

NO. 61.—DETECTIVE TALES FOR ALL.—1^D.

Week ending
August 5, 1916.

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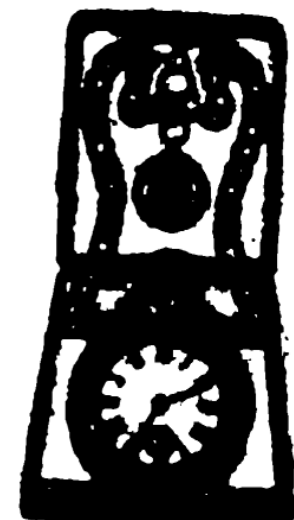
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CHAPTER I.

Introduces Jimmy Bartlett, Wastrel ; also Tells of "The Golden Boomerang."

YOUNG Jimmy Bartlett was an example of what a too indulgent parent, plus an unlimited allowance, in an old and effete civilisation, can do to wither a growing sapling.

John Bartlett, the well-known steamship owner and colonial banker, had decided, when Jimmy first saw the light of this world, that the son should know nothing of the trials which had beset the father's early life. He did not pause to reason that it was due to a great extent that he had met these trials, and mastered them, that he was what he was to-day.

On the contrary, he looked back with a shudder upon the days when he had toiled in the mines of British Guiana, and ventured forth on balata expeditions, and had "cruised" the deep woods in search of mahogany and wild rubber.

There, in the wilds of the "magnificent province," he had gained his start, and now John Bartlett, the millionaire, desired to see his only son brought up in the lap of luxury. Yet no man may deliberately cast a parasite upon the world without, in some degree, paying the price, and, incidentally, calling down upon the same parasite the wrath of Nature, who abhors a useless cog in the scheme of things.

At any rate, what money and education could do to make young Jimmy Bartlett a wastrel they had done, and, all too late, John Bartlett awoke to his mistake. In the first zeal of rectification he had struck too hard.

He had whipped the boy out of England, and, cutting his once too ample allowance down to next to nothing, had sent him off, "bag and baggage," to British Guiana, with instructions to the manager of John Bartlett and Company, in Demerara, to "make a man of him, no matter what it cost."

Jimmy had arrived in Georgetown almost a nervous wreck from too many cigarettes, too many cocktails, and too many night-clubs. Thin, pasty-faced, and obviously unhealthy, he was about as finished a specimen of what the swift life will do for one as could be found in a day's journey. John Bartlett's orders had been curt, and to the point:

"Make him work until he drops. Make a man of him, no matter what it costs."

In a way he was more to blame than the son. Jimmy Bartlett was not naturally vicious, but years of the life he had led tended to dull what strength of character the boy may have had; and the result was not lovely.

Yerkes, the manager at Georgetown, was a hard man by nature, and harder by experience. His pet aversion in life was the modern young man of leisure, and to take upon himself the moulding of such a wreck as Jimmy Bartlett filled him with an unholy joy.

As for Jimmy Bartlett himself, he accepted his fate with a nonchalance born of ignorance. He could not believe that his father would persist in this new phase. It was utterly unlike what he had always known of him.

He hoped, at the worst, that it would mean but a short exile in British Guiana, and then, when his father relented, a return to England for the killing of the fatted calf.

But he had been in Georgetown a very short time when he became sadly disillusioned. He grew to hate Yerkes with a fierce, almost hysterical hatred—a hatred which was none the less because he was helpless to strike back. He had been put to work in the office, one degree above the half-caste office-boy, and when he had rebelled—the rebellion had taken the form of simply walking out and staying out for the day—he had gained nothing.

He still remembered—and with a shudder—the interview which had followed with Yerkes. Yerkes had gone to the hotel that same evening, and had found Jimmy in the billiard-room, somewhat the worse for cocktails. He had grimly led the boy to his room, and, once the door had closed, took him by the collar and shook him as a dog does a rabbit.

“I am not going to say much,” he snarled, when Jimmy was wondering why Yerkes seemed to be three persons instead of only one, “but you had better listen to what I do say. You have been sent out here to me, with definite orders from your father to make a man of you. I don’t think that is possible myself; but he gives the orders, and I will obey as far as possible.

“I don’t know how much money you had when you landed here, but I can tell you that the money you draw from the Demerara branch of John Bartlett and Company won’t keep you at this hotel. If you run up any bills they won’t be paid from this office. You will draw the equivalent of three pounds a week, and, by thunder, you will have to live on it.

“You will come back to work where you left off this morning, and you can bet your life you will not draw a penny you don’t earn. For walking out to-day you get docked one day’s pay. Also, I shall warn the people at this hotel that you don’t earn enough to live here, and that if you run up bills I sha’n’t pay them. That will about do for you. Get to bed, you white, pasty-faced wreck, and get some sleep. Be at your desk at nine in the morning.”

With that Yerkes had thrown him aside and had stalked out. When the door had closed, Jimmy Bartlett collapsed on the bed, and stared ahead of him with the naked flame of his hatred revealed in all its horror. If he had been more of a man he would have struck Yerkes, and Yerkes would have thought more of him for doing so. But all he could do was to sit and shiver, and curse and hate.

It was the worst kind of hatred—it was the hatred which strikes from the dark. Yet he had sense enough to see that an appeal to Yerkes was useless. He had less than ten pounds left of the amount he had come to British Guiana with, and he owed that, and more, at the hotel.

The only way out seemed to be to cable to his father. He wrote the cable that same night, and, pending the arrival of a reply, the tenor of which he felt confident would be satisfactory, he idled away all the next

day at the hotel. That evening the answer came, and with it the last of Jimmy Bartlett's hopes died away. It said simply:

"Can do nothing. Refer you to Yerkes. He has full instructions and power. Have told him to make a man of you. If anyone can do so he can. Better buck up and go at it.—(Signed) John Bartlett."

That night things were brought to a head by a request from the management of the hotel that Jimmy should pay what he owed them. He could not meet the bill in full, but, after some argument, the manager said he would wait for the balance, and intimated at the same time he would like Jimmy's room.

Perforce the boy was compelled to seek cheaper lodgings, and, finally, himself carried his bag along to a cheap rooming-house down in Camp Road. And the next morning he turned up once more at the office. It was a case of do that or starve, and he chose the lesser evil, simply because he hadn't the nerve to do the other.

Georgetown is not a large place, and, with only a small proportion of whites in the population, it follows as a matter of course that gossip is rife. It is the same in all tropical places where white men foregather. Therefore it was not long before the whole town knew what had happened to Jimmy Bartlett.

Some there were who laughed, some who merely grunted, and some who had time to pity the boy. But there was none to go to him and hold out a helping hand. The business was left to Sam Yerkes, and he needed no help.

A month drifted along, during which Jimmy Bartlett managed somehow to do the simple work set him and to live on the three pounds a week that Yerkes allowed him. He could not live a very lurid life on that amount, and he could get no credit. But gradually he was driven to companionship of some sort. Thereon Sam Yerkes made a mistake.

It was all very well to cut the financial ground from under the boy's feet, but to do that, and to provide him with nothing to take its place, beyond work during the day, was not wise. It was but natural that the young fellow should get surfeited with days of toil beside a smelling half-caste, and that his evenings should be of a lonely order.

If Yerkes had taken him to his own house, if he had allowed the influence of his wife to work upon the lad, the metamorphosis of Jimmy Bartlett might have been a different one. But he was a hard man himself, and the very suggestion of the life Jimmy had been leading was enough to rouse his ire. It was his theory that the boy should work hard enough during the day to want nothing at night but sleep.

Bartlett had enough pride and shame to shun those with whom he had previously associated. They knew his shame, and knew that he was helpless. Therefore he took to seeking his pleasure surreptitiously in places where he had no business to be.

He got into the habit of going to a small dingy resort down by the docks, upon which Water Street faces. Just between Water Street and Mundy Street was this place, and, while one occasionally came upon a few whites there, it was mostly patronised by the water-front scum.

There was gambling there, there was a billiard-table, and there was cheap drink. About the only thing at which Jimmy Bartlett was an adept was billiards, and by playing a careful game he managed to make a small weekly addition to his wages.

And on a certain night in July, when the city was sweating under the heat of the equator, Jimmy Bartlett took himself to the low-class saloon, which was now his favourite haunt, in order to put in one of his usual evenings, all unconscious that news had just come down from the upper

reaches of the Essequibo River which had set the town rocking in the throes of a great gold-rush.

On his arrival at the resort, Jimmy Bartlett found all the gaming tables deserted, and the whole outfit, white man, negro, Indian, half-caste, and what not, gathered round a man who stood at the bar, and who had just come down from Tumatumari Fall, the starting-point for the goldfields. Jimmy Bartlett listened to him, fascinated.

"The greatest nugget ever found," he was saying thickly. "I've seen it myself, I tell you. Never was the like of it—shaped like an Australian boomerang, and solid gold. It'll beat the Ballarat nugget and the Castle-main nugget. It is three feet long and a foot high—solid gold, and worth forty thousand pounds, if a penny. My heavens! Gimme another drink; it makes me go thirsty to talk about it."

Jimmy Bartlett pushed himself through the crowd, which gave way on noticing his colour. The man who was telling about the nugget which had been found up the Essequibo was a miner, and, from the way he spoke, Jimmy Bartlett concluded that he had been in the Australian fields in his time.

He called for a drink and asked the miner to join him. Then, when the latter had gulped down the fiery liquor, Jimmy drew him out again. The story was easy of telling.

It seemed that a prospecting party, which had started from the Tumatumari Falls, had worked along the upper reaches of the Essequibo, until they had reached Taruma. Just beyond, on the borders of Brazil, were the Amuccu Mountains, and at the base of these the great nugget had been found.

From its shape, which was roughly like that of a boomerang, it had already been christened the "Golden Boomerang," and the man who told Jimmy Bartlett the tale, had himself seen it in transit on its way to Georgetown.

"It's been sold already," he said, as he gulped down another drink. "Forty thousand pounds, I hear, was paid for it by Bartlett's Bank."

Jimmy Bartlett wandered away to the billiard-room, and, slumping down in a seat, rolled a cigarette. There would be no gaming there that night. All Georgetown was wild over the discovery. Those who could were already preparing to go up the Essequibo, with the hope of reaching the new goldfields before all the best claims had been staked out.

And to think that this great nugget, easily the largest the world had ever seen, should have been brought into Georgetown, should have been sold to his own father's bank, and he, the son, should know nothing of it, that he must first hear of it in a low saloon near the stellings.

It came home to him fully as he sat there just how much of a cipher he was in the affairs of the business, and Jimmy Bartlett rose higher in courage at that moment than he had at any time since coming to the colony. It was with a feeling of blind hatred against Yerkes that he tossed away the end of his cigarette, and, rising, stumped out of the place.

In the front bar they were still talking of the great find, and, once in the street, he could see small groups here and there, groups of native Indian labourers, who, he doubted not, were discussing the same thing.

"Well, they know more about it than Bartlett's own son does," he reflected bitterly, as he took his way towards the railway station.

"To think that Yerkes should have known about it all day, and I never guessed it. I—I hate him, and one day I'll get even with him, if it's the last thing I do."

Passing the end of the railway station, Jimmy Bartlett made his way down

Parade Street, and so out by the sea-wall, which keeps at bay the encroaching Atlantic. In the afternoon great crowds had been there, for along the sea-wall and up by the Botanic Gardens is where Georgetown takes the air.

But now there was scarcely a soul to be seen; the whole stretch of the sea-wall from Camp Road was a deserted promenade, and, slouching along to the grey stone parapet, Jimmy Bartlett leaned upon it and gave himself up to gloomy thoughts.

"If I only had the value of that nugget, I'd show Yerkes!" he muttered savagely. "I'd——"

But there he broke off as a soft footfall sounded behind him and the soft, cultured voice of an educated man greeted him.

— — —

CHAPTER I.

Dr. Mortimer Crane Plays a Deep Game—Jimmy Bartlett Forms a Dangerous Friendship—Dr. Mortimer Crane Forms a Partnership.

IF anyone had whispered to Jimmy Bartlett at that moment to beware, he would have paid no attention to the voice. In the depths of his misery, a voice had hailed him with the voice of fellowship; and he had missed the companionship of his own class more than he realised until that moment.

As he heard the pleasant "Good-evening" beside him, he turned and found himself gazing upon a man whom he knew at once to be a man of the upper European class. Although it was dark by the sea-wall, he could see that his companion was dressed in white—immaculate white, with white shoes and a broad, soft panama-hat.

He was smoking a cigar, the fragrance of which caused Jimmy Bartlett's nostrils to twitch, and which he knew came from only a very choice leaf.

"Good-evening," said the voice again—a soft, well-modulated voice, with just a tinge of arrogance in it. "You and I seem to be the only ones who appreciate the beauties of the sea promenade at night."

"It's only on the nights the band plays down here that the people come," said Jimmy Bartlett. "In the afternoons, though, there are plenty of people here."

The stranger nodded.

"I was here this afternoon," he said. "I did not realise that there were so many white people in Georgetown until then. You, sir—you live here?"

Jimmy Bartlett nodded in reply to the question.

"Yes—worse luck!" he said, as he felt for a cigarette.

"May I offer you a cigar?" went on the stranger courteously.

Jimmy took it, and with the first indrawing of the fragrant smoke he warmed to his new friend. He knew that the other must be a stranger in the place, and now, as he got a better look at his features, he remembered vaguely that the same man had been in Bartlett's Bank earlier in the day.

"Shall we walk along?" said the stranger.

They fell into step, and walked slowly along by the sea-wall.

"Permit me to introduce myself," said the stranger, when they had covered a few paces. "I am sorry I have not a card with me, but perhaps we can manage without that formality. My name is Crane. I am by way of being a doctor."

"And mine is Bartlett," said Jimmy Bartlett.

"Ah, indeed!" said Crane. "Are you, by any chance, related to the Bartletts of Bartlett's Bank?"

"I am the son of John Bartlett," said the boy sulkily.

Nor did he dream for a single moment that Dr. Mortimer Crane had not

only known that fact, but that he had deliberately followed him that same evening for the purpose of scraping an acquaintance.

He had not been in Georgetown two days before he had heard the gossip of the place, and, seeing Jimmy Bartlett pass the hotel the previous day, had pricked up his ears on hearing a laughing remark made about the boy.

He had thought little of it, though he had listened closely while the young fellow's history was related; but when the news of the finding of the great nugget on the upper reaches of the Essequibo had come in, Dr. Mortimer Crane had thought of that nugget first and of Jimmy Bartlett next, for it was common knowledge that Bartlett's Bank had bought the nugget for a figure close to forty thousand pounds.

But why he had at once set out to find Jimmy Bartlett and to scrape an acquaintance with him was a secret which he kept locked deep in his own heart. Certainly, if he desired any favours from Bartlett's Bank, Jimmy Bartlett was not the one to approach. He had no more influence in his own father's business than the veriest half-caste who totalled up figures in the ledger.

But Dr. Mortimer Crane seemed to know what he was about, for he assiduously cultivated the boy until, later in the evening, he had prevailed upon him to return to the hotel with him for one parting drink.

To a man of Crane's cunning and experience, Jimmy Bartlett was as clay in the hands of the potter. On the way back to the hotel, he managed to let Jimmy Bartlett know just how famous a specialist he was without seeming to advance the information.

In fact, Jimmy Bartlett began to think how clever he had been to discover the fact. And once they had arrived at the hotel, he saw that his new friend was a man of power there, even though he had been in Georgetown only two days.

The hotel was situated in High Street just before that thoroughfare widens out by the Georgetown Club, and, as on most evenings, Jimmy Bartlett saw several men from the club whom he knew. He returned their cool nods frigidly, and followed his new friend to a luxurious private sitting-room on the first floor—a wide, spacious room, overlooking the square.

"Now, we can have a cosy chat," said Crane, as he drew a couple of easy-chairs towards the open window.

And, hearing him, Jimmy Bartlett never for a single moment guessed that it was because he was already in full possession of his history that Dr. Mortimer Crane had not taken him to one of the public rooms below.

Why should Dr. Mortimer Crane go out into the streets of Georgetown and search about until he found the derelict Jimmy Bartlett? What possible use could the young fellow be in the scheme of things as planned by the older man? It was certainly not for charity's sake or for pity's sake.

Crane was not the type of man to waste either time or money on derelicts unless he calculated on getting back his investment a thousandfold. Then why had he sought out Jimmy Bartlett? True, the boy was the son of the wealthy John Bartlett, and had he still been living in the indulgence of his father he might have been of some use to an adventurer.

But the contrary was the case, and all Demerara knew it. He had less influence with his father, or his father's business, than any stranger. He was employed at a nominal wage, at work of the simplest sort, at the branch in Georgetown.

It was common knowledge that Yerkes, the manager there, treated him with the utmost contempt. He knew nothing of the firm's business activities. He had first heard from strangers that it was his own father's firm that had bought the great boomerang nugget found on the Essequibo.

Then what did Crane wish of him?

Only that cunning adventurer's own brain could have answered that question. Yet for some reason or other he apparently found it worth while to assiduously cultivate Jimmy Bartlett, for before the boy had been in his private sitting-room an hour he had unbosomed himself to Dr. Mortimer Crane, and Crane, by a few sly remarks, had conveyed an impression to the lad that he also did not like Sam Yerkes, the manager of the Bartlett business in Demerara.

Before Jimmy Bartlett left his new friend that night, they were on intimate terms, and the boy had promised to lunch with Crane at the hotel the following day.

When Crane dismissed him for the night, he went back to his sitting-room and, pouring out a stiff whisky-and-soda, lit a fresh cigar. For an hour he sat there, sipping the drink and puffing at his cigar; then, rising, he muttered:

"It might be worked! It is worth while trying. Good heavens, what a haul! I'll go at it the first thing in the morning. But I must have a yacht to do it!"

And this strange man, who had built up for himself, as one of the greatest nerve and brain specialists in the world, who might have risen to any heights in his profession, yet who had at last "cut the painter," and had definitely embarked upon a life of crime, went to bed and slept as quietly as the most honest man.

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The rising sun the next morning lit up the water front of Georgetown with a soft, crimson flush, which presaged another hot day. Out beyond the sea wall, the blue Atlantic rolled in ceaselessly, its combers breaking white as they struck the shallows outside, rolling in with a long sweep, to break close under the grey sea wall.

Round the corner of the bend, where the Demerara emptied its muddy waters into the ocean, a great line of fan-palms stretched far away along the shore. Beyond the sea wall, where the green profusion of the gardens lay, the same noble trees were clearly silhouetted against the deep blue of the morning sky, and along the whole water front the gangs of early blacks, going to their day's toil, lent a touch of colour to the scene.

Back in the town it was still silent. Georgetown still slept, and not yet were Water Street and High Street re-echoing with the noise of the wheels of business.

As the sun cleared the horizon's rim, the bells of the cathedral rang out over the city, calling the devout to prayer with their silvery appeal; then, from the distance down Berbice way, came the coarser sound of an engine's whistle.

High overhead, cut black against the blue dome, wheeled two solitary vultures, preparing for what another day might bring them.

At one of the stellings on the water front, the rising sun lit up a beautiful white yacht. She had come into port the day before, and all that was known about her was that she was named the La Rose, that she was a private yacht, and that from her size and the sumptuousness of her fittings one must suppose her owner to be a person of large means.

Her decks were still wet from the early sloshing-down they had received, when from the entrance to the main saloon there stepped the figure of a girl.

She was clad in pure, cool white, though at the moment she wore no covering on her head. Her hair, coal-black, made a striking contrast against her

fair skin and white clothes, yet the contrast was intensified by the deep-brown eyes, looking almost black, beneath high, arched brows.

It was the owner of the yacht *La Rose*. No obese newly-rich owned that yacht, but this slim young girl, who rose with the sun and sauntered to the side, with a smile of greeting for the new day resting on her red young lips.

In Paris, one might have discovered that the young woman's name was Mademoiselle Miton, known even more intimately in some quarters as the Black Wolf. But here, in Demerara, she was quite unknown, though, to be sure, the residents of Georgetown were not to be left long in ignorance as to her identity.

Standing at the side facing the sea, the girl opened one hand, and took out a small nickel coin. Like creatures of the sea, two little negro boys suddenly emerged from the water beside the yacht and, swimming in close, began to scramble up the side with the agility of monkeys.

Mademoiselle Miton watched them with a smile on her face; then, when they had reached the lower deck, she bent out over the side and allowed one of the coins to fall into the water.

Not until it struck the surface did either of the negro boys move. Then they went down head-first in a clean dive, following the flashing coin as it zigzagged down through the clear green water. One of them, quicker than the other, caught it with his hand, thrust it into a capacious mouth, and, turning a complete somersault, shot towards the surface again.

The other, with his mouth in a wide grin, followed suit, and soon the pair of urchins were climbing up the side again.

It was the amusement indulged in by all tourists who visit the tropics—watching negro boys dive for coins—and certainly it seemed to amuse the Black Wolf, for she sent them down again and again, until her handful of coins was gone.

Then she dismissed them with a wave of her hand, and was just turning to walk along the deck, when suddenly she paused and wrinkled her brows as a man came down the wharf towards the yacht.

He was a man at whom one must look twice, a man whose face showed more than the ordinary amount of intellect, and whose manner was that of one accustomed to command. Thinking that he might be one of the port officials, Mademoiselle Miton stood by the side and waited until he had come up the gangway to the deck.

He advanced towards her, removing his soft panama-hat as he did so, and revealing the high forehead of the intellectual. He came to a pause just in front of her and, bowing, said:

"Have I the honour to address Mademoiselle Miton, the owner of this yacht?"

The Black Wolf gazed at him coolly and nodded.

"That is my name," she said. "May I inquire——?"

"I shall explain fully in a moment, mademoiselle," went on the other, interrupting her. "My name is Crane—Dr. Mortimer Crane. I dare not flatter myself that you have ever heard of me, and therefore I shall explain who I am and why I have taken the liberty of visiting you this morning."

"Do you mean you are Dr. Mortimer Crane, the Harley Street specialist?" asked the Black Wolf, glancing at him sharply.

Crane bowed.

"You honour me by knowing my identity, mademoiselle," he said. "I had not dared to hope that my poor fame had reached you."

"I have heard of you," said the Black Wolf slowly.

Yet she did not mean in the way he had taken it. At the moment she was thinking of some strange whispers which had reached her about this same

man. Now she studied him more closely; but if she expected to find any explanation in his face she was disappointed. It was only the polite mask adopted by the man of the world under all circumstances, and revealed nothing of the inner thoughts.

"And why have you come to see me, Dr. Mortimer Crane?" she asked, after a moment.

"Mademoiselle," he said, in a low tone, gazing straight into her eyes, "I have come to talk to you about a certain matter which I hope will interest you. It is not the subject for public converse, however. I beg that you will grant me just five minutes where we may be free from interruption."

The Black Wolf turned, and made a brief gesture.

"Come to the after promenade deck with me, Dr. Crane," she said curtly. "I shall give you the five minutes you ask for."

Dr. Mortimer Crane followed her along until they stood beneath the awning aft. There a few white wicker chairs had been placed, and as they sat down a white-jacketed steward approached and stood at attention.

"You will bring coffee and rolls for two," ordered Mademoiselle Miton.

"You will join me at coffee?" she inquired of the doctor, when the steward had gone.

"With pleasure, mademoiselle," he said, with a bow. "And now, may I speak of the matter which brought me here?"

"I am listening," she said slowly.

"Mademoiselle," he said earnestly, bending forward, "you will forgive me if I say that in the past I have—er—heard one or two things which tell me you are a woman of exceptional calibre. I—er—believe me, mademoiselle, it is a little difficult to be perfectly frank, but at the risk of your displeasure I must be.

"I have heard that on more than one occasion you have put your wits in opposition to the law, and that you have not come off second-best. It is because I have heard those things that I have had the temerity to approach you this morning. Shall I go on?"

"Proceed, please," said the Black Wolf, with a faint smile hovering about her lips. "I am all attention."

"Mademoiselle, I wish to ask you a question. I wish to ask if you have heard of the great nugget known as the 'Golden Boomerang,' which has just been found on the upper reaches of the Essequibo, and which at this moment is lying in a Georgetown bank?"

The Black Wolf nodded.

"I heard something about it last night after we docked," she said. "I gathered that it was of some considerable value."

"Mademoiselle, it is magnificent!" said Dr. Mortimer Crane, his eyes glistening as he thought of it. "I myself saw that nugget yesterday in Bartlett's Bank here. It is not exaggerated. It is a great mass of pure gold, precipitated by Nature in a freakish moment, and it is worth, in actual weight, forty thousand pounds.

"It is rightly named the Golden Boomerang. It is roughly shaped like an Australian boomerang, and unless that golden mass recoils upon those who possess it, then I miss my guess."

"But you did not come here this morning just to rave about this find," said the Black Wolf.

"I beg your pardon, mademoiselle; my enthusiasm carried me away. It is true I did not come here just to talk about it. But it is an essential part of what I have to say.

"Mademoiselle, I shall put it frankly. Would you—could you be tempted to enter into an attempt to get possession of that Golden Boomerang?"

The Black Wolf gazed at him speculatively for a few seconds; then she smiled.

"Isn't that rather an odd question for the famous and well-known Harley Street specialist to ask?" she said coolly. "Why, I could almost believe from the way you put it that you mean to get possession of the Golden Boomerang in some illegal manner!"

"You are making sport of the matter," responded Crane coolly. "You know what I mean well enough, mademoiselle. You know that I have not spoken without giving the matter careful thought. If I had not known you were in Georgetown, I should have laid my plans differently. But, mademoiselle, I can be of use to you and you can be of use to me.

"I think I can place before you a plan for getting possession of the Golden Boomerang which will appeal to you. You see, I have been very frank with you. I have taken a great risk in doing so, for there are very, very few persons who suspect that Dr. Mortimer Crane is other than the nerve and brain specialist. Yet you yourself have gained my confidence by evading the law, and I have placed my secret in your keeping. Now, won't you be frank with me as well?"

Mademoiselle Miton took a sip of the coffee which the steward had brought, and, lighting one of her favourite Petrov cigarettes, allowed the blue smoke to curl up lazily into the warm morning air. Then she shrugged ever so slightly.

"I must say that you have been frank enough, Dr. Crane," she said slowly. "On the other hand, I might also ask why you should assume that the proposal you have just put forward would appeal to me. You say that I have evaded the law on different occasions. That means that you have heard things about me, and, on the strength of gossip, have come to me with this plan.

"I might, you know, utterly deny the truth of the things you have heard. I might, and could, grow very indignant at such a statement. And when you say that very, very few persons suspect that you are other than the famous brain and nerve specialist, you are no doubt correct. Nevertheless, there are those who do suspect, for I myself have heard a whisper about you.

"Nor shall I adopt the indignant pose with you. I shall neither acknowledge nor deny that I have ever broken the laws of my country. I must leave that to your own surmise. You say that I can be of use to you, and that you can be of use to me. That may be so, and I take it you mean we should enter into a concerted attempt to get possession of the Golden Boomerang.

"Now, I am going to be frank with you, Dr. Crane. Only last night, when I first heard of this great nugget, it occurred to me that here, if any place, was an opportunity for one to exercise one's ingenuity.

"Forty thousand pounds in solid gold is sufficient to arouse the cupidity of anyone, and I am not immune. If you have a definite plan, by which you think we can secure the Golden Boomerang, then I think—yes, I am quite sure, Dr. Crane, that I am ready to listen to you, and if your plan appeals to me, then it is just possible that we can come to some arrangement. It would, of course, be a fifty-fifty arrangement."

Mortimer Crane bowed.

"Of course, mademoiselle!" he said softly. "My plan and my work against your work and the asset of your yacht and crew. I think that is fair enough. And now, mademoiselle, I shall tell you my plan!"

With that, Dr. Mortimer Crane bent forward, and began to speak in low, earnest tones.

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The day following the conversation between Mademoiselle Miton—the Black Wolf—and Dr. Mortimer Crane on board the yacht *La Rose* was an eventful one in Georgetown, for on that day was not the famous Golden Boomerang nugget transferred from the offices of Bartlett & Co., the bankers, to the steamship *Tumatumari*, which lay at one of the stellings off Water Street?

At least, the public firmly believed that it had witnessed the transfer of the great nugget. It had been given out publicly enough that the Golden Boomerang would be taken to England on the *Tumatumari*, and that under an armed escort, it would be carted down to the stelling at midday.

There was a great crowd collected in High Street before the offices of Bartlett & Co., and as a well-planned and well-executed bluff it was faultless. First, a small platoon of the Georgetown Militia, lent for the purpose, appeared, and took up its station in front of the bank.

The native police good-naturedly kept the crowd back. And then, at twelve o'clock sharp, Sam Yerkes, the manager of the bank, appeared at the front entrance. Behind him, and carrying a huge box under which they groaned and sweated, came eight big buck niggers. A large dray backed into the kerb at the same moment, and the perspiring blacks placed the case on it.

In that case was supposed to be the Golden Boomerang nugget, which had so set all Demerara by the ears, and for which, it was said, John Bartlett & Co. had paid forty thousand pounds. Once the case was aboard the dray, the platoon of militiamen surrounded it, and, ahead of a cheering throng of whites, blacks, and Indians, the procession started for the stellingen.

All along High Street to the square in front of the Georgetown Club, down past the Museum, and so into Water Street, along past the great iron-and-glass Stabrook Market, to the T-shaped stelling beyond, where lay the *Tumatumari*, went the dray, guarded by the soldiers. And there, amidst further cheering, the heavy case which was supposed to contain the Golden Boomerang was swung aboard.

Nor did any of that cheering crowd guess for a single moment that the case contained nothing more valuable than a huge block of basalt. Yerkes, the manager of Bartlett & Co., intended taking no chances. He knew perfectly well that there were men about who would stop at little to get possession of the nugget.

There had been whispers of a well-organised attempt which would be made to secure the Golden Boomerang, and in self-protection Sam Yerkes had conceived a smooth piece of bluff.

Where he erred was in believing the rumours. He did not know—he could not know that they had been deliberately started by one Dr. Mortimer Crane with the sole intention of causing Yerkes to do exactly what he had done. As far as the public in general was concerned, it had seen the last of the nugget of fame. It was now safely aboard the *Tumatumari*, and Georgetown would see it no more.

But Sam Yerkes knew, and Dr. Mortimer Crane knew also, that the great nugget still reposed in the vault of Bartlett's Bank, and that it would not go aboard the *Tumatumari* until late that night. As a matter of fact, Crane did not know this positively until late that afternoon.

It was after the bank had closed, and he was sitting in his private sitting-room at the hotel, chatting with young Jimmy Bartlett, who had become very intimate with the famous specialist during the past day or two. The intricate mental process followed by Dr. Mortimer Crane to make the boy his tool would be of too complicated a nature to detail.

It is sufficient to say that the man to whom the brain and the heart of

the human being were an open book had so played upon the nervous strings of the lad's nature that by now the inmost secrets of his heart were in Crane's possession.

So gently had he led the boy's thoughts into the desired channels, and so easily had he gained the information he sought, that Jimmy Bartlett himself could not have put his finger on a single suspicious question which the other had asked him about the affairs of the bank.

He only knew that, for some reason, this great specialist, a visitor in Georgetown, had found him congenial, and had put it down to the fact that Dr. Mortimer Crane was of a more discerning nature than the rest of his fellow-men. Also, when hearing how pinched Jimmy was for money, the other had insisted on being his banker, and already there had been transferred from Crane to the boy a sum somewhat over a hundred pounds.

And on this afternoon in question, while the band played in the Botanic Gardens, and while all Georgetown took the air along the sea-wall, Jimmy Bartlett habbled forth secrets, which Dr. Mortimer Crane drank in eagerly.

When he finally dismissed the boy, he knew as much as Jimmy knew about the arrangements made for the transfer of the Golden Boomerang to the Tumatumari. Not that Jimmy Bartlett had been trusted by Yerkes with the secret of his plans, but among the clerks at the bank the truth had leaked out, and in the course of time it had reached Jimmy Bartlett.

So by the command of the subtle process of mind domination, of which he was a past-master, Dr. Mortimer Crane became possessed of the secret which Yerkes flattered himself was known to only himself, his chief accountant, the captain, and the purser of the Tumatumari.

Of one thing Jimmy Bartlett had been ignorant, and that was the exact time when the real nugget would be moved from the bank to the ship. Only the four principals in the matter knew what time that would be.

And Sam Yerkes was canny. He put into the making of his plans a thorough knowledge of Georgetown. Now, along Water Street, just near the T-shaped stelling at which the Tumatumari lay moored, was situated, as has already been said, the Stabrook Market.

This market, be it known, is one of the most massive structures in the town, and in the early hours of the morning is a scene of remarkable bustle. All along Water Street to Lombard Street, and across the open space in front of the market, right across to the Government buildings, the early morning presents a remarkable scene in Georgetown.

There, at the market, all the produce for the consumption of the town and surrounding districts is brought, and not only the townspeople purchase their supplies there, but the steamers and schooners lying at the stellings also get their provisions at the market.

A great, ugly mass of iron and glass, the market nevertheless takes on a strange beauty under the bright rays of the rising sun, and to stroll through the different stalls and to watch the natives with their baskets of variegated tropical fruit, coconuts, mangoes, guavas, bananas, and what not, is an experience never to be forgotten.

The mist is still lying on the Demerara and back in the hinterland; the misty peaks of the foothills are not yet visible. Out at sea the Atlantic thrashes shorewards in its never-ending roll, and the streets re-echo with the clatter of heavy wheels, the loud, high-pitched voices of the negroes, and the lower, more restrained accents of the Indian.

With the great proportion of indentured natives from India, the market presents a likeness to an Eastern bazaar, except that here one does not see the turbanned Arab, or hear the early morning call of the muezzin as the faithful are summoned to prayer.

Such was the hour and such the scene that Sam Yerkes had picked to cover up the actual transfer of the Golden Boomerang from the bank to the ship. And the scene at the bank was vastly different than it had been at midday.

No crowd gathered in the street to watch the affair, no platoon of militiamen drawn up as an escort, no dark-skinned native police. Instead, a little group of buck niggers at the back door of the bank, with a heavy market dray drawn up, and Sam Yerkes and the chief accountant of the bank superintending operations.

It was still night. Not for another twenty minutes would dawn rip asunder the mantle of purple in the east, not for another half-hour would the scimitar of the rising sun be hurled up above the pink horizon, to herald the coming of another day in the tropics.

Already, though, the market was abustle, and the heavy market cart was only one of many which had lurched and lumbered along the streets. Into the dray the eight buck niggers lifted a plain wooden case bearing the great Golden Boomerang, and then the canvas tarpaulin was dropped.

To all intents and purposes it was but a cart ready to drive to the market. A buck nigger jumped up and took the reins, clicking to the pair of mules as he did so. Another buck nigger sprang up beside him, while, under the tarpaulin at the back, the chief accountant climbed. The rest of the buck niggers and Sam Yerkes would not accompany it. It would not do to excite suspicion, and always Yerkes had before his mind the rumours he had heard.

Now the mules were turned, and as the great cart lumbered up the narrow street towards the turning which would lead into High Street the buck niggers about the door dispersed, while Sam Yerkes re-entered the bank, slamming the door after him. Now, from Bartlett's Bank, in High Street, to Water Street is only a short distance. At midday, when the block of basalt had been transferred to the Tumatumari the way had been straight along High Street to the square in front of the Georgetown Club, and from there into Water Street. But on this occasion a different course was chosen.

Instead of continuing along High Street, after emerging from the narrow lane at the back of the bank, the buck nigger who held the reins drove straight across High Street and down a side valley, until he came to the corner of Urquhar and Queen Streets.

Nor did he swing round there, but continued straight on into Water Street, or, at least, it would be more correct to say that he intended to continue straight on into Water Street. But he never reached there on that occasion, for no sooner did the dray cross the junction of Urquhar and Queen Streets, than from the shadows of a side turning, four men appeared.

There was nothing about their appearance to excite suspicion. They were one and all dressed in the thin garments of the country, and one and all were dark-skinned, as are the coast mongrels of South America.

They appeared to take no interest in the dray as it approached them, but lurched across the street in front of it, much after the fashion of four natives who had been drinking all night. In fact, so well was it done that the two buck niggers in the front seat of the dray grinned with a certain appreciation and envy.

Then things happened, and happened so swiftly, that the grins remained frozen on the two bucks. In some way those four apparently intoxicated natives parted, and, before a word could be uttered by the pair on the dray, two of the quartette were up beside them, holding a knife each at his man's throat, while the other pair had whipped up the canvas at the back, and were underneath, with revolvers pressed against the body of the chief accountant.

It needed no threats to force the two bucks into submission. They read a grim purpose in the pressure of the points of steel against their throats, and to the low-voiced commands of one of the pirates the driver dropped the reins.

A sharp command brought the mules to a stop, and, following that, the two niggers were forced back from the seat beneath the tarpaulin, and into the dray proper. There they were bound and gagged with a swiftness and precision that was only the fruit of long practice, and when they were safe from working mischief were unceremoniously bundled on top of the chief accountant, who had been treated in like manner.

So swiftly had the four pirates worked that the whole affair had taken less than two minutes, and now, while two remained in the dray to watch the prisoners, the other two climbed up on to the seat.

Not a word was spoken. Their plans had been laid too carefully to make words necessary. Each man knew what he had to do, and did it with a swiftness worthy of a better cause. Now one of them gathered up the reins, and, tightening them, clicked to the mules.

The mules not knowing—or, if they did, not caring—about the change in drivers, went on willingly enough, but on reaching Water Street, instead of turning to the left, as had been the intention of the rightful driver, they turned to the right. Along Water Street went the dray, the mules being forced into a brisk walk, until at last it turned up Barrack Street.

From there it was driven past the military quarters and the officers' quarters, until it came to Camp Road. Now a turn was made to the right and along parallel to the railway line went the dray, until, just as the sun was rising, it paused opposite a gate leading into the small military fronting park.

There four more men dressed as natives suddenly appeared, and, lifting the flap of the dray, they were assisted by the pair inside to dump out the plain case containing the Golden Boomerang. Once it had been lowered to the road the dray did not pause, but kept on again, leaving the nugget to be piled on to another dray which at that moment appeared.

Nor did the first dray stop until it reached the boundaries of Plantation Kitty. There it turned to the right again and passed along Irving Street, until it picked up the Botanic Gardens. Past the gardens it went and on to the waste land by the racecourse.

Into this waste land the dray was driven, until, after bumping along over numerous rough paths, it was finally drawn up in a small patch of scrub just beyond the racecourse. There the two in the front seat leaped out, and, taking a rope from the dray, tied the mules securely.

In the meantime, the other pair made a final examination of the two bucks and the chief accountant, and, being satisfied with their condition, joined their fellows outside. Then all four sloped off through the racecourse and down past the Botanic Gardens, by the Brick Dam, and so made their way into Water Street again.

The sun was up above the horizon now, and the scene at the market as they passed was a busy one. Drays and mules and hurrying natives filled the street, and the passage of the four created no comment among so many.

They parted at the market, and by circuitous routes three of them made their way to a certain rakish-looking white yacht which was moored at a stelling far down Water Street. The fourth walked on until he came to a certain low saloon near the water-front.

There he entered, and was seen no more, though an observing individual might have noticed that a shuffling hunchback, who looked like an Italian, emerged half an hour later and slowly made his way towards the market.

Behind a silent warehouse on a dilapidated stelling the dwarf disappeared, and from the other side their appeared ten minutes afterwards a white man smoking a cigarette, and idly interested in the bustle of the market life about him.

It was Dr. Mortimer Crane, the distinguished British specialist, a man who had already made many friends in Georgetown, and whom everybody knew was staying at the hotel. He strolled idly along to the head of the T-shaped wharf at which the Tumatumari lay, and, pausing there, gazed down at the great ship.

On the bridge he discerned two officers gazing anxiously up the stelling, as though on the lookout for something; then, with a faint smile on his lips, he turned and strode jauntily along to his hotel.

Had he waited a few seconds longer he would have been in time to see a small liner just coming into dock. It was the Berbice, up from Cayenne, in French Guiana, and, among other things, was freighted with things fateful to Dr. Mortimer Crane, as will soon be evident.

In this way was the great nugget known as the Golden Boomerang stolen in Georgetown, and on this day did Sam Yerkes awake to the fact that he was by no means infallible.



CHAPTER III.

The Arrival of the Berbice—A Distinguished Passenger Calls on His Excellency the Governor—Sam Yerkes Arrives in a Hurry.

HIS EXCELLENCY SIR HORACE TWEEDALE, Governor of the Colony of British Guiana, was indulging in what was for him a rare treat. He was enjoying nothing less than a quiet after-coffee cigar in the beautiful gardens of Government House, and, there is good reason to believe, endeavouring to think of some new channel into which he could direct his remarkable energies for the good of the colony.

It was no idle phrase which dubbed Sir Horace Tweedale "the little father of the colony," for of all the long line of illustrious men who had come and gone in an executive capacity, there was none more popular or more filled with a zeal for the development of the "magnificent province" than he.

Still on the sunny side of fifty, Sir Horace had climbed swiftly up the ladder of promotion. He had first been heard of with striking merit in India, and when a vacancy had occurred in the West Indies, he had been the man appointed to the post.

In the Leeward Islands he had done splendid work, and then had come a long period of uphill and trying achievement in West Africa. Uganda had followed, and then Mauritius, and now he had been sent to British Guiana.

In two short years he had acquired a marvellous popularity, the principal reason being that he knew the tropics from "A" to "Z," and knew where paternal government became a government for the colonists, and where it verged on a nuisance. It is not every colonial governor who possesses this same quality of distinction which makes the present governor of British Guiana the right man in the right place.

Before him stretched the cool garden, lined by a fringe of the marvellous cabbage palms than which there is nothing more beautiful in all the tropics. Off to the left of where he lounged in a white wicker chair towered a clump of the stately traveller's or fan tree, that remarkable creation of nature which appears like a lady's fan, widespread to intercept the rays of the sun, and which to the weary traveller brings sustenance, for at the base of each leaf there is a small quantity of precious water.

In the immediate foreground, and edging a small artificial lake, was a riot of blues and reds and whites—the exquisite nymphaeas—and then beyond, on the placid surface of the lake, the famous water-lilies which one sees on every patch of water in Demerara, great wide leaves nearly two yards across, with turned-up edges, and recalling to one's mind a quaint old nursery tale, so ready do they appear to receive Alice for her trip into Wonderland.

In the immediate body of the garden one could distinguish the guava, the cacao, the cocoanut palm, the aeta, and every shrub and bush which grows to profusion in the shelter of the equator.

It was indeed a very lovely scene on this morning when the Governor, white-clad and immaculate, took his ease before the business of another day should begin. Therefore it is easily understood that when a white-jacketed negro servant approached him, bearing a silver tray with a letter upon it, his Excellency felt justified in frowning.

It did seem a pity that those few moments snatched for thought could not be enjoyed in peace. He roused himself with a sigh, and, flicking the ash from his cigar, stretched out his hand for the letter.

He glanced at it curiously before opening it, noticed the crest of the steamship Berbice which plied between British, French and Dutch Guiana, then slit the seal and took out the folded double sheet of paper which it contained. This is what he read:

“His Excellency Sir Horace Tweedale,
 “Governor of British Guiana,
 “Government House,
 “Georgetown.

“Mr. Nelson Lee, of London, England, begs to present his compliments to his Excellency Sir Horace Tweedale, and begs that his Excellency will grant him a short interview for the purpose of presenting letters of introduction to his Excellency which Mr. Nelson Lee has brought from England. Any hour set by his Excellency would be quite satisfactory to Mr. Nelson Lee.

“Mr. Nelson Lee begs to state further that he is a passenger from Cayenne, French Guiana, on the Berbice, and that it is his intention to sail for England by the Tumatumari.

“He presents his most respectful salutations to his Excellency.”

That was all, and as Sir Horace Tweedale read it over the second time the frown cleared from his brow.

“That will be Nelson Lee, the famous criminologist, I imagine,” he murmured, oblivious of the presence of the negro servant. “It will be a real pleasure to meet him. What a bit of luck, too!”

“I have been sitting here actually thinking of some way in which we could improve our own police system, and, like a shot from the blue, this man of all men, turns up. He may be able to give me some valuable pointers, and, anyway, it will be very interesting indeed to talk with him. I shall invite him up for breakfast.”

Breakfast, be it known, is a somewhat different meal in the tropics than in northern countries. There, early in the morning, “coffee” only is served, this consisting of coffee and fruit, and, perhaps, a roll.

Then, at about eleven, comes the Spanish breakfast, which corresponds to the French meal at the same hour. The Governor turned to the big negro, who had the stamp of Barbadoes all over his dusky countenance, and said:

“Who brought this letter, Teacher?”

The quaintly named darkie showed his white teeth.

"It am brought by a young gen'leman, yo' Excellency," he said.

"Inform him that I shall have a reply ready in a few minutes, Teacher," said the Governor; and with a bow the black retired.

"Now Sir Horace drew towards him a small white wicker table, which stood at his elbow, and taking up a fountain pen proceeded to write.

"Sir Horace Tweedale presents his compliments to Mr. Nelson Lee," he wrote, "and begs that Mr. Nelson Lee will give him the pleasure of his company at breakfast at Government House at eleven o'clock."

He had written this on a small correspondence card with his own private crest engraved upon it, and now he thrust it in an envelope, addressing it to:

Mr. Nelson Lee,
"Steamship Berbice."

Teacher, his own private body servant, was waiting by the time he had finished, and, taking the letter from the Governor, hurried away with it.

To a lithe, white clad young fellow, who was waiting in the formal reception room—Nipper, to be exact—the darkie handed the letter, and a few minutes later Nipper was on his way back to the Berbice, which, it will be remembered, had docked that morning just as Dr. Mortimer Crane had completed his "coup."

What was Nelson Lee doing in this part of the world, it may be asked. He had been to French Guiana on a very delicate mission—a mission in which he himself had played no small part. Two years before a certain well-known French banker had been accused of a crime, and had been sent to Devil's Island for ten years.

Nelson Lee, feeling positive that the man in question was innocent, had set himself to prove his contention, and after two long years he had been able to go to the French Government with positive proof that the banker who had been punished was innocent.

The French Government, with a rare appreciation of the fitting thing, had made Nelson Lee its representative, to take to Cayenne the papers of pardon for the banker, and Lee had at once consented. He had travelled straight through to Cayenne, and within forty-eight hours of his arrival M. Paul Berime was a free man.

How Lee managed slowly but surely to accumulate the necessary proof, how he made his representations to the French Government, and the gratitude of M. Paul Berime, is another story. Sufficient is it to say that the banker was on board the Berbice, with Lee and Nipper, and that it was their intention to connect with the Tumatumari at Georgetown.

In accordance with his usual custom, Lee had provided himself with letters on leaving England. The Colonial Secretary had given him letters to the Governors of Trinidad and British Guiana, and from other prominent sources Lee had others.

He was standing aft with M. Paul Berime and the captain of the Berbice when Nipper ran up the gangway with the Governor's reply, and on reading the courteous invitation, Lee glanced at his watch.

"I shall have just time to change and go," he said, with a glance at the French banker. "Monsieur, will you forgive me if I leave you this morning? The Governor wishes me for breakfast."

"Monsieur Lee, go by all means," said the Frenchman quickly. "Monsieur Nipper and I—we will go and see the town. Helas! Monsieur, I could not see it the last time I passed through it. But now—now, Monsieur Nipper and I will do it brown, as you British say."

Lee smiled, and charging them not to load themselves up with too many curios from the Chinese quarter, went below to change into another suit

of white. At exactly half-past ten he passed over the side in immaculate white from head to foot, and walking leisurely, made his way towards Water Street.

Breakfast at Government House was usually served on a small balcony enclosed by copper netting, and overlooking the beautiful gardens.

Lee was conducted there by Teacher, the negro, where he found his Excellency, and Captain Archibald Fordham-Travers, Aide-de-Camp to the Governor.

The Governor greeted him warmly, and introduced him to the aide; then he received Lee's letters, and, with a brief word of apology, opened them. Half-way through the letter written by the Colonial Secretary, he lifted his eyes and held out his hand.

"Mr. Lee," he said, "I am very pleased indeed to welcome you. You must consider yourself my guest while you are here. And now, gentlemen, let us sit down."

Each man of that trio had travelled widely, each man had "done things" in the world—each man was a pure cosmopolitan and sportsman, and with a combination of this sort, it was fore-ordained to be an interesting meal.

They chatted with deep understanding of the distant corners of the world, and then, when the black servant had handed round the cigarettes, his Excellency leaned back and said:

"Well, Mr. Lee, you are the last from home. Tell us all the news."

Lee was just opening his mouth to reply, when suddenly he paused, as from somewhere within the house they heard a loud voice saying:

"Tell his Excellency that I shall not keep him for a moment. But I simply must see him. It is of the most urgent nature."

As the words reached them, the Governor frowned.

"Unless I am very much mistaken, that is Yerkes," he said. "A worthy man, but utterly lacks a sense of humour."

At the same moment, a young Britisher appeared at the entrance to the balcony. It was one of the Governor's secretaries. He wore an apologetic look as he glanced towards his chief.

"What is it, Roberts?" asked the Governor with a drawl.

"I am sorry to disturb you, sir," said the young man, "but Mr. Yerkes is here, and says he must see you at once, if you can possibly give him a few minutes. He says it is very urgent, sir."

His Excellency sighed.

"Very well, Roberts," he said. "Tell him I shall join him in a few moments."

When the secretary had gone the Governor rose, and, with a gesture, bade Lee and the aide to remain seated.

"Keep your seats, gentlemen," he said. "I shall go and see what Yerkes wants. He is one of our best citizens here, and would not send such a message to me unless it were urgent."

Nevertheless, Lee and Captain Fordham-Travers stood at attention whilst his Excellency passed them, and then, when he had gone, they lounged over the rail chatting of the development of the colony. In less than five minutes his Excellency was back again, bringing with him a big, raw-boned Scot—a man whom Lee instinctively knew to belong in that category known as "righteous, but hard."

"Let me introduce you to Mr. Nelson Lee," said the Governor. "This is Mr. Yerkes, Mr. Lee. Mr. Yerkes is one of our most prominent citizens here, and I have already told him of you. You have met Captain Fordham-Travers, Yerkes. And now, my dear man, do sit down and take a cigarette. Or, if that is too frivolous for you, help yourself to a cigar."

It was plain that Sam Yerkes regarded the silver box of cigarettes with strong disfavour. He looked upon them as an abomination and a curse, though, strangely enough, he did not object to taking his poison in a larger dose—that is, in the form of a cigar.

That his Excellency knew Yerkes well, and knew how to handle him, was evident to Lee, who watched the proceedings with some inward amusement. When, however, Yerkes had lit his cigar, and when they were all once more seated, the Governor dropped his banter, and in the clear, candid, blue eyes there appeared a look which indicated the force of character which had lifted Sir Horace Tweedale to his present position.

"I have asked Mr. Yerkes to come out here because he has a curious tale to tell. I thought it might interest you, Mr. Lee. But before I ask him to repeat it, I should like to inquire if you have heard of the great nugget which was found here some days ago?"

"Yes, your Excellency," answered Lee. "We got the news in Cayenne before we left. It has created quite a furore."

The Governor nodded.

"It was a great find," he said. "It will cause another gold rush in British Guiana. But the nugget, which was christened the Golden Boomerang, was not exaggerated, Mr. Lee. Mr. Yerkes, whom I can see is fuming with impatience, is the manager in the colony for the interests of John Bartlett and Company. Through him Bartlett and Company bought the Golden Boomerang for forty thousand pounds.

"It was decided to ship the nugget to England without delay, and yesterday a cheering procession accompanied what they thought was the nugget down to the stelling where the Tumatumari is moored. As a matter of fact the case which was taken down then contained nothing more valuable than a block of basalt. Mr. Yerkes exercised some of his native cunning, and worked a little bluff on the good people of Georgetown.

"The nugget itself was not sent to the ship until last night, or, rather, in the early hours of this morning. That is why Mr. Yerkes has come to see me; and the whole thing is so daring that I was certain it would interest you. Now, Mr. Yerkes, will you please tell us again what happened."

Yerkes removed his cigar from his mouth, and, speaking in short, jerky sentences, told what had happened.

"Decided to send nugget to ship just before daybreak, got a big market cart—thought would attract no attention—had cart at back of bank at hour decided on—chief accountant and myself superintended loading of case into dray—two buck niggers in front seat, and chief accountant under the cover accompanied dray from bank—dray never arrived at stelling—dray, the chief accountant, and two bucks not seen since.

"The Golden Boomerang has been stolen, as I was warned it would be stolen. Want your Excellency to give orders for every cart leaving Georgetown to be searched; want search made for dray, and want every ship in port searched."

"Don't be impatient," said his Excellency coolly. "I have already sent word to the chief of police to come here at once. Inside half an hour every channel leading from the town will be under search. Everything possible will be done, Yerkes.

"And now, Mr. Lee, what do you think of the tale? It is rather daring, and needed cool management to walk off bodily with a nugget the size of the Golden Boomerang, don't you think?"

Lee nodded slowly.

"It was certainly daring enough," he said. "But I understand your

Excellency to say that Mr. Yerkes had received warning that an attempt would be made to get possession of it. Is there any clue as to the identity of the person or persons responsible for that?"

"Yerkes shook his head. "It was just a vague rumour," he said. "Two or three persons warned me they had heard it."

The Governor smiled across at Lee. "It strikes me this is just about in your line, Mr. Lee," he said. "Here is a first-class mystery on the tapis, and a famous criminologist steps into the scene at the psychological moment. Yerkes, why don't you retain Mr. Lee's services in the matter? Forty thousand pounds is not to be sneezed at, even by Bartlett's Bank."

Lee shook his head.

"I am afraid I could not undertake it, even if Mr. Yerkes wished me to," he said. "I am booked to leave by the Tumatumari, and there are two others in my party."

"If Mr. Lee would consider the matter, I should certainly be prepared to retain his services," said Sam Yerkes gruffly.

"Well, you can talk it over with our chief of police," put in the Governor cheerfully, "for, unless I am greatly mistaken, I can hear his voice now."

He was right, for a few seconds later Teacher appeared, ushering a tall, military-looking figure on to the balcony.

As he approached the little party, they all rose, and the newcomer saluted the Governor. Then he shook hands with Captain Fordham-Travers, and was just turning to do likewise with Yerkes, when his eyes fell on Nelson Lee. For one moment a look of amazement rested on his face, then it changed to a smile of pleasure as he thrust out his hand towards Lee.

"Nelson Lee, by all the saints," he cried. "What on earth are you doing out here?"

"And I might ask you the same question, Major Percy," said Lee as they gripped. "The last time I met you, you were reorganising the police force of Siam. Now I find you here on the other side of the world."

Major Percy, one of the most able executives in the British service, smiled and nodded.

"Sure; don't I remember the time we had in Bangkok," he said. "And to think you were here, and I didn't know it."

The Governor was looking at them quizzically.

"Now, this is splendid," he said. "I had no idea you two knew one another. Percy, our worthy citizen Yerkes has come here with a tale of woe this morning. It seems that the Golden Boomerang has been spirited away from under his very nose. Get him to tell you all about it. He is in an awful state, as you can see. He demands that the whole police force be called out, and I imagine he will be demanding the militia as well."

Major Percy turned and shook hands with Yerkes.

"Sure," he said, in his rich, Irish brogue, "and I have a lot of news for you, Mr. Yerkes. Your chief accountant has been found by one of my boys tied hand and foot in an old market dray beyond the racecourse. Has that anything to do with the matter?"

Sam Yerkes was on his feet.

"My chief accountant found tied!" he exclaimed. "That is the first we have heard of him since he left the bank. Major Percy, what do you know about the matter?"

"Steady on, now, man," said the major. "Sure, I haven't seen him at all. I was just on my way to him, when I received his Excellency's command. Come along with me now, man, and you can see him for yourself, though, to be sure, he is swearing like a pirate."



Suddenly from out the murk overhead there appeared something strangely grotesque.

Lee's heart leaped within him. It was the propeller of the yacht. He had found his objective.—(See page 33.)

"You see, my boys have strict orders not to touch anything they may find until it has been seen by me. Sure, they interpreted my orders to the letter, for they refused to untie your accountant until I got there. The poor man! He is very angry, I fear. And now, what is it about the Golden Boomerang? His Excellency says it has been stolen. Sure, Mr. Yerkes. I thought ye were more clever than that, so I did."

"Go along with you, and find the dray," said the Governor. "Then come back and tell me all about it. And, Percy, give what orders for closing all avenues of escape from the town that you deem fit."

"Thanks, your Excellency, and I'll do so at once. And if your Excellency can spare my old friend, Nelson Lee, for a little, I should like him to come along with me."

"Just what I had suggested before you arrived," said the Governor. "Would you care to go, Mr. Lee?"

Lee nodded and smiled.

"I think I should," he said.

"Then go by all means: but come and see me when you return. I want to talk with you. I think you had better agree to Mr. Yerkes' proposal after all, Mr. Lee. I should like to see you in action, so to speak."

"I'll think it over, Sir Horace," rejoined Lee.

He, Major Percy, and Yerkes departed a few seconds later, and entered the big motor car which stood at the kerb. Major Percy ordered the negro driver to make at once for the racecourse, and as they started down Carmichael Street, Sam Yerkes began to relate the details of the theft of the Golden Boomerang.

It was just as the car had circled the great bulk of the Cathedral, and turned into King Street, that Nelson Lee's attention suddenly wandered from the matter in hand. Just passing by the Law Court he saw a figure which seemed strangely familiar to him. He watched the man as he turned the corner, then, as his face became visible to Lee, the detective gave a sudden gasp of surprise.

He had recognised Dr. Mortimer Crane.

CHAPTER IV.

What the Market Dray Revealed—Lee's Deductions—A Vague Suspicion.

SERIOUS though the matter was, it was impossible for Lee not to see an element of humour in the scene which met their gaze on arriving at the racecourse. The big, lumbering market cart had been driven across a rough piece of waste land into a thicket of prickly shrubs, which now almost surrounded it.

It was tilted at an angle of almost forty-five degrees, due to the nervous shifting of the mules, though it would have taken a much stronger and more stubborn beast than a mule to get free from the rope which tied them to the largest tree in the clump.

However good a churchman, and however restrained ordinarily, the chief accountant of Bartlett's Bank certainly revealed unexpected wells of fluency, for as they approached the cart they could hear him cursing all and sundry, with a finish which would have done credit to an Australian bullock-driver.

The two buck niggers lay bound and gagged, and gazing at him with speechless admiration. Their gags still remained in their capacious mouths, though the accountant had worked his loose in some way. He paused as he saw his chief approach, and lay quiescent enough, while his rescuers freed him. Nelson Lee left him explaining what had happened to Yerkes and

Major Percy, while he bent over the bonds which still bound the two blacks and carefully examined them.

Not until he had completed his examination did he release them, and then, climbing out of the dray, he walked round to the mules. He did not untie them at first, but continued his examination there, and waited for Major Percy to come up. While the chief of police and one of his "boys" were untying the mules, Lee walked back to where Yerkes and the accountant stood, and listened to a detailed repetition of the hold-up—for hold-up, they now knew without doubt, it had been.

All the accountant could tell was, that they had gone along very well after leaving the bank until they reached Water Street. Then, according to his tale, two men had leaped on to the cart in front, while two more had climbed in at the back, forcing him down before he could cry out for help. It had taken only a couple of minutes altogether, and then, he imagined, the cart had driven to the right along Water Street.

From that on, his story was disconnected and uncertain. He had tried to guess which way they were being driven, but it had been impossible, and he had no idea where they finally drew up until day had come, and they had been found behind the racecourse. But one statement he did advance, which both Yerkes and Major Percy took careful note of, and which both buck niggers endorsed.

This statement was, that the hold-up had not been made by white men, but by natives of sorts—the accountant inclining to the theory that the men had been either Portuguese or negro mongrels, and the two bucks that they were native Indians from the hinterland. All three seemed to take it for granted that the men had come from the mining country inland.

Nelson Lee said nothing, nor did he even hint that he did not agree with this statement at all. For the present he was a mere onlooker. Major Percy was in charge, and it was not for him to make suggestions, unless asked for them. But his position was soon to be changed, for Sam Yerkes approached him and said:

"Mr. Lee, we've been rooked all right. Bartlett and Company stand to lose forty thousand pounds over this affair. We simply must get that nugget back. I wish to ask you to formally take up the investigation of the case for Bartlett and Company, and as to terms, you can name your own."

Lee demurred.

"I intended stopping here in Georgetown for a few hours only," he said. "Were I alone, it would not make so much difference, but I have my assistant and another person with me. I had counted going to England by the Tumatumari. Besides, no doubt Major Percy will soon run down the gang which is responsible."

Major Percy came up just in time to hear Lee's remarks.

"Is Yerkes asking you to take the case, Lee?" he asked.

Lee nodded.

"Then let me add my request to his," said the chief. "If you can possibly arrange to stay over and go into the case, I should like it immensely. If you strike any clue which I may miss and want anything done, it will be attended to at once. You will have the whole force behind you. Myself, I shall only be able to devote two days to it at the most, for I must go down to Barbice on a case there. What do you say?"

"I should like to have a little time in which to consider the matter," said Lee. "I shall let you know early this afternoon. Will that do?"

"It will suit me all right," said Major Percy. "How about you, Yerkes?"

"It will have to do," said Yerkes, "though I think there is no time to be lost."

Major Percy scratched his chin.

"Well, to begin with, I can have every train and cart searched as it leaves the town, and I can discover pretty well what carts left town during the night. The thieves may try to work the nugget back into the interior and over into Venezuela, Brazil, or Dutch Guiana. We shall try to stop them before they are able to do so."

"Can I have a word with you, Major Percy?" asked Lee.

The chief walked aside with Lee, and in a low tone the detective said:

"May I make a suggestion?"

"Certainly, Lee," responded the chief. "What is it?"

"It is, that you have a thorough search made of every vessel lying in port at the present time, and if any have sailed this morning, to cable to the place they will stop at next, and have them searched there."

"Good heavens, do you think the nugget will be smuggled out of the country that way?"

Lee nodded.

"But the accountant and the two buck niggers all say it was done by men from the interior. If that is so, they will try to work it back through the country they know."

Lee smiled and shook his head.

"That job was never done by men from the interior," he said quietly.

"It was done by sailors."

"By sailors!" exclaimed Major Percy. "Now, what in the name of all that's wonderful makes you think that?"

"I will tell you. The knots which were tied in the ropes which secured the three prisoners—the knots in the ropes with which the mules were tied to the tree—were only tied by sailors. No landsman ever tied those ropes. The men were all secured with a sailor's running hitch, and the mules by a complicated half bowling knot and half slip hitch, which only very experienced sailors know how to make."

"That is why I say the job was done by sailors, and why I say you will find the attempt to smuggle the nugget out of the country will be made by sea. I'll tell you something else. The accountant says he thinks the cart drove to the right, along Water Street, after the hold-up. Figure that out for yourself. That would take the dray down past the lower stellings. Then, he says, it turned again. Unless it turned completely round, it could only go in one way, that is, past the railway station, or the barracks, and so parallel to the sea-wall."

"He adds that it stopped once, and on that occasion, the case containing the nugget was removed. Very well, there must have been a vacant piece of ground on the way, or a place fairly well secure from interruption, for such a transfer to be made. From that spot, this dray was driven along until it reached this waste ground, back of the racecourse. But what happened to the gold? It was undoubtedly lifted into another dray and driven to a place of safety."

"I do not say it was not carried out of the town, but I do think the conditions which existed, seem to point more strongly to the theory that it was carried back to the sea front, and there loaded on board some ship. The bandits were probably disguised. At any rate, a thorough search of all the ships in port can do no harm, and such a search would be useless if a single exception were made."

"By thunder, Lee. I do believe you are right," said Major Percy earnestly. "Now, it never occurred to me to notice what sort of knots there were in the ropes. But I shall follow your suggestion, and have every vessel in port gone through with a fine tooth comb. I shall have my men spread

over the water front simultaneously, and take them by surprise, so there will be no time for monkey tricks, and not even the Tumatumari shall be exempt."

"It would be useless if you did pass her by, or any other for the matter of that," said Lee. "And, by the way, major, I suppose I can get from the port authorities a copy of all the vessels now in port? In going over the names it is just possible one may hit on a suggestion of value."

"I will arrange that a list be placed in your hands as soon as we get back," said the chief.

CHAPTER V.

Nelson Lee's Suspicions Take Concrete Form—The Search of the *La Rose*—Lee's Quandary.

IT was late afternoon again, and in a private sitting-room of the hotel in High Street sat Nelson Lee and Nipper. The French banker, whom Lee was accompanying back to Europe, was lying down in his room at the moment. He had willingly fallen in with Lee's suggestion to stop over a steamer, and now Lee and Nipper were going over the latest report from Major Percy.

Before Lee, on the table, was a list of all the vessels of every size lying at the stellings of Georgetown. Accompanying this list was a report of all the measures taken by the chief of police to discover the whereabouts of the Golden Boomerang. Lee had read them over carefully, and now he was discussing the affair with Nipper.

"It is this way, my lad," he was saying. "The nugget disappeared after leaving the bank in the market dray, and the actual hold-up took place somewhere between High Street and Water Street. I have been down to Urquhar Street to examine the spot, and can easily see how it was worked.

"The bandits rushed out of a little alley near Urquhar and Queen Streets, and raided the dray there. From that spot, it was undoubtedly driven to the right on reaching Water Street, and I have already followed a probable course. This course led me past the barracks, and along parallel to a small park on the other side of Camp Road. I should not be at all surprised if the case containing the nugget had been dropped there.

"From that spot it would be only a short run back to the water front, and also from the same spot the first dray could be driven on to the racecourse where it was found. I have already told you why I think the hold-up was brought off by sailors, and since then I have seen something in this list of vessels in port which strengthens my suspicions."

"What is that, sir?" asked Nipper quickly.

"Just take a look at this name, Nipper."

The lad bent over and read the name to which Lee's finger was pointing.

"The *La Rose*," he said. "Why, sir, that is the name of the Black Wolf's yacht."

"Exactly, my lad," responded Lee quietly. "And now let me tell you something else. Staying at this hotel with us is a man whom you know of quite well. He is also a man one would ordinarily never suspect of criminal instincts. But let me ask you to recall a case we had not long ago, Nipper, and which we inscribed in the 'Index' as 'The Case of the Crimson Disc.' Now, can you guess who I mean?"

"Scott! Guv'nor, do you mean Dr. Mortimer Crane, the Harley Street specialist?"

"I mean just him and no one else," said Lee. "He is at this hotel. I saw him this morning when I was on my way to the racecourse. And when

I finally decided to take up the investigation of this case. Nipper, I immediately made a few inquiries about the man. He was not in the hotel at the time, but I discovered that he had gone to lunch on board the yacht *La Rose*!

"Dr. Mortimer Crane and Black Wolf in Demerara at the same time; Dr. Mortimer Crane and the Black Wolf apparently on intimate terms; the Golden Boomerang, the greatest nugget ever found, missing, and the hold-up brought off by sailors! If such a combination of conditions doesn't warrant us in being a little suspicious of this pair, then I shall begin to think that I am no longer capable of applying the association of ideas!"

"Scott, sir, but I believe you are on the right track. It was exactly the type of thing which would appeal to the Black Wolf, and it fits in curiously with what I myself have discovered."

"In what way do you mean, my lad?"

"Well, sir, you know when you made your investigations at the bank, and came upon certain information about young Bartlett there, you told me to find out what I could about his way of life. I have picked up a good deal of gossip about him. It seems that he was sent out here by his father, because he had been hitting the high spots in London too hard."

"It seems that Yerkes, the manager out here, is an old friend of Bartlett's, and the young chap was turned over to him. Yerkes is a hard man, and has given Bartlett a tough time of it, I hear. Anyway, instead of having plenty of money to spend, as he had at home, he has to get along on three pounds a week here, and he has to earn that. He works as a sort of under-clerk at the bank."

"When he first came out, he lived at this hotel and went the pace a bit, but since Yerkes cut down his funds he has dropped out of the life round here. There seems to be a good deal of mystery about where he spends his time out of office hours, but I have discovered that he goes to a low-down white trash saloon near the stellings, where he plays billiards with anyone who may be about."

"But here comes the curious part, sir. For the past two or three days he has been about this hotel again, and always in the company of a man who is staying here and who has plenty of money. I didn't hear the man's name, but I was told he was an eminent London specialist, and that his friendship with young Bartlett was a curious thing. Now, I wonder, sir, if that eminent London specialist would mean Dr. Mortimer Crane? If so, then there may be some connection between it all."

Nelson Lee rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"This is important what you tell me, Nipper," he said. "We must investigate that suggestion further. I shall take it upon myself to have a talk with young Bartlett. It would not be very difficult for him to discover when the nugget was to be taken from the bank, and certainly there was a leak some place there, for the bandits were on hand at the exact hour."

"But, sir, if Dr. Mortimer Crane and the Black Wolf are working this deal together, if they have managed to secure the nugget, then it should have been found when the *La Rose* was searched by the police."

"Not necessarily, my lad. The Black Wolf is no fool, as we know from our past experience with the elusive lady. That she and Crane are mixed up in this thing I feel positive, and my suspicions are greatly strengthened by what you tell me of young Bartlett. What we have to do now is to find out when the *La Rose* is leaving port and to ask Major Percy for authority to make another exhaustive search just before she sails. Come along, Nipper, we shall go along to him at once. You had better find out the

name of the man whom young Bartlett has been seen about the hotel with, and meet me beneath the watch tower on the museum. Then we shall go along and give the yacht an overhauling that will reveal the nugget, if it is aboard."

They parted at the door of the hotel, Nipper re-entering the building to make further inquiries about Jimmy Bartlett and Lee hurrying on to see Major Percy. It was twenty minutes later that they met at the appointed rendezvous in front of the museum, and there Nipper conveyed to Lee by a slight nod the fact that the man with whom Jimmy Bartlett had been seen during the past few days was none other than Dr. Mortimer Crane.

They walked on briskly to the stelling along Water Street, where the *La Rose* lay moored, and as they reached the top of it Major Percy himself appeared, accompanied by four native police.

"I thought I had better come along myself," he said, as they joined up. "There is sure to be a row at a second search being made, and it will be better for me to be on hand. I do hope you have definite suspicions, Lee. Technically speaking, we have no reason at all for making a second search of this yacht."

"We shall have to risk that," replied Lee. "I feel very strongly about this. I shall be very much surprised if the *Golden Boomerang* was stolen by anyone else."

"The woman may be what you say, but Dr. Mortimer Crane—I can hardly believe it," muttered the major.

Lee shrugged.

"He is clever, I admit," he rejoined; "but while I have not been able to get sufficient evidence to put my finger on anything concrete, I am as certain as I live that Dr. Mortimer Crane is a crook, and that one day the world will rock at the discovery."

"Well, I am in your hands," said the major. "If I hadn't the utmost confidence in your powers of intuition, I never should have agreed to a second search. If the lady starts anything, you must stand back of me."

"If I know anything of the lady, I think you will find she will create no trouble," said Lee, as they approached the gangway. "On the contrary, I imagine that if she has had a hand in this she will feel so confident that she has hoodwinked us that she will be quite willing that another search of the yacht should be made."

There was no room for further conversation now, for they were on the deck of the yacht, and a white-clad steward was approaching them. Nelson Lee, at a sign from Major Percy, took the lead.

"You will please present the compliments of the chief of police to Mademoiselle Miton," he said, "and say that we request a few minutes conversation with her."

The steward asked them to wait, and, hurrying aft, disappeared beyond the entrance to the saloon. He was back in a few seconds, however, to inform them that Mademoiselle Miton would see them at once. They followed the steward aft, and there, beneath an awning, they saw the Black Wolf and Dr. Mortimer Crane sipping tea and chatting in a care-free manner which certainly seemed the evidence of a clear conscience. The new-comers bowed as they approached, and the Black Wolf, rising, shook hands cordially with Lee.

"This is a surprise, Mr. Lee," she said with a smile. "You are most ubiquitous. I meet you in all sorts of odd corners."

"We do seem fated to come upon one another in out of the way places," said Lee, shaking hands. "Permit me to introduce Major Percy—Mademoiselle Miton. How do you do, Dr. Crane. It seems that we all find

Georgetown popular at the same time. Dr. Crane—Major Percy. I think you have both met my assistant, Nipper.

"We are sorry to disturb you, Mademoiselle Miton, but, as you know, Major Percy found it necessary to make a search of all vessels in port to-day. He regrets that he must ask you to permit him to make another search of the *La Rose*, and, since I knew you, I offered to come along with him."

Mademoiselle Miton gazed straight into Lee's eyes.

"Am I then suspected of participating in something illegal, Mr. Lee?" she said coolly.

"Er—not at all, not at all, mademoiselle," said Major Percy. "Er—just a little formality, you know. Believe me, I am most awfully sorry to worry you, but—er—the law—yes, the law, don't you know."

The Black Wolf had the faintest light of mockery in her eyes as she turned her gaze away from Lee, and inclined her head in the direction of Major Percy.

"I quite understand, Major Percy. Since the law demands it, I should not dream of raising an objection. It would be far from my mind to oppose the law."

Lee felt that she was laughing at them, and he grew savage, for the more he sized the situation up the more positive he felt that Dr. Mortimer Crane and the Black Wolf could not both be in Demerara and be on intimate terms without having had a hand of some sort in the disappearance of the *Golden Boomerang*.

Yet so cool was the Black Wolf that she must feel very confident of her position. As for Dr. Mortimer Crane, he stood a little aside, politely indifferent to what was going on, and filling to perfection the role of guest aboard. That Mademoiselle Miton had managed to convince Major Percy that she was quite innocent of any wrongdoing was plain, for the gallant major shot Lee a look which said:

"Hang it, man, we can't impose on this sweet young thing any more. Let us call it off."

But Lee ignored the look, and the major, seeing he was determined, led the way forward, where his four men were waiting. Then, under Lee's personal supervision, there took place a search of the *La Rose* which left nothing to chance. From stem to stern, from bridge-deck to bilge-keel, they went over her with a fine tooth-comb, and had a single golden sovereign been concealed, instead of the huge case containing the nugget which Lee suspected was there, they must have found it.

But not a sign was there of it, and as they once more reached the after-deck, where Mademoiselle Miton and Dr. Crane sat chatting easily, the major was both dishevelled, upset, and in a very bad temper with Lee. He felt, and perhaps not without reason, that he had made a fool of himself, and that he must appear a lout in the eyes of the dainty, white-clad creature who smiled so sweetly at him.

"Mademoiselle Miton, I must ask you to accept my humble apologies," he said, as he mopped his perspiring brow. "I am truly sorry to have put you to all this trouble."

"Pray don't mention it, Major Percy," she said sweetly. "I realise that you have your duty to perform. And now won't you sit down and have an iced sherbet? By that you will know I have forgiven you."

The Black Wolf doling out forgiveness to the chief of police! The mere suggestion of it made Lee smile grimly. He did not apologise, however, for he simply felt that she had fooled them cleverly. Instead, he gazed at her quizzically and said:

"It would be futile for me to attempt to apologise after what Major Percy has said, mademoiselle. I shall have to let his words stand for what I ought to say."

She shot him a brief glance, and her eyes squinted at him mockingly.

"I have heard you quite eloquent before this, Mr. Lee. But never mind, we shall forget it all."

Now that the gallant major's suspicions had been quite removed, he threw himself into the entertainment of the Black Wolf with a zest which bade fair to place the doctor in the background, for the major could play the ladies' man to perfection when occasion warranted. While he sipped his iced sherbet, Lee chatted languidly with Crane, but subconsciously his mind was busy every moment trying to ferret out the slightest clue which would give him a line to work on. A moment later, as Major Percy's voice came to him, he knew that he must work swiftly indeed.

"Can you sail to-night, mademoiselle?" the major was saying, evidently repeating a phrase the Black Wolf had used. "Of course you can sail to-night! I shall see that the port authorities give you a clearance to leave any time during the evening. It is a little irregular, and I am very sorry to hear that you are leaving us so soon. We could give you a good time here, I am sure, if you would remain for a little."

"I must run up to Port of Spain," said the Black Wolf; "but I shall probably return, and then, major, I shall hold you to your promise."

The gallant major placed his hand over his heart and bowed.

"Mademoiselle," he said, "it will be my duty to make your stay pleasant when you return. And now, much as I regret it, I fear I must tear myself away."

Lee rose, too, and when they had made their adieus a steward conducted them along the deck to the gangway, though all the time Lee had the uncomfortable feeling that both the Black Wolf and Dr. Mortimer Crane were laughing at them. Once they were free of the yacht and well up the stelling the major turned a reproachful gaze on Lee.

"Lee, my boy," he said, "that is one time when you were at fault. To suspect that dear little thing of duplicity! My dear fellow, I would as soon suspect myself."

Lee shrugged.

"Then I fancy you had better begin getting suspicious of yourself, major," he said quietly.

"But, Lee, it is impossible," protested the major. "Why, man, she simply hasn't got it in her. What on earth made you think she had a hand in this affair. When I went there I expected to find a hard-faced woman of the world—a regular harridan. But that dainty little thing—why, no, no, no! She couldn't do it!"

"If you are finished raving about her, I think I shall take leave of you here," said Lee, with a smile. "You can at least comfort yourself with the thought that your very handsome apology appeased her, and your acquiescence that the yacht should sail this evening satisfied her, I am sure."

"It was the least I could do," protested the other. "We had put her to no little trouble, and she told me we had already delayed her. She is anxious to get to Port of Spain."

"I don't wonder," murmured Lee.

"What did you say?"

"Nothing," said Lee. "Well, au revoir, major. Possibly I shall meet you at the club this evening."

"Do come along, my dear fellow," said the chief. "I shall be there after nine."

They parted at the head of the stelling, and while the major hurried up Water Street, Lee and Nipper strolled along towards Fort William Frederick, which overlooks the junction of the Demerara River and the sea. There Lee leaned against the wall and gazed back along the line of stellings which jutted out into the river. Nipper, reading his thoughts, made a suggestion.

"Perhaps they haven't taken it aboard yet, guv'nor. Maybe they will rush it aboard just before sailing."

Lee shook his head.

"Impossible, Nipper. They would never run such a risk after the police have been there twice. No, I feel that they are ready to sail this minute, if necessary. The Black Wolf was laughing at us all the time. That they have the Golden Boomerang, I feel certain, and that they have it secure, I am also sure. But where, where, where? And how, how, how? That is what puzzles me."

Just beyond the first stellings they could make out the white lines of the yacht, where she lay bathed in the roseate glow of the dying sun.

"In another half-hour it will be sundown," muttered Lee, "and then darkness will follow almost at once. She will slip out to sea after dark, and with her will go the Golden Boomerang, unless we can do something to prevent it."

"But we can't stop her sailing, for Major Percy has given her permission to sail," said Nipper.

"We must stop her—we must," said Lee savagely. "The La Rose must not sail to-night!"

Suddenly he straightened up, and, turning to Nipper, said:

"Come, my lad, I have an idea."

Lee led the way back along Water Street until they came to the stelling just before the one at which the yacht lay moored. Down this wharf Lee turned, and paused before a small coasting schooner which lay moored there. A large shed on the stelling hid them from view of the yacht at the adjoining wharf. Lee swung himself over the side of the schooner and gave a low hail. Almost at once a black face appeared from the caboose forward, and, when the man approached, he asked in island French patois what they wanted. The patois was sufficient to give Lee the clue he required.

"You come longe Martinique," he said curtly.

The black, a man from the French West Indies, showed his teeth in a smile.

"We come longe Guadeloupe," he said. "You wish see the captain?"

Lee nodded, and tossed the black a silver coin.

"You tell the captain I wish see him pronto, quick," he said, in the island patois, and, with a chuckle, the black disappeared aft.

A few moments later a short, stocky man, with three-parts black blood in him and one part white blood, came along the deck.

"You wish see me?" he asked, in bad English.

Lee nodded.

"When do you sail for Guadeloupe?" he said.

"To-morrow morning," replied the captain. "You want passage, monsieur?"

Lee shook his head.

"No, but I want the use of your schooner to-night. How much money do you want to give me the use of the deck to-night and to keep your mouth shut—eh? How much?"

"What you want for to do?" inquired the black captain suspiciously.

Lee stepped close to him and said in a low tone:

"I want the use of the deck for little while only. I give you a paper from

the police saying it is all right. You will be satisfied with that. Now, how much you want?"

"Ten pounds," hazarded the black captain.

Lee shrugged.

"I will give you five," he said curtly.

"All right," agreed the other. "What time you want it?"

"In half an hour."

"Ver' good, monsieur; you have it for the five pounds. My men quite safe; you trust them all right."

"Very well," said Lee. "Now, we are going away, but we shall be back in half an hour."

He climbed back to the wharf again and hurried up to Water Street, the mystified Nipper keeping close to his side.

"What is the idea, sir?" he asked, when they reached the street.

"You will see in a few minutes," was all the reply Lee vouchsafed him.

Lee stopped before a ship-chandlers, and, after a glance inside, opened the low door and entered. He picked his way between piles of cordage and tarry nests until he found an old man in the back part of the shop.

"Have you a diving suit?" asked Lee, when the old man had turned towards him.

"I have two," came the reply, in bad Portuguese. "You wish to buy?"

"I wish to hire one for an hour or so," said Lee. "I will pay you well for the use of it."

"Very well, I can arrange that," said the ship-chandler. "It will cost you ten pounds a day."

"I'll pay it," replied Lee. "I also want to buy a coil of stout rope."

When he had examined the diving suit, and the gear which accompanied it, and had chosen a coil of rope, he made arrangements for the whole lot to be sent down at once to the Guadeloupe schooner, and then he and Nipper went on ahead. The ship-chandler lost no time in doing as he promised, for less than ten minutes after they reached the schooner the diving gear and the coil of rope arrived.

Now Lee had the black crew of the schooner pressed into service, and the gear was got ready at once. Dark had just fallen when everything was ready, and, getting into the suit, Lee gave the signal to screw on the front glass of the helmet. Nipper was to remain on deck in charge of the pump.

A rope ladder had been fixed over the side of the schooner, and with a last wave of his hand Lee began to descend. Down, down, down he went into the muddy waters of the Demerara until they had closed over him. Two blacks stood at the side, one paying out the signal cord and the other taking care that the air tube did not buckle.

There was a sharp tug as Lee reached the bottom, and the coil of rope he had bought began to unwind more quickly as he walked away from the schooner. In his hand he carried a loose end, and down below he was feeling his way along under the keel of the schooner, endeavouring to light his way by the use of a small electric flashlamp.

It was risky work at night, for he was working on an entirely strange bottom, and could only pick his way by guesswork. But he had figured out his plan carefully, and while the keel of the schooner was well above the bottom he reckoned the yacht would draw sufficient to bring her keel down within reach.

It was a strange, murky world through which he was passing. Even under the bright-lit dome of day it would have been yellow enough, for the waters which pour down from the hinterland above bring with them a marvellous sediment of sand and mud. But now, under the blanket of a

tropic night, in those turbid waters Lee was as one in an ugly world of his own.

Underfoot he sank deep into the mud and sand which had gathered close to the stelling, and the light from the torch lit up only a tiny, misty circle ahead of him. To see was out of the question. He must depend utterly on the power of feeling and his own sense of direction. Before leaving the schooner he had taken his bearings as well as possible, and indeed, during the hour before darkness, he had outlined his scheme of progress.

He kept on right under the keel of the schooner until he suddenly came up against the stone wall of the stelling; then, keeping one hand against this for guidance, he began to walk outwards. On and on he went, treading very slowly, until, when the stelling suddenly angled sharply, he knew he had reached the end.

Now he turned, still following the line of the stone, until it angled once more, and he knew that he was standing at the upriver outer corner of the wharf. Above him surged twenty feet of turbid stream finding its way along to the wide ocean beyond. Now Lee had taken careful note of the position of the next wharf, at which the *La Rose* lay moored, and knew that the two stellings were of the same length. If he could keep straight on, at the line he was standing, he could bring up directly under the stern of the yacht.

His danger lay in the chance of missing the right line and wandering out into the bed of the river, when all his efforts might go for nought. Nipper was on the job on the deck of the schooner all right, for the air was coming through freely, and the rope was being paid out evenly. He had no fears of any complications in that direction.

Before leaving what seemed the last outpost of safety, Lee turned, and stood with his left arm evenly against the corner of the stelling; then, with the electric torch advanced in his right hand, he launched himself forth, so to speak, and started off into the dark and unknown world which lay before him.

Carefully he counted and measured his steps as he advanced. He reckoned the other stelling lay about sixty feet distant, which, counting each stride at two feet—he was compelled to take short steps in the cumbersome diving suit—would mean thirty paces, ought to bring him somewhere near his objective.

Naturally, there was absolutely nothing to give him the direction. If he once got off the line he had set, or began to wander in a circle, he stood a chance of getting tangled up in a hopeless maze.

At the tenth pace he paused for a moment. He could feel the sweat dripping from his forehead inside the helmet, and it ran down his face, causing an agony of itching which he was helpless to prevent. It brought home to him more than anything else the strain he was labouring under. But he went on again, and at the twentieth pace paused once more.

The light, held close to the bottom, revealed an old black log which, for a moment, gave him a shock. It was almost exactly like an alligator lying there, and he knew there were plenty of alligators as well as manatee in the Demerara.

On for the third leg of the journey, until, when he came to the twenty-sixth pace, he found the sweat dripping more profusely than ever from his forehead. Twenty-seven, twenty-eight, twenty-nine, and still the light, held far out, revealed nothing. At last, with slowly advancing foot, he counted thirty and stopped.

He was in as dreary a world as when he had started, and no matter how he held the light he could see nothing of the other stelling, much less the

yacht which was his objective. There was only one possible mistake he had made—he had not come in a straight line, but had walked off at a tangent towards the deep water in the middle of the river.

Now he knew to the full just what danger he was in. Unlike the man who is lost in the Canadian lumber woods, he had no trees handy by which he could blaze a return path. He had nothing about him but the swirling yellow waters of the Demerara and the soft mud and sand underfoot.

He turned and cast the light at the last pace he had made before coming to a stop. Already it had been completely obliterated. He could not guide himself back to the stelling which he had left. Yet there was one thing to act as a theory, by which he could make another attempt.

If he had come out into the river, then the stelling which was his objective must be off to his left somewhere. He turned at right angles to the way in which he had been facing, and took a tentative step forward. Nothing yet. A second step, then a third and a fourth, and he stopped again. Up went the light, and suddenly from out the murk overhead there appeared something strangely grotesque.

Lee's heart leaped within him. It was the propeller of the yacht! He had found his objective. The La Rose was of even deeper draught than he had thought, for another pace brought him well in under the curve of the stern, and he saw that her keel was a bare two feet clear of the bottom.

He could reach the propeller easily from where he stood, and now, dragging along the rope he had been carrying until he had half a dozen coils lying at his feet, he jammed the electric torch into a crevice by the propeller shaft and set to work.

First he bound the end of the rope firmly into the shafting, after which he cut off a long piece of the rope, using his belt axe for the purpose. This he carefully wound round and round the propeller shafting and the blades until it coiled like a snake about the black shaft.

That done, he secured the other end. And when he had finished the job he knew full well that any movement of the propeller must wind the rope tighter and tighter about it until it would refuse to budge.

He had indeed taken radical measures for preventing the La Rose from sailing that evening. Lee was just on the point of turning back to retrace his steps when, by pure chance, he made a discovery which altered completely his whole plan of campaign.

He had begun to walk along under the bulging stern of the yacht, in order to pick up the wall of the stelling, and had gone only four paces when suddenly he came full tilt against something solid. It sent him back reeling, and in his staggering the precious torch dropped into the mud.

It took him a long, agonising minute to find it again, and when the little circle of light was once more gleaming he raised it up to see what he had encountered. Never had he gazed upon a stranger sight.

Like a great growth of some sort on the curving hull of the yacht, there was a whitish mass clinging on, he could not see how. He approached it still more closely, and by the light of the torch made it out to be a large wooden packing-case.

Now he could see, too, that it was secured by a strong wire cable which ran round it and then up into the yacht through a hole. Had one been able to peer in through that hideous glass disc which covered Lee's face they would have seen a most grotesque contortion of his countenance which gave him the appearance of a gargoyle.

Lee was smiling. And well he might, for he knew that at last he had come upon the Golden Boomerang. Well might Mademoiselle Miton rest secure while he and Major Percy had searched the yacht.

Inside the yacht there had been nothing to find, and not even Lee had thought of looking outside. It was clever, as he had to acknowledge to himself. A small hole bored through the hull from one of the holds, a strong wire cable passed through and secured round the case containing the nugget, the hole in the hull plugged up, and the end of the wire cable left coiled up like a piece of spare - it was all very simple, and in its very simplicity had lain its security.

Nelson Lee stood for a little while examining the wire cable, then on the upper side of the case he found the looped knot. It was not easy work to undo it, but he strove patiently, and at the end of a quarter of an hour he had succeeded.

He had to stop once, for a sharp signal had come along the rope from Nipper asking if he were all right. Lee had replied by a single tug, and then had gone on with his work. Now he stood well back and released the loop.

Immediately the case slipped from out the cable and dropped straight into the mud. Only a faint reeling of shock indicated the weight of the case. That done, Lee wound the cable round and round until he had formed a large wire knot which would effectually prevent the cable from being pulled through the hold, and which, at the same time, would give a strong resistance in case the cable were tested from inside the vessel.

That done, he made his way back to the propeller, and, while no words issued from his mouth, he was saying to himself:

"After all, I think the *La Rose* will sail this evening as arranged."

With that, he undid all the work which he had so laboriously accomplished, and allowed the length of rope to fall into the mud. Next he took hold of the end which was still connected with the coil on the schooner, and began pulling it in towards him until the end appeared.

Now there was a big coil at his feet, and, taking one end of it, Lee passed it around the case, which he felt sure contained the nugget, and which, luckily, had fallen into the mud cornerwise.

He secured it strongly; then, leaving the rope coiled up beside the case, he turned to make his way back to the schooner. Even at the moment when he cleared the end of the yacht there came a rush of water over his head, and he rocked under a strong inpull. He looked up and saw the propeller of the yacht churning up the water overhead.

The *La Rose* was already preparing to get out to sea!

CHAPTER VI.

Major Percy Receives a Shock—Night Fishing—A Great Catch—Nelson Lee Elucidates, and Incidentally Reads Sam Yerkes a Lecture.

NELSON LEE and Nipper found Major Percy at the Georgetown Club, as he had said. The gallant major was lying back in a deep cane chair, smoking, and glancing over the latest illustrated papers which had come in from "home." He hailed Lee and Nipper jovially, and when Lee had dropped into a seat beside him, said:

"Well, my dear fellow, how goes the search for the Golden Boomerang? I have just come from dining with the Governor. Told him all about our little visit to the yacht. Ha, ha! Sure, and that was one time, my boy, when you were caught napping."

"I quite agree with that," said Lee, with a faint smile. "And, apropos, the yacht has just sailed."

"Here's wishing the little lady a pleasant voyage," said the major.

"Sure, and I'll be glad to entertain her when she returns to Georgetown."

"Major, you would be one of the finest police organisers in the world if you didn't have a soft Irish heart," said Lee soberly. "By the way, do you care for fishing?"

"I do, my boy," said the major, "and if I hadn't to go down to Berbice the first thing in the morning—sure, I'd take you out and show you how to catch something. It's all we are liable to catch here, I'm thinking," he added slyly.

Lee smiled good-naturedly.

"I want you to come along and help me catch something to-night," he said. "It won't take us long, and I have an idea we may catch something big."

The major glanced at him in puzzled fashion, but Lee was pulling a straight face.

"Do you mean it?" he asked.

"I do," said Lee.

"Then, my boy, I'm with you," said the major. "Might as well make a night of it."

He got to his feet at once, and allowed Lee to lead the way from the club. They went down past the museum, and walked along Water Street until they came to the stelling at which the yacht had lain.

"What is the idea, Lee?" asked the major, now all attention.

"You will see in a few moments," replied Lee.

Out of the shadows there now appeared four blacks—the crew of the Guadeloupe schooner. They stood at attention while Lee turned to the major, and said:

"I told you we would catch something big. Now I am going to prove my words. Over the side, one of you," he added, turning to the blacks. "Down on the bottom you will find a coil of rope. Bring the end of it up."

One of the blacks stepped to the edge of the stelling, and, scarcely waiting to look over, threw his hands above his head and dived. He disappeared beneath the black water, but came up a few seconds later with the end of a coil of rope in his mouth. Lee and the other blacks assisted him on to the stelling again, and then, at Lee's signal, all hands laid hold of the rope.

They drew in until they had taken up all the slack, then they gave a mighty heave after mighty heave, until at last they dragged over the edge of the wharf a big, heavy packing-case. When it had settled down just in front of the major, Lee turned to the blacks, and, handing them some money, waited until they had departed. Then he turned to the major and said:

"Behold the catch, major. Before you is the Golden Boomerang, or Nelson Lee has made the mistake of his life."

The major, now serious enough, sank down on to the wet case and gazed helplessly at Lee.

"Do you mean it, Lee?" he said feebly. "And if you do mean it, how in the name of fortune did you manage it, and what is it doing here in the Demerara?"

"That is a long story," said Lee, slowly. "I will tell it to you at the club; and, incidentally, it has a good deal to do with 'the dear little lady' whom you couldn't dream of suspecting. If you will see that some of your men take charge of it, then we can find Yerkes and tell him about it. Only, first, I should like to see the case opened, just to assure myself that I have made no mistake."

Major Percy acted swiftly enough now. Nipper was sent to headquarters to get a dozen men, and when they arrived the case was opened. Nor had Lee made any mistake. Before them, just as it had been packed at the

bank, lay the Golden Boomerang—the great yellow mass of pure gold, which had set the cupidity of the world aflame.

Forty thousand pounds' worth of pure gold. As the full realisation of it all burst upon the major—as he realised how nearly it had been taken safely away—he mopped his brow.

"Sure, I am a fool when it comes to dealing with the ladies, bless their dear little innocent hearts," he said weakly.

And, still muttering to himself, he led the way up from the stelling, while his men got a dray and carted the great nugget off to headquarters.

It was half an hour later, and in a cosy smoking-room at Government House sat His Excellency the Governor, Major Percy, Captain Fordham-Travers, Nelson Lee, Sam Yerkes, and Nipper.

The military band had been playing in front of Government House earlier in the evening, but now it had departed, and the Governor was taking his ease after a long, hard day. Nelson Lee had just finished relating how he had discovered the whereabouts of the Golden Boomerang, and had given the gallant major a brief outline of the adventurous career of Mademoiselle Miton, otherwise the Black Wolf. The Governor had been lying back enjoying it to the full, but now Lee turned to Sam Yerkes, and said soberly:

"Mr. Yerkes, I should like, with your permission, to say a few straight words to you."

The Governor's eyes filled with fresh interest. Something in Lee's tones made him think Yerkes was about to be hauled over the coals, and nothing would have pleased the Governor better. Yerkes could hardly refuse to grant the request to the man who had just saved Bartlett's Bank from a loss of forty thousand pounds cool cash, and he, perforce, nodded.

"You may not like what I am going to say, Mr. Yerkes," he said quietly, "but I feel that, before I leave, Georgetown, certain things must be said to you. To begin with, I have not yet told you how it was discovered the Golden Boomerang would be removed from the bank secretly. I am going to tell you that, and going to explain why I consider that you, and you alone, Mr. Yerkes, are responsible for what happened."

"I!" ejaculated Yerkes, while the Governor hid a smile. "You must be mad, Mr. Lee!"

"Not mad, but only human, Mr. Yerkes," said Lee, coldly. "Listen! John Bartlett is almost as well known to me as he is to you. He is a man who was brought up in the same sort of a school as yourself.

"He had one son, and, while the boy was still in tender years, John Bartlett made up his mind that he should not know any of the hardships which he himself had known. A mistaken idea, I grant you; but still, John Bartlett made that decision, not the boy. I want you to bear that in mind. Then, all too late, John Bartlett awoke to the mistake he had made. In order to rectify it he made another mistake. He cut from under the boy's feet all the ground which was familiar to him. He pauperised him, and sent him out here to you, with orders to make a man of him at any cost.

"You, a man of the old, hard school, and entirely out of sympathy with the new generation, went at the job, if you will pardon my saying so, like a bull in a china shop. You could only see one way to carry out orders—to make the boy's life a perfect Hades for him—to keep him ground down in money, and to work him till he dropped. That is your idea of making a man of the lad.

"If he had never known anything different, the plan might have succeeded. But the boy had been used to everything; and this you took away, while offering him nothing to take its place. You took away all the pleasures

he had been used to—you sneered at all his habits—you made it impossible for him to associate with his own kind—you made him the butt of local gossip, and literally drove him into the underworld for his relaxation.

“You never once invited him up to your own house, where he might have had an opportunity of coming under the influence of your wife. You drove him to a horrible den near the stellings, and that he hasn’t gone completely under is only because there hasn’t been time yet. Therefore, when one night he was standing at the sea wall in a despondent mood—the night he had heard from the riff-raff of the town about the great nugget which had been found and which he did not even know had been purchased by his own father’s firm—it is not to be wondered at that a friendly hand held out by a man of culture, and of the world he had known in London, should have been eagerly seized by the boy.

“It was his last attempt to pull himself back into the world which he knew. In the hands of this man the boy was as putty. It was not difficult for him unwittingly to tell the little happenings of the bank, and so skilfully, that the lad did not realise it, was he made a tool to discover when the nugget would be moved.

“You flattered yourself that only you and the chief accountant knew it. It was the common talk of the office. Your chief accountant could not suppress the inclination to whisper it to his assistant, and so the story travelled. That is how it finally got out that the nugget would be moved secretly to the Tumatumari at night, and that is how those who planned to secure it managed to bring off the coup.

“Therefore, I say that you, Mr. Yerkes, are the one truly responsible for what was very nearly a loss of forty thousand pounds to your bank!”

There was dead silence when Lee finished speaking, and each man, with the exception of the Governor, gazed studiously at the end of his cigar or cigarette. As for the Governor, he was looking from Nelson Lee to Yerkes in a curious manner.

Yerkes’s head was bent, and not until the silence became almost unbearable did he lift it. When he did, his face was drawn and haggard, yet he looked straight into Lee’s eyes.

“Mr. Lee,” he said huskily, “no man has ever spoken to me like that before, and, Heaven help me, but you have told only the truth! I—I would do anything in the world for John Bartlett, and here I have been driving his only son to ruin.

“I am a hard man, and I have been intolerant of the petty vices of the younger generation, but from this moment I shall do differently by the boy. I shall take him to my home and give him the influence he should have had long ago. Mr. Lee, I want you to shake hands with me. You have done me a great service this night—you have made me bare my soul, but the agony has not been in vain.”

Like a flash the Governor was on his feet.

“Sam Yerkes,” he cried, “you have spoken like a true man. If you had failed to rise to the heights I have always thought you capable of beneath that rough Scotch exterior of yours, I should have closed Government House to you. Give me your hand, man. I am proud to shake it.”

Yerkes somewhat shamefacedly stood up and shook hands with the Governor, then the gallant major broke in with his Irish brogue and the tension was relieved.

The Governor clapped his hands for Teacher, his own body-servant, and cooling drinks were served to celebrate the occasion, while, for the Governor’s benefit, Major Percy had to relate in detail all over again the particulars

of his visit to the yacht, when Mademoiselle Miton had so coolly pulled the wool over his eyes.

And thus was the Golden Boomerang a greater find to John Bartlett than he could dream, for through it was Jimmy Bartlett saved, and surely the saving of a boy is worth more than the value of gold.

EPILOGUE.

Out at sea, beneath the beautiful calm of a tropic night, a slim white yacht slowed up, and on deck white figures appeared. Over the side there descended a diver, who climbed down a curving ladder fitted to the hull of the yacht and disappeared beneath the indigo waters of the Caribbean.

At the side stood a little group waiting anxiously for his reappearance. Five minutes passed, and then the rounded top of the helmet broke the surface of the water. Up the ladder came the diver, and willing hands removed the glass disc as he stepped over the side.

Two persons bent forward tensely to hear what he had to say, and, with slow hesitation came his remarks.

"There is no case tied to the hull," he said. "The wire cable goes through the hull, but there is only a knot on the other side!"

And as the words tailed out, Mademoiselle Miton laughed hysterically.

"Fooled--fooled!" she cried. "Nelson Lee beat us in the end, and I always said we had underrated him!"

As for Dr. Mortimer Crane, he leaned against the side and shook a vicious fist in the direction of Demerara.

But what he said was drowned in the noise of the screw as the white yacht stole on again into the tropic night, her dainty bows curtsying to the long roll of the Caribbean.

THE END.

AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT!

Next Week, under the Title of

"THE AMAZING CASE OF THE LOST EXPLORER"

*Will appear a Splendid Long Complete Story of NELSON LEE's
"JIM THE PENMAN."*

DO YOUR EDITOR A GOOD TURN
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THE ISLAND OF GOLD

*A thrilling story of Adventure and
Treasure Hunting in the Southern Seas*

By FENTON ASH

You can begin this Story to-day!

ALEC MACKAY, the hero of our story, with CLIVE LOWTHER, an old chum, and BEN GROVE, a hearty old "sea dog," are comrades in an expedition to the South Seas in search of a supposed treasure island.

The island reached, the party begin to explore, and meet with a half-starved man named MIGUEL, whom they befriend. That same night, however, Alec sees the stranger prowling about the camp, evidently bent on some evil errand, and follows him to a distant camp. Unfortunately, Alec is discovered, and shots are fired at him. (Now read on.)

A Timely Rescue.

ALEC lost no time getting out of the line of fire. He crawled behind the shelter of some fallen tree-trunks which lay near, and thence farther down below the ridge he had been lying on.

He did not shoot back because he had no particular wish to rouse the further hostility of these people; but he drew his revolver out of his belt, and kept it ready in case he should be compelled to make use of it.

The best thing he could now do, he quickly decided, would be to make for the camp. The dawn had now come, and it was light enough to enable him to find his way to the camp. Whether he would be able to get there without being molested was a question that could only be decided by the result.

One thing was certain—the more quickly he could get away the less chance there would be of their being able to intercept him.

These thoughts flashed through his mind even before he had reached the fallen logs. He did not stay there, therefore; but, getting on his feet, he commenced to retrace his steps as fast as the nature of the ground would allow.

He had got as far as the place where he had first lost sight of the dago, and began to think he would be able to make good his retreat without further trouble, when there was another shot, and again a bullet whistled close over his head.

Promptly he dodged behind a low tree, and this time he determined to shoot back. It would inform his pursuers that he was armed, and was not inclined to let them have it all their own way. It would make them more cautious, too, and so check the pursuit.

Accordingly he fired, without taking any particular aim, towards the place the bullet had come from.

Just as he pulled the trigger, he saw two figures come out of a small thicket in the direction he had pointed the pistol. A moment after, they darted back again, evidently thinking it unwise to expose themselves in the open.

"So far so good!" muttered Alec, as he stood watching for what was to happen next. "That precious pair—Miguel, as he calls himself, and Slaney—must guess that I followed them, and know of their secret meeting, and I reckon they're pretty mad at being found out. They must be, or they would

not be such fools as to fire at me in this way. They must know that the noise of the shots may be heard at the camp, and may bring our people out to see what it's about."

No doubt that would be the case before long, but meantime Alec realised that his position was critical, for these men evidently knew their way about there better than he did. And there was the danger that they might get round between him and the camp without his being aware of it. Then they might either attack him in the rear or wait in ambush, and fall upon him unawares.

Neither alternative was a pleasant one to contemplate, and he was reflecting that the longer he remained where he was the more time he was giving them to intercept him, when the noise of some loose stones slipping down a rock caused him to look sharply to his left.

He was just in time to see, on the other side of the ravine, two dim shapes dart across an open space between some clumps of bushes.

They were doing what he had feared, then, and he promptly decided to make a run for the camp, and chance getting there before his foes could intercept him.

"I'd best fire a shot or two as a warning to 'em first," he thought. "If it's heard in the camp it may help, too, to hurry up our chaps."

He fired two shots in the direction he had seen the dark figures—or, rather, towards where he calculated they would then have got to.

To his surprise, they were answered at once by two or three shots much farther round, as though the men had already reached his line of retreat.

For a moment his heart fell, and then he was startled by an outburst of shouts and cries. He heard his own name called, and then he knew that Clive and Grove had come out to look for him.

Alec shouted back, and a moment or two later had the satisfaction of seeing a group of his friends emerge into an open space only a few hundred yards away.

He ran forward to meet them, and Clive and Grove, on their side, no sooner saw him than they sent up a shout of gladness and began to run, too. Behind them were three or four sailors.

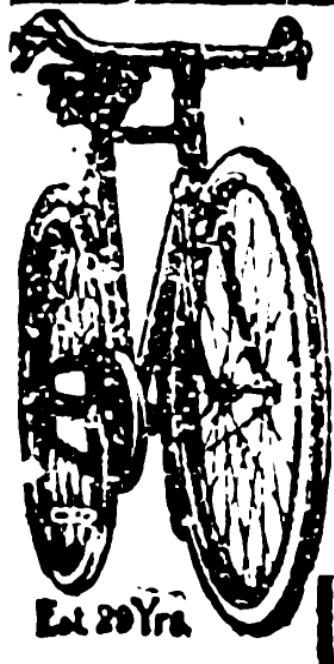
"Why, what on earth's up?" cried Clive, as he came near. "We've been frightened out of our lives about you! The doctor's in a fine state of mind—all the worse because he couldn't come with us to look for you. He slipped on a rock, and he's hurt his ankle. You seem to be firing off some powder! What's it all about?"

"The firing has not been all on my side," Alec answered. "I've had some bullets whistling about my ears. I'm jolly glad to see you! I can tell you that! I was beginning to think I was in a tight place."

"Who be the villains, sir? Wheer be they?" cried Ben Grove, looking first this way and then that. "Point out wheer we can find the galoots, an' we'll soon give 'em something to remember ye by."

"It's no use looking for them now, Ben," Alec returned. "Now you've come, they're sure to have made off, and, I expect, are far away by this time. We'd better get back to the doctor now. He'll be worrying more if we don't."

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"But who were they?" asked Clive, looking very bewildered.

"I'll tell you that, old chap, as we go along. It's a little story that will surprise you."

As Alec expected, his pursuers had already made good their retreat. At any rate, nothing more was seen or heard of them, and he was able to give his account of what had happened without interruption.

By the time they gained the camp, he had told the whole story, and had answered to the best of his ability the questions and comments it called up.

Then, at the camp, he had to go over it all again for the information of the doctor.

"Oh-ho!" said the scientist at the finish. "So that's how the land lies, is it? Humph! I can't say I am so very much surprised—that is, as regards the dago. He looked to me too fat and well-fed for a man who had been living on a diet of berries and shell-fish. Very likely he is in league with some natives from other islands, and came over with a party. He's evidently an ungrateful, traitorous dog! We're well rid of the rascal!"

"But what about Slaney, sir?" Alec asked. "These two seem to be friends."

"Ah, that's a more serious business, I'm afraid!" said the doctor thoughtfully. "I shall have to discuss that part with Captain Barron."

"But I don't see why they should have fired at Alec, and followed him up in that murderous way," Clive put in. "It looks as though they have something very bad to conceal—as though they thought Alec had overheard them talking, and they were ready to kill him rather than he should get back and tell us."

"As to that," said the doctor slowly, "something depends upon whether they knew who it was they were shooting at. D'you think that this Miguel and Slaney knew they were firing at you?" he asked Alec.

"Well, sir, as to that, I really can't say with any certainty. At first they very likely did not know; but afterwards, when they could see the one they were pursuing was making for the camp, they must have guessed that it was someone belonging to our party, even if they did not know exactly who it was."

"Yes, it has a rather bad look, regard it which way you will," Dr. Campbell agreed. "I shall certainly see Barron about it and warn him."

"There's another thing, doctor," Clive observed. "As we were on our way to look for Alec, Grove told me about something that occurred here before we turned in. It was while Alec and I were with you after our supper. You remember we were talking about our chances of discovering the gold we came out to look for and all that. Well, about that time, as you may recollect, Ben looked in to ask you something. He says that he believes he saw someone creeping off from outside the tent, as if he had been listening, and says he is nearly sure it was this Miguel. If it was, and he heard what we said, then it has told him what we are here for. And I shouldn't be surprised if it set him and his precious native friends—and Slaney—all treasure-hunting, too."

"Ah! Now, that's a much more serious matter! That's a thing that might give us a good deal of trouble," the doctor declared gravely. "I'm sorry to hear that. I suppose there's no doubt about it?"

"Not if Ben is right in his belief."

"H'm! That's bad! They might—— But there! It's no good meeting trouble half-way. Being forewarned, we must take our precautions accordingly."

(To be continued.)

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