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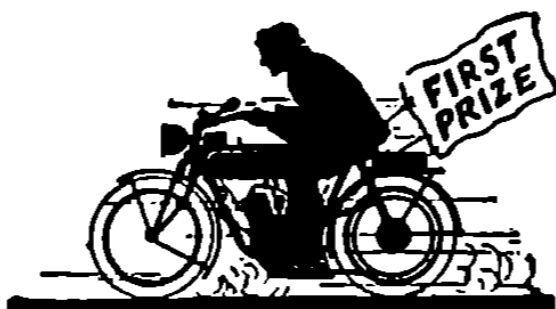


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A
MISCARRIAGE
OF
JUSTICE

Week ending July 24, 1915.

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of

have shown the papers mentioned to my chums, who have signed their names on my list, and I have got them to read them.

Let your chums sign their names and addresses on one side of the column, like this.

Name of paper which they have read.

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THE JUDGE:

The Decision of the EDITOR of the "NELSON LEE LIBRARY" must be accepted as ABSOLUTELY FINAL

A MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE;

OR, IN THE GRIP OF THE LAW.

A Grand, Long, Complete Tale of Nelson Lee and Nipper.

CHAPTER I.

. On the Verge of Ruin.

IT was a dull, depressing day, and London was wearing its least attractive aspect. Somewhere in the sky, no doubt, the sun was shining, but it might as well have been non-existent for any glimpse of it that was visible. It was dark and cold and damp. The pavements were coated with a greasy film of grime, and the air was heavy with a misty drizzle that was rapidly developing into a fog.

Gloomy and depressing as it was in the streets, there was an even deeper gloom and a blacker depression in the private office of Hervey & Foyl, the well-known stockbrokers of Threadneedle Avenue.

John Hervey, the senior partner, was seated at his desk, staring moodily at a litter of books and papers. Gilbert Foyl, the junior member of the firm, was standing with his back to the fire, silently gnawing his moustache. Both men's faces were haggard and drawn, and in their eyes was a look of hopeless despair.

"The irony of the situation is enough to drive one crazy," said Hervey presently. "Just think of it. We hold ten thousand shares in White Eagles. At the present moment those shares are worth exactly half-a-crown apiece, but from private information in our possession we know—we are absolutely certain—that in a comparatively short time each of those shares will be worth fifty pounds. In other words, if we can only hang on for a few weeks we'll be able to divide half a million between us!"

"In the meantime," he continued, "our balance at the bank is practically exhausted, we have raised all we can on our securities, and unless we can lay our hands on fifteen thousand pounds by noon to-morrow, in order to meet Salter's claim, we shall be hammered on the Exchange and driven into bankruptcy. Cruel, isn't it?"

Foyl made no reply, but continued to gnaw his moustache in gloomy silence. Hervey turned on him resentfully.

"Why don't you say something?" he said irritably. "Of course, I know this doesn't hit you as hard as it hits me——"

"How do you make that out?" interrupted Foyl, breaking silence at last. "Every penny I have is in the firm, and if we are hammered, my ruin will be as complete as yours."

"True," said Hervey. "But you're a young man, and can easily make a fresh start. I, on the other hand, am getting on in years, and have neither the energy nor the pluck to begin at the beginning again. Besides, this

firm is my child, as it were. I founded it, and with pride and affection I've watched it grow and expand. It represents to me my life's work, and now I am to see it destroyed, blotted out, dragged down into the mire of dishonour and disgrace. It—it will break my heart, I think!"

There was a curious catch, almost a sob, in his voice as he uttered these words. Foyl, who was not easily moved, was visibly affected. He came over to his partner and laid his hand on his shoulder.

"It's hard on you, old man, but it's equally hard on me," he said. "Indeed, I'm not sure that it isn't harder on me than on you. As you know, I'm not one who wears his heart on his sleeve, and I don't often talk about my private affairs; but, to show you what this means to me, I'll tell you a secret."

"About six months ago I fell in love with a girl named Jessie Malvern. She's an orphan, and lives with her guardian—Colonel Pryce. She'll have two thousand a year of her own when she comes of age; but at present both she and her money are entirely under the colonel's control. She's very fond of him, and thinks he is all that an English gentleman should be; and although she loves me very dearly she would never marry me, I know, without the colonel's consent."

"Colonel Pryce has a son, named Hubert, and I've no hesitation in saying that there aren't two bigger rotters in the country than the colonel and his son. As I've already told you, Jessie has no suspicion of the true character of her guardian, and, of course, I haven't enlightened her. As a matter of fact, even if I told her my opinion of the colonel, I don't suppose she'd believe me."

"Now, I happen to know that before I appeared on the scene the colonel had made up his mind that Jessie should marry his son—for the sake of her money, of course. When he discovered that Jessie and I were falling in love with each other, he did everything in his power to keep us apart. In spite of all his scheming, however, we managed to meet from time to time, and only last week Jessie promised to be my wife on condition that I obtained her guardian's consent."

"I interviewed the colonel a couple of days ago," continued Foyl. "Although, no doubt, he would have liked to have poisoned me for upsetting his plans and winning Jessie's affections, he was outwardly polite and self-possessed. He asked me a lot of questions about myself and my family and my prospects, and in the end he said he would talk the matter over with Jessie and give me his answer next Monday."

He turned away with a gesture of despair, and resumed his former position by the fireplace.

"So now you know what it means to me if we are forced into bankruptcy," he concluded. "In the first place, I should be a beggar, and, as an honourable man, I could not hold Jessie to her promise; and in the second place, even if I did try to hold her to her promise, the colonel would refuse to consent to his ward marrying a penniless bankrupt. Jessie, I am sure, would marry me—if I asked her—although I hadn't a penny in the world, but she would never, never marry me without her guardian's consent. Unless, therefore, this disaster can be averted, I shall not only lose my money and my position in the City, but I shall also lose what is dearer to me than anything else in the world—the girl I love."

Hervey rose from his chair and held out his hand.

"Forgive me, Foyl," he said. "I'm a selfish brute! I had only looked at the matter from my own point of view. I had only thought of what it meant to me, but I now admit that if this blow falls, it will fall as heavily on you as on me."

"But is it certain that the blow must fall?" said Foyl, making an obvious

effort to shake off his despondency. "Can nothing be done to ward off the blow?"

"I can think of nothing," said Hervey.

"How would it be," suggested Foyl, "if one of us were to see Salter this afternoon, and frankly explain how matters stand, and ask him to grant us a few weeks' grace?"

Hervey shook his head.

"It would be useless," he said with conviction. "Salter, as you know, has had his knife into us ever since we bested him over that Romanza Rubber affair, and now that he has got us in a tight corner he'll show us no mercy. It would be a waste of time to appeal to Salter."

"It might be worth while trying," persisted Foyl.

Again Hervey shook his head.

"Well, I won't try," he said. "Call it false pride, if you like, but I couldn't bring myself to appeal to Salter for mercy. I'd sooner face ruin."

"Would you mind if I appealed to him?" asked Foyl.

His partner looked at him in surprise.

"Are you serious?" he asked.

"Perfectly," said Foyl. "I wouldn't do anything against your wishes, but, if you're agreeable, I'm quite willing to see Salter, and explain the position, and ask him to grant us an extension of time."

"He wouldn't do it," said Hervey.

"No harm in asking him, anyhow," said Foyl. "It's our only hope, and at the worst he can only refuse."

"I thought you knew Salter better than that," said Hervey. "He'll not only refuse, but he'll insult you into the bargain. The more you humble yourself, the more he'll taunt you and the more he'll gloat over your humiliation."

"Then you advise me not to go to him?"

"I do."

"But you don't forbid me to go and see him?"

"I have no right to forbid you. I know it will be useless, but if you want to go—if you're prepared to expose yourself to his taunts and insults—go by all means."

Foyl hesitated for a moment. If only he had known how much depended on his decision!

"I think I'll go," he said at last.

Saying which, he donned his hat and overcoat and left the office, little dreaming into what a pitfall of fate, into what a tangled web of tragedy, he was innocently walking.

CHAPTER II.

The Murder in Penfold Lane.

TO look at him, you would never have guessed that Marmaduke Salter was a member of the Stock Exchange. He was a short, thick-set man with a heavy, coarse-featured face which was adorned by a snub nose, a large mouth, and a pair of small, beady eyes. His lower jaw was very square, and the hair on his bullet-shaped head was closely cropped.

At the best you would have taken him for a prosperous publican; at the worst you might have set him down as a retired pugilist.

His offices were in Penfold Lane, a stone's throw from Threadneedle Avenue. They were situated on the ground floor of a handsome building known as Caspian Chambers.

The outer office, which was occupied by half a dozen clerks, fronted the street. Salter's private office overlooked a small courtyard at the back of the building.

The fog was growing denser every minute when Gilbert Foyl walked into the outer office, but it was not yet dark enough to justify the clerks in switching on the electric lights.

"Is Mr. Salter disengaged?" he asked of the clerk who came forward to inquire his business.

"I'll inquire, sir," replied the clerk, who knew Foyl well both by sight and name.

He tapped at the door of the inner office and disappeared into the room. He reappeared a moment later and returned to Foyl.

"Mr. Salter is disengaged, sir," he said. "Will you please step this way."

Salter was seated at a small knee-hole desk in the centre of the room. Behind him was the fireplace and in front of him was a bookcase.

On his left was the door which led into the front office, and on his right was the window which overlooked the courtyard at the back of the building. In spite of the cold and damp, this window was open a few inches at the bottom.

"Come in. Glad to see you," he said, when the clerk ushered Foyl into the room.

He pointed to a chair.

"Take a seat," he continued. "I hope you don't mind the window being open, but the fact is when the wind is in this quarter the fire smokes if the window is shut. Bit of a nuisance, isn't it?"

Foyl murmured something in reply, and seated himself in the chair which Salter had indicated.

"I've called about our account with you," he said, when the clerk had left the room. "It's due to-morrow, I believe."

"That's so," said Salter, pushing a box of cigars towards Foyl. "Have a weed? No? Well, you won't mind if I have one, will you?"

He bit off the end of a cigar and lighted it.

"Let me see, fifteen thousand, isn't it?" he said. "Not a large sum for a firm of the standing of Hervey & Foyl. A mere trifle, in fact. Have you called to settle now?"

"No," said Foyl. "The fact is, we're rather hard-pressed for money just now, and I've called to ask you if you can see your way to grant us an extension of time."

"Then you've called on a fool's errand!" said Salter coarsely. "An extension of time, forsooth! Not likely! The money is due to-morrow, and it must be paid to-morrow."

"I hope that isn't your last word."

"It is."

"At any rate, you'll perhaps allow me to explain the position in which my partner and myself are placed."

"You can explain as much as you like, but it won't alter my decision."

"We are the holders of ten thousand shares in the White Eagle Mine."

"Muck! Worthless rubbish!"

"At present they're quoted at half-a-crown apiece."

"I know, but they're going down, and very soon they won't be worth the paper on which they're printed."

"That's the general opinion, I admit. But we have confidential information which leads us to believe—which makes it practically certain—that the shares will be up to fifty pounds apiece within a short time."

Salter removed his cigar from his mouth, threw back his head, and guffawed loudly.

"What do you take me for?" he jeered. "Do you think I'm an idiot that you can impose on me with a cock-and-bull tale like that? I suppose you want me to accept some of your rotten shares in settlement of my account?"

"Not at all," said Foyl. "We have not the remotest intention of parting with a single share unless we are forced. My object in telling you what I've told you is to make you understand that although we're short of money just now, we shall have plenty of money at our command—if we are let alone—in a few weeks' time. If, therefore, you will consent to wait——"

"But I won't! Not a day! Not an hour! Not a minute! The money must be paid by noon, to-morrow, or—well, you know what will happen."

"Yes, I know what will happen," said Foyl quietly. "We shall be hammered on the Exchange and forced into bankruptcy. But that won't benefit you, will it? If you drive us into the bankruptcy court—and you can do it, I admit—you'll only get a fraction of the money we owe you. The White Eagle shares will be sold before the rise takes place, and you'll be lucky if you get a few shillings in the pound. On the other hand, if you leave us alone, and grant us a few weeks' grace, you'll get your account in full, with added interest at five per cent. Surely, as a business man, that must appeal to you?"

"It doesn't appeal to me in the least. On the contrary, it leaves me absolutely cold. In the first place, I don't believe your fairy-tale about the coming rise in White Eagles. And in the second place, even if I did believe it, I should still insist that you must settle my account to-morrow, or take the consequences."

"But why?" asked Foyl.

Salter laid down his cigar and looked his visitor full in the face.

"You ask me why?" he said, and his voice trembled with suppressed passion. "I'll tell you. Have you forgotten that affair of the Romanza Rubber Estates? You haven't, I see. Neither have I. You bent me over that business, but I swore to have my revenge, and I've been working and waiting for revenge ever since."

"You say you're hard pressed for money just now," he continued. "Do you know whom you've to thank for that? No! For months I've been secretly working and scheming to drive you into a corner, to get you into a hole. And at last I've done it!"

His face was now transfigured with venomous hate, and his beady eyes glowed with malignant triumph.

"You and Hervey are absolutely under my thumb," he went on, "and I'll show you no more mercy than I'd show to a couple of rats that I'd caught in a trap. I can crush you—ruin you—beggar you—and, by Heaven, I will!"

"Foyl was only human, after all. So far he had kept his temper with commendable restraint, but this final outburst on Salter's part stung him to the quick."

In scorching phrases he told Salter what he thought of him. Salter retorted with equal heat; and for a few moments the two men engaged in an angry altercation, the sounds of which, though not the actual words, were clearly heard by the clerks in the front office.

While they were thus slanging each other, a man stole into the little courtyard at the back of the building and glided towards the window of Salter's private office.

He was a youngish man, and was not unlike Foyl in general appearance.

He was not so well or so neatly dressed as Foyl, but he was about the same height and build, he had the same type of face, and, like Foyl, he had a heavy dark-brown moustache.

As already mentioned; the window was open a few inches at the bottom. On perceiving this fact, the new arrival chuckled softly to himself.

He glanced nervously to right and left, as if to make sure that nobody was watching him; then, stooping down in a crouching attitude, he crept to the outside of the window.

At that moment Salter was sitting at his desk and Foyl was standing in front of him, on the other side of the desk. Each man was glaring into the other's face and talking at the top of his voice, so that they neither saw nor heard the sinister figure outside the window.

Slipping his hand into his overcoat pocket, the man drew out an old-fashioned, long-barrelled revolver, and stealthily inserted the muzzle into the open space at the bottom of the window.

Crouching still lower, he squinted along the barrel, and was just about to press the trigger when Salter, for no reason whatever, happened to turn his head and glance in the direction of the window.

All that was visible of the man from inside the room was the upper part of his face and the hand which held the revolver. It was more than enough for Salter. With a shout of alarm, he sprang to his feet, but even as he did so a loud report rang through the room.

Crack !

One shot sufficed. The bullet struck Salter between the eyes and buried itself in his brain. Death was probably instantaneous, for he staggered back, knocked over the chair, and pitched to the floor like a pole-axed ox.

All this had taken place with such dramatic swiftness that Foyl was too bewildered for a moment to realise what had happened. As the window was not in his line of vision, he had never seen the man outside; and he had been utterly at a loss to understand why Salter had suddenly leaped to his feet with a shout of alarm.

When, however, the report of the revolver rang through the room, and Salter pitched to the floor, it suddenly dawned on Foyl that somebody had fired at Salter through the open window.

As the truth burst on him, he glanced towards the window, and was just in time to see the back of a man disappearing in the fog.

Without a second's hesitation, carried away by his excitement and his eager desire to capture the man, Foyl sprang to the window, threw up the sash, and vaulted out into the yard.

As he alighted on his feet outside the window, he slipped and fell, and by the time he had picked himself up the man had vanished.

So far as Foyl knew there was only one way by which the fugitive could have escaped from the yard, and that was by doubling round the end of the building and down a narrow passage, which led into Penfold Lane.

As the man had been making off in that direction when Foyl had last seen him, Foyl dashed away in that direction, too, but had barely covered a dozen yards when something lying on the ground attracted his attention.

It was an old-fashioned, long-barrelled revolver, from the muzzle of which a wisp of smoke was slowly dribbling. Apparently the fugitive had either dropped it or thrown it away.

Foyl stooped and picked it up, and no sooner had he done so than he heard somebody running up the passage which led into the yard from Penfold Lane.

"He's coming back to search for his revolver," muttered Foyl.

With the revolver in his hand he darted into the passage, and literally ran into the arms of a constable.

"You're in a mighty hurry, young man," growled the constable, gripping Foyl by the arm and fixing his eyes on the smoking revolver in Foyl's hand. "Now, what's your little game?"

CHAPTER III.

In the Grip of the Law.

WHEN the clerks in the outer office heard the report of the revolver and the crash which followed, they jumped down from their stools and gazed at each other with frightened eyes.

"He's shot him," said one of them hoarsely. He was Salter's head clerk, and his name was Arnold.

The words had scarcely crossed his lips ere the sound of an opening window was heard.

"And now he's escaping through the window," said Arnold excitedly. "Come on!"

He darted to the door of the inner office and flung it open. Then he started back with a cry of horror, while the other clerks, clustering behind him, peered into the room, over his shoulder, in shuddering silence.

Salter was lying on the floor beside the overturned chair, with a thin stream of blood trickling from a wound in his forehead. Even to their untrained eyes, it was plain to be seen that he was dead.

The window was wide open, and Foyl had disappeared, though his hat still stood on the end of the desk.

Arnold was the first to recover his wits.

"Brodrick and Smith—you stay here and see that nobody moves anything," he said, turning to two of the terrified clerks. "You"—turning to another—"go for the police. You"—addressing a third—"go for the nearest doctor. I'm going after Foyl."

And without waiting for their replies, he raced across the room and vaulted through the window.

In the meantime, as already described, Foyl had darted into the passage leading to Penfold Lane, and had run into the arms of a police-constable.

"You're in a mighty hurry, young man," growled the latter, catching Foyl by the arm and glancing meaningfully at the revolver in Foyl's hand. "Now, what's your little game?"

"Mr. Salter has been shot—fatally. I'm afraid," replied Foyl, speaking excitedly and almost incoherently. "While he and I were talking in his office, a man stole up to the outside of the window, which happened to be open, and——"

Before he could say more, Arnold came running up through the fog.

"Ah, you've got him, I see!" he panted.

"Yes, I've got him," said the constable grimly. "Do you know him?"

"Oh, yes," said Arnold. "His name is Foyl—Gilbert Foyl, I believe. He's a member of the firm of Hervey & Foyl, of Threadneedle Avenue. He came to our place about a quarter of an hour ago and asked to see Mr. Salter. He was shown into Mr. Salter's private office and very soon we heard him and Mr. Salter quarrelling. All at once we heard a shot, followed by a crash, and when we rushed into the room we found that Mr. Salter had been shot through the head and was lying dead on the floor. The window was wide open, and Mr. Foyl had vanished."

Something in the tone in which he uttered these last words caused Gilbert Foyl to start.

"Are you suggesting that it was I who shot Mr. Salter?" he demanded. Arnold shrugged his shoulders and pointed to the revolver in Foyl's hand.

"The facts speak for themselves, I think," he said.

Foyl was not alarmed—not yet. He was not even angry with Arnold. The idea that anybody could seriously believe that he had murdered Salter was too ridiculous to cause him a moment's uneasiness.

"You do not know what you are saying," he said to Arnold. "You are excited and upset by what has happened. When you've calmed down a bit, you'll be the first, I'm sure, to laugh at your absurd suspicions."

He turned to the constable.

"I admit that Mr. Salter and I were quarrelling," he said. "He insulted me, and I—well, I lost my temper, and told him what I thought of him. Suddenly, to my surprise, Mr. Salter leaped to his feet with a cry of alarm. Before I could ask him what was the matter, a shot rang out, and he dropped to the ground.

"The shot appeared to come from the neighbourhood of the window, and, on looking in that direction, I saw a man running away. He had evidently stolen up to the outside of the window while Mr. Salter and I were talking. The window was open at the bottom, and although I didn't see him fire the shot, it was evident that he had fired through the open space at the bottom of the window.

"With the object of catching the man before he got clear away, I ran to the window, threw it open, and jumped out into the yard. Unfortunately I slipped and fell, and by the time I had picked myself up the man had vanished in the fog. I dashed off in the direction in which I had last seen him, and found this revolver lying on the ground. As I picked it up, I heard somebody coming up this passage. I thought it was the man coming back for his revolver. I ran into the passage—and ran into your arms. And that's all I know about the matter."

Arnold looked at the constable, and his lips half parted in a derisive smile.

"A very lame story, don't you think?" he said.

"It's not for me to express an opinion," said the constable. "My business is to ascertain the facts of the case, and the facts of the case, so far as I'm concerned, are these. I was on duty in Penfold Lane, and was passing the end of this passage, when I heard a shot. It seemed to come from this yard, so I ran up this passage, and collided with this gentleman, who was hurrying down the passage with a smoking revolver in his hand.

"You saw nobody else in the passage or in the yard?" queried Arnold.

"No," replied the constable—"only this gentleman."

A dim foreboding of his danger now began to dawn on Foyl. At last he began to realise what a cunning web of circumstantial evidence the fates had woven round him.

"What I've told you is the absolute truth," he said to the constable. "If you didn't meet the man in the passage, he must have escaped from the yard by some other exit."

"Maybe," said the constable, in a non-committal voice. "All I can say is I never saw him. You're the only man I saw, and although I express no opinion as to the truth or otherwise of your story, I'm bound to tell you that I cannot let you out of my sight until I've made further inquiries."

Foyl's heart sank.

"Does that mean that I'm to consider myself under arrest?" he asked.

"Oh, no!" replied the constable. "Not yet, anyhow! But I must go to

Mr. Salter's office now, and pursue my inquiries there, and I must ask you to accompany me. If you decline to accompany me——"

"But I don't decline, of course," said Foyl. "Lead the way!"

"Better give me that revolver first," said the constable, holding out his hand. "It's an important clue, and if your story is true—and I'm not saying it is or it isn't—that revolver may help us to discover the identity of the murderer."

"I hope it will," said Foyl, as he handed the weapon over. "At any rate, I'm sure of one thing. If you make inquiries, you'll find that this revolver isn't mine, and was never in my possession until a few minutes ago."

The constable briefly examined the revolver, and saw that it contained five live cartridges and one spent one. He carefully placed it in his pocket. Then he led the way to the open window, and he and Foyl and Arnold climbed into the little room.

Meanwhile, short as the time had been, one of the clerks had returned with a doctor, and another with an inspector of police. The doctor was examining Salter, and the inspector was talking in a low voice to one of the clerks.

There was something of a sensation when Arnold climbed in at the window, followed by Foyl and the constable. The last-named saluted the inspector, and engaged in a whispered conversation with him, at the end of which he handed him the revolver.

The inspector beckoned to Arnold, drew him aside, and questioned him. Then he nodded his head, as though he had come to some decision, and glanced across at Foyl, who had dropped into a chair and buried his face in his hands.

Presently the doctor rose to his feet, and announced that he had finished his examination.

"You can remove the body to the mortuary now," he said. "I've seen all I wish to see for the present."

"You certify that life is extinct?" asked the inspector, as a matter of form.

"Absolutely! In fact, death must have been instantaneous."

"And the cause of death?"

"A revolver bullet which penetrated the skull and lodged in the brain."

The inspector showed him the revolver.

"Is this a likely sort of weapon from which the bullet might have been fired?" he asked.

The doctor examined it, and handed it back.

"Yes," he said. "I can't be certain, of course, until the fatal bullet has been removed and compared with those that still remain in the revolver. At the same time, I have very little doubt that this is the weapon with which the crime was committed. Where did you find it?"

The inspector smiled, and shook his head.

"You mustn't question me!" he said. "You'll be going now, I suppose? Good-afternoon, and thank you. I'll let you know about the inquest as soon as I hear from the coroner."

The doctor departed, and the inspector and the constable held another whispered consultation. The inspector then walked over to Foyl, while the clerks looked on in breathless suspense.

They guessed what was coming—especially when they heard the constable go to the front door and whistle for a taxi.

"Your name is Gilbert Foyl, I believe?" said the inspector.

Foyl looked up and nodded. His face was ashen grey, and he seemed to have aged ten years in the last few minutes.

"Yes," he said wearily, "that's my name."

"I also understand that you deny that this revolver is your property?"

"I must certainly do!" said Foyl. "If you doubt my word, you have only to make inquiries to satisfy yourself on the point."

"Inquiries will be made, you may depend on it," said the inspector. "In the meantime, in view of the information I have received from the constable and these clerks, my duty is clear. Stand up, please!"

Like a man in a dream, Foyl dragged himself to his feet. The inspector laid one hand on his shoulder.

"Gilbert Foyl," he said, in cold and formal tones, "I arrest you on the charge of wilfully murdering Marmaduke Salter at or about the hour of three o'clock this afternoon. You need not say anything unless you wish, but it is my duty to warn you that anything you say will be taken down, and may be used against you at your trial. Please hold out your hands!"

As Foyl held out his hands, the inspector drew a pair of handcuffs from his pocket. A moment later the handcuffs snapped, and the Law had Gilbert Foyl in its grip.

CHAPTER IV.

Nelson Lee to the Rescue.

IT was the following morning. Nelson Lee had just finished breakfast at his rooms in Gray's Inn Road, and was glancing through the morning papers, when the door opened and Nipper bounced in.

"Here we are again!" he announced cheerfully. "The top of the morning to you! Hope you've left me something to eat, for I'm as hungry as a hunter!"

The detective looked up from the paper he was reading and glanced at the clock. It was a quarter-past nine.

"This is a nice time to come down to breakfast!" he said severely.

"A very nice time!" said Nipper, as he seated himself at the table. "The nicest time of the day! I always did think so, and I'm glad to find you agree with me!"

Nelson Lee smiled and shook his head.

"You're incorrigible!" he said.

"Dunno what that means!" said Nipper. "But if it's something flattering, I am. Anything startling in the papers this morning?"

"Yes. A stockbroker was shot in the City yesterday afternoon—Mr. Marmaduke Salter, of Caspian Chambers, Penfold Lane."

"Who shot him?"

"It is alleged that he was shot by another stockbroker named Foyl, but Foyl denies this, and says that he was shot by some unknown man, who fired at him through the office window, which happened to be open at the time."

He picked up one of the papers which he had already read and pushed it across to Nipper.

"That's as good a report as any," he said. "Read it while I run through these other papers."

Nipper read the report and ate his breakfast at the same time. In less than ten minutes he had finished both.

"Seems an interesting case," he remarked, as he folded up his napkin. "Are we likely to be called in?"

Nelson Lee smiled at the "we," but made no comment on it.

"I think it's quite possible that my services—I mean our services—may be requisitioned," he said.

"Good business!" said Nipper. "What makes you think so?"

"You've heard me speak of Mr. Hervey."

"Yes. He's the Stock Exchange man who invests your money for you, isn't he?"

"Yes. And he's one of the best and most trustworthy fellows in the world. A year or two ago he took Foyl into partnership, and as he's sure to want to do the best he can for his partner, I think it's very likely——"

The front-door bell rang.

"Speak of angels!" said Nelson Lee. "Ten to one this is he!"

He was right, for a moment or two later his landlady, Mrs. Jones, rapped at the door and announced that a gentleman named Hervey wished to see the detective on urgent and important business.

"Clear the table and show him up," said Nelson Lee.

The landlady whisked away the breakfast-things and ushered Hervey into the room. If he had looked haggard and careworn the day before, he looked ten times more haggard and careworn now.

"You can guess, no doubt, why I have come," he said in a hollow voice, after shaking hands with Nelson Lee and Nipper. "Gilbert Foyl is my partner, but he is more than that—he is my dearest friend. He is absolutely innocent of this terrible crime, and you must help us to prove his innocence."

"I shall be only too glad to do what I can," said Nelson Lee. "Pray be seated. Am I to understand that Mr. Foyl has sent you to solicit my help?"

"No. I have come on my own responsibility. After Foyl was arrested, he was taken to the police-station, from where he sent an urgent message, imploring me to come to him at once. When I reached the station, he told me his story, and asked me to engage a lawyer to defend him. I have engaged Mr. Booth, who will represent him at the magisterial inquiry, which opens this morning.

"Now, Mr. Booth is a very clever lawyer," he continued, "and I have every confidence in him. At the same time, I feel we must have the very best help it is possible to secure, and that's why I've come to you. You will help us—won't you, Mr. Lee?"

"I have already promised to do so," said Nelson Lee.

He waved his hand towards the pile of newspapers on the table.

"I have already read the published reports of the affair," he said, "but there are one or two points which the papers leave obscure, and which I shall be glad if you can clear up. For instance, why did Mr. Foyl go to Mr. Salter's office, and what did they quarrel about?"

In reply to this question, Foyl told him of their financial embarrassment, of the fifteen thousand they owed to Salter, and of the expected rise in White Eagles.

"It was only yesterday afternoon that we discovered what a hole we were in," he went on. "Briefly, the position was this—Salter's account was due at noon to-day, and we couldn't meet it. If he insisted on payment, we should be ruined, and forced into bankruptcy. On the other hand, if he would agree to wait a few weeks—by which time the rise in White Eagles would have materialised—we could pay him in full, and have half a million to divide between us.

"In these circumstances," he concluded, "Foyl volunteered to go to Salter's office and ask him to grant us an extension of time. I told him it would be useless, and I was right. Salter not only refused his request, but grossly insulted him. Stung by his taunts, Foyl lost his temper, and it was while they were slanging each other that the unknown man crept up to the outside of the open window and shot Salter through the head."

The detective pondered for a moment or two before he resumed his cross-examination.

"You are quite satisfied, I suppose," he said at last, "that White Eagles will be worth fifty pounds apiece in a few weeks' time?"

"It is as certain as I'm sitting here," said Hervey. "But that doesn't interest me now. Although Salter is dead, his account is still alive. It is due at noon to-day, and we cannot meet it. We shall be declared bankrupt, the shares will be sold before the rise takes place, and somebody else will reap the reward."

"Yesterday afternoon," he added, "I could think of nothing but the ruin which was staring us in the face. It seemed the most terrible thing that could happen. But I care nothing for that now. Ruin, bankruptcy—nothing matters if only Foyl can be saved. And you will save him, won't you, Mr. Lee?"

"I will do my best," said Nelson Lee again. "Meanwhile, there's another point on which I should be glad of information. Did Mr. Foyl see the man who shot Mr. Salter?"

"He only saw his back as he was disappearing in the fog."

"Then he can't describe the man?"

"No."

"That's a pity. It must have been someone who had a grudge against Salter. I must make inquiries on that point. And now for another question. Is it a fact that the only exit from the yard is through that passage which leads into Penfold Lane?"

"I believe so."

"If that is so, we are up against a very awkward fact; for the constable declares, I see, that nobody came down that passage except Mr. Foyl."

"Perhaps the murderer was in the yard all the time, and they never saw him on account of the fog."

"That's possible, but hardly probable. However, I'll go down to Penfold Lane this morning, and have a look at the yard. And now about the revolver. Mr. Foyl, of course, denies that it is his."

"And he speaks the truth. I know for a fact that he never owned a revolver of any kind or description."

"The police will say that he may have bought a revolver without your knowledge. However, that's another point on which I must make inquiries. I'll get the police to allow me to take a photograph of the revolver; and then I'll interview all the gunsmiths in London, and find out if any of them has recently sold such a weapon."

"The police are already doing something of that kind, I understand."

"No doubt, but that needn't prevent me conducting an investigation on my own account. Do you happen to know who's in charge of the case?"

"Inspector Mansfield."

"A good man. I must see him some time to-day. At what time is Mr. Foyl to be brought before the magistrate this morning?"

"Eleven o'clock."

"At Bow Street, of course?"

"Yes."

"Well, Nipper and I will go down to Penfold Lane and explore that yard," said Nelson Lee, rising to his feet. "We'll then come on to Bow Street, and meet you there. In the meantime, you have some shares of mine in the strong-room at your office—about twenty thousand pounds' worth, I believe?"

"That is so," said Hervey, with a faint smile. "But you needn't be anxious about them. Although the firm will be driven into bankruptcy, your shares will not be seized to pay our debts!"

"I never imagined they would," said Nelson Lee. "I wasn't thinking of that. I was thinking of Salter's account, which is due to be paid at noon to-day. If you'll bring the necessary papers to Bow Street at eleven

o'clock, I'll sign an order authorising you to use fifteen thousand pounds' worth of my shares to settle Salter's account.

"Of course, I'm not thinking of making you a present of the money," he added with a laugh. "I'm only lending it to you for a few weeks."

"Without security?" gasped Hervey, scarcely believing his ears.

"I know you," said Nelson Lee simply. "If you say that White Eagles are going up to fifty pounds apiece, I'm quite content to take your word for it. When the rise takes place you can pay me back—with interest, if it'll ease your conscience!"

Tears streamed down Hervey's face. Words failed him. Although he had affected to make light of the ruin which was staring him in the face, it had really tortured him almost as much as the fact of Foyl's arrest. And now, as if at the waving of a magician's wand, the clouds were dispelled and the sun was shining again.

"How—how ever can I thank you?" he faltered.

"By saying no more about it," said Nelson Lee. "Indeed, as a matter of fact, we've wasted too much time in talk already. If you are to get the papers prepared, and if Nipper and I are to go to Penfold Lane, and meet you at Bow Street at eleven o'clock, we have none of us any time to spare. Good morning!"

And before the bewildered stockbroker could find his tongue, the detective handed him his hat and bowed him out!

CHAPTER V.

A Smashing Blow.

AFTER Hervey's departure, Nelson Lee sent for a taxi, in which he and Nipper drove to Penfold Lane. Dismissing the taxi at the end of the passago which lead to the rear of Caspian Chambers, they walked down the passage, and set to work to explore the yard.

By the light of what they had read in the papers, and what Hervey had told them, they had no difficulty in locating the window of Salter's office, and the spot where Foyl had picked up the revolver.

They also satisfied themselves that there was no legitimate exit from the yard except through the passage which lead into Penfold Lane.

A few yards from the spot where Foyl had found the revolver, however, there was a rather high brick wall, which divided the yard from a similar yard at the back of the next block of buildings. From this second yard, a narrow covered passage also led into Penfold Lane.

"That, no doubt, is how the murderer escaped," said Nelson Lee, pointing to this wall. "It's a fairly stiff climb, I admit, but a desperate man, fleeing for his life, would make light of it. Probably his original intention was to escape down this passage, but just when he reached this spot he heard the constable coming up the passage; so he dropped his revolver, darted to this wall, leaped into the air, caught hold of the top of the wall with his hands, and hauled himself over."

Nipper examined the brickwork of the wall with the air of a professional expert!

"There are no signs of anybody having climbed over this wall," he said judiciously. "I mean, there are no marks, or scratches, or anything of that kind."

"There wouldn't be," said Nelson Lee.

"So we cannot prove that that is how the man escaped?"

"True! I'm morally certain that that is how he escaped, but I freely admit I can't prove it."

Nipper shook his head.

"Juries have no use for moral certainties!" he said. "They want proofs definite evidence—something they can see and handle! You'll never save Foyl from the gallows by presenting the jury with a moral certainty."

It was not often that Nipper talked in this strain. The detective was secretly amused by his pupil's solemn, and rather portentous air, but managed to preserve his gravity.

"I'm quite well aware of that," he said. "But I hope to be able to produce such proofs of Foyl's innocence as will satisfy even a British jury."

"And where do you hope to find such proofs?" asked Nipper, glancing round the yard. "Here?"

"No," said Nelson Lee. "All my hopes are based on the revolver. If we can prove that it isn't Foyl's—better still, if we can find the real owner of the weapon—the case against Foyl will collapse like a house of cards."

"So your next step will be to try to trace the owner of the revolver?"

"Yes! As I told Mr. Hervey, I shall ask Inspector Mansfield to allow me to take a photo of the weapon. I shall then interview all the gunsmiths in London, show them the photo, and ask them if they recognise it. If one of them recognises the revolver, and can tell me to whom he sold it—well, there you are!"

"And if none of them recognises it?" asked Nipper. "Or, if one of them recognises it, but can't remember to whom he sold it?"

Nelson Lee shrugged his shoulders.

"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof!" he quoted. "We've seen all there is to be seen here. Let us now go to Bow Street."

Hervey had just arrived when they reached the famous police-court. He had brought the necessary papers with respect to the detective's shares; and after Nelson Lee had appended his signature, Hervey introduced him to the lawyer, Mr. Booth—whom he had engaged to defend his partner.

"I'm glad we are to have your valuable help, Mr. Lee," said the lawyer. "Between you and me—there's no use in blinking the fact—the case against Mr. Foyl is very strong; and although I am convinced that he is innocent, I am bound to confess we shall have all our work cut out to prove his innocence. I suppose you haven't had time to do anything yet?"

"Nothing worth mentioning," said Nelson Lee. "I sha'n't be able to start work in earnest until I've had a few words with Inspector Mansfield. Do you know if he's in court?"

"Not yet, but he'll be here in a few minutes. Of course, you understand that the proceedings this morning will be purely formal—just evidence of arrest, and then a remand to enable the police to complete their inquiries."

"Quite so! You won't oppose a remand, I assume?"

"Oh, no! Like the police, we also need time to complete our inquiries."

He had scarcely finished speaking ere the magistrate took his seat on the bench, and Foyl was placed in the dock.

As the lawyer had predicted, only formal evidence of arrest was given; and then an application was made that the prisoner should be remanded for a week.

"I do not object," said Mr. Booth, rising and bowing to the magistrate.

"Remanded for a week," said the latter briefly.

It was all over in less than five minutes, and in five minutes more, Foyl was on his way, in a taxi-cab, to Holloway Prison.

After his departure, Nelson Lee sought an interview with Inspector Mansfield, whom he ran to earth in one of the corridors.

"Ah! Good-morning, Mr. Lee," said the inspector cheerily. "Is it true—I've just heard a rumour to that effect—that I'm to have you against me in the Penfold Lane case?"

"Quite true," said Nelson Lee. "We are to be rivals—not for the first time—but that needn't prevent us being friends, I hope."

"It never prevented us being friends in the past," said the inspector, with a laugh, "so I don't see why it should now! I'm going to hang Foyl if I can—and I think I can—but I don't want to hang him if he isn't guilty."

"I know you don't," said Nelson Lee. "That isn't your way. Consequently, although I'm on the other side, I hope you'll grant me a small favour."

"Anything in reason. What do you want?"

"To photograph the revolver."

"Going to try to trace the owner?"

"Yes! With a man who plays the game as fairly as you do. I've no objection to laying my cards on the table. If you'll allow me to take a photograph of the revolver, I shall interview all the gunsmiths in London, and——"

"Then you'll waste your time! It's evident you haven't seen the revolver. It's an old out-of-date pattern, such as no gunsmith stocks nowadays."

"Moreover, there's a private mark on it which shows that it has been in pawn at some time or other. Instead of interviewing gunsmiths, therefore, you'd better do as we are doing—make a round of the pawnshops."

"Thanks for the tip," said Nelson Lee. "When may I photograph the weapon?"

Before the inspector could reply, a constable came up and beckoned him aside. It was the constable who had captured Foyl in the passage leading to the rear of Caspian Chambers.

His name was Dawson, and it was evident from the look of excitement on his face, that he was the bearer of important news.

He and the inspector conversed together in low tones for a moment or two; and then the inspector turned to Nelson Lee.

"You needn't trouble to photograph the revolver now," he said quietly.

"We have found the shop at which it was purchased!"

If the inspector could speak quietly, in face of this dramatic news, so could Nelson Lee!

"And where was it purchased?" he asked in an even voice.

"At a pawnshop in Bermondsey—in Gatling Road, to be precise."

Nelson Lee nodded.

"That's a point in our favour," he said. "I mean, it's a point in favour of Foyl's innocence."

"How do you make that out?"

"You have seen Foyl," said Nelson Lee. "You know the sort of man he is. Is it likely that a man in his social position, if he wished to buy a revolver, would buy one at a pawnshop?"

"Murderers do queer things sometimes," said the inspector. "However, I must now drive round to Gatling Road and question the proprietor of the shop. Care to come with me?"

"Rather!" said Nelson Lee.

Nipper, much to his disgust, was sent back to Gray's Inn Road, while the inspector and Nelson Lee drove to the shop in Bermondsey.

It was a third-rate pawnshop, next door to a jeweller's, and the proprietor's name was Legg. He was expecting his visitors, having been warned by telephone that they were coming to see him, and he received them in a sort of office at the back of the shop.

"You've called about that revolver, I suppose?" he said to the inspector.

"Yes," replied the latter. "You have seen the weapon?"

"Yes. The constable showed it to me this morning, and I recognised it at once as a revolver which was pledged with me a few years ago, and which I sold across the counter on Tuesday night."

"Tuesday night—the night before last—the night before Mr. Salter was shot?"

"Yes."

"Please tell us what happened?"

"It was my assistant's night out, so I was alone in the shop. About half-past eight a young man came in and asked if I had a second-hand revolver to sell cheap. I showed him one or two, but the price was too high. Finally, I showed him an old-fashioned revolver which was pledged with me some years ago, and which has never been redeemed. I told him he could have it for seven-and-six, and he closed with the offer. He paid me the money, took the revolver, and left the shop—and that's all I know about it."

"Did he purchase any cartridges?"

"No. I don't sell cartridges."

"Did you know the man?"

"No. He was a complete stranger to me."

"Did he give any name?"

"No. As it was a cash transaction, I didn't think it necessary to ask him his name."

"What sort of a man was he?"

The pawnbroker described the man, and the inspector glanced triumphantly at Nelson Lee. The description certainly fitted Foyl very closely.

But Nelson Lee was not dismayed. The pawnbroker, he argued, had probably seen a portrait of Foyl, and it had influenced his recollection of the man to whom he had sold the revolver.

"May I ask him one or two questions?" he inquired of the inspector.

"Certainly."

The detective turned to Legg.

"Of course, you have read the newspaper accounts of the murder in Penfold Lane?" he asked.

"I have."

"You know that a gentleman named Foyl is accused of having shot Mr. Salter with the revolver which was purchased at your shop on Tuesday night?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever seen Mr. Foyle?"

"Never."

"Has anyone described him to you?"

"No."

"Probably there have been portraits of him published in some of the newspapers. Have you seen any of those portraits?"

"No. There was no portraits in any of the papers I have read."

"As a matter of fact," said the inspector, "no portrait has been published in any of the newspapers. Is that all you want to ask him?"

Nelson Lee replied in the affirmative, and the inspector turned to Legg,

"About the man who bought the revolver," he said. "Would you know him again if you saw him?"

"Oh, yes!" said Legg, quite confidently.

"Then please put on your hat and coat and come with me."

Legg disappeared into an inner room.

"You're going to take him to Holloway, I suppose?" said Nelson Lee.

"Yes," said the inspector. "I'm going to see if he can identify the man who bought the revolver."

"May I come with you?"

"Certainly."

A moment later the pawnbroker reappeared and announced that he was ready. The three men then drove to Holloway Prison, where the inspector left Nelson Lee and Legg in an ante-room while he went off to arrange matters with the chief warder.

He was absent about a quarter of an hour, at the end of which time he returned to the ante-room and invited Nelson Lee and Legg to follow him into the prison yard.

Standing in a line, with their backs to the wall, were fifteen men. Some were tall and some were short; some well dressed and some in rags. The fourth from the end of the line was Gilbert Foyl.

"Now, Mr. Legg," said the inspector, "I want you to look very carefully at these men and tell me if you see the man who bought the revolver at your shop on Tuesday night. Take a good look, and don't be in a hurry to answer."

The pawnbroker put on his spectacles and glanced along the line. When his eyes fell on Foyl, he started and nodded his head.

"That's the man," he said, pointing to Foyl. "He's better dressed now than he was on Tuesday night, but I'm positive he's the man who purchased the revolver."

Once more the inspector shot a triumphant glance at Nelson Lee. The latter calmly shrugged his shoulders.

"A clear case of mistaken identity," he said carelessly.

It was bravely said, but in his inmost heart the detective knew that a smashing blow had been dealt at his hopes of saving Gilbert Foyl.

CHAPTER VI.

The Forged Letter.

IN the drawing-room of a house at Hampstead sat a young and pretty girl. Her eyes were wet with tears, and on her lap lay a morning paper, open at the account of the murder in Penfold Lane. By her side stood an elderly man of military aspect.

The girl was Jessie Malvern, and the man was her guardian, Colonel Pryce.

"Poor Gilbert!" sobbed Jessie, through her tears. "To think that he was arrested yesterday afternoon, and we never heard of it until now! But, of course, it's all a dreadful mistake on the part of the police."

"Of course," said the colonel soothingly.

"Nobody could ever make me believe that Gilbert was guilty," she continued. "The idea is absurd! He never shot the man—I'm sure he didn't."

"And so am I," said the colonel. "As you know, I'm not particularly fond of Gilbert Foyl, but I'm absolutely certain that he never committed the crime with which he is charged. He is incapable of such a thing."

The girl jumped up and impulsively flung her arms round his neck.

"You're a dear," she said. "I know you don't like Gilbert, and I was afraid you might be prejudiced against him. You don't know what a comfort it is to me to hear you say that you don't believe him guilty."

"I trust I can be fair, even to those I dislike," he said, with a virtuous air. "And I'm as confident as you are that whoever shot Marmaduke Muller, it was not Gilbert Foyl."

Jessie rewarded him with a look of grateful affection. Little did she dream what a deep and dastardly game her guardian was playing.

"I would like to tell him," she said, "how sorry we are for him, and how we don't believe for a moment that he is guilty. Would they let me see him, do you think, if I went to the prison, or the police-station, or wherever they have taken him?"

The colonel shook his head.

"You are very ignorant of the ways of the law, my dear," he said, lying with his customary fluency. "Now that Foyl has been arrested, nobody will be allowed to see him except his solicitor."

"But it seems so dreadful not to be able to let him know that my faith in him is mistaken," she said. "If they won't let me see him, will they allow me to write to him?"

"Certainly," he replied. "As a matter of fact, I intend to write to him myself, assuring him of my sympathy and of my firm belief in his innocence. If you'll write your letter now, I'll go down to the study and write mine, and they can be posted together."

While Jessie seated herself at an escritoire and began to write her letter, the colonel left the room and strolled down to the study. This was a small room on the ground floor, and its most prominent article of furniture was a large knee-hole desk.

Seated at this desk was the colonel's son, Hubert Pryce, a weedy, dissolute-looking young fellow and a true "chip of the old block." Propped up in front of him was a letter written by Jessie to the colonel some weeks before, when on a holiday. Littering the desk were several sheets of paper covered with Hubert's attempts to imitate the writing of this letter.

"Well, how are you getting on?" asked the colonel, after carefully closing and locking the door.

"Pretty fair," replied the amateur forger. "I've got the hang of the list, I think. Look at that."

He handed his father one of the sheets of paper. The colonel examined it, compared it with Jessie's letter, and patted his son on the back.

"This is splendid!" he said. "The signature is perfect. Go on practising for a few minutes longer, while I write my letter to Foyl."

He seated himself on the other side of the desk and wrote the following letter:

"Dear Sir—I was very shocked to read the news of your arrest. I trust you may be able to establish your innocence, but until you have cleared your name I must ask you not to hold any communication whatever with my ward. I may add that Miss Malvern entirely shares my views in this matter, and is writing to you to that effect by same post as this.

"Yours truly, W. PRYCE."

He passed the letter to his son.

"That's all right, I think?" he said.

Hubert read the letter and handed it back.

"I should have made it stronger," he said. "However, it'll do. I'm ready now to write the other letter. What shall I say?"

The colonel dictated the following letter, which his son wrote out in a very clever imitation of Jessie's handwriting:

"Dear Mr. Foyl,—Colonel Pryce tells me that he is writing to ask you not to attempt to communicate with me until you have cleared yourself of the dreadful charge against you.

"He thinks I ought to write to you myself, lest you should think he was taking this step without my knowledge and approval, so I am sending this note to say that I quite agree with my guardian that we had better not see each other or write to each other for the present.

"Yours sincerely, JESSIE MALVERN."

"Top-hole!" said the colonel, after examining the forgery. "If I hadn't seen you write it, I would have sworn it was in Jessie's writing. Now for the envelope. By the time he gets the letter he'll have been brought before the magistrate and remanded. That means he'll be taken to Holloway Prison, so address the envelope there."

Hubert addressed one envelope—imitating Jessie's handwriting again—and the colonel addressed another in his own writing. The letters were placed in their respective envelopes, and the envelopes were sealed and stamped.

With the forged letter in his pocket and his own letter in his hand, the colonel then returned to the drawing-room.

Jessie had just finished her letter to Foyl and had enclosed it in an envelope. It was a letter of too sacred a character to be reproduced here. Enough to say, it breathed undying love and unshakeable faith in his innocence.

"How shall I address it?" she asked, when the colonel entered the room.

He told her. And after she had addressed and stamped the letter he picked it up and walked across to the bell.

As he did so, while his back was turned to the unsuspecting girl, he slipped her letter into his pocket, drew out the forged letters and placed it under his own. Then he rang the bell.

One of the housemaids answered his ring.

"Please take these two letters," he said, "and post them in the pillar-box at the end of the road."

The housemaid took the letters and left the room.

The colonel walked over to Jessie, and kissed her on the brow.

"In a couple of hours from now," he said, "Gilbert Foyl will know that some of his friends, at any rate, have not turned their backs on him in his time of trouble."

Foyl was having a consultation with his lawyer in his cell at Holloway when the letters were delivered. At the sight of Jessie's writing—or what he believed was Jessie's writing—on one of the envelopes, an eager light sprang up in his eyes.

"Excuse me half a minute!" he said to the lawyer. "This letter is from my dearest friend. I must just see what she says."

He tore the envelope open, but no sooner had he glanced at the letter than all the happiness died from his eyes, and his face went white with pain.

"Bad news, I'm afraid?" said the lawyer sympathetically.

Foyl crushed back a sob. Jessie had deserted him!

"I think you'd better leave me now," he said huskily. "We can resume our consultation to-morrow, if you like; but, between you and me, I don't care very much now whether I'm acquitted or found guilty!"

CHAPTER VII

On the Trail.

AFTER Nelson Lee had witnessed the pawnbroker's identification of Foyl at Holloway Prison, he and the inspector made their way to the City mortuary in order to be present at the opening of the inquest on Salter's body.

Here, again, the proceedings only lasted a few minutes. The body was identified by Arnold as that of his late employer, and at the conclusion of his evidence the coroner adjourned the inquiry for a week.

Before leaving the mortuary, the detective had a few words with Arnold, who, it will be remembered, was Salter's head clerk. He then returned to his rooms in Gray's Inn Road, where Nipper was impatiently awaiting his arrival, and made a belated lunch.

Now, although the scene at Holloway Prison had dealt a smashing blow at Nelson Lee's hopes of saving Foyl, it had not in the least disturbed his belief in the young stockbroker's innocence.

"As I told the inspector, it was simply a case of mistaken identity," he said to Nipper when he had related what had happened. "I'm not casting the least doubt on the pawnbroker's good faith. I'm sure he honestly believed that Foyle was the man to whom he had sold the revolver, but I'm equally sure he was mistaken."

"If you're right," said Nipper shrewdly, "the pawnbroker's mistake has given you some very important and useful information."

The detective looked at him, half in admiration and half in doubt.

"It has," he said. "But I didn't think you would be sharp enough to see it. In what way do you think the pawnbroker's mistake has given me some useful information?"

"You're convinced that it wasn't Foyl who shot Salter?"

"I am."

"You believe that Salter was probably shot by some man who bore him a grudge?"

"I do."

"Then, if you're right," said Nipper, "it is evident that the person who shot Salter is a young man about the same height and build as Foyl, and very like him in the face, for, if the man wasn't very much like Foyl, the pawnbroker would never have thought that Foyl was the man."

"Capital—capital!" said Nelson Lee, patting him on the back. "You're getting on! You'll make a detective yet. I didn't give you credit for so much shrewdness. Your reasoning is perfectly sound. As you say, it is clear from the pawnbroker's mistake that the man who shot Salter—or, at any rate, the man who bought the revolver—is somebody who very strongly resembles Foyl in age and height and personal appearance."

"So you've got some sort of a clue at last!" said Nipper. "How will you follow it up?"

"Before I left the mortuary this afternoon," replied the detective, "I invited Arnold—he was Salter's head clerk, you know—to call on me this evening. He was inclined to refuse at first, but eventually he promised to do so. When he comes, I shall ask him if he knows of anybody who bore his late employer any enmity. If he knows of such a person, I shall ask him to describe the man. If his description fits Foyl, I shall know that I have struck the trail, and I shall take appropriate steps to follow it up."

It was then about half-past five. Two hours later Arnold arrived, somewhat shy and awkward, and with a distinct under-current of hostility in his manner.

"I've come because you asked me to come," he announced. "but I may as well tell you at the start that nothing you may say will convince me that it wasn't Mr. Foyl who shot Mr. Salter!"

"Are you then so prejudiced against Mr. Foyl," said Nelson Lee, "that nothing in the world will persuade you that he is innocent?"

"I'm not prejudiced against Mr. Foyl."

"I'm glad to hear it. I may take it, then, that your only desire is that the murderer—whoever he may be—shall be brought to justice?"

"Of course."

"That is also my only desire. If Mr. Foyl is guilty, I have not the slightest wish that he should escape the penalty of his crime. On the other hand, if somebody else committed the crime, I want to find that somebody else and bring him to justice. You agree with that?"

"Mr. Foyl committed the crime!" said Arnold doggedly.

"But if he didn't?" said Nelson Lee. "If it was another man who shot Mr. Salter? If you could help me to find that other man, would you do so?"

"Of course I would! But there was no other man! It was Mr. Foyl who murdered Mr. Salter."

"That has yet to be proved. In the meantime, as you have expressed your willingness to help me, have you any objection to answering one or two questions?"

"Not at all!"

"Then, by way of a beginning, do you know of anybody who bore Mr. Salter a grudge? Not a trifling grudge, but a very bitter and deadly grudge."

"Yes, Mr. Foyl!"

"Leaving Mr. Foyl out of the question, do you know of anybody else who was actuated by feelings of enmity towards Mr. Salter?"

"Lots! He was a shrewd and not very scrupulous business man, and many members of the Stock Exchange bore him a grudge because he had bested them over various deals. But they didn't hate him enough to murder him."

"I didn't mean a business grudge. I meant a personal grudge—a personal enmity. Do you know of anybody whom he had injured, or who thought Mr. Salter had injured him, and who would be likely to seek revenge?"

Arnold started, but did not speak.

"Yes?" said the detective encouragingly. "You have thought of somebody, I see."

Arnold shook his head.

"It has nothing to do with Mr. Salter's death," he said. "But when you used the word 'revenge,' it reminded me of a scene that took place at the office about a fortnight ago."

"Please tell me about it."

"There's nothing in it, I assure you."

"Nevertheless I should like to hear about it."

"I must first explain," began Arnold, "that we used to have a clerk at the office named Shand. He was an out-and-out wrong-'un—drunk, and gambled, and all that sort of thing, you know—and sometimes I used to think he wasn't quite right in his head. He was a clever fellow in his way, and for a long time he managed to hide his little peccadilloes from Mr. Salter's knowledge. About a fortnight ago, however, Mr. Salter discovered that Shand had accepted a bribe from one of Mr. Salter's rivals on the Exchange, and had given this rival certain private information concerning Mr. Salter's operations."

"Mr. Salter was furious," he continued, "and when Mr. Salter was angry there was no man on earth could sting you and scorch you with his tongue like he could. For a quarter of an hour he stormed and raved at Shand in

front of us all, and then he ordered him to leave the office and never show his face there again.

Shand reached down his hat and coat," he went on, "and walked to the door. He was as white as death, and his eyes were blazing with passion, but he never said a word till he reached the door. Then, turning round and pointing his finger at Mr. Salter, he said—or, rather, hissed: 'Mark my words, Mr. Marmaduke Salter, if I have to wait twenty years, I'll have my revenge for this!'

"That's all that happened," concluded Arnold. "I've never seen or heard of Shand since that day, and I'd forgotten all about him till your mention of the word 'revenge' recalled the scene to my memory."

"Thank you," said Nelson Lee. "What is Shand like? In personal appearance, I mean? Is he at all like Mr. Foyl, for instance?"

Arnold started again.

"Well, yes; now you mention it, he is," he said. "He's about the same height and build as Mr. Foyl, and he has the same sort of face and the same sort of brown moustache. Yes, now you ask me, I should say he's very like Mr. Foyl!"

"So like him," said Nelson Lee, "that anybody who only saw him for a few minutes in a dimly-lighted shop might easily mistake him for Mr. Foyl?"

"Quite easily!"

The detective nodded.

"I think we've struck the trail," he said quietly. "Can you give me Shand's address?"

"I don't know if he's still at his old address," replied Arnold, "but when he was employed at the office he lodged with a Mrs. Richardson—a widow, I believe—at No. 19, Hansell Street."

"That's in Bermondsey, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"And the revolver with which Mr. Salter was shot," said Nelson Lee, "was purchased at a pawnbroker's shop in Bermondsey."

For the third time Arnold started.

"Mr. Lee," he said hoarsely, "are you suggesting it was Shand who——"

"I'm suggesting nothing at present," interrupted Nelson Lee. "You have given me some very interesting information, for which I am extremely grateful. Will you grant me one more favour? Will you kindly keep our interview a secret for the present?"

"Certainly, if you wish it," said Arnold. "But what——"

"Please ask no questions now," said Nelson Lee, handing him his hat. "I'm sorry to appear to be driving you away, but the fact is I'm anxious to follow up the information you have given me without a moment's delay. Good-evening!"

Arnold took the hint and his departure. After he had gone, the detective picked up his hat and turned to Nipper.

"I'm now going down to Hansell Street," he said, "to try to ascertain Shand's movements on Tuesday night and yesterday afternoon. I may be late, so don't wait up for me."

"I don't think!" grinned Nipper, also reaching for his cap. "I'm coming with you, of course. If you don't let me come with you, I shall follow you—that's all!"

"In that case," said Nelson Lee, with a mock sigh of resignation, "you may as well come with me."

They left the house together, and, just as a neighbouring church clock was chiming a quarter to nine, they turned into Hansell Street.

CHAPTER VIII.

Face to Face.

NELSON LEE was perfectly correct in believing he had struck the trail. It was Shand, the dismissed clerk, who had shot Marmaduke Salter.

After the scene at the office, described by Arnold, Shand had returned to his lodgings in Hansell Street, and for two whole days he had remained indoors, brooding over his "wrongs" and nursing thoughts of "revenge."

At the end of that time he had roused himself from his apathy, and had gone to see the stockbroker, who had bribed him to betray his employer's secrets.

He had explained that he had lost his situation through serving this man, and had appealed for financial help. As he could be of no further use to the stockbroker, however, the latter had refused to help him, and had curtly ordered him out of the office.

During the following week Shand had made many attempts to obtain employment; but, as Salter had spread the story of his treachery, it need hardly be added that nobody would employ him.

Now, as Arnold had remarked to Nelson Lee, there were times when Shand was "not quite right in his head." That is to say, his mental balance was easily upset; and as a result of his dismissal, his desertion by the man who had bribed him, and his failure to obtain another situation, he sank into a low, nervous state, in which his only thought was how to obtain "revenge" on Marmaduke Salter.

For several days he occupied his time in planning various schemes, all of which he rejected as impracticable. And then, on a certain Tuesday afternoon, he concocted the plan which he afterwards carried out.

That same night—Tuesday night—on the pretence of going out to post a letter, applying for a situation, he went to the pawnshop in Gatling Road, and purchased a revolver.

At another shop he purchased a supply of cartridges; and on Wednesday afternoon, telling his landlady he was going out to seek work, he betook himself to Penfold Lane.

Thanks to the fog, he gained the yard at the back of Caspian Chambers without attracting observation. Through the open window of Salter's office he saw his hated enemy talking to Gilbert Foyl.

As already described, he stole to the outside of the window, took careful aim, and planted a bullet in Salter's brain.

His next movements were in exact accordance with Nelson Lee's theory. That is to say, he first made for the passage leading into Penfold Lane; but, hearing the constable running up the passage, he dropped his revolver, climbed over the wall into the adjoining yard, and so got clear away.

His landlady was out when he reached his lodgings. He was her only lodger, and, in order to supplement her slender income, she was in the habit of going out "charring" on three afternoons in the week.

Tuesday was one of her half-days; so that she was out, and the house was deserted when Shand arrived and let himself in with his latchkey.

Now that the fatal deed was done, now that Shand had secured his "revenge," it might have been thought that he would have been exultant and triumphant.

But by the time he reached his lodgings the reaction had overtaken him. Instead of being exultant and triumphant he was terrified by what he had done, and specially by the fact that he had dropped the revolver in his flight.

His tea was on the table, and the kettle was singing on the hob. But

he could neither eat nor drink. His face was grey with fear, his lips were dry and parched, and he started every time a footstep passed the door.

Eventually, not daring to let his landlady see him in such a condition, he went out before she came in, and did not return until she had gone to bed.

After a night of sleepless terror, he arose on Wednesday morning, firmly resolved to flee the country at the earliest possible moment.

Even the news, which he read in his morning paper, that Foyl had been arrested for the murder, did not alter his resolve.

"I'd have been all right if I hadn't left the revolver behind," he muttered. "The police will find out where it was bought—the man will give them a description of me—and before many days have passed they'll track me down. By hook or crook I must be out of England before to-morrow."

Telling his landlady he was going to seek work, he made his way down to the docks. Here he ascertained that a cargo steamer—the Rillington—was leaving for Baltimore that night, and that there was a vacancy for an assistant mess-steward.

The man who gave him this information told him where to apply, and by noon he had "signed on" in the name of Hurst, and had received instructions to report himself on board at ten o'clock that night.

Having thus made arrangements for leaving the country, he next applied himself to the problem of covering up his tracks.

He argued to himself that when the police discovered that it was he who had purchased the revolver, and when they found that he had disappeared from his lodgings, they would naturally make inquiries at the docks in order to ascertain if he had left the country on board any of the vessels which had sailed on the night of his disappearance.

It was true that he had given a false name to the mate who had signed him on. But that was not enough. He must alter his personal appearance.

The mate had only seen him for a few moments, and had not taken any particular notice of him, so he was not afraid of the mate detecting the change in his appearance. He had his papers, and those were all the mate would ask to see.

Again, in order to throw dust in the eyes of the police, he must invent some plausible reason for having disappeared from his lodgings. In other words, he must put the police and his landlady on a false scent. How could he do it?

"I know what I'll do!" he exclaimed, as a brilliant idea occurred to him. "I'll commit suicide! I'll leave a note to say I've drowned myself!"

Having settled this and various other details in his mind, he returned to his lodgings for dinner. As he well knew, Mrs. Richardson would be going out at three o'clock, and would not be back until nine.

"Well, have you 'ad any success?" she asked, when he appeared.

He shook his head, and assumed an air of unutterable dejection.

"I haven't," he replied. "I've been to six places this morning, but I was either too late, or too old, or too young, or there was some reason why they wouldn't have me."

"Well, don't get downhearted," she said cheerfully. "It's a long lane that 'as no turnin'. If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again."

He heaved a melancholy sigh.

"I'm tired of trying," he said, in a hollow voice. "Sometimes I think the best thing I could do would be to make a hole in the water."

"Don't say such things, even in joke," she said reprovingly. "I know you don't mean it, but I don't like to hear you talk like that. It gives me the creeps."

He ate his dinner in silence, and spent an hour in reading the "latest

details" of the murder in Penfold Lane. At three o'clock his landlady, garbed in shawl and bonnet, put her head in at the door.

"I'm going now," she said. "It's my late night to-night, you know, so I sha'n't be in till nine o'clock. Your tea's on a tray in the kitchen, and your supper's on another tray in the pantry, if you don't mind carryin' them up when you're ready for them."

"I don't suppose I shall need either tea or supper," he said lugubriously. "In fact, you'll probably find me lying on the hearthrug with my throat cut when you come back."

"If you talk any more rubbish like that," she said, "I'll send the doctor to see you. It's a tonic you want—that's what's the matter with you."

He laughed a hollow laugh, and a moment or two later he heard her leave the house. Then he set to work to carry out the cunning plot which his crafty brain had concocted.

First of all he went out and purchased a second-hand suit of clothes, a small and cheap portmanteau, and a bottle of hair-dye. This occupied him until nearly five o'clock.

Armed with his purchases, he returned to his lodgings, and spent an hour in cutting his hair quite short, clipping his moustache, and dying both a deep jet-black.

When he had finished, the change in his appearance was remarkable.

Having carefully burnt all the clippings and effaced all traces of the operation, he dressed himself in the second-hand suit of clothes, and packed the suit which he had been wearing in the portmanteau. For reasons which will be apparent by-and-by, he left some letters, his handkerchief, his pipe and pouch, his watch, his fountain-pen, and his silver matchbox in the pockets of the coat and waistcoat which he packed into the portmanteau.

He then sat down, and wrote the following letter:

"Dear Mrs. Richardson,—Forgive me, but I cannot stand this any longer. I have tried my best to get work, but have failed, and when I have paid you for my board and lodgings this week, I shall not have enough money left to pay for a 'bus-ride into the City. I have determined, therefore, to make an end of myself, and when I have finished this I shall go down to Walker's Wharf and throw myself into the river. With many thanks for all your kindness.
Yours truly, G. T. SHAND."

"P.S.—You can have all my things, as I haven't a friend or relation in the world."

He enclosed the letter in an envelope, addressed it to Mrs. Richardson, and placed it on the kitchen mantelpiece in such a position that she would be bound to see it as soon as she came home. Then he glanced at the clock.

"Quarter past eight," he muttered. "It's too soon to start for the docks yet. Besides, I might as well have the old woman's money before I go. I can easily make it appear that a burglar broke into the house, and stole the money after I had left."

He knew that Mrs. Richardson kept her little hoard of savings in a locked-up drawer in her bedroom.

Without the slightest compunction he went up to the bedroom, prised the drawer open with a poker, and transferred the money to his pocket.

To give colour to the "burglar" idea, he ransacked all the other drawers, tossing the contents about the floor, and taking possession of anything that was small and valuable.

He repeated these proceedings in his own room; and then he went out into the back yard, smashed a pane in the pantry window, opened the window and climbed into the pantry, so as to make it appear that that was how the burglar had entered the house.

Having locked the back door again, he once more glanced at the clock. "Quarter to nine," he mused. "I'd better be off now, lest the old woman should return before her time."

He put on his hat, picked up his portmanteau, and turned out the gas.

Then he walked to the front door, opened it, let down the latch, closed the door, turned round, and found himself face to face with Nelson Lee and Nipper!

CHAPTER IX

At the Dove and Rainbow.

NELSON LEE and Nipper had started to cross the road when they saw the door of No. 19 open, and a man come out of the house with a small portmanteau in his hand.

They hurried across the road, and, as the man turned round, after letting down the latch and closing the door, the detective stepped up to him.

It should here be explained that it was a pitch-dark night, and the nearest street lamp was twenty yards away. The detective, therefore, could not see the man very clearly, and, what he saw of him—a young man in a shabby suit, with close-cropped jet-black hair, and a tiny black moustache—was very different from Arnold's description of Shand.

"Pardon me," he said politely, "does Mrs. Richardson live here?"

"Yes," replied Shand, without a tremor in his voice, although he had recognised the famous detective as soon as he had spoken. "But she's out at present."

"She has—or she used to have—a lodger named Shand. Does he still lodge here?"

"Yes."

"Perhaps you are Mr. Shand?"

"Oh, no!"—with a laugh. "My name's Richardson. Mrs. Richardson is my aunt."

"Do you also live here?"

"Yes. But I'm afraid I must ask you to excuse me now. I'm rather pressed for time. I've a train to catch at London Bridge at nine-fifteen, so I haven't any time to spare."

"I won't detain you more than a minute. Mr. Shand, you say, still lodges here. Is he in?"

"No. There's nobody in at present."

"Do you know where he is?"

"I don't. He went out after dinner, saying he was going to look for work and I haven't seen him since. But why are you so curious about him? Has he done anything wrong? Are you a detective?"

"Never mind what I am! Can you tell me what time Mr. Shand will be in?"

"I can't, though I shouldn't think he'll be long. In any case my aunt will be here directly, I expect, so if you like to hang around until she returns, you can question her. She knew I was leaving by the nine-fifteen, and she said she would be back before I left, but something must have detained her. And now I must really be off," he added. "Good-night!"

He turned abruptly on his heel and walked briskly away. No sooner had he done so than Nelson Lee laid an impressive hand on Nipper's arm.

"Listen!" he said in a hurried whisper. "I believe that's the man we're after! I can't be sure till I see him in a better light, but I'm almost certain it is Shand, and that he's about to clear out of London. At any

rate, I'm now going to shadow him and put my suspicions to the test. You stay here, and when Mrs. Richardson returns, question her about Shand and find out what he was doing on Tuesday night and yesterday afternoon. Then go to Gray's Inn Road and wait till I come."

"But supposing you're wrong about that man?" asked Nipper. "Supposing he isn't Shand? Supposing the real Shand comes to the house after you've gone away? What am I to do then?"

"Keep watch on the house," said Nelson Lee, "and if he goes out again, follow him and find out where he goes and what he does."

There was no time for further instructions, for by that time Shand had nearly reached the end of the street; so, without any further delay, the detective glided after him.

Now, although Shand was feeling rather pleased with himself at the ready way in which he had answered the detective's questions, he was far from satisfied that the danger was past.

On the contrary, he had an uneasy suspicion that Nelson Lee would shadow him; and so, instead of making straight for Walker's Wharf, as he had originally intended, he trudged away towards London Bridge.

Presently he entered a tobacconist's shop and bought a packet of cigarettes. He lit one in the shop, and as he came out into the street again, he let the cigarette slip from between his lips and fall on the pavement.

And as he stooped and picked it up, he shot a swift backward glance along the brilliantly lighted street.

One glance sufficed! Nelson Lee was gazing into a shop-window about thirty yards farther down the street!

For a moment Shand was seized with panic. His suspicions were confirmed. Nelson Lee was shadowing him. What was to be done?

His mind was soon made up. He did not look behind him again. There was no need. He had learnt all he wished to know.

He turned down a neighbouring side street, and after threading his way through a labyrinth of streets and alleys on the south side of the river, he finally turned into a low public-house, called the Dove and Rainbow, which was well-known to the police—and to Shand—as a favourite resort of the dregs of the criminal world.

The landlord was strongly suspected of being a "fence," or receiver of stolen goods, but so far he had conducted his illegal business with such cunning skill that the police had never been able to obtain any evidence against him.

Here, if anywhere, argued Shand, he would find men who would help him to outwit Nelson Lee. And he was right.

In a long low room at the end of the sanded passage some eight or ten evil-looking ruffians were drinking and smoking. They ceased their talk when Shand walked into the room and eyed him with distrustful glances.

But the expression on their faces quickly changed when he laid a sovereign—one of Mrs. Richardson's sovereigns—on the table.

"I'm in trouble with the cops!" he said boldly, assuming a Cockney twang. "Nelson Lee is shadderin' me. He's ahtside nah. I want to give 'im the slip. Show me 'ow I can do it, an' yer can divide that quid between yer!"

Four men made a grab at the golden coin, and one of them got it.

"Fair do's!" growled the others. "'E said we was to divide it between us."

"We'll talk abaht that afterwards!" said the man who had secured the sovereign, as he coolly thrust it into his pocket. "We've gotter hearn it afore we divide it!"

He turned to Shand.

"I dunno who yer are, or wot yer done," he said, "an' I dunno as I want ter know! If you're up agen Nelson Lee, that's good enough for us—ain't it, mates?"

There was a chorus of cordial assent.

"Yes, yes; but 'ow can I dodge 'im?" said Shand, who was due on board the Rillington at ten o'clock, and had much to do in the meantime.

His new-found ally pointed to a door at the far-end of the room.

"It's as heavy as smokin' ahag!" he said. "Nelson Lee's in the street at the front of the 'ouse, ain't he?"

"Yes."

"Well, all yer got ter do," said the man, "is ter slip aht through that door, an' dahn the passage, an' turn ter the left, an' while Nelson Lee is coolin' 'is 'eels at the front of the 'ouse——"

He broke off with a startled oath, for at that moment Nelson Lee—suspecting what Shand was after—strode into the room!

In an instant all was uproar and confusion. At the sight of Nelson Lee, Shand uttered a cry of dismay and dashed towards the door at the far-end of the room.

Quick as thought the detective darted after him, but ere he had taken a couple of strides, one of the men snatched up his mug of beer and flung it into Nelson Lee's face!

Before the detective could wipe the blinding fluid from his eyes another of the men shot out his fist and struck him a violent blow on the chest.

Winded by the blow, the detective staggered back; and before he could recover his balance another of the ruffians tripped him up and sent him crashing to the ground.

As he fell, he struck the back of his head against a corner of the table. For two minutes—perhaps three—his mind was an utter blank.

When his scattered wits returned, his assailants and Shand had disappeared, and the landlord of the public-house was kneeling by his side, wringing his hands and imploring him to tell him what had happened.

"I was upstairs when I 'eard a crash," he said. "I ran down as fast as I could, but by the time I got 'ere there was nobody in the room but yerself. 'Ow did it 'appen?"

The detective dragged himself to his feet and briefly related what had happened.

"The villains!" cried the landlord, in a voice of well-feigned indignation. "It's blokes like them wot bring disgrace on a respectably-conducted public-'ouse! Unfortunately, they was all strangers to me, so I can't give yer their names; but if ever any of 'em shows 'is face inside this 'ouse agen, I'll 'and 'im over to the police, s'welp me I will!"

The detective smiled a trifle bitterly. He knew quite well that if the landlord had wished, he could have given him the names of every man in the room.

"But that wouldn't help me to get on Shand's track again," he muttered to himself. "I've lost all trace of him now, so I may as well go back to Nipper and confess my defeat."

CHAPTER X.

Nipper Takes a Hand.

ABOUT two minutes after Nelson Lee had left Nipper, the latter saw an elderly woman come down the street and halt outside the door of No. 19. By the time she had taken her latch-key from her pocket he was at her side.

"Excuse the liberty," he said in his best imitation of Nelson Lee's manner, "but are you Mrs. Richardson?"

"I am," she replied, pausing in the act of inserting the key in the lock.

"Would you mind telling me," asked Nipper, "if you have a nephew who lodges with you here, and who's leaving London to-night by the nine-fifteen from London Bridge?"

She looked at him with puzzled eyes.

"Is this some new kind of joke?" she demanded.

"Not at all," said Nipper. "I'm perfectly serious. I'll tell you afterwards why I ask."

"Well, I haven't a nephew either 'ere or anywhere else," she told him, "and the only person who lodges 'ere is a gentleman of the name of Shand."

"Then the guv'nor was right!" declared Nipper.

Again she regarded him with a bewildered air.

"Look 'ere!" she exclaimed. "What are you after? Who are you, and who's the guv'nor, as you call 'im, and why was he right—and anyway what's it all about?"

"It's very cold and dark out here!" he suggested. "If you were to ask me to step inside for a few minutes I could explain things much more easily."

She hesitated for a moment, but there was something in his frank and boyish face which disarmed suspicion.

"All right—come inside," she said, as she unlocked the door and led the way into the dark front-passage.

As she afterwards told the police, the moment she entered the house she "felt" there was something wrong.

The place seemed so silent and deserted, and the very air seemed charged with mystery.

When she had closed the door and had lit the passage-gas, she glanced up the staircase and saw that the door of Shand's sitting-room, which was on the first-floor landing, was wide open. There was no light in the room.

"It's too early for 'im to have gone to bed," she muttered. "He must be out."

Suddenly she remembered Shand's parting words: "You'll probably find me lying on the hearth-rug with my throat cut when you come back!"

She shivered at the recollection, and the eerie feeling that "something was wrong" became overpowering.

"It's silly of me," she said to Nipper, "but I'm feelin' very nervous to-night. Would you mind going up to that room at the top of the stairs and seeing if there's anybody there?"

"With pleasure!" he answered readily.

He drew a flash-light from his pocket and ran upstairs. Mrs. Richardson went into the kitchen and struck another match with the intention of lighting the kitchen gas.

No sooner had the match spluttered into flame than a draught of wind blew it out again and left her in the dark.

"Drat it!" she exclaimed, resisting a temptation to scream. "The pantry-window must be open."

She struck another match and lit the gas. She then saw that the pantry-door was open, and through the open door she saw that the window was not only open, but one of the panes had been smashed, and several of the things on the bench below the window had been knocked over and were lying on the floor.

"There's been a burglar 'ere!" she gasped.

The words had scarcely crossed her lips ere Nipper walked into the kitchen, his eyes ablaze with excitement.

"There's nobody in the room upstairs," he said, "but somebody has been

there, and has ransacked all the drawers and scattered the things on the floor. As I happened to be upstairs, I took the liberty of looking into the other rooms. They're all in the same state—drawers smashed open and things chucked about all over the place! Among the things in one of the rooms I saw an empty cash-box, the lid of which has been prised open, so it's safe to say that you've been robbed!"

She wrung her hands and sank into the nearest chair.

"I knew there'd been a burglar 'ere!" she moaned.

"Burglar your grandmother!" said Nipper rudely. "It's your lodger—Mr. Shand—who has robbed you. For certain reasons, which I'll explain in a minute, he made up his mind to clear out to-night; and before he did a guy he took advantage of your being out to lay his hands on everything of value he could find."

She shook her head and pointed into the pantry, where even Nipper could not deny there was the clearest evidence that somebody had climbed in through the window after smashing one of the panes.

"That's 'ow the burglar got into the 'ouse," she said. "Mr. Shand was in the 'ouse, so there would 'ave been no need for 'im to climb in through the pantry-window if he'd wanted to rob me. He must 'ave gone out again, after I left 'im, and while he was out, and there was nobody in the 'ouse, a burglar must 'ave——"

At that moment she caught sight, for the first time, of the letter on the mantelpiece. She jumped up, snatched it down, tore the envelope open, and read the letter. Then she dropped back into her chair and began to cry.

"Poor, poor, young man!" she moaned through her tears. "He threatened to do it, only this afternoon; but I never thought he meant it. You'll be sorry now that you called 'im a thief! He's been and gone and drowned 'imself! Read that!"

Nipper read the letter but was not impressed.

"I shall go down to Walker's Wharf and throw myself into the river," he read. "Where's Walker's Wharf?"

"In Boat house Lane," she replied. "It's only a few minutes walk from 'ere. Mr. Shand was employed there at one time, but the company went bankrupt, and the wharf is now unoccupied."

"Well, if you want my candid opinion," said Nipper, "this letter is a clever fake. I don't believe for a minute that Mr. Shand has committed suicide, and I'll tell you why."

He told her how he and Nelson Lee suspected it was Shand who had murdered Marmaduke Salter. How they had come to Hansell Street to make inquiries into his movements on the day of the murder. How they had seen a young man leave the house with a small portmanteau in his hand.

How Nelson Lee had questioned this man, and how the man had said he was Mrs. Richardson's nephew. How the detective had suspected it was Shand and had decided to shadow him, leaving Nipper to keep watch on the house till Mrs. Richardson returned.

"Now you know all this," he concluded, "you can easily guess what happened. Shand read in the papers that the gov'nor was working on the case and he was afraid the gov'nor would track him down. He decided to take to flight, but before he cleared out, he ransacked the house and helped himself to your money and valuables. Then he chucked the things about in his own room, and broke the window, and wrote this letter—just to throw dust in your eyes."

Mrs. Richardson looked at him doubtfully. For the first time she began to think that Nipper, perhaps, might, after all, be right.

"'Ow did you know it was Mr. Shand that you saw coming out of the 'ouse?" she asked.

"We didn't know at first—at least we weren't certain," he admitted. "But it must have been Shand, of course?"

"What was the man like?"

"He was a rather tall young man, with short black hair, and a small black moustache."

She shook her head. Her belief in Nipper's theory—never very strong—began to waver.

"That isn't a bit like Mr. Shand," she said. "Mr. Shand 'as rather long brown 'air and a 'eavy black moustache."

"He must have cut his hair and clipped his moustache, and dyed them a different colour."

"That doesn't sound likely. 'Ow was the man dressed?"

"In a shabby suit of dark-blue serge."

Again she shook her head—more vigorously than ever!

"Then it couldn't 'ave been Mr. Shand," she declared. "Mr. Shand didn't own a blue-serge suit. I know every suit he 'ad, for I've cleaned and pressed 'em scores of times, and there wasn't a blue serge suit among 'em! What sort of a bag was the man carrying?"

Nipper described the bag, and his description destroyed the last lingering trace of her belief in his theory.

"That settles the matter!" she said triumphantly. "Mr. Shand never 'ad a bag like that. He only 'ad a Gladstone bag, small brown 'andbag, and a black canvas trunk. So you're quite mistaken, you see. It wasn't Mr. Shand you saw coming out of the 'ouse. It was the burglar, and the things he 'ad stolen were in the bag!"

"You said I could easily guess what 'ad 'appened," she went on. "I can! Before I went out this afternoon, Mr. Shand said—but I thought he was only joking—that the best thing he could do was to make a 'ole in the water. After I'd gone he must 'ave sat brooding over 'is troubles till at last he decided to drown 'imself. So he wrote this letter to me, put it on the mantelpiece, and then went down to Walker's Wharf and threw 'imself into the river."

"After he'd gone," she continued, "there'd be nobody in the 'ouse. Some time after dark a man broke in through the pantry-window, stole everything he could lay 'is 'ands on, and packed 'is plunder in a bag which he'd brought for the purpose. He then walked out by the front door and walked into you and Mr. Lee. He put you off with a lot of lies, and then walked off."

It was Nipper now who shook his head.

"It all sounds very plausible," he said; "but I don't believe it for a minute. However, we shall soon know the truth, for the guv'nor is shadowing the man, and he'll soon find out if he's Shand or not. In the meantime can you tell me what Mr. Shand was doing, or where he was, about half-past eight on Tuesday night?"

She wrinkled her brow in an effort to remember.

"Oh, yes!" she said at last. "He was in his room all day, but he went out about quarter-past eight, to post a letter. He came back before nine, and went straight to bed."

"And where was he yesterday afternoon?"

"I don't know. I was out all the afternoon, so I can't say."

Nipper asked her a few more questions but without eliciting any fresh information. Then he picked up his cap and held out his hand.

"Good-night!" he said. "I must be going now, if there's nothing more I can do for you."

"There's one thing you can do for me, if you'll be so kind," she said. "The police ought to know that my house has been burgled, and that Mr. Shand has left a note to say he's drowned himself. Would you mind calling at the police-station and asking a policeman to step round?"

"I'll do so with pleasure," said Nipper. "Where is the nearest police-station?"

"In Boathouse Lane."

"That's where Walker's Wharf is, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll probably have a look at the wharf after I've called at the police-station," said Nipper.

He left the house, and a few minutes later, walking at a swinging pace, he turned into Boathouse Lane. As he swung round the corner, he ran into a man who was coming in the opposite direction—a rather tall young man with a small portmanteau in his hand.

"I beg your——" began Nipper.

Then he broke off with a shout of triumph.

He recognised the man!

It was Shand!

CHAPTER XI.

Safe at Last!

AT the same moment that Nelson Lee crashed to the ground in the taproom of the Dove and Rainbow, Shand darted through the door which one of the men had indicated as his best mode of escape.

The door opened into a covered passage, and after sprinting down this passage, and turning to the left, he emerged into a squalid alley at the back of the public-house.

By that time the other occupants of the taproom had taken to their heels and were stampeding down the passage as fast as their legs would carry them.

As Shand had now no further use for them, and had no desire to renew his acquaintance with them, he put on a spurt; and after twisting and turning through three or four streets and lanes, he eventually found himself in Jamaica Road.

"So far, so good!" he muttered with a sigh of relief. "Now for Walker's Wharf, and then for the Rillington."

It was half-past nine when he reached the wharf in Boathouse Lane. As Mrs. Richardson had told Nipper, the wharf had been closed for some time, and the gates were shut and locked.

Shand, however, who had formerly been employed there, knew a way of entering the premises without passing through the gates; and a few moments later he was standing on the dark, deserted wharfside.

Opening his portmanteau, he took out the coat and waistcoat which he usually wore and laid them down on the edge of the wharf. As already stated, he had left in the pockets of these garments some letters, his handkerchief, his pipe and pouch, his watch, his fountain-pen, and his silver match-box.

Whoever found the garments, therefore, would have no difficulty in ascertaining the name and address of their owner; and the finder's evidence, coupled with the note which Shand had left for Mrs. Richardson, would

leave no doubt that Shand had gone down to the wharf, taken off his coat and waistcoat, and plunged into the river.

"It'll be a clear case of suicide during temporary insanity," he chuckled. "Of course the body will never be recovered, but that's a small matter. Many a man's body, who drowns himself in the Thames, is carried down to the sea and never seen again!"

"And now for the Rillington!" he added, as he closed the portmanteau, and picked it up.

He made his way back into Boathouse Lane and started off for the Surrey Commercial Docks, where the Rillington was berthed. On reaching the end of the lane, he was about to turn the corner when a boy came hurrying round and bumped into him.

"I beg your—" began the boy—who was Nipper, of course.

Then he broke off with a shout of triumph.

"Shand!" he cried exultingly.

"Nipper!" gasped Shand, and even as he spoke, his fist shot out and landed on the point of Nipper's jaw!

Unprepared for this sudden attack, Nipper measured his length in the gutter, whilst at the same instant Shand spun round on his heel and bolted in the opposite direction.

Needless to say Nipper lost no time in leaping to his feet and giving chase.

"Stop thief!" he yelled. "Stop him! Catch him! Trip him up! Don't let him escape!"

His appeals fell on deaf ears. In addition to himself and Shand, there were only six people in the lane, and two of these were women.

The four men evidently thought it was no affair of theirs; for although they stopped to gaze at Shand and his pursuer, they made no attempt to interfere.

"The beastly cowards!" panted Nipper. "They're afraid of him. However, I can do without their help; for I'm gaining on him hand over fist."

This was quite true. Even if Shand had not been burdened with a portmanteau, he would have been no match for the fleet-footed Nipper.

Handicapped by the weight of the portmanteau, he was hopelessly out-classed. Before he was half-way down the lane, Nipper was pounding at his heels.

"You may as well give in!" cried Nipper. "You can't—"

The sentence was never completed, for at that moment Shand suddenly wheeled round and hurled the portmanteau at his youthful pursuer!

The bag struck Nipper full on the chest and bowled him over like a ninepin! And before he could pick himself up, Shand darted across the road and vanished down a narrow open passage which led to the riverside.

At the bottom of this passage was a ramshackle landing-stage, alongside which a boat was moored.

In feverish haste Shand stepped into the boat, cast off the mooring-rope, matched up the oars, and was in the act of pushing off when Nipper came limping down the passage.

"Too late!" jeered Shand, with a mocking laugh.

"We'll see about that!" muttered Nipper, between his clenched teeth.

In little more time than it takes to tell he kicked off his boots, threw off his coat, and dived into the river.

By that time the boat had vanished in the darkness, but, guided by the splash of the oars, Nipper rapidly swam after it and presently caught sight of it again.

Now it is a true saying that you cannot put an old head on young shoulders. If Nipper had been older and more experienced—if he had been Nelson Lee, for instance—he would not have shown himself to Shand, but would have followed him until he saw where he landed, or until he could summon help.

In his youthful impetuosity, however, as soon as Nipper caught sight of the boat again, he put on a spurt, swam alongside, and laid his hands on the gunwale.

Owing to the darkness, Shand did not see him until he was alongside. With a startled oath, he sprang to his feet, swung one of the oars aloft, and aimed a savage blow at Nipper's head.

With the swiftness of a lightning-flash, Nipper dodged the blow, dived under the boat, and came up on the other side.

As he once more laid his hands on the gunwale, and began to haul himself into the boat, Shand struck at him a second time.

In doing so, he lost his balance, and almost before either of them knew what was happening, the boat capsized and flung both of them into the water.

And that was the last that Nipper saw of Shand. Whether he floated away, or swam away under cover of the darkness, or whether the current swept him away, or whether he went to the bottom, Nipper could not tell.

For a quarter of an hour the plucky youngster swam this way and that, searching for Shand and calling his name.

But it was labour in vain, and at last he abandoned the search and swam back to the landing-stage.

Three-quarters of an hour later a bedraggled man, minus a hat and drenched to the skin, shuffled aboard the Rillington.

"Great Scott! Who's this scarecrow?" demanded the mate, eyeing him with mingled amusement and disfavour.

"My name's Hurst, sir," said Shand, for such it was. "You signed me on this morning, you know, as assistant mess steward. Here are my papers. I'm sorry I'm late, but I've had an accident."

"I remember your name," said the mate, after glancing at the wet, limp papers, "but upon my word I shouldn't have known you again in your present condition. What on earth has happened to you?"

"I missed my way in the dark, and walked over the edge of the dock," said Shand. "I wasn't hurt, and I managed to get out all right, but unfortunately I've lost my kit, which is now lying at the bottom of the dock."

"Drunk, I suppose?" said the mate, with a shrug of his shoulders.

"Oh, no, sir!" protested Shand. "I'm a teetotaler."

"Well, you certainly seem fond of water!" laughed the mate.

His little joke restored his good-humour.

"Come down to my cabin in the morning," he said, "and I'll see if I can fish out some old things of mine to replace the things you've lost. In the meantime, go to the galley and ask the cook to lend you a rug while your things are drying."

Shand thanked him, and shuffled off to the galley. Half an hour later, in charge of a tug, the Rillington was on her way down the river.

And as Shand, sitting by the galley-fire, watched the lights of London slipping past, he heaved a sigh of profound relief.

"Safe at last!" he murmured.

CHAPTER XII.

Committed for Trial.

EXCEPT for a slight headache and a certain amount of soreness at the spot where his head had struck the table, Nelson Lee was feeling quite all right when he left the Dove and Rainbow.

Before he had walked very far, however, a feeling of drowsiness began to steal over him, and his feet began to feel as though they were shod with lead.

"I can't think what's come over me!" he muttered irritably. "I feel for all the world as if I'd been drugged!"

He tried to shake off the feeling of drowsiness, but, in spite of all his efforts, it increased with every step he took. To make matters worse, his sight began to grow dim, and he began to reel and stagger like a drunken man.

Now thoroughly alarmed, he hailed a passing taxi. By the time the taxi had drawn up alongside the kerb, however, he was unable to speak, and was scarcely able to stand. In fact, he would have fallen if a passer-by had not caught him.

Observing his condition, a crowd quickly gathered. As he was obviously growing worse every moment, and as he was utterly unable to say who he was, the driver very sensibly lifted him into the cab and took him to Guy's Hospital.

By the time the hospital was reached, Nelson Lee was completely unconscious. Papers found on him told the authorities who he was, and after he had been put to bed, with an ice-bag on his head, a telephonic message was sent to Gray's Inn Road.

At that time Nipper was hauling himself ashore at the landing-stage in Boathouse Lane. In spite of all that had happened, he had not forgotten his promise to Mrs. Richardson.

The first thing he did was to call at the police-station and deliver the old woman's message. Then, after laughingly declining to gratify the curiosity of the police as to why he was wet through, he chartered a taxi and drove to Gray's Inn Road.

"Oh, I'm so glad you've come!" was Mrs. Jones's greeting. "They telephoned from Guy's Hospital nearly an hour ago to say that Mr. Lee had been suddenly taken ill, and had been brought to the hospital in a taxi."

In less than a quarter of an hour after receiving this startling news, Nipper had changed his things and was on his way in another taxi to Guy's Hospital.

"I'm Nipper," he announced to the house surgeon who came down to interview him in the waiting-room at the hospital. "How's the gov'nor? I mean Mr. Lee. Is he seriously ill?"

"Very!" said the house surgeon gravely. "Very seriously ill indeed!"

"What's happened?"

"We don't know, and, as Mr. Lee is unconscious, he can't tell us. All we know for certain is that he has injured his head, and is now suffering from compression of the brain."

"Is that the same as concussion of the brain?"

"Oh, no!"

"What is it, then?"

"It means that when he injured his head a small blood-vessel inside the skull, between the bone and the brain, was wounded and began to bleed. It is possible that, at the time he received the injury, he felt no ill-effects, or he may have been stunned for a few minutes and then come round and felt all right."

"Presently, however, as the vessel went on bleeding, and the blood inside the skull pressed on the brain, he would gradually grow drowsier and draw water until he became as he is now—completely unconscious."

"And can't you stop the bleeding?"

"We are trying, of course. We have applied ice to his head in the hope that the cold will stop the bleeding. If it does, the blood inside the skull will probably become absorbed, and Mr. Lee will gradually recover consciousness. If it doesn't——"

"Yes?" said Nipper, as the house surgeon paused. "If the cold doesn't stop the bleeding?"

"We shall have to perform an operation."

"Will it be a dangerous operation?"

"It will be a very serious operation, but we have performed it many times, and most of the patients have recovered."

"When will you know whether you have to perform the operation or not?"

"I can't say. If Mr. Lee were to become suddenly worse, we might have to operate to-night. If he remains about the same, neither improving nor getting worse, we shall probably wait a day or two before we decide."

It was then Thursday night. During the next two days Nipper passed through the most anxious time of his life.

He found time to call on Mr. Booth, Foyl's lawyer, and tell him what had happened at Hansell Street and Boathouse Lane, but for the greater part of those two days he haunted the hospital, asking for news of his beloved "guy'nor."

On Friday the news was "No improvement; much about the same." On Saturday it was "Not quite so well." And when Nipper called at the hospital on Sunday morning, he was told that an operation had been decided upon, and would be performed at noon.

How Nipper lived through the next few hours he never knew. All that he afterwards remembered was one of the doctors coming down to the waiting-room and telling him that the operation was over.

"It was completely successful," said the doctor, "and Mr. Lee bore it remarkably well. He's quite conscious now, but very weak, of course."

"Is he out of danger?" asked Nipper.

"It's too early to say that," replied the doctor gravely. "My own opinion is that he will make a good recovery, but I can't yet say that he is out of danger."

"May I see him?"

The doctor shook his head.

"Most certainly not!" he said emphatically. "At the end of a week, perhaps, if all goes well, I may allow you to see him, but only on condition that you don't talk business to him or say anything to excite him."

As events turned out, however, the detective did not make such a rapid recovery as the doctors had hoped. He had one or two relapses, a second operation was necessary, and nearly three weeks elapsed before Nipper was allowed to see him.

During those three weeks, of course, the world did not stand still. The law, for instance, had to follow its appointed course, whether Nelson Lee was well or ill, and before the end of those three weeks the first act in the tragedy of Gilbert Foyl's life had been brought to a conclusion.

As already stated, Foyl was brought before the magistrate on the morning after the murder, and was remanded for a week. On the following Thursday he was once more placed in the dock at Bow Street, and the case for the Crown was opened.

The principal witnesses for the prosecution were Arnold, Police-constable

Dawson, and the pawnbroker Legg. Other witnesses were called, but these were the ones who gave the most important evidence.

Arnold related how Foyl had come to the office, and had asked to see Salter. He described how he and the other clerks had heard the sounds of quarrelling, followed by a shot and a crash.

He told how they had burst into the inner office and had found that Foyl had disappeared, while Salter was lying dead on the floor.

After the doctor had testified to the cause of death, Police-constable Dawson described how he had met Foyl "running away," with a smoking revolver in his hand.

Then Legg stepped into the witness-box, and once more "identified" Foyl as the man who had purchased the revolver at his shop on the night before the murder.

Mr. Booth opened the defence by calling Hervey, who explained why Foyl had gone to see Salter on that fateful Wednesday afternoon. He was closely cross-examined by the prosecuting lawyer, who compelled him to admit that both he and Foyl had regarded Salter as an "enemy," who was plotting to ruin them.

Arnold was recalled by Mr. Booth, and questioned as to Shand's dismissal, his threats of revenge, and his likeness to Foyl. He admitted that Shand was very like Foyl; but, as Shand had disappeared, and as no photograph of him could be produced, this portion of Arnold's evidence was generally regarded as of little value.

It should here be explained that by this time, of course, the story of Shand's "suicide" was public property. His letter to Mrs. Richardson had been published in the papers, and his coat and waistcoat had been found at Walker's Wharf.

It is true that his body had not been found, though the river had been dragged, but that, in the eyes of the public, was a matter of small importance.

After Nipper had told his story, Mrs. Richardson was placed in the witness-box, but it cannot be said that her evidence assisted the case for the defence.

She was obviously indignant that anybody should try to make out that "poor, unlucky Mr. Shand" had committed the murder, and she reiterated her belief that a burglar had broken into her house after Shand had gone out to drown himself, and that it was this burglar, and not Shand, whom Nelson Lee and Nipper had seen.

She was shown the bag which Shand had hurled at Nipper, and which had afterwards been traced and recovered by the police; but she merely repeated that Shand had never owned such a bag, and that the things in the bag, some of which had undoubtedly belonged to Shand, were the things which the burglar had stolen from Shand's room.

There is no need to prolong the recital. It is enough to say that all Mr. Booth's efforts to connect Shand with the murder failed to impress either the magistrate or the public. The result, in fact, was a foregone conclusion, and after a five days' hearing Gilbert Foyl was committed for trial and taken back to Holloway Gaol.

CHAPTER XIII. Sentenced to Death.

THE trial took place at the Old Bailey, a few weeks later, before Mr. Justice Meredith. There was a brilliant array of counsel on both sides, the case for the Crown being conducted by that eminent barrister Mr. Crawford Bunham, K.C., M.P.

The same witnesses were called as at Bow Street, and they gave the same evidence as they had given there. The only additional witness of import-

now was Nelson Lee, who by that time had completely recovered from the effects of his injury.

In his opening statement the counsel for the defence had outlined Nelson Lee's theory, and when the detective went into the box he gave the jury the facts on which his theory was based.

It was afterwards said that the jury were greatly impressed by Nelson Lee's evidence, and were prepared to give Foyl the benefit of the doubt; but that they changed their minds after hearing the judge's summing-up.

However that may have been, it is certainly the fact that the judge's summing-up was dead against Foyl.

"I do not think I need say much about Mr. Nelson Lee's evidence," he said. "We all admire Mr. Lee as an able and courageous investigator, and I am sure we're all greatly interested in listening to the skillful way in which he endeavoured to shift the burden of guilt from the prisoner's shoulders.

"At the same time," he continued, "it is my duty to point out to you that all the theories in the world cannot outweigh a single established fact. However much you may admire Mr. Lee's ability, however much you may be struck by the ingenuity and plausibility of his theory, you are not called upon to pass judgment on theories, but on hard, material facts.

"And I submit to you, gentlemen of the jury," he concluded, "that if you confine your attention to the ascertained facts in this painful case, you can only come to one conclusion."

The jury came to the "one conclusion," which the judge had so plainly pointed out to them. In other words, they returned a verdict of "Guilty!" and the judge, after expressing his "complete agreement" with the jury's verdict, sentenced Foyl to death.

An appeal was promptly lodged, and as promptly heard and dismissed. Apparently, however, the detective's evidence had raised a doubt in the Home Secretary's mind as to the certainty of Foyl's guilt; for two days before the death sentence was due to be carried out, it was announced that the Home Secretary had advised his Majesty to commute the sentence to one of penal servitude for life.

Foyl received the news of the commutation of his sentence with the same lack of interest he had shown when the judge had sentenced him to death.

Ever since he had received that letter which bore Jessie Malvern's name, but which had been forged by Hubert Pryce, he had displayed the most complete indifference to his fate.

Little did he know that she had written half a dozen times, but that all her letters had been intercepted by her rascally guardian. Little did he know that she was heart-broken because he had never answered her letters, or even acknowledged them.

On the day that he was to be transferred from Newgate to Wormwood Scrubs, there to begin the first stage of his term of penal servitude, he received a letter which once more bore the name of Jessie Malvern, but which was another of Hubert Pryce's forgeries.

"Sir," it ran,—I am glad you are not to be hanged, for you will now have more time in which to repent and seek forgiveness for your crime. You will understand, of course, that all is over between us now; and I hope you will do your best to forget me, as I shall try to forget you.

"Yours truly, JESSIE MALVERN."

And with these cruel words searing his brain, Gilbert Foyl went to his living death.

Conclusion.

ON the day that the Home Secretary's decision was announced, but before it was made public, Hervey called on Nelson Lee.

"Heard the news?" he asked excitedly.

"Yes," said Nelson Lee. "I've just had a telephonic message from the Home Office. Foyl's sentence has been commuted to penal servitude for life."

"Well, that's something to be thankful for, isn't it?"

The detective shrugged his shoulders.

"From Foyl's point of view, I suppose it is," he said. "But there's little satisfaction in it for me. This case will rank as one of my biggest failures."

"Oh, you mustn't say that!" protested Hervey. "You've done splendidly!"

"Splendidly, indeed!" said Nelson Lee ironically. "I was engaged to prove Foyl's innocence; and he has been found guilty, and sent to penal servitude."

"But that's no fault of yours. If it hadn't been for your unfortunate illness—which stopped your investigations at their most critical stage—you would undoubtedly have succeeded in bringing the crime home to the right man."

The detective shook his head.

"I decline to shelter myself behind my illness," he said. "The fact remains that I have failed."

"You may seem to have failed at present," said Hervey; "but one cannot tell what the future has in store. Some day, perhaps, as the result of your work in this case, Foyl's innocence may be proved, and he may be restored to us."

"A ruined and broken man!" said Nelson Lee bitterly.

"Not a ruined man, at any rate," said Hervey. "On the contrary, if Foyl is ever released from prison he will be one of the richest men in the country."

For a moment the detective looked puzzled; then a light broke on him.

"Ah, White Eagles have risen at last, have they?" he said.

"Yes," replied Hervey. "I didn't tell you before, because I wished to wait until I was able to repay your generous loan. The rise was much longer in coming than I'd expected; but it came off all right in the end, and to-day the shares stand at sixty pounds apiece. I sold out yesterday at fifty-seven, so that after I've paid back your loan there'll be considerably over half a million for Foyl and me to divide between us."

"As Foyl has neither kith nor kin," he added, "he has made over his share to me. I have formally accepted it, but I shall always look upon it as money held in trust for Foyl. I shall invest it, and keep a separate account of it, so that if ever Foyl comes out of prison he'll find his share, with accumulated interest, waiting for him."

Again the detective shook his head.

"He'll never come out," he said gloomily.

For once, however, Nelson Lee was wrong. There came a time when the truth was brought to light—when Foyl's innocence was proved—when the prison-gates opened and set him free—when, embittered by his wrongs and thirsting for revenge on those who had wronged him, he claimed his enormous wealth, and embarked on a ruthless vendetta of vengeance.

But that is another story.

(The sequel to this amazing story will be published on Wednesday next, under the title of "The Convict's Vendetta." Please order in advance.)

The Boys of Ravenswood College;

or, Dick Clare's Schooldays.

A New Story of School Life. By S. CLARKE HOOK.

Author of the famous Jack, Sam & Pete stories, appearing weekly in
"The Marvel Library."

Dick Clare, a rich youngster, joins Ravenswood College, and he soon makes his presence felt.

One day news comes to the school that Dick and his chum, Tom, have been drowned, but ultimately they turn up safe and sound.

Melby, one of the other boys, takes a violent dislike to Dick Clare, and is especially jealous because the Headmaster takes special notice of the new boy.

Dick and Tom pay a night visit to an island close by the school. Mysterious lights have been seen on the island.

The Return to the School.

"It isn't likely that we shall get caught," said Dick.

"Good! I'm glad to hear that," observed Tom. "If you are right it will be because you were born lucky as well as rich. However, it's no good bothering about the future, because it's a thing you can't foresee."

They landed in safety, drew the boat up beyond reach of the tide, and were about to race towards the college, when a stern voice sent a shock through their systems.

"Halt, or I fire!"

"It's all right," whispered Tom, peering into the darkness. "It is Samuel, the village constable. He hasn't got anything to fire with, and if he had he wouldn't be able to hit what he fired at. He's too fat to run. Come on!"

They did, and the constable came pounding after them, shouting to them to stop; but as they proceeded, the shouts became more breathless.

"It's all right," exclaimed Dick. "He's getting winded. Bother! There goes my cap."

"Then you have left a clue behind," said Tom; "and to go back for it would mean certain capture. It doesn't matter. We are bound to get nabbed, because Samuel will report the matter to the Head, and he will ring us all in, so he's bound to drop on the correct boys."

"I know who you are!" howled the constable, who had not the slightest chance of overtaking them. "I shall report you to-morrow. You are Ravenswood boys."

"He's hit the nail on the head," panted Tom. "The rest of the blows won't fall on our heads. We will scoot through the private grounds. Follow me. We've got something to look forward to to-morrow."

Under ordinary circumstances getting in would have been exciting work; but on this occasion the chums did not trouble themselves much about the matter, knowing that detection was certain on the morrow.

However, they got to their dormitory without detection, and were soon sleeping as calmly as though no trouble awaited them on waking.

"There goes the bell, half an hour before its time," exclaimed Tom. "Samuel has been on the warpath. Come on, Dick! We've got to face the music. The Doc. is desirous of discovering the delinquent."

The boys of Ravenswood trooped into the great hall, and took their seats in silence, for the Head stood at his desk, and every boy knew that something serious had happened.

"Has any boy lost a college cap?" demanded the Doctor.

"Yes, sir; I have," answered Melby.

"Come here! Is this cap yours?"

"I think so, sir. It looks like it."

"When did you lose it?"

"The term before last, and my father kicked up an awful row, but my mother——"

"That will do. Go to your place," ordered the Doctor, who knew that Melby would have gone on talking about himself and his family for half an hour if permitted.

"Two boys broke bounds last night——"

"I'll bet there were more than that," muttered Melby.

"Sit down, boy!" ordered the Head. "Two boys broke bounds, and went on the water to the island. I call on those boys to step forward."

Dick and Tom rose, and walked towards the desk, looking as though they did not like it.

Melby Seeks Vengeance

AS Dick and Tom stepped up to the Doctor's desk, Samuel the constable entered the Hall by the further door, and he looked extremely fat and important.

"The constable charges you with having signalled to the foe from the island, boys," said the Head.

"Last night, between the hours of eleven and one," observed Samuel.

"What have you to say, boys?"

"That the constable is mistaken, sir," answered Dick. "As far as I know no foe was there, and certainly if there had been we should not have signalled to him. I do not know whether Tom is an expert at signalling, but I know no more about it than the dodo."

"You do not appear to realise that this is a very serious matter, Clare. The constable insists on arresting you."

"Well, it would be serious if it were true, sir, but as it isn't true, I don't consider it serious. As far as the constable's charge is concerned, it is amusing—as far as we are concerned it is not."

"Do you deny that he saw you go to the island, and that subsequently he saw you return?"

"I don't think he saw us go, otherwise he would have stopped us, sir. He certainly saw us come back, because he chased us, and couldn't catch us."

"You broke bounds?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why did you go to the island?"

"I saw what I took to be signalling on the island, sir."

"From what point?"

"Am I bound to answer that question, sir? But it does not matter. From the tower. I know I ought not to have been there, but—well, I was. I saw the lights the night before last, and overruled Tom Hart. He did not want to come."

"Yes, he did," said Tom.

"Well, you certainly raised objections, and would not have thought of going if I had not induced you. I am entitled to the blame, sir."

"You both are," said the Head sternly, "and will take the consequences, which are known to you both, unless you convince me that your sole purpose in going to the island was to stop the signalling, or to discover the signallers. Can you assure me of that, Clare?"

"Well, why it was—I really don't know, sir."

"Think, Clare," said the Head, looking less severe. "Would you have gone to the island last night had you not seen the signalling on the previous night?"

"No, sir."

"You went solely to do a service to your country?"

"I can't say that, sir. As far as I am personally concerned I did not regard the signalling likely to be of much consequence. In fact, I did not really know that it was signalling. It looked suspicious, that was all. I went to the island to discover what it really was, but I wanted the excitement as well. If there had been no excitement in it I'd have come to you and told you, then 'Samool' could have gone."

Samuel, the village constable, was frequently called "Samool" by the boys, and always by himself, and the youngsters tittered now as Dick called him Samool to the Head. It was considered daring under the circumstances.

The Doctor, however, did not appreciate the mirth.

"You appear to treat a very serious matter with levity, boy," he said. "Tell me exactly what happened."

"We broke bounds, sir. Took a boat. Went to the island. Were attacked by a gang, but escaped. On landing we were attacked again by the police force which ran after us, but couldn't run fast enough. Unfortunately we lost part of our equipment, which Samool commandeered."

"Your charge against the boys appears to be without the slightest foundation, constable," said the Head.

"But how do I know that they are speaking the truth, sir?"

"It can easily be proved," said the Doctor. "If you go to the island, you will surely find some trace of the men who were flashing the lights. How were you attacked, Clare?"

"They heaved rocks at us when we were in a narrow channel, sir. We didn't like it, and backed out, then they fired, especially when we were smashing up their boat. If Samool hires a lighter—or something, heavy that will carry him to the island, he will find the damaged boat. We fairly smashed it up, and it will never float again, and we chucked—heaved—flung, I mean, cases of provisions overboard."

"It will be advisable for you to inform the constguard of what has happened, constable," said the Head. "I believe you will be convinced that you have no charge against these boys. In the meantime, I will hold myself responsible to bring them forward at any time required."

"Very good, sir. I only did my dooty."

"Quite correct, constable, and if you catch the delinquents, what these lads have done will have been of service to you. I hope you may succeed. Good-morning!"

Samuel was not quite satisfied; however, he took his departure, and the culprits were ordered into the Doctor's study, where they received a severe lecture, and an intimation that if they were caught breaking bounds again they would be caned.

"Which you may consider a jolly lucky exit," exclaimed Tom, as they made their way to No. 7. "A future canning is not nearly so painful as—Hallo, Melby! How are your toes?"

"I suppose you would not like to have your bare toes caught in a beastly rat-trap?"

"Not a bit of it. I was only inquiring after the general state of their

health, and you need not get ratty because I make kind inquiries about the hanged things."

"I don't want to have my toes made fun of, and I'm not going to stand being bullied in the shameful manner I have been."

"Well, you must blame Gowl for that," said Dick. "We have got nothing to do with it."

"If you stood by me like you ought, and told me your secret power over the beast, he'd never dare to bully me again. I call it beastly mean, Dick. But I'll get level with him, and I'll do it this very night, you see if I don't. Of course, I sha'n't tell you what it is, because you won't tell me things; but I'm relying on your honour not to mention that I'm going to pay him. He will jump to the conclusion that it is you, but that won't matter, because you will know that it isn't. I want you to lend me a couple of shillings, Dick."

"Then you will have to go on wanting," retorted Dick. "If you think I am going to supply you with funds to make the bully imagine I have played him some trick you are jolly well mistaken."

Then Melby commenced arguing, and at last Dick flung him half-a-crown to stop him, which was sixpence more than he had asked for, and a shilling more than he expected.

"I daresay we shall get the money's worth of fun out of him," said Dick, when discussing the matter later on. "At any rate we will watch the little joke. He is sure to get into hot-water."

But Dick was wrong. It was Gowl, the bully, who got into hot water, and he did so in this manner.

That night he went into one of the bath-rooms for a hot bath; this was what Melby was waiting for and expecting, and for which he was quite prepared.

Watching his opportunity, and allowing the bully sufficient time to have got into the bath, he procured a chair from one of the dormitories, placed its back against the bath-room partition, then climbed up until he could see over, there being a couple of feet space between the top of the partition and the ceiling.

Now he produced from his pocket a large bottle of the thick purple ink used for taking multiplex copies.

"My eyes!" murmured Tom. "If he's going to slop that stuff over the bully there will be trouble. Why, he will never get it off. Do you think we ought to stop the idiot?"

"Can't be did," murmured Dick. "We are too late."

And so they were, for Melby had uncorked the bottle, and, reaching his arm through, he poured the contents of the bottle right on the top of Gowl's head, which was immediately beneath that spot.

The howls the bully uttered so startled Melby, that he missed his footing, and he and the chair came toppling over to fall to the floor with a crash that smashed the chair and hurt Melby considerably.

He bolted along the passage and promptly disappeared, groaning as he went, while from the bath-room came wild and furious yells.

Gowl was in a truly fearful state. The purple ink streamed down his face, and when he tried to get rid of it with the bath sponge he made matters ten times worse. Before he got out of the bath he was dyed all over.

Then he spoilt all the towels, and when he looked at his face in the glass a very evil expression came into his eyes.

"How dare you make this noise, boy?" demanded Mr. Foster, coming to the door. "Hush! Are you bereft of your senses to speak like that? Who are you?"

"Gowl, and some fiend has poured a bottle of violet stain all over my head. I'm in an awful state and—oh fury—it won't come off."

"It is useless to lose your temper, Gowl," said Mr. Foster. "I can only say that if the boy is caught he shall be severely punished. Have you any idea who it was?"

"No, how could I?" hooted Gowl.

"Don't dare to address me in that manner. Get your clothes on, then come to my study, and I will endeavour to discover the perpetrator of the silly trick."

"I say, you chaps," exclaimed Melby when the chums entered the dormitory he was in bed—"what have you been making this ghastly row for?"

"It's all right, Melby," murmured Tom. "There's going to be trouble over this."

"Oh, well, I don't know anything about it," declared Melby; "and even if I did know I wouldn't tell. I consider a fellow who told of a thing like that would be the greatest scoundrel unhung, and that he ought to be shot or burnt alive."

"You appear to think the punishment for sneaking should be severe," observed Dick. "Yet I have a recollection of your having sneaked on more than one occasion."

"Not in a thing like that."

"Like what?"

"Oh, I don't know what it is, but I feel sure it's something very serious, because of the noise, and——"

"It's all right, Melby," laughed Dick. "I believe with you that it is serious. We shall know more about that in the morning; in the meantime, go to sleep with the firm conviction that neither Tom nor I are going to turn sneaks. There's just one word of advice I would give you, and that is, keep your mouth shut. We know what the trick was, and who played it, but we are not going to tell, therefore it would not be wise on your part to land us with the consequences, for if you start doing that it is ten to one you will be bowled out."

"Oh, I wouldn't think of doing such a thing. I believe in honour amongst thieves."

"It is quite evident then that you are not a thief, for your exhibition of honour is a ghastly failure."

The chums were up in good time the following morning, so were most of the youngsters, because by some mysterious means it had got about that there was a big row on. No one appeared to know exactly what had happened, although all knew that something had happened, and they congregated in the quad discussing the coming row, and spreading the most extraordinary reports.

Then suddenly howls of laughter rang out, while Gowl strode towards the master's quarters.

His face was blue—so were his hands and neck and hair. The scrubbing he had given himself in his vain attempt to get off the stain had turned the purple ink into a deep blue.

There was not a small boy there who did not dread him, and most of them had good cause to do so; but to have suppressed their shrieks of laughter would have been more than they could have performed, even though their lives had depended on their seriousness.

"My eyes!" exclaimed Dick. "Ha, ha, ha! Talk about blue devils. What! No you don't, Gowl. I don't want to be thumped about because you've got the blues. Ha, ha, ha! It's no good getting angry with me. I didn't blue you."

"If you don't come here, you little viper, I will make it all the hotter for you when I do catch you."

"Then you shall have a run for your money, bully Gowl," laughed Dick, dodging dexterously, but Gowl called on some of his friends to help catch the daring youngster, and then Dick went across the Close, and took a flying leap over the hedge that surrounded the Head's private grounds. He did not actually clear it, but he got over all right, and now he hoped that the chase would be abandoned, but in this he was doomed to disappointment.

Gowl made no attempt to leap the hedge, but he came through the gate a little further along, and Dick's retreat was cut off, unless he chose to bolt right across the lawn in front of the Doctor's study, which he did not.

But there was a useful weapon at hand. It was the garden engine which the gardener had left while going to see what vegetables would be required that day. Dick sprang to the engine and commenced to pump vigorously, while he directed the rush of water full at Gowl's breast as he charged.

The bully stopped dead, and as he uttered a howl of fury, Dick sent the stream full in his face.

"Come on, you beauty!" cried Dick. "Think you are a charging rhinoceros? Ha, ha, ha! Getting wet, aren't you? Why don't you come on, you coward? You can't get much wetter!"

This was perfectly true, but it was no easy matter to come on with that rush of water in his face, and he was half choked by the time he gained the engine.

Dick darted away, and Giles, the gardener, who had been nearly convulsed as he watched the proceedings on his return from the house, now approached, while Dick, who was very chummy with him, hid amongst the laurels.

"Here!" cried Giles, seizing Gowl by the arm, as he was gazing around for his enemy. "How dare you come into my garden and empty my engine like this? Do do think I've got nothink to do but fill that engine. Haw, haw, haw! Why, you've turned blue with the cold. Bust me if he ain't as blue as violets."

Dick's Daring Deed.

"RELEASE me, you insolent ruffian!" howled Gowl. "If you don't take your hands off me I'll knock you down!"

"See here, young gent," exclaimed Giles, noticing that Mr. Forster was coming towards them from the college, "I always did respect young gents in the college—when the young blackguards don't get up to their tricks," he added, beneath his breath. "I have my dooty to perform, and shall perform it even if you knock me down. Oh, I beg your pardon, sir! I did not see you coming."

"What is the meaning of this behaviour, Gowl?" demanded Mr. Foster. "I ordered you to come to my study this morning."

"It's that young villain Clare," cried Gowl. "He has drenched me to the skin."

"Has Master Clare been here, Giles?"

"Well sir, I wouldn't like to say. I certainly thought I saw—observed a preperessing young gent in the neigh—vicinity of these ere domains." Giles always considered it incumbent on him when addressing a master to use the longest words he could remember. He did not always use them in the right place, but it was near enough for him.

"Why were you chasing Clare?" demanded Mr. Forster of the bully.

"I have reason to believe he poured that stuff over me when I was in the bath, and—"

"Haw, haw, haw—ahum—hough—hough—— Oh, this dreadful cough!" mumbled Giles. Then he redoubled his cough, for a slight rustling in the bushes warned him that Dick was making his escape. Dick had tipped him liberally on more than one occasion, so that he was on his side all the time.

"Come to my study at once, Gowl," ordered the master. "Did Clare drench you on purpose?"

"Of course he did. The little villain squirted the water at me."

"Haw—hough!"

"And Giles helped him," added Gowl, maddened at the badly suppressed laughter, and no more believing in the cough than did the master.

"Why, you wicked, sinful young bla—young gentleman," cried Giles, "I wasn't near the sp—the purlieus. I was perigrinating by the pantry. Cook will tell the story."

"The same lie, you mean," snarled Gowl.

"I don't consider it opportune that a young gent should doubt my ferocity," observed Giles. "We all know how truthful you are."

"Follow me, Gowl," ordered the master.

"You hound!" murmured Gowl, glaring at Giles, as the master walked away.

Then Giles rubbed his own back, screwed up his mouth in a round, and squinted horribly.

When Mr. Forster entered his study he found Dick awaiting him, for he had previously been ordered into the master's presence.

"Gowl has informed me that you poured ink over him while he was in his bath last night. It is not my custom to force a boy to incriminate himself, and Gowl says that he did not actually see you play the disgraceful trick. Do you wish to say anything?"

"Yes, sir. I had nothing to do with it."

"Then it was Tom Hart," declared Gowl.

"Tom Hart can answer for himself," said Dick.

"You know who did it!"

"First of all you accuse me without the slightest evidence, then you accuse Hart under similar circumstances; then you assert that I know who did it. But in each case you are only guessing. I assure you, sir, I had nothing to do with it, and trust that is all you will require me to say."

"Yes. If I will not force a boy to incriminate himself, I shall certainly not strive to force himself to incriminate another. I accept your word that you had nothing to do with the matter, Clare. Now Gowl charges you with having squirted water at him."

"Quite correct, sir, I did."

"Why?"

"I'd rather Gowl gave you that information, sir."

"He was grossly impertinent to me," declared Gowl. "I ordered him to come to my study, and as he ran away I followed. He leapt the hedge into the Doctor's private grounds, and I considered it my duty to follow him. He then drenched me with water."

"Repeat the words he uttered, Gowl."

"He called me a devilish-blue scoundrel, jeered at me, and incited other boys to do the same."

"Do you admit that, Clare?"

"I suppose it is a half-truth, sir. It does not give you the right impression. I certainly laughed at him—by reason of his colour. I also said 'Talk about blue devils,' and I squirted at him. I also remarked that

I did not want to be thumped because he had got the blues, but that it was no good him getting angry with me because I did not blue him. That is every word I uttered."

"You did not call him a devilish scoundrel?"

"Certainly not!"

"Do you deny that you called me a devil?" demanded Gowl.

"I said 'Talk about blue devils.' I submit that such an expression is a very different thing from calling you a devilish scoundrel. It is an abominable falsehood to assert that I called you anything of the sort."

"There is no difference—"

"That is a point for Mr. Foster to decide."

"You want to deceive him to escape the thrashing you deserve."

"Bosh! Do you think I'm going to lie to strive to deceive a master? I'd take a hundred lickings first."

"Did you squirt the water at Gowl because you feared what he would do to you, Clare?" demanded Mr. Foster.

"Not I, sir. I'm no more frightened of him than I'm frightened—of you, or the Head. I no doubt did it so that he should not catch me; but I also did it for the lark."

"Your next half holiday will be stopped. I shall endeavour to discover the boy who played that disgraceful trick on you, Gowl. No doubt you will do the same. Was Hart in your company when the trick was played?"

"Yes, sir! He had no more to do with it than I had, which is nothing. We did not know the trick was going to be played in such a form, neither had we the power of stopping it," said Clare.

"Would you have stopped it?"

"Well—I wouldn't like to say, sir. I think we would. I am not sure. If I had known it would have dyed him that ghastly colour I think I would have stopped it, but I am not at all sure on the point."

"It is a great pity there should be such enmity between you and Gowl."

"As far as I am concerned, sir, there is no enmity at all. It is true there is no friendship, and never will be, but then it is scarcely likely considering his age and mine."

"You would play him tricks that you would not play against the captain of this college."

"I'd play Vance tricks that I wouldn't play on the curate of Ravenswood, sir. The difference between the two is scarcely greater."

"And that is how the little demon insults me."

"You know the reason why, Gowl. You can go."

Mr. Foster did his utmost to discover the delinquent, but he completely failed. The fault was Gowl's, because he told the master that he was certain Melby was not the culprit. Had Melby been questioned he would, without doubt, have given himself away; but Gowl had sent him out on an errand, and had imagined he was actually out at the time the trick was played. He thought Melby would blurt this out as an alibi, and that would have caused further trouble. Thus it was that the culprit escaped, while Dick got his half holiday stopped.



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The idea was to make up for it, and so when Vance had his next night out, Dick broke bounds, and took a stroll along the summit of the cliffs, keeping at a safe distance from the college. He intended to pay a subsequent visit to the tuck-shop, and bring a supper in.

At about a mile to the north the cliffs jutted out in a point where they were almost perpendicular, and it was a grand sight to watch the waves bursting against the face of the cliff when the tide was high. It was now coming in, and Dick walked to the extreme edge of the cliff, standing on the brink without the slightest sign of nerves.

Then an expression of wonder came into his eyes. On a ridge of rocks jutting far out into the sea, stood a young girl, and she had evidently seen him, for she was waving her handkerchief as a signal of distress.

Dick knew that the tide had more than an hour to flow, and already it had covered a portion of the ridge of rocks between her and the shore, cutting off her retreat. Beyond the ridge of rocks, in the shelter of the little natural bay, a rowing-boat was moored, while others were on the beach; but it would have taken Dick half an hour to get round, and by that time the waves would have been bursting over the rocks on which the young girl stood.

"She's Viva, the Doctor's daughter," muttered Dick, gazing intently towards her. "There's just one way to get to her in time—at least, there are two, only I'm too big a coward to dive down this height and chance hitting my head on the rocks. That being so I'll take the other way. My father would have dived!"

As a matter of fact his father would have done nothing of the sort. He would naturally have adopted the surest means of rescuing the girl, and those means were exactly what Dick attempted—and failed in.

He commenced to descend the rocks, and found his progress comparatively easy for the first twenty-five feet; after that further progress became impossible, for the face of the cliff was sheer beneath him.

"It's all right, Viva," he shouted, hoping that his voice would reach her. "I'm coming to rescue you. It's quite simple. Don't be frightened."

He hurriedly took off his boots, and flung off his coat, then stepping to the brink on which he stood, he gazed down the height, and faintly, borne by the wind, he heard Viva's voice.

"Don't come. You must not venture. You will be killed!"

"If I hadn't been a coward I'd have taken this dive from the summit, and so saved time," mused Dick.

He was at least fifty feet above the level of the water, whose depth he had no means of telling, but he took the terrible leap, and down the height his body swept to plunge into the water.

Viva's hands were clasped, and her breath came in a gasp as she watched for the reappearance of the brave lad who had faced what seemed like certain death for her sake.

Then she uttered an exclamation of thankfulness as his head rose above the surface, and he came towards the rocks with a swift side-stroke.

"That's all right," he panted, struggling up. "The rest is easy, Viva."

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