as you are. But I expect the fellow will show himself soon. And he will then make some sign."

But it did not seem as though Nelson Lee's words were coming true. For, after the machine had circled round about eight times, the pilot commenced "stunting."

Three times he looped the loop, and he did it perfectly. Then he treated us to some wonderful exhibitions of nose diving, tail sliding, and all manner of other stunts.

Finally, he came shooting up to our level again, and flew right past within twenty yards, so that we could see every wire and strut of his machine.

It was rather a thrilling moment as the biplane came tearing by, overtaking us as a modern motor-car will overtake a governess car. Then the aeroplane had gone by, and he at once turned and commenced circling again.

"Begad!" said Sir Montie. "This is most remarkable, dear old boys—it is, really!"

"It beats me!" I confessed. "I'd like to know who the dickens the chap is!"

"Probably he's a foreigner," suggested Tommy Watson. "He can't speak English, and that's why he hasn't made any sign."

"You silly ass!" said Handforth, glaring. "What difference does it make

whether a chap's foreign or not? He can wave his hand, I suppose?"

There was no arguing with this logic, and Tommy Watson made no reply. And then something occurred which drove all else from our minds. It was so startling and so staggering that we were left quite breathless.

By this time the engines of the airship had been stopped, and we were simply hovering there, practically motionless. Our ears were filled by the roar of the aeroplane's engine as it circled round and round, like a particularly enraged hornet.

Puff! Puff!

Several little white clouds of smoke appeared over the upper portion of the aeroplane, and these were followed by several other puffs. Then, faintly, we heard several sharp cracks.

"Why, what the dickens——" began Handforth.

"Goodness gracious!" said Nelson Lee. "It can't be possible that——"

Ping!

Something struck the brass rail just where we were standing, and this caused a sharp metallic sound. Gazing at the spot, I saw the rail was distinctly dented --and there was only one explanation.

The brass rail had been struck by a bullet!

"Good heavens!" I ejaculated.

I really was incapable of saying anything else at the moment, for this affair was too astounding for words. The man in the aeroplane was actually firing at us! And he was not firing a revolver, but he was operating the wicked-looking machine-gun which projected over the upper plane of the red scout.

We were being attacked!

Puff! Puff! Puff!

The gun continued to fire, and I knew at once that the bullets were aimed at the airship's gasbag, not at the car, where we were standing, but above us, and at our most vulnerable spot. The bullet that had struck the rail was a stray one.

The pilot of the aeroplane was evidently intent upon punching holes through the gasbag so that we should lose our most precious possession. Without gas we should never hope to get back to our base, and we should descend into the swamp, never to rise again.

"The infernal scoundrel!" roared Lord Dorrimore, his face distort with rage. "Upon my soul! This is a bit too much for me, Lee!"

"I cannot understand it!" ejaculated Nelson Lee, in a troubled voice. "The man must be mad—he must be a maniac! Either that, or there is something more in this than we can realise at the moment."

Dorrie set his teeth.

"I realise one thing, anyhow!" he said grimly. "I'm not going to stand being potted at, without making any reply!"

He whipped out his big service revolver, and cocked the trigger. The next moment he levelled the weapon, and Nelson Lee followed his example.

Crack! Crack!

"That's the stuff to give him!" shouted Handforth. "Two can play at that game!"

"Souse me! Rather!" said Tom Burton.

"It is even as I have said!" exclaimed Umlosi, touching my arm. "But let me tell thee this, Manzie. We are but just commencing our adventure. The battle will be insignificant compared to the strange and wondrous things which are even now approaching."

"This is quite exciting enough for me, thanks," I said grimly. "It's positively dastardly, Umlosi. For this stranger to come here, and take pots at our gasbag—a rotten outrage! It's almost equivalent to murder! The fellow in that machine must be a maniac!"

"Maybe thou art right, O Nimble One," rumbled Umlosi. "But methinks there is another explanation!"

He would say no more, and I was too interested to take notice of him in any case.

Crack! Crack!

Dorrie continued to fire, and we noticed that the biplane at once sheered off, it's circles became wider, and it steered clear of the airship.

I watched closely through my binoculars, and I distinctly saw the pilot throw up his hand, as though he was in some pain. A bullet had probably found its mark.

In any case, the result was immediate.

The red aeroplane, instead of coming round at us again, turned tail, and flew away. It climbed higher and higher, and rapidly became a speck in the sky.

Lord Dorrimore, his face flushed with

anger and emotion, stowed his revolver away.

"By the Lord Harry!" he exclaimed. "It's not often I show temper, but I'm decidedly wild now, Lee!"

"With every justification, old man," said Nelson Lee quietly. "This affair is positively startling. We may thank our lucky stars that we have not been vitally struck."

"We don't know yet, sir!" put in one of the mechanics, who was looking very anxious. "Most of the bullets hit the gas-bag, and it's pretty certain that there are some ugly rips in the silk."

Nelson Lee nodded.

"I am afraid you are right, Jarvis!" he remarked. "I fully realise the possibilities. If the gas is escaping rapidly, we shall lose height, and it may be difficult for us to return to the Majarra!"

"That's what I was thinking, sir," said Jarvis.

"Is it possible to repair any damage—here on the spot?" said Dorrie.

"It might be, sir, if we land," said the mechanic. "There's practically no wind, and if we could only find a clear space, sir, it would be an easy matter. At all events, we could make one or two quick repairs, and thus prevent the gas from escaping so rapidly."

"Then we had better search for a landing place," said Nelson Lee briskly. "There is no time to lose—every moment we waste in talking, the gas is escaping."

Indignation ran high on board, and we were all talking at once, and wondering what in the world had possessed the pilot of the aeroplane to fire at us in such an outrageous manner.

I noticed that we had left the swamp behind; we were now directly over rocky, bare ground. The airship was descending fairly rapidly, her engines going at full speed. We were going down in a long, straight glide.

"There's no need for all this!" said Handforth. "We can get back to the yacht all right."

"It's all very well to say that, Handy; we don't know," I replied. "The airship seems to be light enough now, I know, but the Majarra is well over a hundred miles away, and all sorts of things might happen before we cover that distance. If there are any rents in the silk, they will probably grow larger unless they are attended to at once, and as they grow larger, so the gas will escape in greater quantities."

"Yes, I suppose that's right," agreed Handforth. "By George! What a murderous rotter!"

"But who the dickens could he have been?" asked Watson blankly.

"I think that it is quite possible that there is an explanation," said Nelson Lee. "Do not forget, boys, that an attempt was made to sink The Wanderer before she left Tilbury, another attempt was made while the yacht was in the Atlantic. On the top of that, a mysterious individual was seen on the vessel even after we had arrived on the Majarra!"

"You—you mean——"

"I mean, Nipper, that it is only too obvious that we have an unscrupulous enemy!" said Nelson Lee quietly. "This enemy is unknown to us, and that is still the more reason why we should be cautious. We don't know why he is attacking us, and we don't know who he is. It is, therefore, up to us to be on our guard."

"My only hat!" I ejaculated. "This seems to prove that he is a systematic individual—probably an Englishman, who succeeded in getting out to Brazil before we arrived. Have you any suspicion, sir?"

Nelson Lee pursed his lips.

"Well, as a matter of fact, I have," he admitted.

"What is your idea?" I asked eagerly.

"It is hardly my way to give voice to suspicions, Nipper," said Nelson Lee. "Before I say anything at all, I shall wait until I have some definite data to work upon, for, as I have said, I have suspicions, and I intend keeping them to myself."

Ten minutes later we succeeded in making a perfect landing, on a bare, rocky piece of ground, where the sun was blazing down with terrific heat. However, we managed to scramble out of the car, and we anchored the airship securely. Then, without loss of time, both the mechanics scrambled on to the gasbag, using the network as a foot and hand hold.

They soon came down and made their report.

The silk was plugged in at least twenty places. Sixteen of these were very tiny holes, and there was no likelihood of

them enlarging, and the escape bf gas was only trivial.

But the other four holes were more serious. They were long, jagged rents, and the gas was literally pouring out in a never-ending stream. It was imperative that repairs should be undertaken at once.

This would be a job which would occupy all of three hours, and Nelson Lee and the two engineers did not lose a moment in getting to work. They were all extremely thankful that the damage was no greater.

And the one insistent thought which kept throbbing through my brain was this—who was the man in the aeroplane, and why had he attempted to cripple us?

CHAPTER IV.

THE ARMY OF GIANTS.

LORD DORRIMORE rapidly recovered his composure.

"Well, it's been a bit of excitement, and I suppose we must be thankful that the damage is only trivial," he remarked. "At the same time, I am thoroughly angry, and if ever I see that fellow again, I'll have no mercy on him!"

His lordship took out a magnificent gold cigarette case, selected a cigarette, and placed it between his lips. Nelson Lee, who was just about to mount the netting turned.

"If you want to light that cigarette, old man, I should advise you to walk a hundred yards away," he said quickly. "This gas is escaping, and we don't want the airship to go up in one huge blaze."

"That would be rather unpleasant, old man," grinned Dorrie. "I'll take your tip. By the way, did you say that we should have to stay here about three hours?"

"Just about that," said Nelson Lee.

"Can we be of any assistance?" asked Dorrie.

"I hardly think so," smiled Lee. "There is no need for all of us to go climbing over the gas bag. I can manage quite easily with the assistance of these two mechanics. You and the boys, Dorrie, will have to stand by and watch us."

Lord Dorrimore glanced round, and he sighed. The spot was by no means alluring. Nothing but bare rocks on every hand, with the sun beating down, and radiating from the ground in suffocating waves. There was no shelter to be seen anywhere, and we were already perspiring freely.

We were standing on a long, sloping hillside. Far away, down the slope, we could see the green of the swamp, stretching away in the distance, right to the horizon.

Up the hill, there was nothing but the same bare rocks, with, however, a few patches of green in the distance.

Lord Dorrimore looked up there, and then he looked at us.

"What do you say, boys?" he asked. "I don't quite cotton to the idea of standing here, do you? What's wrong with taking a walk up the hill?"

"I'm game, sir," said Handforth promptly.

"It'll be hot work, though," remarked Watson.

"No hotter than if we stand still," said Dorrie. "Come on, you fellows. We'll take a walk and be back in a couple of hours. We might as well explore the country, and see where we are. I can't say that I'm impressed with the landscape."

"Thou art surely right, O my father," said Umlosi. "This is indeed a barren wilderness, and methinks it will be better to get on the move. This country is a strange one, and I am full of interest."

"Well, I certainly didn't think that a rocky waste of this description existed in this Amazon plain," said Lord Dorrimore. "However, this is all unexplored territory, and I expect we're the first white men to set foot on it. We're on the other side of the swamp—where no Europeans have ever trodden before."

It was quite a good idea of Dorrie's to take a stroll, for we certainly could do nothing by remaining near the airship. The guv'nor, indeed, preferred to be alone with the two mechanics. So, shortly afterwards, we started off—Dorrie, Umlosi, Sir Montie, Watson, Handforth, Burton, Young Stanley Kerrigan, and me.

We walked up the long slope, and presently turned and looked back at the airship resting on the ground, and looking extremely impressive there.

Dorrie lit his cigarette, and puffed at it with keen enjoyment.

"That's one disadvantage of being in the air," he remarked. "A fellow can't have a cigarette, you know! Still, it's all the more enjoyable afterwards."

We walked on, greatly interested in all we saw. After about half an hour, the ground was not so rocky, and here and there we came upon patches of course, rough grass. It was sun-dried, baked, and the blades of grass were as sharp as knives.

We traversed another half-mile of this kind of ground, and then the grass was no longer in patches, but it covered the whole expanse of country before us.

We had left the rocky ground behind, and other changes were shortly to occur. For example, the grass became smoother and greener, and here and there patches of flowers, gorgeous in their colouring, and cacti stood out on every hand, in curious, uncouth shapes.

At last we appeared to reach the very top of the long ridge, and we were all literally dripping with perspiration.

Fortunately, the sun had disappeared behind a bank of clouds, and we were not troubled by the terrible glare. The air, however, was close and hot, and there was no refreshing breeze to cool us.

Turning, we gazed out upon a really wonderful sight.

Here, at a good distance from us stood the airship, looking quite small and insignificant. The figures of Nelson Lee and the two mechanics were like flies. And beyond the airship, right into the dim, hazy distance, stretched the terrible swamp.

As far as the eye could see, in every direction, that ghastly morass stretched out its tentacles, and barred the path.

It was like some ugly monster lying there, poisonous, treacherous, and waiting for victims.

The sight was so impressive that we all stood gazing upon it for some minutes without making any remark. And we did not fail to recognise that we were on the wrong side of the swamp—that civilisation lay beyond, and that if, through some unforseen chance the airship never got into the air again we should be cut off completely beyond all hope of rescue.

"H'm! A pretty lively sort of place," remarked Lord Dorrimore, lighting a fresh cigarette. "What do you say, boys?"

"I was just thinking, sir, how the dickens we shall be able to get back to the Majarra if the airship doesn't do the trip," said Handforth.

"If the airship doesn't do the trip, my son, we sha'n't! said Dorrie grimly. "It's the only conveyance we've got, an' if that fails us—well, I'm afraid we shall be so many souls missin'!"

"How cheerful!" murmured Watson.

"However, there's not much fear of that," went on Dorrie cheerfully. "You can trust the professor to see that the airship is O.K. What your guv'nor doesn't know, Nipper, could be written on a postage stamp. I've always pinned my faith to the professor—an' he never fails me."

"Oh, we shall get back to the yacht all right," I said. "The airship isn't disabled—those few gashes only amount to a trifle—once they're seen to, the Adventurer will be as airworthy as ever. By the way, are we turning back now, or shall we go to the top of the ridge?"

Dorrie turned, and looked in the other direction.

"I think we might as well have a squint over the top," he observed. "It's not far now—only about another half-mile, by what I can see. We might as well have a look over the summit, if it's possible. According to my calculations, this ridge extends from the swamp right up here, an' then slopes away again—probably to another swamp. Anyhow, we shall see if we look."

"That's the idea, sir," said Handforth.

We walked on again, with the intention of reaching the top. I knew well enough that we should probably fail. We could see for a half a mile ahead, and then only the sky met our gaze. This indicated that the ground sloped away beyond that point. But it was quite possible that the very opposite was the case. One is always apt to be deceived over these matters.

However, as it turned out, I was wrong. We were able to see down the other slope, and a fresh surprise was awaiting us.

But the distance was more than half a mile, and we were tired and hot and thirsty by the time we reached the crest. However, we were well repaid.

The surprise came to us suddenly, without the least warning.

1. Handforth, tray, steward, all went down together.

2. Umlosi proves more than a match for the two white giants.

A clump of trees grew in front of us, and we reached these, and passed between the trunks, at length emerging on the other side, half expecting that we should have some further ground to traverse.

But it was not so.

As soon as we emerged into the open air again, we discovered we were looking straight down a tremendously long slope, and we could see for miles—twenty, thirty, forty miles—into the valley. The spectacle was absolutely astounding.

The view that met our gaze is quite beyond my power of description. From our very feet the ground sloped away gradually, and at first it was rough, rocky, and firm.

But then it changed its character. And it was this that caused us such astounding surprise.

For, unlike the deadly swamp over which we had just flown, there was no swamp here. We did not gaze down upon a terrible morass which was infested by snakes and insects and fever. We looked, instead, upon a valley which held us motionless with wondering delight.

Intensely green fields, sparkling streams, clumps of stately palm trees—all of these sights met our gaze. We were looking down into a gorgeous valley—a place that was literally a paradise.

Lord Dorrimore was the first to speak.

"A bit of a contrast—what?" he remarked calmly.

"A contrast!" I echoed. "Great Scott! I've never been so surprised in all my life, Dorrie! This—this doesn't seem like Brazil at all!"

"It's—it's wonderful!" said Handforth, in an awed voice.

"Thou art surely right, O my son!" exclaimed Umlosi. "This spectacle is one which fills us all with glorious pleasure. Thou art right when thou sayest that it is wonderful. Even the most beautiful portions of Africa cannot compare with this scene!"

"And if we look the other way we see nothing else but that horrible swamp!" said Tommy Watson. "It seem almost impossible to be true, you know. How can this extraordinary change be a reality?"

"It's no good askin' me questions of that sort, my son," said Dorrie. "At the same time, there must be a good explanation. This tremendous ridge, you see, cuts off the swamp completely from this other land. It seems to stand up in a great barrier for hundreds of miles. The swamp ends, this rocky ground comes in between, mountin' to a great height, and then it drops away again, and at the bottom is this valley."

"That's about it!" I agreed. "It's a valley of beautiful fields and rivers and woods, right in the heart of this terrible mire. It must extend for hundreds of miles, by the look of it."

"Quite probably," agreed Lord Dorrimore. "We shall certainly have to explore this territory, my lads. I didn't think that such splendid country existed in Brazil."

"I wonder if it's inhabited?" said Watson.

"It might be, although we can see no sign of any native villages, or anythin' of that sort," said Dorrie. "But this place, don't forget, is completely cut off from the Brazilian forest. It is a kind of island, in the middle of that swamp—which is quite impassable. It's on the cards that this huge tract of lovely country is positively barren of human bein's."

"What about that aeroplane, sir?" asked Handforth suddenly.

"Eh?"

"That aeroplane!" repeated Handforth. "It came from this direction, you know."

"By gad! So it did!" said Lord Dorrimore, looking thoughtful. "Now you come to mention it, Handforth, that aeroplane did come from this part of the country, and it went back there, too! The whole adventure is gettin' quite interestin'!"

He unslung his binoculars, released them from their case, and focussed them Then, for some moments, he stared through the glasses into the dim distance. We had not come prepared in this way—we had no glasses with us. Dorrie's were the only pair.

"Can you see anything particularly interesting, sir?" asked Handforth.

Dorrie made no reply for a moment. Then he put the glasses down, and regarded us with an expression on his face which arrested my attention at once. It was an expression which told of wonder and delight—which seemed to indicate that his lordship was intensely puzzled.

"By the Lord Harry!" exclaimed Lord Dorrimore softly.

"What's the matter, sir?"

"What have you seen, Dorrie?" I asked.

"Speak, O my futher!" said Umlosi, "for we are of the great curiosity."

Lord Dorrimore took a deep breath.

"Well, I don't know whether my eyes are going wrong, or whether these binoculars are squiffy—or what! But I'll swear I can see a town lyin' down there in that valley—about twenty miles away, as the crow flies!"

"A town!"

"A town in this valley!"

"Hundreds of miles from civilisation?"

"Exactly!" said Dorrie. "That's what I said. Either my eyes are wrong, or the glasses are wrong, or it's actually a fact. Take a squint through them yourself, Nipper, an' tell me what you can see. If there isn't a town there, I'll eat my own sun helmet!"

I took the binoculars at once, and, a moment later, I was looking through them interestedly and intently.

The whole landscape ahead sprang into sharp relief as I gazed through the binoculars. The clumps of trees came to my vision distinctly, and I could see sparkling rivers, glorious green fields, and myriads of gorgeously coloured flowers.

The whole scene was one of extreme delight, and I was held spellbound. It was all so unexpected that I could hardly believe it to be true—it was as though I was gazing through the glasses of a panarama. And then something really curious happened. I was looking at a dense clump of trees, when something moved out into the open—something huge, and of uncouth shape.

It was alive, and was certainly an animal of some description. But the thing which fairly made me quiver with excitement was the fact that the animal was of an enormous size compared to the trees. Moreover, it was shaped in the most astounding manner—unlike any other animal I had ever seen.

"Good heavens!" I ejaculated. "What on earth——"

"Well, young 'un," asked Dorrie, "can you see it?"

"Look—look, Dorrie!" I gasped. "I don't mean the city—I've seen something else! There's an animal there—an animal as big as a house——"

"Begad! So you're seeing things, too!" said his lordship, seizing the glasses.

He held them to his eyes, but after searching the landscape for some little time, he lowered them, and turned to me.

"I can't see anythin' particularly startlin', Nipper," he said. "Look again, an' tell me where to gaze!"

I did look again, but now the strange animal had vanished back into the recesses of the forest, and I could see no sign of it whatever. I was greatly excited—far more excited than I had been for many a day—and I was flushed with the emotion of it all.

"It is not there now!" I said, without lowering the binoculars. "I expect it's gone back into the wood."

"You must have imagined it, you ass!" said Handforth.

"I didn't!" I declared. "I saw it as clearly as I see you! A great hulking animal, looking something like one of those prehistoric monsters we see illustrated in natural history books."

The other fellows were plainly sceptical, and they did not actually believe that I had seen anything out of the common. I gave it up after a moment or two, and held the glasses at a different angle.

And then something sprang into view which gave me fresh surprise. It was many miles away, and, even with the binoculars, it was impossible to see everything distinctly. But I was quite certain of one thing—I was looking down upon a city!

It seemed to be of a Moorish type, with great white buildings, minarets, and domes. It was gleaming gloriously in the sunshine, and it seemed to be a city of dreams, rather than an actuality. I stared at it long and wonderingly.

"Yes, there's a city, right enough, Dorrie," I said at length. "Good gracious! It's almost impossible—but yet it's there!"

I handed him over the binoculars, and very soon he was gazing into the distance, too. After him the other juniors had a look, and we were all positively convinced that what we saw was a huge city of stones and masonry. There was no hallucination about it—the place positively stood there.

"It must be a dead city," said Handforth. "I couldn't see anybody moving about!"

"Well, there's nothing very surprising about that," said Dorrie. "It's as much as we can do to distinguish the buildings. The place is a tremendous distance away, don't forget. It's not likely that we should be able to see any human figures. Let me have a look through the glasses again."

The binoculars were handed back to Dorrie, and once more he gazed through them at the strange sight in the distance.

We were all so excited and surprised that we did not realise the lapse of time, and we stood there, minute after minute, until over an hour had passed. We were entranced by the scene, and we were never tired of looking through the glasses and seeing fresh wonders.

It was a valley of surprises—a valley of glorious green and colours. It was so unlike the forest land we had already seen, that it did not appear to be really true. For here there were open spaces, beautiful meadows, and the trees grew in clumps—in isolated woods and spinneys. And there were innumerable little streams, trickling between wooded banks, with waterfalls plainly discernible here and there.

At last it was realised that we must make a move—for we had an hour's journey back to the airship.

"I suppose we'd better be goin'," said Lord Dorrimore reluctantly. "What a pity Lee wasn't here to see it with us! But we shall be able to go up in the airship, and take a closer view."

He had one last look through the binoculars before stowing them away. And it was fortunate that he did so. For he saw something else which positively made everything fall into significance. A sight met his gaze which left him dumbfounded and staggered, and it needed something of an extraordinary character to bring Lord Dorrimore into this condition.

"Oh, there's no doubt about it!" he said in a dazed voice. "I'm mad!"

"Eh?

"What sayest thou, N'Kose?" said Umlosi.

"I'm dotty—I'm clean off my rocker!" said Lord Dorrimore. "There's no doubt about it at all!"

"What do you mean, sir?" grinned Tommy Watson.

Dorrie handed the binoculars to me.

"Look!" he said impressively. "Look through these, and tell me if you don't see something that's absolutely impossible!"

"But if it's there, Dorrie, it must be possible——"

"It's not there—I'm off my rocker. There can't be anything else for it, my son!"

I was struck by his tone, and I took the binoculars away from him sharply—much to the chagrin of Handforth, who wanted to grab them first. I placed them to my eyes, and focussed them to the spot which Lord Dorrimore had indicated. For a moment or two I could see nothing that was really staggering, and then became as still as a statue, and I held my breath in sheer stupification.

For I did see something that seemed to be impossible—and I realised the cause of Dorrie's strange tone.

For there, down in the valley, and about five or six miles from us, I could see hundreds of figures moving. They were coming straight in our direction in a great long column. With the naked eye it was not possible to see them, but those binoculars were excellent ones, and they brought the view into sharp relief.

The figures were those of human beings, but they were of such an extraordinary character that I glued the glasses to my eyes and stared in amazement.

Judging by the trees on every hand, it seemed quite certain that these men were nothing short of eight feet in height. They were robed in curious white clothing, and they had glittering gold bands on their heads, the gold scintillating in the sunlight.

Not only this, but the men were white, to judge by all appearances. They were not black, or brown, or yellow, but white, and they were gigantic.

In addition to this, the column of strange men approaching in orderly file were covering the ground at a most astonishing speed. They were running, and they must have been travelling at nothing short of twenty miles an hour. Possibly they were travelling at even greater speed than this.

"You're not mad, Dorrie!" I exclaimed hoarsely. "It's true; they're really there! An army of giants!"

"What!" yelled Handforth.

"Look—look for yourself!" I exclaimed.

He looked through the binoculars, and the others had a look in turn. And

when they had finished we all stared at one another in a rather scared fashion.

There was no doubt about the thing at all—a great body of men were coming towards us as fast as their legs would carry them. And they were running in orderly style. They were giants of the most extraordinary character. We had never seen such men in all our lives.

The whole thing was positively staggering!

CHAPTER V.

THE DREAM CITY.

LORD DORRIMORE looked rather grave.

"The truth about this thing has just struck me," he exclaimed, "and we shall be well advised to get a move on at once!"

"That's exactly what I was thinking, Dorrie," I said breathlessly. "Why are these giants coming in this direction? The only possible explanation is that they are making for the airship. They intend to capture it if they can."

"Begad!"

"My only hat!"

"It's a fact," said Lord Dorrimore. "Nipper's right. The only explanation is, as he says. That aeroplane must have flown back to the city, and these giants were given warning, and they've now come over to locate us and to make a nice little capture."

"And if we're not quick they'll do it!" I exlclaimed. "They're running at double the speed we can run, and if the airship isn't ready to take to the air we shall be properly in the cart. The best thing we can do is to hurry back with all speed."

"Thou art right, O Manzie!" rumbled Umlosi. "Even as thou sayest, I will speak. But I am reluctant to leave this spot, for I should dearly love to have a great fight with these warriors whom we see before us!"

"You wouldn't stand much chance against that crowd, old Coalbox!" said Lord Dorrimore. "Strong as you are, you'd be wiped up!"

We did not lose any time in turning on our tracks and hurrying back down the long slope towards the airship, which was quite visible a good distance away.

We did not speak much as we ran, for our minds were too full of thoughts. From the first to the last we had met with nothing but amazing surprises since we had commenced this trip.

What could it mean?

We knew that a wonderful city existed down in that valley, and we knew that there were human beings there of a tremendous size. But this did not account for the aeroplane. Where had that come from, and how had these strange men obtained such a modern example of triumph?

It was too ridiculous to suppose that these people, cut off completely from the rest of the world, could have built a flying machine exactly similar to our familiar aeroplanes. That machine had come from Europe, and unless I was mistaken, it was a London-made aeroplane, by all appearances. Then how in the name of all that was miraculous had it got into this strange corner of the world? Who was the pilot, and why had he attempted to send us to destruction?

All of these thoughts chased themselves through my mind as I ran, and I wondered if Nelson Lee would believe our story. Certainly it was a story which one could be excused for not believing.

The valley, the city, the strange monsters I had seen, and, last of all, those extraordinary human beings—they were all fantastic, and Nelson Lee would find it difficult to believe that we were speaking the truth.

He and the two mechanics clearly saw that something out of the common was afoot, for we were approaching in a terrific hurry, running with all our power, in spite of the intense heat. By the time we arrived we were bathed in perspiration, and we were almost exhausted. Nelson Lee came out to meet us with an expression of keen inquiry on his face.

"What is the matter, Dorrie?" he asked, in concern. "Why this precipitate hurry?"

"Old man, we've got to get into the air at once!" panted Lord Dorrimore. "There's an army coming along!"

"A which?"

"An army, sir!" I gasped. "An army of white giants!"

The guv'nor stared at us wonderingly.

"I really don't understand what on earth you're talking about!" he said.

But we very soon made him understand. Dorrie and I did most of the

talking, and we related all our adventures. We told Nelson Lee exactly what we had seen, and we warned him about the approach of the giants.

The guv'nor was reluctant to believe that we were speaking the actual truth. For some little time he believed that we were attempting to pull his leg. But at last he knew that we were in deadly earnest.

"As it happens, the repairs are just about completed," he said. "We can get into the air within a quarter of an hour, if necessary. But I must feel that your story has almost exhausted my powers of belief."

"I quite realise that, old man, and I sha'n't blame you if you call me a prevaricator of the truth," said Lord Dorrimore. "I sha'n't blame you if you think that I have been telling you a tissue of whoppers. But it's the truth. The white giants are coming even now, and it's quite likely——"

He paused, and stared up the long slope towards the top of the ridge.

"Ye gods and little fishes!" he ejaculated. "The beggars are coming now! Look! Use your glasses, man, and look!"

We all stared up the hill, and we could see one or two spots moving about against the skyline. Through the binoculars, however, the dots became human beings, and it was easy to see that there were hundreds of them, coming over the crest of the ridge in a never-ending column.

Nelson Lee looked long and searchingly.

"Good gracious!" he exclaimed at last. "These men are even bigger than you stated, Dorrie! I judged that there is not a single one of them less than nine feet in height! And they're covering the ground at an appalling speed!"

"The best thing we can do is to get in that car and sail into the air!" said Dorrie. "I'm not a quitter, but when it comes to fighting an army of giants, you can count me out! I'm as willing as anybody to engage in a nice little scrap, but this is altogether different. I don't like the idea of being captured by a crowd of fellows out of Gulliver's Travels!"

There was really no sense in delaying matters, and Nelson Lee gave his instructions briskly and sharply. Within three or four minutes we were all in the car, and the airship was released from her anchorage.

It was not possible to get the great vessel into the air in a minute, and there were several minor delays, and all this time the strange giants were coming towards us at a terrific speed.

They were now not more than half a mile distant, and they would be actually on the spot within a minute or two.

We could see them clearly with our naked eyes, and our first estimate of their size was by no means exaggerated. The smallest man out of the lot was certainly eight feet six inches in height, and the majority of them were nine feet or over. They were broad in proportion, and perfectly shaped.

They were, in fact, gigantic specimens of humanity, and they only differed from ordinary human beings in the fact that they were large.

Their features were quite normal, and of a rather refined type. There was nothing whatever of the savage about them. Every man was clean-shaven, and his white robe in no way interfered with his movements. Upon every head rested a ring of gold-coloured metal.

"By gad! We shall have to look sharp!" said Lord Dorrimore urgently.

"If once they get near enough, we shall never be able to escape!" exclaimed Handforth excitedly. "They've only got to grab these trailing-ropes and we shall be pulled down again. There are hundreds of them, and they'll be able to do what they like!"

But this did not happen.

Just in the nick of time we succeeded in getting clear of the ground, and we soared aloft with roaring engines. And as we went up the giants came to a halt and stared into the sky, gesticulating strangely.

Then I saw that they were operating some curious instruments they were holding. Each man was provided with one of these things, which seemed to be a kind of stick with some curious mechanism at the other end.

Click! Click!

Something struck the rail just near me, and a small object fell to the floor of the car, rebounding from one of the supports.

"It's a dart!" I exclaimed.

I picked the thing up, and saw that it was about four inches long, and was made of metal, a metal of a dull, brassy colour. The end was as sharp as a

needle—that is to say, the point, and it was turned over as the result of its contact with the support.

It was fortunate that we had attained a good height, for a perfect shower of these darts came shooting round us, and it was apparent that the weapons held by the giants were equally as powerful as any modern rifle. The dart was sent into the air with appalling force, and they had a tremendous range.

"Well, Dorrie, this is a rather surprising adventure," said Nelson Lee calmly. "I certainly didn't anticipate anything of this nature when we started off."

"It's too much for me!" complained Dorrie. "I've got a frightful headache, you know. All this excitement is inclined to have a weakening effect on a fellow. What I can't understand is these merchants down below want to throw things at us. We've done them no harm, so why should they cut up rusty?"

"They are hostile, and that is all that really matters," said Nelson Lee. "Perhaps they consider that we are intruding, and that we have no right here."

"Well, we're certainly intruding, in a way of speaking," said Lord Dorrimore. "At the same time, it's not exactly a pleasant way to greet strangers from the outside world."

I was staring down over the rail of the car, and I was not much interested in any conversation that was going on. My whole attention was centred upon that great crowd of giants below.

Even now it seemed almost impossible—it seemed that we were in the middle of an extraordinary nightmare. We had not been prepared for an adventure of this nature, and it took us completely by surprise.

We had come expecting to find nothing but a deadly swamp, with perhaps a continuation of the dense forests beyond, and here we were in the midst of a land of wonders!

On this side of the great swamp we appeared to be in a country where everything was bizarre and almost unbelievable.

In any case, I was positively convinced by this time that Colonel Kerrigan was alive. Aunt Janet's visions were, by some extraordinary means, real. The strange city she had seen in her dreams was here before us, down in the valley. It therefore stood to reason that the colonel was there, too. He was probably a prisoner in the hands of this strange race of giants.

"I'm blessed if I know what to make of it, you chaps!" said Handforth, who for once was almost subdued. "It's a pity we've come up so high. We haven't been able to inspect these chaps very closely."

"We couldn't stay down there, you ass!" said Watson. "What about those darts? We simply had to get out of their range. Thank goodness we got off the ground in time, that's all I say!"

"Yes, it was a pretty narrow escape," I agreed. "I'd rather inspect these fellows at a distance!"

"I don't blame you, dear old boy," said Sir Montie. "Begad! I really don't know whether I'm on my head or my heels!"

The airship was behaving really well considering that she had lost a quantity of gas. She did not have her former buoyancy, but she rose in the air gracefully and obedient to her controls.

We rose higher, and then circled round majestically, with Nelson Lee in full control of the helm.

"Well, what's the programme, old man?" asked Dorrie. "Shall we go straight back to the yacht, or shall we sample a little more of this fare?"

"Well, I suppose the most sensible course would be to turn our nose towards the Majarra," said Nelson Lee. "At the present time I am strongly tempted to take a short flight over this wonderful valley you speak of. My curiosity has been aroused, Dorrie, and I want to see this strange city with my own eyes."

"I don't blame you, professor," said Lord Dorrimore. "And that idea falls in exactly with my own scheme. It won't take us long to slip over that city, and then we can set our course for home straight away. Do you think the old 'bus is in a fit condition to do the trip?"

"The airship? Of course!" said Nelson Lee. "She has lost a certain quantity of gas, I will admit, but she is still airworthy. My only doubt was concerning the aeroplane."

"You think it will attack us again?"

"It is quite likely."

"Good!" said Dorrie. "We shall be better prepared this time."

"That is all very well, old man, but I must remember that I have several boys on board," said Nelson Lee quietly. "I

do not want to take them into any unnecessary danger."

"Don't mind us, sir," put in Handforth. "We're willing to take any old risks!"

"That is quite likely, Handforth," said Nelson Lee. "But your father and mother might not be quite so keen upon it. I do not wish to return to England with any one of my guests maimed or injured."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Dorrie. "There's no need to be scared about that, professor. If that merchant in the aeroplane attacks us next time, we can dispose of him quickly enough. I've got a good rifle on board and a decent revolver. I'm game, anyhow!"

"Same here, sir!"

"Begad, rather!"

"Oh, let's go, sir!" said Stanley Kerrigan eagerly.

Nelson Lee was prevailed upon, and at length consented to fly over the valley, and, if possible, to get a good sight of the Dream City. We called it the Dream City because it had appeared to Miss Kerrigan in her dreams—and it had been, until now, only a vision. It had suddenly become a reality.

We were soon speeding through the air at full speed, and we left behind the army of giants on the hillside—quite amused at their helplessness. They had come all the way out of the valley for the express intention of capturing us—but they had met with failure.

It seemed that if we had only kept in the air slightly longer in the first place, we should have looked right into the valley after proceeding a very short distance.

For now, having attained a fairly good height, we very rapidly passed over the ridge, and there, below and ahead of us, was the valley itself—a gorgeous panorama of green, and sparkling rivers. From the air it looked even better than it had looked from the hill top.

We were not mistaken with regard to the character of this paradise. It was indeed a wonderful valley, and I longed to set foot on the ground, so that I could explore it at leisure, and obtain a nearer view of the marvels.

This, however, would probably never be—for it would be an extremely risky undertaking to land in the valley.

Very soon the city came into prominent sight, and we could see its gleaming white walls down ahead of us, and we gazed over the rail in delight and wonder. Nelson Lee was as much interested as we were.

"Your description was quite inadequate, Dorrie," he declared. "This town is a glorious place indeed. It is the very last thing I should have expected to find on this terrible Brazilian swamp. It only proves that there are many more wonderful things to see in this old world yet!"

Lord Dorrimore nodded.

"This part of the globe has never been explored, of course," he said. "At the same time, I never expected to find a civilised town here—to say nothing of giants eight or nine feet high. Begad! I've got a sort of feeling that we shall wake up before long and find ourselves nearly falling out of bed!"

Dorrie was not alone in this sensation. The whole adventure seemed altogether too absurd to be actually true; but it was true, and we could only gaze in silent wonder at the scene before us.

We reduced our height somewhat, until we were flying at only an altitude of about fifteen hundred feet. From this height we could look down and see every detail of the city.

For we were already over the outskirts, and we were intensely interested.

We had noticed that for a good many miles beyond the city the fields were cultivated, and they were orderly and neat, and we also observed that there were many people working on them.

From the air it was not easy to judge the size of the workers, but we gathered that they were giants like the rest. And over the city itself, the sights which met our gaze were of enthralling interest.

The whole place was laid out in beautiful terraced streets, with big square stone houses, gleaming white in the sunshine.

The streets themselves were extremely wide, with beautiful rows of palm and other trees growing along the borders and in every square.

Fountains played here and there, and the whole city was alive with the strange white-robed giants, who were staring up at us with intense interest.

This intense interest was reciprocated on our part, and we had an intense longing to land, and so become acquainted with this extraordinary race of people.

But Nelson Lee decided that it would be altogether too risky to attempt a landing, or to even descend lower than a

thousand feet. We had already learned that these giants were hostile.

Somehow or other, I had a feeling within me that we were gazing down upon a scene from ancient Rome—it looked as though a gigantic cinema picture was being taken, and that we had arrived at the very moment when the cameras were "shooting" the various scenes.

But it was too stupendous for that—it was a real life picture, a picture which we had never dreamed of seeing.

And then, before we had half traversed the city—before we could really take stock of the scenes—something of a startling nature took place.

We became aware of a buzzing roar, and then the red aeroplane swooped down out of the upper sky, its machine-gun spitting viciously as it flashed down.

At the very same moment we felt the airship quivering slightly, and then all our attention was fixed upon the red machine. It turned almost within its own length, and came roaring back at us like an angry wasp.

Its machine-gun was popping away incessantly.

"The scoundrel!" exclaimed Lord Dorrimore, between his teeth. "By gad! We'll show him something this time!"

The aeroplane came swooping past us, and I managed to get a fairly good sight of the pilot, crouching in the cockpit. Of one thing I was certain—he was no giant like the rest of these people. He was undoubtedly an ordinary human being, as it were. He was not a native of the extraordinary land.

Then the excitement began.

We already knew that many bullets had taken effect on the gas bag—and these seemed to be a different class of bullet. They were not the same as the man had used during the earlier attempt. They were probably far more effective, for even now we were losing height, proving that the bag had been ripped rather badly in more places than one.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Nelson Lee's revolver spat viciously, and Lord Dorrimore's revolver echoed the sound. Both men were dead shots, and, although there were many disadvantages in firing at such a swiftly moving object, some of the bullets took effect.

I distinctly saw a splinter of wood fly away from one of the aeroplane's struts, and a portion of flapping canvas told its own story.

And then the red attacker received his deserts.

Quite abruptly the aeroplane seemed to shiver. It stumbled in its track, so to speak, hovered for a moment, and then we saw the reason for this.

The great tractor screw, in front of the machine, had splintered into a thousand portions, and had gone to nothing. One of the revolver shots, apparently, had struck the propellor, and it had splintered to atoms—as propellors will.

In any case, the result was disastrous—for the airman.

His machine was thoroughly out of hand, for the engine had raced at a terrible speed to begin with, really causing the whole motor to wrench itself out of its seating. And the aeroplane got into a terrible spin, and nose-dived for the ground at a speed which was literally a headlong fall.

The aeroplane went down, down, and we were all convinced that it would smash itself to atoms when it struck the ground. We watched it, fascinated, hardly realising what had happened.

The pilot was obviously a pilot of the most amazing skill.

For, at the last moment, and when within three or four hundred feet from the ground, he managed to flatten out his planes, and, more by chance than anything else, the machine landed on its wheels, in one of the great, wide streets.

But our own peril was over.

CHAPTER VI.

LEFT BEHIND.

"WELL, to give the fellow his due, I must say that he is a wonderful pilot!" said Nelson Lee, as we leaned over the rail and saw a tiny figure getting out of the cockpit of the aeroplane, and walking round to inspect the damage. "I never expected him to regain control of his machine."

"It was certainly a wonderful piece of work, old man," said Lord Dorrimore. "At the same time, he thoroughly deserved to have a crash. The infernal ruffian was intent upon sendin' us to destruction, at all events."

"I should like to investigate more closely," said Nelson Lee grimly. "I

am intensely curious regarding—— Well, Jarvis, what is it?"

One of the mechanics had come up and was saluting.

"I'm afraid there's a bad leak of gas, sir," said Jarvis. "We are losing height all the time, and I don't think there's any remedy—unless we throw some weight overside."

"This is bad!" said Nelson Lee gravely. "I had feared something of the sort, but I did not think it was so serious."

"Handforth, I'm afraid you'll have to jump overboard!" said Lord Dorrimore, looking very solemn.

Handforth grinned. But it was really no joking matter, as we soon found. The second attack by the aeroplane had been more severe than the first, and it was quite obvious that The Adventurer was in a rather bad way. She was moving nearer and nearer to the ground constantly, in spite of all the efforts of the mechanics and Nelson Lee to remedy matters.

This meant that the gasbag had lost its buoyancy, and was unable to carry its load.

The peril, indeed, was startling.

To remain over the city was quite suicidal, so Nelson Lee set the nose of the airship straight for home, and the engines were raced with all their pressure. It was to be a rush to the Majarra—as hard as we could possibly go.

But, steadily and insistently, we grew nearer and nearer to the ground, and it was only possible to come to one conclusion.

Before we had covered half the distance home—while we were over the deadly swamp—the airship would be compelled to make a landing—she would be unable to carry the weight. This meant, in plain language, that we should be precipitated into the mire, and there would be no escape. We should all go to sudden death.

It was little wonder, therefore, that we were all looking extremely serious and grave. There was even a doubt whether we should clear the ridge which surrounded the valley—whether we should sustain height long enough in order to get over that great barrier.

However, we just managed to scrape over, with less than a hundred feet to spare, and once more the great swamp was in sight, with the bare rocky ground in the short distance ahead of us. The Dream City had now been left behind, and it was only a haze in the extreme distance.

We had carried a certain amount of ballast, but this had already been thrown overboard, and although it lightened the airship for a certain time, it was only a temporary advantage.

Gradually we descended lower, and Nelson Lee came to one positive conclusion—it would be madness to attempt to cross the swamp in our present condition.

A landing, therefore, was imperative.

The country was scoured carefully in every direction, and there was no sign whatever of any hostile forces; therefore it was fairly safe to land.

We succeeded in getting to the ground safely, and with only a slight bump. Then the airship was anchored, and Nelson Lee and the mechanics lost no time in climbing up the network, in order to examine the damage. This time their report was serious.

There were several big rents in the double silk envelope, and two of the compartments were practically empty.

The gas contained in the huge bag was, of course, not in one body. There were at least a dozen different compartments, each one in its own casing, so to speak. Therefore, if one emptied itself, there would be eleven others still full of gas.

It was ascertained that two of these separate compartments were very short of gas; in fact, one was practically empty, and the other was rapidly getting itself into a similar condition. The other ten gas bags were comparatively whole and were not punctured severely.

This, however, was very serious.

With these two compartments emptied the airship did not have enough buoyancy to carry its load home. No matter which way we looked at the problem, there was only one solution.

It was impossible for us all to return.

Every available pound of material had been cast overboard, and only the human freight remained. Nelson Lee was not long in coming to a positive decision.

"There is only one way out of this difficulty," he declared. "I am very reluctant to take this course, but it must be done. Several of us must remain behind."

"Begad!"

"Oh, my only hat!"

"I was about to say the same thing, guv'nor," I put in. "Well, it's not such

a serious matter, after all. I'm perfectly willing to remain behind here, and I'm sure that these other chaps are willing, too. Then you'll be able to slip off home in the airship, refill her with gas, and come back for us."

"That was my idea, Nipper, but I do not like to go off alone—without you," said Nelson Lee. "I must insist upon remaining behind—in order to look after you."

"My dear old man, you can dismiss that idea from your head straight away," said Lord Dorrimore calmly. "I'm remainin' behind—an' so is Umlosi. If there's any looking' after to be done, we're the men for the job. Don't forget that you're the pilot of this 'bus, an' you've got to stick to the helm!"

Nelson Lee pursed his lips.

"I admit that there is sense in your suggestion, Dorrie," he said. "At the same time, I don't like it at all. It is a great pity that we could not all go home together——"

"Of course it is," said Dorrie; "it's a beastly pity, in fact. But still, what's the good of making worse of the trouble than it actually is? Will the airship be able to get home safely if six of us are left behind?"

"My dear man, it is not even necessary to leave six behind," said Nelson Lee. "But, lightened in that manner, there will be no doubt whatever as to the result. The Adventurer will be able to slip back to the yacht without the slightest trouble, and it will not take long to make rapid repairs and fill up the gasbags once more."

"How long do you think it'll be before you can get back?" asked Dorrie.

"Four or five hours—probably five," said Nelson Lee. "Certainly no longer than that."

Dorrie grinned.

"My dear man, there's nothin' better," he declared lightly. "Why, I thought the thing was really serious! Instead of that, we find it's as simple as A, B, C! If we can't look after ourselves for five or six hours, you can write me down as bein' no good. Buzz off, as soon as you like!"

"That's right, sir," said Handforth. "We don't mind staying behind."

It was really the only way; and everybody realised this. The airship, in order to reach its base, would find it necessary to fly light, and, once there, it would be quite an easy matter to make quick repairs and to refill the empty gasbags.

It was still comparatively early in the day, and there were very many hours of daylight left. The atmosphere was calm, there was no sign whatever of a change in the weather, and everything was suitable for the work in hand.

It was decided that Lord Dorrimore would stay behind with Umlosi, and Watson and Tregellis-West and Handforth and myself would be with them. The others would remain in the airship, and would fly over the swamp to the Majarra with all speed.

Reluctant as Nelson Lee was to adopt this course, he was compelled to do so. There was nothing else to be done. It was the only way out of the difficulty.

So, without wasting any further time, the airship was released, and she rose in the air lightly and breezily. Now that a great portion of her weight had been taken off, The Adventurer slipped away splendidly.

We were left behind!

We stood in a little group, watching the airship as she rose in stately circles, her engines humming musically. As far as outward appearance went, there was nothing wrong with her whatever, and nobody could have seen that she was short of gas.

Having reached a height of at least five thousand feet, her nose was set for the distant Majarra, and she sped off at a great speed. She grew smaller and smaller as we watched, until she was but a speck in the sky. And then she vanished altogether.

Lord Dorrimore turned to us, and he was smiling.

"Well, boys, this is a bit lively—what?" he asked, lighting a cigarette. "We're left in sole possession of this tract of land, an' if the airship doesn't come back, we shall be left in the cart properly. There'll be no returnin' to Piccadilly for us!"

"Oh, the airship's bound to come back, sir!" said Handforth.

"Of course it is—Dorrie is only trying to be funny!" I said. "Personally, I don't mind this arrangement in the least. We're a long way from those giants, and they're certainly under the impression that we've flown completely away. They won't send out any scouts to see if a few of us have landed. We're as safe as houses."

"And the professor will turn up

smilin' an' cheerful almost before we know it," smiled Lord Dorrimore. "But if he doesn't bring some fizzy lime juice and some sandwiches with him, I'll make use of some extra sweet words. Egad! I'm feelin' peckish—to say nothin' of bein' frightfully thirsty."

"Umlosi was right, sir," said Tommy Watson. "He told us long ago that we should meet with all sorts of queer adventures and we should have tons of excitement."

"Umlosi's got a way of seein' these things," said Dorrie. "I can't understand it—but there you are. I think he must be possessed of second sight!"

The Kutana chief smiled, revealing all his teeth.

"It is not that I claim to be a man of wonder, O N'Kose," he rumbled. "I have said that we should meet with many wondrous excitements in the future—and I will tell thee that these excitements have but commenced. We have received only a slight taste of what is to come. Methinks that thou art sceptical, O my masters—but thou wilt find that I am right. There will be many dangers yet—there will be much blood spilt—there will be many perils!"

And, somehow, I was quite certain in my own mind that Umlosi was right!

CHAPTER VII.

UMLOSI'S GREAT FIGHT.

IT would be idle to pretend that we were not all rather anxious. We knew well enough that Nelson Lee was determined to reach the yacht, and that he was equally determined to come back to our rescue—at the earliest possible moment.

But the guv'nor's determination was not everything. Airships are not absolutely the most reliable method of travelling, and they are sometimes apt to make bad landings, or to have slight mishaps. With an airship it is possible to have a very slight accident which causes a delay, perhaps, of several days—and that applies far more particularly in the Amazon region than it would in Europe.

Consequently, our anxiety was not exactly misplaced. With all the good intentions in the world, it was on the cards that Nelson Lee would not be able to return in the time he had specified.

An hour or two would make little difference, but if it dragged out to two or three days—well, our plight would be a serious one indeed.

It was not my fashion to be an alarmist and to look upon the worst side—neither was this Lord Dorrimore's habit.

At the same time, we could not help thinking of these things. One tiny mishap, and we should be left helpless—beyond all hope of assistance.

For the airship was the only possible method of reaching us. If anything happened to that frail craft, we should be doomed.

However, The Adventurer was not so frail, after all—she was a sturdy vessel, and really one of the best designed airships on the face of the earth. She was a masterpiece of construction, and her designers had embodied in her design all the very latest improvements copied from the military airships of the latest manufacture.

Dorrie puffed at his cigarette quite calmly.

"Well, boys, we shall have to do somethin' to pass the time, I suppose," he remarked. "This heat is infernally exhaustin', an' I wish I could find some shade somewhere. There's not a bally tree to be seen!"

"And there's no water, either!" said Handforth. "I'm gasping!"

"Methinks water is nigh, O my master!" exclaimed Umlosi, looking round. "If thou will permit me, I will rapidly bring thee water—mayhap thou art all of the big thirst!"

"There's no mayhap about it, old son," said Dorrie. "We're nearly all on the last verge of exhaustion. If you can see some water, then my eyesight must be goin' wrong—because I can't see any!"

Umlosi smiled.

"Water is not to be seen, O my father," he replied. "But I can feel that we are near a stream—I can feel it in my nostrils."

"I'd rather feel it in my throat," said Dorrie calmly. "Buck up, Ink Pot!"

"Thou are pleased to be humorous, N'Kose!" smiled Umlosi. "Thou hast a new name for me, I fear. It matters little. I am thy servant, and thou art my master. It is for thou to call me as thou wish!"

"I shall call you somethin' you won't like, if you don't buck up about that

water," said Dorrie darkly. "Can't you see that I'm dyin'?"

Umlosi smiled, and walked off. He walked quite straight, as though he knew exactly where to find the water, although there was none in sight. His instinct probably told him where to look, and in which direction the stream lay.

He soon disappeared behind a clump of rocks, and, meanwhile, we looked round for some shelter. The glare of the sun was very trying, and we wanted to find some shade—some coolness.

This was not such a difficult job as we had supposed, for, after walking along for some few yards, we came within sight of a great wall of rock which jutted out from the hillside. And there, low at the foot of the rocks, stood a large opening, which seemed like the mouth of a cavern. Lord Dorrimore pointed to it triumphantly.

"That's our destination, my sons," he said. "It's bound to be cool in that place! Come on!"

His lordship led the way, and we followed him. And Dorrie was quite correct in his surmise.

The opening in the rock proved to be the mouth of a deep cavern. We did not extend far in, for we were not bent upon an exploration tour. Our main object was to get out of the heat of the sun, and to cool down somewhat.

In this we succeeded, for in that dark opening there was no glare, and the air was delightfully cool. We all sat down gratefully, and took a rest.

"Well, this is all serene," said Handforth comfortably. "We're as right as ninepence here. Mr. Lee will be back almost before we can have time to look round."

"Let's hope so, anyway," I said cheerfully. "There's no sense in looking on the dark side of things. By the way, why didn't we go with Umlosi? We're all thirsty, and he can't bring any water to us."

"Why not?" asked Dorrie.

"Well, he hasn't got anything to carry it in——"

"That's all you know, my son. Umlosi generally carries a water-skin—a kind of flabby leather bag, which folds up to nothing, but which will hold about half a gallon of water any day!"

"Oh, that's good!" said Handforth. "I can drink about a quart on my own account!"

We were doing our utmost to keep cheerful, and to continue conversation, just for the sake of speech. But we were all busy with our thoughts.

We all had a deadly fear within us that Nelson Lee's plan would not materialise. We could not help thinking of the many dangers which the airship would encounter, and the many mishaps which were likely to occur.

Any one of these mishaps would mean sheer and utter disaster for us. If the guv'nor got back before nightfall, all well and good. But if he did not——"

I did not much care for thinking of the possibilities.

And then our attention was diverted by the approach of Umlosi.

Sitting in the cave mouth, in the grateful shade, we could see the giant Kutana chief coming round some of the rocks, and we all noticed that he was carrying the bag which Lord Dorrimore mentioned.

"Good old Umlosi!" I said. "How the dickens did he know where to find that water?"

"How does he know all sorts of things?" asked Dorrie. "Umlosi's got a wonderful nose, my lads—he can sniff things for miles off! That's what gets over me—there's no sniff in clean water!"

We smiled, and watched Umlosi as he came along. And then our attention was diverted. I think I was the first to see a movement among the rocks just in the rear of Umlosi.

Then, as I watched, I saw two figures appear. I jumped to my feet, filled with sudden alarm. For these two figures were huge, they were clothed in white robes, and gold bands glittered on their heads.

They were two of the giants!

"Great Scott!" I shouted. "Look there!"

"Eh?" gasped Dorrie. "What on earth——"

"The giants!" I yelled.

"Begad!"

Everybody was on his feet in a moment, and we all stared out across the rocky ground towards the spot where Umlosi was walking. About twenty yards behind him the two giants were clearly visible, and they were running up with the evident intention of taking our black friend prisoner.

"Look out, Umlosi!" roared Handforth, at the top of his voice.

But Umlosi did not need any warning. He had already turned, and he was aware of his danger. The Kutana chief did not run—he stood his ground, and waited for the attack. He was quite unarmed, but this made no difference to him. Umlosi was fearless, and he did not wait for the giants to attack him. He came to the conclusion that it was the best kind of defence to assume the offensive.

For he ran forward, yelling at the top of his voice, and looking extremely warlike. The two giants came to a halt, and waited.

And now we could see how huge these men really were.

Umlosi himself stood quite six foot six inches in his shoes—but, standing near those giants, he looked a mere pigmy. They were head and shoulders above him, towering up like mountains. They were broad in proportion, and their strength was evidently considerable.

"Look here, we can't leave Umlosi in this predicament," said Lord Dorrimore quickly. "It's up to us to go to the rescue—an' if we can't drive the beggars off without inflicting injury, I shall fire my revolver."

"Good egg!" roared Handforth. "Come on!"

We rushed out of the cavern entrance, and pelted across some rough ground. Umlosi heard us coming, for he turned and held up his hand steadily.

"Be thou still, O my masters!" he shouted, in his rumbling voice. "Methinks I shall be able to deal with these strangers single handed."

"It can't be done, Umlosi!" shouted Dorrimore. "You must let us give you a hand——"

"Nay, N'Kose, I beg of thee to remain still!" interrupted Umlosi. "For many moons I have been awaiting this opportunity—I have been awaiting for a real fight. Wah! My muscles need exercise—a great battle is what I need! I beg of thee to let me fight these warriors alone. If I grow weak, then thou shall come to my aid!"

Dorrie looked uncertain.

"I suppose we'd better let him have his own way," I said. "But if those fellows overpower him, we'll soon rush forward!"

"They'll wipe him up in less than a minute," said Dorrie. "Hang it all, he can't perform the impossible. He'll be like a baby in their hands!"

However, we decided to give Umlosi just a minute or two—to see what he could do. We realised that it was quite impossible to fight the two giants with any hope of success.

So we stood in a group, about twenty yards off, waiting and watching.

Strange to say, the two giants did not seem inclined to attack. They had come to a halt within a few feet of Umlosi, and they were examining him with open-eyed astonishment. I could see the expressions of surprise in their eyes. They were quite child-like in their strange naive curiosity.

"I don't suppose they've ever seen a nigger before," I whispered. "They're quite bowled over, you see. Umlosi's as black as coal, and they can't understand it!"

"They don't seem to be armed, either!" murmured Tommy Watson.

We could take better stock of these giants than we had been able to of the vast army, which we had seen earlier. These two men were fully nine feet in height, and their white robes were worn very gracefully. Upon their feet were curious leather shoes, which were not exactly sandals, but which looked something like them. Strappings extended half-way up their calves.

The white robes were drawn together over the chest by means of a gold clasp, and the men wore gold ornaments round their wrists and round their necks.

Their features were even and well proportioned, with no trace of negro blood, and they were finely built.

But they seemed so huge, so grotesque in their size—that we stared at them in open astonishment. Even as they stared at Umlosi.

And then one of them moved.

He put out a huge hand, and touched Umlosi's shoulder. The touch was evidently a heavy one, for Umlosi wrenched himself away.

"What thinkest thou?" he shouted. "Wouldst thou lay thy fingers on one of noble blood? Thou art venturesome, O thou of mighty frame. Thou art a real man—as thy brother. I greet thee, and if thou art peaceful, there will be no fighting!"

There was fighting, however.

For the two giants came forward, and they both seized Umlosi at the same

time, although they did so in quite a gentle manner. Umlosi was not standing this, and he lunged out with all his strength.

Crash! Crash!

His fists thudded upon the chests of the giants, and they staggered back in some little surprise.

Their expressions changed, and they came forward to the attack with grim determination.

"We'd better chip in now!" said Handforth excitedly.

"Wait!" said Dorrie. "We're not wanted quite yet!"

It did not seem that we were wanted at all. For Umlosi was lunging out with all his amazing strength and agility. His arms whirled, and every one of his punches found its mark. They found themselves up against a somewhat difficult proposition, considering that their single opponent was much smaller than themselves.

But they woke up with a vengeance.

They returned the attack, and hit out terrifically. But, somehow, their blows did not go home. Umlosi guarded himself in a most wonderful manner, and every one of the giants' thrusts went aside, and did not find its mark.

Meanwhile Umlosi himself was inflicting many.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

His fists ran home again and again. He hit on the chest, on the arms, and on the face. One giant was bleeding from the nose, and the other had a severely cut lip. And now they were thoroughly enraged.

Again and again they attempted to get Umlosi in their grasp—they did their utmost to capture him. But, in spite of their enormous size, they found it quite impossible to deal with the black African chief.

His one great advantage was his nimbleness. In spite of his size, Umlosi was able to dodge about with the agility of a bantam, and he kept up a constant rain of blows.

They found that they could do nothing to hurt this man, and the experience was not exactly to their liking. They were really more surprised than hurt, and they made one more determined effort to render their enemy helpless.

But they failed.

Umlosi really let himself go. His arms whirled so quickly that we could hardly follow their movements. His footwork was amazing, and he dodged from side to side, round in circles, and the giants were beaten back, they were battered, they were confused.

And, at last, realising that this black man was their master, they gave up the fight.

With one accord they turned on their heels, and ran—they ran for the rocks.

"Wah! Thou art of cowardly blood!" roared Umlosi. "Stay and finish this contest, thou great weaklings! Wah! are thy veins filled with water, that thou should leave the battle so soon?"

And we all returned to the cavern, and we lay down in the cool, awaiting the return of Nelson Lee with the airship.

And we all had an uneasy feeling that those two giants whom Umlosi had beaten, would turn to their comrades. What then? It was only too clear that the pair would return—and they would not return alone. They would bring many of their comrades.

We were here, helpless, and filled with anxiety. Would Nelson Lee return in time? Would the airship appear before it was too late?

It is hardly necessary for me to add that Nelson Lee did return, and that everything came out all serene in the finish. But before that occurred, we were destined to pass through many strange and wonderful adventures. There was excitement in store for us—excitement and adventure which would surpass anything that had ever happened to civilised human beings.

Our stay in the land of the white giants was by no means over!

THE END.

More about the Dream City and its strange inhabitants will be told next week in another enthralling narrative, entitled:

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(Now read on.)

The Boot is on the Other Foot.

HE walked over to where his brother was holding Johnson—or Snaith—securely down.

"Want any help, Jack?" he asked.

Jack gave the cowed ruffian a final shake by the throat, then came to his feet. The first thing he did was to hold out his hand to Gerald, who took it bashfully.

"Don't you ever mention again to me that you owe me your life, old chap," he said. "You saved mine just then. I never thought the hound would pull a gun on me. We're quits now!"

"Hardly, I think," said Gerald quietly. "But I'm glad to have been of some use to you. Up to now I've only been a beastly drag on you."

"Rot!" said Jack. "Well, now, let's tie these jokers up and get 'em across the river. I think we've seen the last of our troubles with this scoundrel and his pet."

There followed some rather amusing by-play on the part of Jim Talmage, who plainly had a big score to settle with the Swede, whatever it might have been. And Olesen, now he was a prisoner, was so badly cowed by his position that he could do nothing to defend himself against the mischievous Canadian. But at length Talmage grew tired of this sport.

"Hold out your hands, doggie!" he said. And the Swede did as he was told without a protest. The next moment Talmage had the fellow securely bound, hand and foot, and it did Teddy's heart a great amount of good to see the great brute in exactly the same position he himself had been in only the previous night.

Snaith was treated the same. But Snaith only submitted to be bound on the strongest compulsion.

"Waal," he snarled, "an' what ye reckon ye're goin' to do this time? Think you've put one over me properly, I take it?"

"I guess we're preparing you to stand your trial for a lot of things," said Jack Royce curtly. "I'm thinking there'll be quite an interesting case held, Johnson, on you. For you're surely the foulest, blackest-hearted scoundrel that ever polluted a country's good soil by walking on it. There's assault, there's attempted murder three or four times over, and there's—murder!"

Johnson's dark face went a trifle sallow.

"Guess ye'll have a job to prove anythin' but one attempt at murder," he said. "And that attempt was last night's. Say, I guess I'm real sorry your kid brother an' Telford should have escaped, and I'm darned if I know how they did; but—well, Royce, you sure did butt into things that were none o' your darned business, you and that kid brother."

"That'll do," said Royce. "As I was saying, what we know and what they'll make you say will be thrilling reading in the papers back in civilisation. And I'm thinking there'll be another person standing in the dock about the same time as you—Cardone, the man who hired you to murder Telford!"

Snaith recovered himself to some extent, and an evil gleam came to his eyes.

"Waal," he said, "it beats me how you're goin' to get me into the dock even yet, but if I do go, then I'll be real glad to see Cardone along with me. All I did for Cardone, and not a cent of his money have I seen! Heck!"

They bundled their prisoners into the canoe, and Jack and Talmage paddled it across. Then Talmage returned to pick up the rest of the party. In half an hour or so they had their two prisoners safe in the surveying camp.

There was a tribe of hunting Indians, it

(Continued on page iv of cover.)

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seemed, camped only a matter of five miles in the woods from the Little Slave River. As there was to be no work done for some days to come—Simpson had decided to send a runner down to headquarters with a report as to the hitch he had met with, and to hear his company's verdict ere progressing with his surveying—there were plenty of men in the gang who were willing to act as escort to Snaith and Olesen. Accordingly, with Jack in charge, with Teddy and Gerald accompanying the party, half a dozen men forced Snaith—and the big Swede—to march through the trackless woods until they came to the Indian village in question, where, with due solemnity, they handed their prisoners over to the care of Tall Wolf, the little chief of this small wandering community of red men.

(To be continued.)

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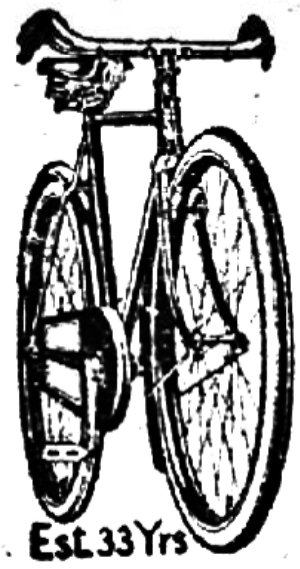

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