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EILEEN DARE'S TRIUMPH!

THE LAST STIRRING ADVENTURE
OF NELSON LEE'S LADY ASSISTANT.

By the Author of "THE SECRET OF CROOKED REEF," "WHO KILLED STANTON ROADING?" "THE CINEMA CLUE," etc., etc.

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ONE PENNY.

EILEEN DARE'S TRIUMPH!

**THE LAST ADVENTURE OF NELSON LEE'S
LADY ASSISTANT.**

*By the Author of "The Secret of Crooked Reef,"
"Who Killed Stanton Roding?" "The Cinema
Clue," etc., etc.*



CHAPTER I.

THE ACCIDENT NEAR KINGSTON—CAPTAIN
BILLY MASTERS—SIGNS OF — ?

AUNT ESTHER was enjoying herself immensely.

She and her niece, Miss Eileen Dare, were out for a motor ride, and they had been down among the Surrey hills.

It was now evening—the evening of a superb summer's day. The girl detective was behind the wheel of the little two-seater car, and she was looking radiant with health and happiness.

Eileen's great campaign against the Combine had been astonishing successful. Indeed, there only remained one member of that gang of highly placed rogues to be accounted for. This man was Roger Haverfield, the well-known steel manufacturer of Birmingham.

Quite recently Eileen Dare, with the aid of Nelson Lee and Nipper, had dealt a blow at the Combine, which had finally wrecked it. There was no Combine now, for only Haverfield remained.

It was rather curious that he should be the last to survive the girl detective's campaign. Haverfield had instigated the original plot, months before, against Mr. Lawrence Dare, Eileen's father. Mr. Dare had been the consulting engineer of the Haverfield Steel Company; he had, in fact, practically controlled the great business.

But Roger Haverfield had become acquainted with a number of well-known

City men—scoundrels every one of them. They had called themselves the Combine, and Haverfield had plotted with them to get rid of Lawrence Dare.

Just at that time Eileen's father had perfected a wonderful new engine for use in submarines. And Haverfield, with the help of the other members of the Combine, had succeeded in branding Mr. Dare as a traitor to his country.

A traitor!

And Lawrence Dare had been one of the greatest patriots in the whole United Kingdom! The irony of the whole thing had been appalling. Nelson Lee had done his utmost to save Mr. Dare, but had been unable to avert the disaster. The poor man, however, had died from shock the night before he was to have been executed as a spy!

Undoubtedly Haverfield and his associates had committed murder, for Mr. Dare would have been alive to the present day but for the evil machinations of those who had pitted themselves against him.

Now, of course, his invention had been tried and tested, and it had already made Roger Haverfield's fortune. The Haverfield Steel Works was even now fulfilling big contracts for the new engine, and Haverfield himself was reaping the huge reward which rightfully belonged to Eileen, she being Mr. Dare's only child.

Just before Mr. Dare had been seized with the fatal attack, Eileen had seen him, and had made a solemn vow that she would punish every man who had taken a part in that vile and murderous plot.

Nelson Lee, the famous crime investigator, had agreed to help Eileen throughout her campaign. He had done so, and, as a result, every one of those scoundrels had suffered the extreme penalty of the law.

By a curious chance, Roger Haverfield alone remained. Eileen was fully determined to bring him to justice, but the opportunity of exposing him had not yet presented itself. When that opportunity came, Eileen would enter upon the last phase of her great battle with undiminished enthusiasm.

Only a week or so before Mr. Sydney Bradford and Lord Max Roper had paid for their crimes. They were even now awaiting their trial, and it was certain that very long terms of penal servitude would be meted out to them.

Sydney Bradford had been a highly respected London solicitor, and it had been a great shock for his clients when the astounding truth had been made public. Being a bachelor, with no relatives, Bradford's affairs were now in the hands of the courts. In all probability, his private fortune was more than half somebody else's money.

Eileen Dare had taken a big part in that adventure, and was greatly pleased with the result which had been achieved. For two of her enemies had fallen at one blow. She hoped that she would soon be able to get to work on the final round of the contest.

For, truth to tell, Eileen Dare was thoroughly sick of the whole grim business. She loved detective work—there was no denying that—but, now that she had progressed so far, she was anxious to finish with the Combine business once and for all. That was her greatest wish.

Afterwards, perhaps, she would assist Nelson Lee in some of those cases where a girl could be of material assistance. For Nelson Lee fully appreciated Eileen's astounding detective ability.

But the girl did not know what Fate had in store!

All unwittingly, she was even now speeding towards an adventure which was to have the effect of changing the whole course of her after life. She was destined to meet—Captain William Oliver Masters, of the R.F.C.

And that meeting was to— Well, Eileen Dare was a very pretty girl, and Captain Masters was a very handsome young man. There are, undoubtedly

plenty of handsome young men to be seen in Great Britain, but Eileen had seen hundreds, but had never met the young man.

Nipper, Nelson Lee's astute young assistant, had often solemnly shaken his head and remarked that there wasn't any fellow good enough for Eileen. Nipper adored the girl in his own boyish way, and was ready to idolise the fellow who won her affections. He'd be a thundering good sort, at all events. For, in Nipper's logic, Eileen Dare wouldn't look at a chap who wasn't a thundering good sort.

Eileen was a level-headed, practical girl, and was well capable of taking care of herself in any circumstances. She lived with her aunt, Miss Esther Gilbey, in a sweet little flat in Chelsea, near the Embankment.

On this particular afternoon they had been out for a motor ride, and were now returning in the cool of the evening. It was midsummer, and the sky was clear and blue. Scarcely a breath of wind stirred, and the roads were rather dusty.

The neat little car was bowling along smoothly. The spot was not far from Kingston, and on both sides there were green meadows. Houses were dotted about in all directions, and children were playing by the roadside.

It was a very peaceful scene, and Eileen and her aunt felt very contented as they glided along.

A few children in a cottage garden were pointing upward excitedly, and Eileen raised her eyes for a second and looked into the sky. There, high above, was a single-seater military biplane.

The machine was travelling evenly, and was coming straight towards this particular district. The sunlight glistened on the white planes, with their distinguishing circles.

"Do you see it, auntie?" asked Eileen.

"An aeroplane, my dear?" said Aunt Esther. "Oh, I can't bother to look up now. Aeroplanes are so common nowadays that there is nothing particularly interesting in watching them."

Eileen laughed lightly, and glanced up once more.

This time she saw the biplane dip a trifle, and there was a cloud of blue smoke trailing behind it. At the same moment two loud explosions distinctly came to the girl's ears—for the car was very silent.

"Oh, the engine is misfiring!" ex-

claimed Eileen. "I don't suppose it is anything serious—— But see, auntie! The pilot is bringing the machine down. There must be something wrong."

The girl brought the car to a standstill in order to watch. Not for a second did she imagine that anything of a startling nature was to occur. She merely wished to see the machine land, for it was quite clear that the pilot was making for the large meadow which bordered the road at this spot.

The aeroplane had been about two thousand feet high when Eileen first saw it. And now it was descending in a wide, sweeping volplane. The machine looked beautiful in the evening sunlight.

Obviously there was nothing seriously wrong, and Eileen surmised that the airman was going to land for the purpose of adjusting the engine. Probably the defect was only trivial, but it could not be remedied in the air.

"It must be lovely flying on an evening like this," remarked Eileen enthusiastically.

"My dear! How can you say that?" asked Aunt Esther. "I think all aeroplanes are death-traps—I wouldn't go up in one for a fortune!"

Eileen smiled. Her aunt was not precisely slim, and the average pilot would hesitate before offering to take her up for a joy-ride.

"He'll make a splendid landing," said Eileen, after a moment.

The machine was quite near the ground now, and the pilot was finishing up his glide in a straight dip to earth. And then, at that very second, the disaster happened. It was so unexpected, and so sudden, that both Eileen and Aunt Esther were momentarily speechless.

The aeroplane was sweeping down, and there was a clear stretch of grass land before it. Then, like a flood, about ten little children burst through a hedge and went running helter-skelter into the field.

They were right in front of the descending biplane!

The little mites, innocently enough, had not realised the danger. They thought—if they thought at all—that the aeroplane was coming down further on, and they were excited, and eager to get a close view.

But the danger was appalling. It seemed as though they were about to be cut to pieces by the flying monster. Eileen just caught her breath in and

watched. She turned deathly white, but gave no sound.

She saw, in a glance, that an accident of some sort was inevitable. Either the machine must mow down the children, or the pilot must risk disaster by swerving to one side.

Tall trees grew to the left, and telegraph wires lined the right-hand side of the meadow, which in itself was narrow. There had been ample space for the machine to land in before the children burst through the hedge. But now the little mites were stretched out in a long shouting line across the meadow. They were laughing and cheering. They had no idea of their terrible peril.

The whole thing was over in less than thirty seconds.

The end came swiftly, and it was an end which stamped the pilot of the machine as a brave, chivalrous man. He had seen the children, and he had performed an evolution which meant safety for the children, but disaster for himself.

It was a noble act of self-sacrifice.

The pilot attempted to restart his engine, but could not do so. Then, seeing that a collision was unavoidable unless he swerved, he swung the aeroplane round steeply, intending to land in a ploughed field on the opposite side of the road. It was the only thing to do.

The children cried aloud with delight as the machine glided round only a few feet above their little heads. They had no idea that they had caused this catastrophe. For, the next second, the landing wheels of the biplane caught in the telegraph wires!

The airman had done his best to avoid them, but failed.

Crash!

It was all over. Eileen Dare, standing up in her car, saw the white-winged machine capsize. The tail went up, and the aeroplane smashed to the ground with a terrible splintering of wood and metal. From first to last, the incident had not occupied one full minute.

"Oh!" gasped Aunt Esther, horrified.

She could not say anything else. Eileen, still standing, just took one glance. She saw the children rooted to the ground in the meadow. They were stunned by the accident. And there was the wrecked aeroplane lying on the broad stretch of grass which lined the road—a crumpled mass of wood and canvas.

"How terrible!" said the girl breathlessly. "Oh, the poor man who was driving it! He must be badly injured, auntie! Oh, how awful! Those children didn't know—the foolish, foolish little creatures!"

As she spoke, Eileen dropped into her seat and sent the little motor-car speeding forward. The wreckage of the aeroplane was only a couple of hundred yards in front. The car reached the spot, and Eileen jumped nimbly out.

Nobody else was near the spot. Some people, far away, had seen the fall, but the road was temporarily deserted, and what houses there were in the vicinity were concealed by trees.

Eileen ran across to the wreck. She fully expected to find the poor pilot dead—crushed and mangled. But the girl did not hesitate. Possibly he was alive, and, if so, he would need succour.

She found him at once; he was not buried beneath the debris. After crashing, the machine had collapsed upon its side, one pair of wings splintered to atoms, and the other pair towering perpendicularly into the air.

The pilot's seat in the fusilage, therefore, was on its side, and the airman would certainly have been pitched out but for the strap which held him in his seat. Control wires were everywhere, and there was a terrible odour of petrol in the air.

Eileen bent down over the still figure. The pilot was half sprawled on to the road, and there was an ominous patch of blood in the dust. Lifting the man's head, Eileen saw that his face was torn and bleeding, and deathly white. The contrast between his white skin and the rich red blood was striking.

As Eileen moved the unconscious man he uttered a sigh, and his eyelids flickered for a second. Evidently he wasn't dead. With nimble fingers the girl unfastened the strap. Even as she was doing so there was a kind of loud puff from the other wreckage, and then a burst of livid flame.

The petrol had caught fire!

Eileen knew that the terrible spirit would spread with appalling rapidity, and within a few seconds the whole pile of wreckage would be a roaring mass. And, unless the airman was dragged out immediately, he would perish in the flames.

The girl freed the strap as the thought flashed in her mind, and in a moment she

was dragging the young fellow free. Eileen was strong, and she could perform really wonderful feats of strength.

But this task was almost too much for her. She could only drag the inanimate body along the ground in jerks, a few inches at a time. At last, however, she reached a spot in the grass quite clear of the now fiercely burning biplane.

"Oh, thank Heaven!" she panted fervently.

Then she hurried to the motor-car. Aunt Esther had got out, and she was now standing in front of the car, gazing at the scene before her with eyes that were filled with consternation and alarm.

"My dear—my dear!" she exclaimed shakily. "Is—is the poor man dead?"

"I don't think he's hurt very much, aunt," replied Eileen. "The fall wasn't far, you know. I want the first-aid case!"

In the car's locker there was a neat leather case, containing lint and bandages and soothing ointment. Eileen soon had it out, and then she went back to the young officer. Aunt Esther followed tentatively.

The remains of the aeroplane were well alight now, and the heat which radiated out was terrific. But Eileen took no notice; her first task was to attend to the injured man's wounds.

The children who had been the primary cause of the accident stood a little distance off, in a frightened group. People were hurrying to the spot from different directions, but they were still a good way off.

Eileen took charge of the operations in an extremely level-headed fashion. She knelt down in the grass, and propped the unconscious man's head upon her lap. Then she gently bandaged the severe cuts which extended across the right side of his face.

So far as the girl could see, the pilot's limbs were unharmed. Certainly his legs and arms seemed to be perfectly whole. He had evidently struck his head upon the ground at the moment of impact, and the tangled wires had cut his face.

Eileen's bandages were only temporary, of course. She could not attempt to bathe and soothe the wounds here. And, as she was working, she noticed that the airman wore khaki, and that he was a captain.

She could not help admiring his well-built, sturdy figure. He was a young

man of about twenty-six, and a perfect specimen of British manhood. In spite of his cut face, Eileen could see that he was really handsome. At least, she thought so.

"What a shame!" she murmured softly. "Oh, I do hope he is not badly hurt!"

Even as she formed the words, the injured man shifted one arm a trifle, and then raised his eyelids. For just a second he looked straight up into Eileen's concerned face, and then he closed his eyes again.

"By Jove, I must be dreaming!" came the lazy, murmured words from his lips. "What a lovely girl! Queer I should see such a vision! What the deuce has happened? Oh, those infernal kids, of course!"

Eileen had turned a delightful pink at his words.

"That's right!" she said gently. "You're better now, aren't you?"

This time the young officer kept his eyes open.

"Why, by gad, I wasn't dreamin'!" he exclaimed, in surprise. "Oh, I say, this is too bad! I'm causin' you a fearful amount of trouble——"

"No; you must lie still!" ordered Eileen imperiously, as he attempted to struggle up. "Please—please lie still!"

He smiled rather twistedly, and rested his head in her lap again.

"The old 'bus looks ripping, eh?" he said. "She makes a good bonfire, anyhow! What a confounded nuisance telegraph wires are! I tried to miss 'em, but the 'bus wouldn't lift enough. Glory! My head's singing in ragtime!"

Eileen laughed at his cheery words.

"It was noble of you to turn aside as you did," she said softly.

"Eh? Why, I couldn't do anything else, could I?" he asked. "Those kiddies were in the way, and I couldn't run them down. Kids are a nuisance, but the world can't get on without them. That's a sure thing. I should have killed the whole crowd if I'd kept straight on, and by swervin' only one life was in danger."

"Your own, you mean?" said the girl.

"Why, yes! But I'm as right as nine-pence!" declared the airman. "Just my luck, you know. Brand new 'bus, delivered from the factory this week! Still, accidents will happen. I suppose you saw the whole pantomime?"

"Yes. I thought you had been killed!"

He laughed and sat up.

"I'm a heap better now, miss. You'll pardon me, but I don't know your name. I'm Billy Masters, of the R.F.C.," he exclaimed. "Thanks awfully for going to all this trouble! You'll let me know your name, won't you?"

"It's Eileen Dare," said the girl smilingly.

"What a ripping name!" he exclaimed. "Oh, I—I—— You don't mind giving me a hand up, do you? I'm a bit groggy."

He struggled to his feet, and Eileen held him as he swayed a trifle; but after a moment he laughed, and stamped his feet and waved his arms.

"Sound as a bell!" he declared. "Knee's a bit bruised, I believe, but no bones broken. Reminds me of a smash I had on the school 'bus at Hendon. Oh, is that car yours?" he added.

"Yes. And this is Miss Esther Gilbey, my aunt," said Eileen.

Captain William Oliver Masters, D.S.O., shook hands cordially with Aunt Esther, who was greatly relieved to see him so obviously well. His bandaged face looked rather serious, but he was quite cheerful.

"Infernal pity about my machine!" he said ruefully. "If she hadn't caught fire, I dare say——" He paused, and looked straight at Eileen. "By Jove, I was strapped in! How in wonder's name did I get free?"

"I unstrapped you and pulled you out," said Eileen smilingly.

"You did?" he ejaculated. "Great Scott!"

"Yes, and Eileen nearly burned herself, too!" put in Aunt Esther. "Oh, I was terribly afraid! You brave, brave girl! You owe your life to Miss Dare, young man."

Captain Billy Masters whistled.

"You pulled me out—me!" he exclaimed incredulously. "I say, that was splendid of you, Miss Dare! How on earth can I thank you?"

He winced a little as his cut face twitched. As a matter of fact, he was in great agony, but he did not show it. His head was singing, and his right knee felt about twice its proper size.

But he could not help looking at Eileen with unbounded admiration in his deep grey eyes. And it was not so much

admiration of her courage. She was one of the prettiest girls he had ever seen, and he could scarcely keep his eyes away from her. By Jove, she was lovely!

Daintily dressed, she stood there, looking like the girl a fellow dreams about, but never sees. At least, that's what Billy thought. "What a superb figure she had! Trim and small and shapely. And those eyes—— He'd certainly never seen such a pair of glorious brown eyes in all his life! They were just liquid pools of delightfulness."

"I say," he burst out, "you're—you're splendid!"

"Don't you think we had better take you to a doctor's?" asked Eileen softly. "Your face needs attending to. Those cuts are terrible, Captain Masters! You must be in awful pain. Do let me take you!"

"To a doctor's? Oh, no!" he said. "I'm fit enough to get home, Miss Dare. I'm on leave, you know, and I'm staying at my father's place in Belgrave Square. My father's Sir Roderick Masters—quite a decent sort."

"Do you really think you'll be all right until you get home?" asked the girl anxiously.

She didn't quite know why she was anxious.

"Why, of course!" he replied. "The job'll be getting a conveyance. There aren't any taxis out here, I suppose?"

"Oh, I will take you home in my car!" said Eileen quickly.

"By Jove, I can't allow you to do that!"

"I insist!"

"Oh, well, I suppose it's no good havin' anything further to say!" smiled Captain Masters. "All the same, I think you are altogether too good to me, and I don't know how I shall thank you."

Even as he spoke, he swayed. His head was throbbing dizzily. The short talk had been a little too much for him in his present condition.

Eileen saw him pale a little as he staggered.

"Oh, you shouldn't have been talking so long!" she cried. "It was foolish of me to allow it! Get into the car at once! Just for the moment I am the doctor, and you've got to obey my orders!"

"By glory!" murmured Billy.

But he obeyed meekly, and, if the truth be told, very willingly. He would have obeyed any order that Eileen chose

to give him. He owed the girl his life, and she was such a glorious girl that he wondered if he was dreaming it all. He'd certainly never met such a splendid girl before.

And then, just when Eileen was about to start the car—there was just room for the extra passenger in the broad seat—several excited people came running up, and two policemen arrived on bicycles.

By this time the aeroplane was nothing but a smouldering heap of black ashes. The awed children were still watching in silence. The constables wanted to know all about it, and Eileen briefly explained. Captain Masters gave his name, his rank, and all other information, and then Eileen was allowed to take him away.

The police saw that the airman needed a doctor rather badly, and they did not allow their formalities to delay his departure.

He was silent during the journey to London, but he greatly admired the way in which Eileen handled the little car. She drove rather fast, but took no risks, and at last Belgrave Square was reached. Billy had given Eileen the number, and she pulled up before the big mansion. The young officer badly wanted to arrive home before his mother and father heard of the accident through other channels. His mother was somewhat nervous, and she would be ill for weeks if she received such a shock.

But, by Billy presenting himself and telling the news, everything would be all right. He scrambled out of the car as Eileen brought it to a standstill. It was still daylight, and the captain was anxious to get indoors as soon as possible. He didn't want a crowd to stand round admiring his bandages.

"Phew!" he gasped, as he held on to the car. "That knee of mine's givin' me beans! I must have hurt it more than I thought! It's got as stiff as the very dickens!"

"I'll help you to the door," said Eileen.

"That's right, my dear," put in Aunt Esther at once. "But you really cannot manage him all by yourself! Why, if Captain Masters puts one of his big hands on your little shoulder he'd knock you down!"

"Oh, no, he won't!" laughed Eileen.

Billy didn't say anything. In fact, he was rather anxious to have Eileen's sup-

port. The prospect of having one of his arms over her shoulders seemed decidedly alluring. Besides, he'd have to press a good bit.

He even went to the length of making out that his knee was a little worse than it actually was. The garden path was rather a long one, and Billy went very slowly. He didn't see why he should hurry himself under the circumstances. Eileen supported him splendidly, and a thrill ran through him as he pressed his arm upon her shapely, dainty shoulders.

Why it should, he didn't know. He'd met girls before—thousands of them. He'd never felt this way in the presence of any other girl, and somehow he instinctively knew that she was by no means unwilling to assist him.

As they went up the path, he looked down upon her head by his side. By Jove, what a pretty head it was! Eileen was only wearing a small toque for motoring, and her beautiful, dark-brown hair shone gloriously. He could see the profile of her face, too, and his eyes were alight with admiration.

How ridiculous it was! He'd only met her for the first time an hour since; but he told himself very decidedly that he'd meet her again! She must have a fearful impression of him, torn and battered as he was.

Aunt Esther remained in the car. She was rather flustered by the whole business, and really didn't see why she should take the trouble to leave her seat and go up to the house for a few moments. It was very kind of Eileen to bring the injured airman home; but, after all, these people were total strangers, and it would seem like intrusion if Aunt Esther went up to the house, too.

At last the steps were reached, and Captain Masters leaned even more heavily on Eileen as they mounted. He could feel her body grow firm and rigid as she supported the weight. He felt perfectly brutal, but he didn't attempt to relieve her in the least degree. He felt extremely glad that his knee had got so stiff.

He insisted upon Eileen entering, and in a few moments she found herself within a beautiful drawing-room.

Sir Roderick and Lady Masters were somewhat alarmed at first, but reassured when their son told them the whole story.

"It was Miss Dare who saved my life," he declared enthusiastically. "Except for her, there were only a few children near the spot, and I was knocked out of time.

I should undoubtedly have been burnt to a cinder——"

"Don't talk of it, Billy dear!" exclaimed his mother, horrified.

"You must allow us to thank you very heartily for having been of such wonderful assistance to our son," said Sir Roderick gravely. "Miss Dare, you acted with extreme courage, and no words of mine can express my unbounded admiration."

Eileen flushed with pleasure.

"Why, I couldn't do anything else!" she smiled. "I can't see that I did anything praiseworthy at all! And, as for bringing Captain Masters home in my car, there was nothing generous in that, was there? I was coming to London, and I haven't gone an inch out of my way!"

Billy's eyes gleamed. It was just as he had expected. She was making out that she hadn't done a blessed thing!

"Look here! That won't do, Miss Dare!" he exclaimed warmly. "You went to a tremendous lot of trouble, and I know it. You've been a brick all through! I—I say, you—you haven't told me where you live."

"Haven't I?" laughed Eileen. "I live at Chelsea."

And she told him the exact address. He didn't need to write it down.

"Chelsea! That's a lovely spot, isn't it?" he asked enthusiastically. "I—I dare say I shall be better to-morrow. May I—may I call for a few minutes, and tell you how I'm getting on?" he paused, rather confused. "But what an idiot I am! You won't want to know how I'm getting on, will you?"

"I should like you to call," said Eileen softly. "If I am out you can tell my aunt how you are progressing."

"Ye-e-es. I—I will," he stammered.

Confound it all, he didn't want to see her aunt! But, of course, he had to leave the matter there. Somehow he felt sure that Eileen would be at home when he called. He mentally resolved to visit Chelsea even if he had to be carried.

But just then the family doctor arrived. Sir Roderick had rung up for him during the first few moments. And Eileen immediately took her departure. Indeed, she flushed somewhat when she realised that she had stayed too long already.

She bade them all good-bye, and Billy's grip was very warm and tight. He took her little hand into his, and crushed it a great deal longer than was necessary;

and she, with a little laugh, released herself and hurried out.

"Oh, what can be the matter with me?" she asked herself, as she tripped down the garden path. "I must have left poor auntie out here for nearly a quarter of an hour! She will be awfully cross with me."

There was a healthy, joyous glow in her eyes as she nimbly stepped into the driving seat.

Aunt Esther looked at her rather curiously.

"Well, my dear?" asked the old lady.

"Oh, auntie, isn't he a splendid fellow?" she asked impulsively.

"I think Captain Masters is a very nice young man indeed," said Aunt Esther severely. "But that was no reason for you to keep me waiting."

"Oh, I'm sorry, auntie!" cried Eileen penitently.

But Miss Gilbey had seen that glow in Eileen's eyes, and the old soul nodded to herself and smiled rather knowingly.

Curiously enough, almost at the same moment Captain Billy Masters was submitting to the ordeal of having his wounds bathed and dressed. He was in considerable pain, but he didn't care a jot. His mother was by his side, anxious and worried.

"You mustn't look so concerned, Billy," she exclaimed. "The good doctor will soon have you well again, my boy."

"I hope he does!" said Billy, with a shake of his head. "I've simply got to go over to Chelsea to-morrow. I say, mother, isn't Miss Dare a rippin' girl? Isn't she just lovely?"

"Yes, she is very brave—very splendid," declared his mother.

He glowed at the words, and allowed the doctor to pull him about just as the good gentleman liked. And Lady Masters stood regarding him absently, nodding to herself the while.

She, too, had recognised the signs.

CHAPTER II.

A FRIENDLY CHAT—NELSON LEE WONDERS—THE TEST—HAVERFIELD IS FURIOUS.

WHILE Eileen Dare was making the acquaintance of Captain Billy Masters, under such dramatic circumstances, Nelson Lee was lolling in his consulting-room at Gray's Inn Road.

Nipper was lolling, too, and so was Detective-Inspector Fuller, of Scotland

Yard. In fact, they were all three taking things extremely easily for the moment. It was a superb evening, and the warm sunlight was glowing in at the open windows.

Fuller had dropped in for a chat.

The chat was now proceeding, but there was no reason why the participants should not be comfortable. The inspector lay back in an easy-chair, with his feet on the window-sill, and smoked one of Lee's choice cigars. Nelson Lee himself occupied another easy-chair, and he was in very much the same position. Nipper sat on a corner of the desk, and swung his legs.

"Yes, that was an exciting little affair down at Lord Roper's place," Fuller was saying. "I should say they'll get ten years apiece—Roper and Bradford. They deserve it!"

"Every minute of ten years," agreed Nelson Lee lazily.

"Two of the best known men in London, too," went on the inspector. "By George, Lee, you were smart over that business—deucedly smart!"

"Thanks!"

"My dear man, I'm not trying to flatter you!" grinned Fuller. "It's just the truth!"

"I'm not sure that it is the truth," said Nelson Lee. "You seem to forget, Fuller, that Miss Dare was on the scene. It was she who discovered nearly everything, and it was she who wired for us to go down."

"That's true enough," admitted Fuller. "A smart girl, Miss Dare."

"She could give some of your Yard men a few points," remarked Nipper.

Detective-Inspector Fuller puffed at his cigar.

"Myself, in particular, eh?" he chuckled.

"I didn't say that," went on Nipper. "You're one of the keenest 'sleuths' at the Yard, Mr. Fuller."

"For my word! I'm being flattered myself now!" grinned the inspector.

They all laughed, being good friends. Fuller had taken part in the capture of Lord Max Roper and Sydney Bradford, and he had since been at work on some of the rather tedious routine business. Among other things, Fuller had ransacked the arrested solicitor's suite of offices just off Chancery Lane.

Bradford's exposure had been complete. A solicitor of repute, with influential clients, the crash had been a terrible one when it had come. For-

fortunately, Bradford had no family, and no known relatives, so he bore his disgrace alone.

Nelson Lee, of course—and Nipper—were fully aware of Eileen Dare's grim campaign. They had done much work in the girl's fight against her enemies. And they both knew that the Combine was smashed, and that Roger Haverfield was now the only remaining member of that villainous "gang."

The great criminologist wondered how long it would be before Eileen was provided with the opportunity she sought. Once Haverfield was dealt with, the girl detective's campaign would be closed.

It was curious, but at that very moment Lee was to gain certain knowledge which would ultimately lead to Haverfield's exposure.

"Rather queer about Haverfield,—what?" said Fuller absently.

Nelson Lee started.

"Eh?" he ejaculated. "I didn't mention Haverfield."

"I know you didn't. Why, do you know him?"

Lee glanced across at Nipper, and saw that the lad was interested. The detective himself could not help being somewhat astonished at Fuller's reference to the very man who had been in Lee's mind.

"Haverfield?" asked Lee. "The steel manufacturer, you mean?"

"That's him! Rather queer he should be so eager about that office, isn't it?" remarked Fuller. "It's not as though Haverfield were a solicitor himself."

Nelson Lee waved his hand.

"My dear, good inspector, I don't know what you're talking about!" he protested. "I haven't heard anything about Haverfield and an office. And what, may I ask, is queer? Be lucid, my dear fellow."

"Oh, I thought you knew!" smiled Fuller, reaching out and jerking the ash from his cigar into a little tray. "Mr. Roger Haverfield, of Birmingham, seems to be thundering anxious to rent that suite of offices which were recently occupied by Bradford. They're empty now, of course."

"Empty—quite empty?"

"Well, they're not inhabited," said the inspector. "Furniture's there, and all that. But the offices are without a tenant at the present moment. Swell offices, too! Everything's just as it was when Bradford went into retirement.

Haverfield seems to be anxious to rent those offices."

"Well, that is queer," remarked Nipper. "Haverfield's not a thieving lawyer, and those offices are no good for a steel manufacturer."

"Just what I thought."

"Look here, Fuller, just tell me the facts," said Lee quietly.

"Hardly worth the trouble going into everything."

"Yes, it is. Please go ahead!"

"Well, the offices are in a high-class block just off Chancery Lane," said Fuller. "The property's owned by—oh, I don't know who owns it! But the agents are Messrs. Pettitt & Blaxtowe, of the Strand. I had to go to them for information and other things. Piles of routine work to be done in a case like Bradford's. Some big solicitor fellow was after Bradford's offices like a shot. They're in a fine position, you know, and, Bradford's lease being null and void, the agents were on the look-out for a new tenant."

"Well?"

"Well, Haverfield butted in then," said Fuller—"butted right in. Said he wanted those offices particularly. Said he meant to have 'em. Said he'd pay more than the other fellow. He was as eager as a monkey after nuts."

"The offices struck his fancy, I suppose," remarked Lee carelessly.

"Why? They're not business offices—not Haverfield's business, anyhow," went on the inspector. "He and Bradford were rather thick together, as I know for a fact. It may be mere sentiment, of course, but I believe there's something deeper in it. It's queer that Haverfield's so anxious to rent those offices."

"Has he got them?"

"Not yet. He was frantic when he heard that another man was after them," replied the inspector. "Positively said that he wanted to sign a lease immediately. He wants possession this very week. Strange, isn't it? Why is he so eager? I believe he's made a big offer, and means to visit Pettitt & Blaxtowe's to-morrow morning."

"To sign the agreement?"

"Something like that—to fix things up, anyway," yawned Fuller. "But we don't want to talk about Haverfield. It's my private opinion that Haverfield is a wrong 'un—he was tremendously thick with Bradford, anyway. Of course, I may be uttering a scandalous libel, but I don't think so."

Both Lee and Nipper knew how well justified was their companion's vague suspicion. But Lee did not press the subject. Nipper couldn't quite see why his master was looking so thoughtful. But Nelson Lee himself saw quite a lot.

From Fuller's words it was obvious that Roger Haverfield was making the most strenuous efforts to lease the offices which had been so lately occupied by Sydney Bradford.

Why did Haverfield want them?

Why was he so anxious—so frantic to "fix things up"?

What possible reason could Haverfield have for renting offices in London when his business was solely confined to the Midlands? And why should he choose the offices which had been the headquarters of the Combine?

For, in a way, Sydney Bradford's private sanctum had been the chief meeting place of the Combine rogues. Being a solicitor, Bradford had been able to advise, to criticise, to approve. Nearly all the criminal schemes which the Combine had carried through had been conceived and planned out in Sydney Bradford's office.

Nelson Lee was undoubtedly interested. For Haverfield, the last of Eileen's enemies, to make such frantic efforts to lease the suite of offices, was significant. But of what? Nelson Lee had his own ideas.

And after Detective-Inspector Fuller had taken his departure Lee remained very thoughtful. Later in the evening he rang up Eileen Dare, and informed the girl that he and Nipper would take the liberty of calling at her flat about nine o'clock. Nipper, as soon as he heard his master making this arrangement, became intensely active.

It was a quarter-past eight now, and the pair would have to be starting very shortly. Nipper rushed out of the consulting room, tearing his coat off as he went. Two minutes later Nelson Lee grinned.

From the direction of the bathroom came the sounds of much splashing and gasping. Nipper, being aware that a visit to Eileen was projected, was making himself presentable for the occasion.

He had been presentable originally, but Nipper had rather curious ideas about his appearance when Eileen Dare was to be visited. Nipper always liked to look his very best on such auspicious occasions.

When, at last, Lee and Nipper started,

the latter was resplendent in a light flannel suit, a straw hat, and white shoes. The great detective himself was not so particular, and Nipper was rather indignant.

"Why, guv'nor, you haven't changed yet!" exclaimed Nipper.

"I've been thinking, my lad."

"Thinking of what—changing? Just like you, guv'nor," said Nipper indignantly. "You go and use your brain-box and leave important things until the last. It'll take you twenty minutes to change, and that'll make us late."

"My dear Nipper, I have no intention of changing."

"You're—you're going like that?" glared Nipper.

"Why not?" Lee's eyes were smiling.

"Well, there's a question to ask! Why not?" snorted the lad. "For one thing, that suit of yours is as old as the hills, and ought to be handed over to the dustman! For another thing, your shoes need polishing, and your face could do with a scrub. You ought to have shaved—"

"Come on, young 'un!" chuckled Lee, marching to the door. "If I stand listening to you until you have finished we shall never get to Chelsea this evening. I dare say Miss Eileen will forgive me for arriving in a dustman's suit, and all the other shortcomings you mentioned. You see, Nipper, Miss Eileen is sensible, and if she forgives anyone it will be you—for dressing yourself up to represent a tailor's dummy!"

Nipper didn't reply; he felt rather alarmed. Would Eileen really laugh at him? It was an appalling thought, and Nipper didn't say any more about his master's slovenly condition. As a matter of fact, Lee was spruce and tidy—as he always was. Therefore, Nipper's accusations were rather hollow.

When, at length, Eileen's flat was reached, they found the girl ready to welcome them. She was daintily attired in a light summer frock, and, for some reason, her face was even more radiant than usual. Her glorious eyes sparkled with the joy of living, and her cheeks were flushed prettily.

Perhaps Aunt Esther could have offered some explanation, but she did not do so. The old lady, in truth, was rather upset by the evening's adventures. She was very glad that Nelson Lee and Nipper had arrived, and she forthwith proceeded to relate the story of Captain Masters' accident.

Nipper, although he didn't show a sign of it, was rather impatient; he would have preferred to hear the story from Eileen's own sweet lips. But Aunt Esther, at least, told the true story; and if Eileen had been the narrator, she would certainly have minimised her own brave actions.

The visitors were interested; but, after all, there was nothing exactly startling in the story. It merely proved that Eileen was resourceful, brave, and determined—and they had known that for quite a long while.

"I'm glad that the airman wasn't much hurt," remarked Lee, as he sat by the window and lit a cigarette, having obtained permission to smoke. "Aeroplane accidents are too often fatal, I am sorry to say. But I came round, Miss Eileen, to tell you a rather curious piece of news."

"About——" Eileen paused.

"Exactly. About Haverfield."

"Oh!"

The girl detective became eager and alert in a second. It must be admitted that she had been thinking of a certain young man with a cut face and delightfully frank eyes; but now she thrust that vision aside and became all attention.

"Oh, have you found out something?" she asked eagerly. "Something—useful?"

"Well, I'm not sure—I think so," was Lee's thoughtful reply. "Roger Haverfield has acted rather curiously over a certain matter of business. I believe that I have hit upon the truth, but my theory will, of course, need testing."

He told Eileen the simple facts. Messrs. Pettitt & Braxtowe had been approached by Roger Haverfield; he had told them that he wanted to lease Sydney Bradford's offices; he had made arrangements to sign the agreement the very next morning. By offering a bigger price Haverfield had ousted the solicitor who had been anxious to close the deal.

Lee had made sure of these facts. After all, on the face of it, the whole affair was a mere matter of business. Yet—— Well, it was suggestive. Haverfield had really no earthly use for those offices.

"It is certainly curious, Mr. Lee," said Eileen slowly. "Why is Haverfield so eager to lease the place? He doesn't want it for business purposes, does he? It seems to me that he has' another reason for acquiring it."

"Another reason?"

"Yes; there may be some secret which we know nothing of."

"Exactly—exactly!" exclaimed Nelson Lee. "You are as keen as ever, Miss Eileen. You have come to the same conclusion as myself. We must consider all the facts. Haverfield was Bradford's chief—confederate, shall we say? Bradford was arrested in the country, and he had no opportunity whatever of visiting his offices again. They have been closed ever since. Only the police have had admittance."

The detective leaned forward.

"Bradford was methodical in his work," he went on keenly. "Is it not probable that he kept a record of the Combine's various transactions? Was Bradford the man to destroy documents which might prove to be of great value? I don't think so. He kept a complete, faithful record of every deal which the Combine 'brought off.' Why? Mainly to safeguard himself against treachery. If one of his accomplices turned traitor, Bradford would be in a position to produce damning evidence of that traitor's guilt. In that way the solicitor was safe. But—and this is most important—when the crash came, Bradford was unable to destroy those incriminating documents."

"Then—then they are still in his office?"

"Precisely. That is my surmise, Miss Eileen," said Nelson Lee. "Bradford could not, of course, keep the documents in his ordinary safe—that would have been too risky. He probably had a secret receptacle in the floor, or in one of the walls. And those documents are there at this present minute!"

"And that's why Haverfield wants the office!"

"Obviously. Haverfield knows this secret, but he has been unable to gain access to the office—at least, alone. He has probably looked over the rooms with the agent. But that was useless. Haverfield must have Bradford's place in his own hands. His very safety depends upon it."

"How does it, gov'nor?" asked Nipper interestedly.

"How? My dear lad, why don't you use your wits?" smiled Lee. "Just think! Bradford's secret record contains the details of every big transaction—including the dastardly plot against Miss Eileen's father. Haverfield was mixed up in most of these transactions, and if the documents ever fell into the hands of

a stranger, the crash which would follow would ruin Haverfield irrevocably. He is anxious to lease the office—at no matter what cost—in order to obtain those papers and destroy them. If somebody else gets the office Haverfield will be in constant dread. The documents might be discovered at any time, and his position would be an impossible one. By hook or by crook Haverfield must succeed in leasing those premises.”

Eileen looked somewhat concerned.

“He is going to sign the agreement to-morrow!” she exclaimed. “We are too late, Mr. Lee! Haverfield will destroy——”

“One moment, if you will pardon me,” interjected Nelson Lee. “Haverfield will not sign the agreement to-morrow. I shall see to that. I mean to put the matter to the test, and shall interview Messrs. Petitt & Braxtowe in the morning. Whatever happens, Haverfield will not succeed in his efforts. I predict that he will fly into a passionate temper when he discovers that he is foiled—and that display of temper will be a positive indication of the truth.”

After some further talk, Nelson Lee and Nipper took their departure.

And, at ten o'clock the next morning, Lee was ushered into the presence of Mr. David Braxtowe, the junior partner in the famous firm of estate agents, of the Strand. Mr. Braxtowe was stout, and his expanse of white waistcoat seemed to stare at one almost aggressively. But he was a keen business man, and actually the brains of the firm, for Mr. Petitt was old and seldom attended the office.

“Well, Mr. Braxtowe, my business is somewhat unusual,” said Nelson Lee. “I will get straight to the point. You are arranging, I believe, for the transfer of the offices lately occupied by Bradford, the exposed solicitor, to Mr. Roger Haverfield, of Birmingham.”

Mr. Braxtowe nodded shortly.

“That is so,” he replied. “Mr. Haverfield is due at eleven o'clock. The deal is to be settled this morning.”

“I don't want it to be.”

“Eh?” Mr. Braxtowe looked at Nelson Lee coldly. “I don't understand you, Mr. Lee. To be quite plain, I cannot see how my business concerns——”

Nelson Lee smiled.

“I told you I was going to get to the point without delay,” he interrupted. “I don't want you to close this deal with

Mr. Haverfield. I am anxious to prevent it at all costs. A few words of explanation are, perhaps, necessary.”

“Very necessary, I imagine,” said the other curtly.

“Very well. There is a possibility that Mr. Haverfield has no intention of occupying the offices, once he has acquired them,” said Lee. “In strict truth, Mr. Braxtowe, I suspect—villainy.”

Mr. Braxtowe started.

“Good gracious!” he exclaimed. “What possible reason can you have for——”

“Please listen to me carefully,” went on the detective; and he proceeded to put the case before Mr. Braxtowe in careful, well-chosen words. Lee did not make any statement which could be used as a warning to Haverfield, if those statements came to his ears. Yet Lee succeeded in convincing Mr. Braxtowe.

“As I have told you, there is the strongest motive for my request,” went on Nelson Lee. “Haverfield must not lease those offices, Mr. Braxtowe. I will be responsible to you, or your clients, for any loss incurred owing to the falling through of the transaction. I am willing to deposit with you—now—any sum of money you care to name. Only—Haverfield must leave this office without having succeeded in his enterprise. I have a mind to tell you something in confidence, Mr. Braxtowe.”

The other pursed his lips.

“Please do so,” he said. “I am to be trusted, Mr. Lee.”

“I am sure of that,” replied Lee, looking at Braxtowe keenly. “Well, frankly, I suspect Haverfield of having been mixed up in several underhand deals with Sydney Bradford. He requires Bradford's office for a certain reason, which I do not feel at liberty to name. But that reason is—shady.”

Mr. Braxtowe nodded slowly.

“I will not question you, Mr. Lee,” he said. “At the same time, I realise that you would not make this request unless you had a very excellent reason. We will discuss the financial side of the matter later. In any case, I have several gentlemen who are anxious to lease Bradford's suite of offices.”

“I have another favour to ask of you, Mr. Braxtowe,” said Nelson Lee. “It is my opinion that Haverfield will fly into a violent passion when you inform him that

Business is impossible. If he does so he may reveal something of the truth in his temper—something which would be meaningless to you, but significant to me. Is it possible for me to be near by when Haverfield comes?"

Mr. Braxtowe smiled, and indicated a glass-topped door. There was a curtain before the glass.

"You can enter that ante-room, Mr. Lee," he replied. "You will be able to hear everything. This whole procedure is, of course, most unusual, but I fully understand that the circumstances are exceptional, and that your action is warranted. You have my earnest support."

Nelson Lee was very pleased; the agent was doing everything possible to make the test a success. The detective went into a few more facts, and the details were arranged. To tell the truth, Mr. Braxtowe was not anxious to lease his client's property to a criminal associate of the rascally Bradford's. The owner of the offices, Lee learned, was a certain aged peer, who left his property completely to the care of Messrs. Petitt and Braxtowe.

At eleven o'clock, almost to the minute, Roger Haverfield arrived. He found Mr. Braxtowe alone. Haverfield was well-dressed, and seemed to be a highly respectable business man. In reality, he was a rogue of the first water. He was looking very well pleased with himself.

"Ah, Mr. Braxtowe," he said cordially. "Everything fixed up? I haven't much time in London—I'd like to get this affair settled straight away——"

"I am sorry, Mr. Haverfield," interrupted the agent. "I find it impossible to arrange this matter. I have another office, however, in the same block of buildings which——"

"Another office!" interjected Haverfield angrily. "That is no good to me, Mr. Braxtowe! Yesterday we positively arranged——"

"I am sorry, but certain difficulties have arisen which make it impossible for us to carry this transaction through, Mr. Haverfield," said the agent suavely. "It is really impossible for me to go into any explanation. I wish, however, to impress upon you that we are still anxious to do business."

Haverfield breathed hard.

"Business!" he snapped. "It seems to me, Mr. Braxtowe, that you have no idea of business. Yesterday we came to

a definite agreement. I have called this morning to sign the lease. Those offices are mine—the matter is all arranged——"

"Pardon me, you are mistaken," said Mr. Braxtowe coldly, rather incensed at the other's harsh tone. "Nothing has been arranged—nothing has been settled."

Roger Haverfield flushed with anger.

"Am I to understand that the deal is off?" he shouted.

"That is what I intend to convey——"

"I positively refuse to accept that!" roared Haverfield furiously, and with a note of real alarm in his voice. "I shall fight this affair, Mr. Braxtowe—fight it with all my strength! I mean to have that office! Do you understand me?"

"Perhaps, if you lowered your voice, I should be able to understand you more easily," said Mr. Braxtowe, with delightful calmness. He was beginning to realise that Nelson Lee was fully justified in the line he had taken. "It is not usual for men to shout at me in my office, Mr. Haverfield——"

But Haverfield shouted and raved for a full minute. It was obvious that he was not only infuriated, but thoroughly alarmed. He ended up by crashing his fist down upon the desk with considerable force.

"Name your price!" he exclaimed hoarsely. "I suppose it is a matter of price, eh? Somebody has offered you a higher rental? Well, I will pay double!"

"We don't do business that way!" said Mr. Braxtowe sharply.

"Then I will buy the property outright—do you hear me?" shouted Haverfield. "I will buy the freehold, if necessary——"

"That will not be necessary, Mr. Haverfield," interjected the agent. "My client has no intention of selling the property; neither has he any intention of leasing it to you. I think you have created enough disturbance. I bid you good-day——"

Haverfield clenched his teeth.

"Look here——"

Clang!

Mr. Braxtowe had rung the bell upon his table, and a clerk at once entered from the outer office.

"You will kindly show this gentleman out, Benson," said Mr. Braxtowe.

And Roger Haverfield, with blazing eyes and compressed lips, was obliged to take his departure. He went out with a pale face, which was rapidly becoming

haggard. And after he had gone Nelson Lee emerged from the ante-room.

"I think you will admit that I was not far wrong in my surmise, Mr. Braxtowe?" asked the great detective smoothly.

And Mr. David Braxtowe not only agreed, but thanked Nelson Lee heartily for having prevented him from doing business with such an obviously undesirable client as Mr. Roger Haverfield.

Lee himself was convinced that his theory was perfectly correct.

CHAPTER III.

A WELCOME MEETING—THE ACCIDENT AT CHARING CROSS—EILEEN ACTS.

THAT very afternoon, with Mr. Braxtowe's permission, Nelson Lee entered Bradford's offices and made a close examination. Eileen Darr and Nipper accompanied him, and they searched diligently and with great care.

The offices were upon the ground floor of a most exclusive block just off Chancery Lane. They consisted of four rooms—an outer office, a waiting-room, and the apartment which had been Bradford's private sanctum. Behind this was a small room which had been used as a kind of store-chamber.

Naturally enough, Nelson Lee and Eileen turned their attention chiefly to Bradford's private sanctum. It was here, if anywhere, that the secret safe, or cupboard, would be situated.

But, although the three searchers spent four hours within the place, the result of their efforts was—nil.

Everything was as one would have expected. All Bradford's papers had been cleared out; the safe was empty; the furniture was covered with dust sheets; every room was swept as clean as a new pin in readiness for the new tenant.

"Well, I suppose we shall have to give it up," said Nelson Lee at last. "After all, it is rather like searching for a needle in a haystack. In fact, we don't know what we are searching for. It is quite possible that there is no cupboard, and no secret safe."

"That's what I have been thinking, Mr. Lee," said Eileen. "Bradford may have kept a secret record hidden in some article of furniture, or—or in an ordinary innocent looking book—in cipher."

"I think we ought to wait for a few days," he said. "We must see how Haverfield acts, and order our movements accordingly."

It was disappointing, but it could not be helped, and Eileen was not despondent; after all, there was no tremendous hurry. If Haverfield could be caught tripping within the next month Eileen would be perfectly satisfied.

It was evening now, and Nelson Lee saw Eileen into a taxi, which set off at once for Chelsea. When Eileen arrived home she was very thoughtful, and her pretty brow was somewhat troubled.

But the lines vanished from her clear-skinned forehead, and her face flushed delightfully when she found that a visitor was chatting with Aunt Esther. There was only one visitor who could possibly cause such emotions; needless to say, his name was Captain Billy Masters.

The young officer was bandaged liberally, and he could not bend his injured knee. All the same, he was as cheerful as possible, and apologised profusely for having taken the liberty of calling. He'd found Eileen out, and had waited just a little while.

Later on, Eileen discovered that Billy had been chatting with her for nearly an hour and a half; finding Eileen absent, he had been reluctant to leave. He stayed to tea, and told of many adventures. He kept his listeners interested all the time; but never once did he make a single statement which savoured of bombast. Yet Eileen knew very well that he was one of the most gallant officers in the flying service—and that is saying a lot.

Even while telling of the adventure which had won him the D.S.O., he refrained from going into details, and intimated that his superior officers had been quite wrong in recommending him for the honour.

But Eileen and Aunt Esther knew how much to believe of that statement. The girl was a very keen judge of character, and she knew that Captain Masters was a clean, healthy young Britisher.

Before Billy left, he formally announced that Lady Masters would be highly delighted if Eileen would come to tea on the following day. The girl accepted the invitation after a little hesitation.

And, the next day, she was called for by Captain Masters in his own car, who

carried her off to Belgrave Square in triumph.

Three or four days passed delightfully, and there was no mistaking Billy's attitude; whenever he met the girl his eyes shone with admiration. She, of course, being extremely quick-witted, was under no false impression regarding his state of mind.

Eileen herself remained just as delightful as ever; she allowed none of her true feelings to reveal themselves in her glorious eyes. Yet, actually, Eileen was fast becoming very tender in her regard for this great, handsome young fellow.

One afternoon she met Billy quite by accident upon the Embankment. At least it was by accident so far as Eileen was concerned. The day was simply perfect, and the sun shone from a cloudless sky. By the river the air was deliciously cool, and Eileen had strolled down for a breath.

And there, leaning upon the parapet, she had found Billy. He was in uniform, of course, and most of his bandages had been discarded. He was staring thoughtfully into the water, and smoking a cigarette with unnecessary vigour.

To tell the truth, Captain Billy was settling a very knotty point. He had spent several enjoyable hours with Eileen the previous evening, and had mentally decided that he couldn't possibly dare to approach her again until at least two days had passed.

Yet, after luncheon to-day, he had decided to stroll upon the Embankment, his knee being tremendously better. Somehow, his steps had wandered in the direction of Chelsea. He had wandered so far, in fact, that he found himself within a stone's throw of Eileen's flat before he realised the magnetism of that modest abode.

Of course, he couldn't go and bother her now—that was absurd. He lit a cigarette and leaned on the stonework and gazed into the river. The water wasn't very savoury, but it looked as clear as crystal to his enchanted eyes. He could see Eileen's sweet face in every little ripple.

She'd be awfully annoyed if he called again, he told himself. Besides, in all probability, she'd be out shopping or—or something. Girls did go shopping. Or she might be visiting some other friends of hers.

Billy began to grow hot when he

thought of that. Other friends! Naturally she had friends, and perhaps some of them were men. By Jove, what an appalling thought—

And then a wonderfully delightful voice came to his ears.

"Why, it's Captain Masters!" the voice exclaimed.

It was her voice! Billy thought he was dreaming, and he turned abruptly, dropping his cigarette as he did so.

There she stood, two or three feet from him, looking exquisitely charming in a pure white voile dress, with white shoes and stockings and a white hat. She was just the picture of summery daintiness. Billy thought he'd never seen such a pretty picture in all his life.

"I—I—— By Jove!" he stammered.

"What ever are you doing here, Captain Masters?" Eileen asked softly. "I didn't expect to find you on the Embankment. How are you getting on to-day?"

He took her hand warmly, and squeezed it with rather unnecessary pressure.

"I am heaps better to-day, Miss Dare," he declared. "How splendid meeting you! You see, I just came for a stroll. The day was so lovely that I—I—er—couldn't resist the temptation. Curious that I should come this way, isn't it?"

"Very curious indeed!" replied Eileen, with a silvery laugh. "I'm so glad you're better!"

"Are you really? I—I hope I'm not detaining you at all?" said Billy nervously.

"No. I only came for a breath of fresh air," smiled Eileen. "Not that the Thames' air is very fresh, but it's cooler down here by the water. I was going to sit on one of the seats for half an hour. See! I've brought a novel with me."

Billy looked at the novel rather aggressively.

"You're not going to read it, are you?" he asked.

"Now that I've met you, of course not!" laughed the girl frankly. "I shouldn't be so rude. I dare say we shall find plenty to talk about."

"Rather!" he declared joyously.

It was good to see this six-foot young officer's whole-hearted delight. He was slightly nervous, too. Nervous! And he was acknowledged to be one of the most fearless officers in the Service!

"Will you be going back to the

front?" asked Eileen, after they had seated themselves on one of the Embankment seats.

The girl asked the question smilingly, but there was a glimmer of concern in her rich brown eyes.

Billy shook his head.

"Not yet," he said. "This little bust-up has crocked me for the time being. I was on leave at the time, you know. That flight of mine was just a joy-ride. By Jove, it was a joy-ride, too!"

"Why, you nearly killed yourself!" protested Eileen.

"Ah, but the joy's come along all right!" he said, looking at her.

She averted her eyes and flushed a little.

"I've had more joy this last week than I've ever had in my life before," he went on enthusiastically. "My leave's been extended, of course. I shall be at home until these cuts have healed up."

"How long will that be?" asked Eileen carelessly.

"Oh, about three weeks, I suppose!"

"And then?" The girl's voice was not careless now.

"Why, then, I'm going to join a unit on the coast," he said, with a smile. "Coast protection, you know. Scouting for Zepps—if they ever come! Keeping a watch generally. I'd rather go back to the front personally, but I don't happen to be my own commanding officer. I don't know, though," he added, with a quick look into Eileen's eyes. "I reckon I'd prefer the coast job."

"Why?"

"Well, I shall remain in England, for one thing," he replied. "I'll be able to run up to London occasionally, and—and see my friends. Yes, by Jove, I'd rather stay in England now!"

Eileen laughed softly.

"I hope this war will soon be over," she said, suddenly becoming grave.

"It'll be over when the Huns are whacked," replied Billy. "That won't be long, by the look of things. They're dogged brutes, though; I will say that. It's rather amusing to think that they're relying on their submarines to bring Old England to her knees. When the German people know how they've been fooled, there'll be the dickens to pay! But we don't want to talk of the war."

Eileen smiled. She felt that she would

like to tell Billy all about her campaign against the Combine, but at present she didn't think it necessary.

"We'll change the subject, then," she said. "Mr. Lee—a friend of mine—was telling me about——"

"Mr. Lee!" he broke in anxiously. "A—a friend? Oh, I'm awfully rude! I—I didn't mean to interrupt!"

"I mean Mr. Nelson Lee," laughed Eileen.

"By Jove! The detective fellow?"

"Mr. Lee is one of the noblest gentlemen in all the world!" said Eileen enthusiastically. "Oh, he is splendid!"

Poor Billy felt as though a pailful of cold water had been flung over him. There was no mistaking Eileen's tone of admiration. Nelson Lee—the infernal detective! Confound Nelson Lee! What a preposterous name for the fellow, anyhow! Billy glared at his feet savagely.

Then, raising his eyes a trifle, he noticed Eileen's left hand resting upon the novel in her lap, and somehow Billy felt reassured. Her third finger was quite innocent of any ring, anyhow. That was a good sign. Billy felt better.

Nevertheless he regarded Nelson Lee as an impudent scallywag. How dare he be a friend of Eileen's! He wasn't old—not more than forty-five, anyhow!

"You seem to like this chap Lee," growled Billy gruffly.

Eileen noticed his tone at once, and she smiled joyously.

"Oh, we are old friends!" she said, her eyes twinkling. "Then there's Nipper, too. He's a friend. Really a nice boy."

A nice boy! Billy experienced the cold douche again. Nipper! This was really the limit! How anybody with a name like "Nipper" could have the impertinence to claim friendship with Eileen was an—an outrage!

"Who's Nipper?" asked Billy, taking a deep breath.

"Why, a boy! Didn't I say so?" Eileen laughed. "Only a light-hearted, good-natured youngster. He's Mr. Lee's assistant." The girl could not help noticing her companion's obvious distress. "Of course," she added, "Mr. Lee and Nipper are only just good friends—that's all! You would like them immensely. Perhaps I shall be able to introduce you one day."

Captain Masters breathed again.

"We'll talk about flying," he said.

"No; hang flying! What about the



Wild with alarm, with his pursuers near him, Haverfield had attempted to jump over a casting pit. At the moment the pit was filled with a mass of white-hot steel. He had tripped, had fallen——!—(See p. 29.)

play? By Jove, I'm going to take Gracie to one of the theatres to-night. She's been pestering me. Sisters are a bit of a bother now and again. I—I say," he added impulsively, "will you come, too, Miss Dare?"

"To a theatre? To-night?"

"Yes," he said eagerly. "Grace'll be with us, of course——"

He broke off and watched her face. What a ripping thought of his! But he was terribly afraid that he had been too daring. She'd refuse, of course. It was like his infernal nerve to ask her!

Eileen herself, to tell the truth, was pleasantly taken aback by his invitation. She had met his sister Grace at tea one day. Grace was a rather noisy girl of fifteen, but Eileen liked her well enough.

"I shall have to persuade Aunt Esther," said Eileen.

"Then you'll come?" Billy's voice was triumphant.

And all of a sudden he realised that Gracie was a ripping little beggar, after all. Sisters were of some use in the world, although he'd sometimes thought the opposite. If it hadn't been for Gracie, he couldn't have asked Eileen! Gracie would be a bit of a nuisance, of course, but Eileen would be there. Billy, instead of being bored to tears, would enjoy himself tremendously.

The Thames and the Embankment seemed to be twice as bright all in a second. The very sun shone with greater brilliance.

"Yes, I'll come," smiled Eileen. "Thank you ever so much, Captain Masters!"

"Oh, rot! I—I mean, it's I who have to thank you!" he stammered. "I'll tell you what, Miss Dare—I'll call for you in a taxi. How's that?"

And so it was arranged.

They parted after a while. Eileen's half-hour certainly stretched itself into an hour, and Captain William Oliver Masters went off joyfully. Never for a second had he expected to meet Eileen that afternoon, and now he had arranged to take her out to a theatre! What a lovely girl she was!

Billy presented himself at Eileen's flat in due course, and was more enchanted than ever with her appearance. Truth to tell, Eileen had selected one of her very best evening-gowns, and she looked rapturously charming. She had not used a particle of powder or paint in her toilet—she loathed the thought of it—

and yet her lips were rich red, her cheeks delightfully warm, her neck as white as lilies. Other people besides Billy would have said that Eileen was one of the most beautiful girls imaginable. She was.

Billy's sister was with him, and, after bidding Aunt Esther good-bye, the trio went off on their pleasure. Aunt Esther watched them go from the window, and the old lady shook her head gravely to herself. Captain Masters was handsome—too handsome, sighed Aunt Esther. He'd turn Eileen's pretty head! Oh, well, something of the sort had to occur some day, and undoubtedly Billy was a very favourable suitor.

Eileen enjoyed the play immensely. Yet it was rather a dull affair. Gracie said so in plain language, and she scolded Billy with true sisterly candour for choosing such an uninteresting "show." Both Billy and Eileen, however, were delighted with their evening.

When they emerged from the theatre, they found that a slight storm had raged. The streets were wet and the roads a trifle greasy; but now the sky was clear again, and the moon shone.

Of course, a taxi was at once chartered, and the first trip was to Chelsea, to see Eileen home. Billy and his sister would run to Belgrave Square from there. Eileen's little flat was very modest compared to Sir Roderick Masters's palatial mansion, but the Chelsea flat was a paradise to Billy.

The young officer made no attempt to throw dust in his own eyes. What was the use? He knew that he was very much in love with this sweet, self-possessed, delightful girl. Oh, yes, he was in love with Eileen! He knew it, and he revelled in the thought. And he hoped, with bated breath, that she cared for him. The fact that she had saved him from a ghastly death made her a thousand times more precious to him.

Billy felt rather glad that Gracie was in the taxi with them. If they had been alone, he felt sure he would have made an ass of himself. And the time hadn't come yet to—to—— Oh, hang it all! Billy snapped his thoughts short.

"Oh!" exclaimed Eileen suddenly, in tones of alarm.

"Hallo! What's wrong?" asked Billy quickly.

"A smash up!" cried his sister. "Oh, let's look!"

They had all heard a crash, and the

taxi had come to a stop. They were just near Charing Cross. Eileen, near one of the windows, had seen what had happened. It was nothing much. A motor-cyclist had skidded rather severely on the greasy road, and had knocked a man down in the mud.

They were just extricating themselves, and were quite close to the taxi. Eileen could look right down at them, although she herself was in comparative darkness. The vehicle couldn't proceed until the road had cleared.

Eileen saw the motor-cyclist pick himself up. He was grimy with travel, and had evidently ridden hard. He and his machine were covered with dust. Evidently the storm had been quite local.

And then the girl detective received something of a shock. As the motor-cyclist rose, the light from one of the taxi lamps fell full upon his face. He was wearing heavy goggles, but Eileen recognised the man, nevertheless. He was Roger Haverfield!

The fact in itself was not startling; it was only surprising. Yet such unexpected meetings occur almost hourly in the teeming millions of London. It was not even a striking coincidence.

Eileen did not say a word. She did not want to explain to Billy that this man, this motor-cyclist, was the man who had been mainly responsible for the death of her father. Some day, perhaps, but not now.

And then Eileen did receive a surprise.

Two policemen had come up and were looking into matters. Haverfield wasn't hurt, neither was the victim. But the latter's clothes were ruined, and he was undoubtedly incensed.

One of the constables, having found that no serious damage had been done, wanted to know Haverfield's name and address, and wanted to inspect his driving licence. For some reason Haverfield seemed strangely agitated.

Eileen knew that she was invisible to her enemy.

"What absurdity!" said Haverfield sharply, and there was no mistaking his voice. "I don't see why I should give my name. The man's not hurt, and it was a pure accident, anyway."

"Sorry, sir, but I'll have to trouble you," said the policeman.

"Yes, take his name and address and number!" exclaimed the victim, a small, shabby-looking individual excitedly.

"His sort ought to be put in prison! Tearing about knockin' people down!"

"That's enough—you!" said the constable curtly. "Now then, sir!"

Haverfield laughed harshly.

"My name's Richard Middleton," he lied. "I live at No. 35, Hillmore Street, Leeds."

"Let's see your licence, sir."

"Hang it all, I'm in a hurry!" snapped Haverfield uneasily. "Look here! I'll give this man a couple of pounds. That'll settle the matter, won't it? I don't want any unpleasantness."

"Yes, that's all right, guv'nor," said the victim eagerly. "I'll take the two quid!"

Billy, behind Eileen, chuckled.

"The beggar isn't scratched," he said, "and that mud'll all brush off."

Eileen herself was thinking quickly now. Haverfield had given the name of "Richard Middleton." Why? He was Haverfield. Eileen never made such mistakes. But why had Haverfield given a false name? And why had he offered to pay a couple of pounds as soon as the constable had asked to see his licence?

Because the production of his licence would have exposed the lie. If possible, Haverfield wanted to settle the unfortunate affair straight away. If it couldn't be settled, then he'd probably declare that he hadn't got his licence on him. That's all he could do, after giving a false name and address.

"Well, seeing as you want to fix things up—" began the constable.

And then Eileen's taxi started moving, the driver having seen an opening, and the rest of the policeman's words were lost. But it was evident that Haverfield had got his way. The incident was to be settled on the spot.

Eileen remained very thoughtful.

"You're not letting that silly affair worry you, Miss Dare, surely?" asked Billy anxiously. "It was nothing."

"I'm not worried," laughed Eileen gently.

She lay back in her seat, and Billy thrilled as he felt her soft arm against his own. The taxi jolted a good bit, and caused Eileen to press against him; but Billy didn't mind a bit. He thought the jolting was splendid.

The journey was over all too soon, and he left Gracie in the taxi while he escorted Eileen to her door. He wasn't going in. Billy bade the girl good-night warmly, and was delighted with the firm.

pressure of her hand-grip. He went away in a dreamy, happy mood.

He little guessed then that before many hours had passed he would meet Eileen again—that he would be able to repay her the great debt he owed her in kind.

Aunt Esther welcomed Eileen warmly, and there was a dainty little supper ready for the girl. Before sitting down to it, however, she ran into her sweet little bedroom, and changed into a rest-gown.

While she was thus engaged she was thinking—thinking hard.

Why had Roger Haverfield given a false name? He had been taken by surprise, of course; he hadn't anticipated the accident and the consequent intervention of the police.

But there was no reason why Haverfield should conceal his own identity. The side-slip had been unavoidable, and Haverfield would have come to no harm through the police. The taking of his name had been a mere formality; in all probability he would have heard no more about the affair.

Yet, for some queer reason, Haverfield had lied about his name, and had offered to pay two pounds to the man who had been knocked down. Ten shillings would have been ample. The two-pound offer suggested great agitation on Haverfield's part. At all costs, he wanted to conceal his real name.

Eileen knew Haverfield's character, and she knew that, in ordinary circumstances, he would have stated his name with a deal of pomposity. And there was the motor-cycle, too. Why on earth was he motor cycling?

He possessed at least two big motor-cars! And yet, from the dust and grime upon his machine, and upon himself, it was clear that he had ridden from Birmingham on the cycle—and, moreover, he had ridden hard.

Eileen shrewdly arrived at the truth. Haverfield had ridden by motor-cycle, he had worn the heavy goggles, and he had given a false name, because he wished his visit to London to be a secret! Nobody must ever know that he had been in London on this particular night.

But why? What was his reason? If he had come to the metropolis in secret, it was possible that he had planned things so that people in Birmingham would swear that he had been in the Midlands all that night. An alibi! Why, of course! But

why should Haverfield want to prove an alibi—

Eileen suddenly stood stock still during her undressing.

She had remembered something. How perfectly silly of her! Why hadn't she remembered it before? Somehow, this last four or five days, she had been absurdly forgetful of that affair at Bradford's office. Eileen flushed as she realised the reason of her forgetfulness.

What she had called to mind was this: On the morrow a solicitor—the man who had been after the offices originally—was taking possession of the premises just off Chancery Lane. On the morrow those offices would be occupied.

To-night was the last night on which the place would be empty! Had Haverfield come to London with the intention of breaking in—forcibly? Eileen remembered how much Haverfield had at stake, and she was sure that she had arrived at the truth.

Haverfield was going to force his way into Bradford's old office?

By the morning all the deadly evidence would be destroyed!

It was because he had this desperate scheme in mind that he had sought to conceal his identity—to prevent the fact of his presence in London becoming known. It was a flying visit, and he would return to Birmingham at once. Nobody would ever know that he had spent the night in London.

Eileen, by her own keen-wittedness, had hit upon the truth.

At all costs Haverfield must be prevented from achieving his scoundrelly purpose. And Eileen thrilled as she considered the possibilities. Why, there was a chance that Haverfield would be caught red-handed if she acted at once!

Yet she couldn't go to the police. She might be wrong in her surmise; she hadn't an atom of proof. Nelson Lee! Of course—she would ring him up at once and tell him—

Eileen hastily threw on a gown, and hurried to the telephone. She was some little time in getting through to Lee's number, and then recognised the voice of Mrs. Jones, Lee's housekeeper. It wasn't late yet—only just after eleven—and perhaps Nelson Lee himself was out.

"Is that you, Mrs. Jones?" asked Eileen. "I'm Miss Dare."

"Oh, yes, I can recognise you," came

the voice over the wires. "Did you want to speak to Mr. Lee, miss?"

"Yes, please."

"I'm sorry, miss, but Mr. Lee and Master Nipper are away," said Mrs. Jones.

"Away? You mean out, don't you?"

"They are out, miss, certainly," came the reply. "But I can't say when they'll be back. They was called away all in a hurry this evenin'. It's Northampton they've gone to."

"Northampton!" exclaimed Eileen, in dismay.

"Yes, miss. And I was to tell you something if you rang up—Mr. Lee told me. He give me a number to tell to anybody who wanted him quickly—a telephone number. It's written down—Yes, miss, here it is. 'No. five-double-nine-six Northampton.' That's where Mr. Lee is, an' he told me to give the number to anybody who wanted to speak to him most urgent—"

"Thank you, Mrs. Jones," said Eileen, memorising the number. "I will ring Mr. Lee up later, perhaps. Good-bye."

But as the girl detective hung up the receiver she knew quite well that there was no necessity for her to ring up Nelson Lee at Northampton. What could he do there? This affair required prompt action. There was not a moment to be lost.

Nelson Lee was too far away to be of any assistance; Nipper was with him; and the police could not very well be approached. Eileen thought very quickly. And she saw only one thing for it.

She must tackle the job herself!

CHAPTER IV.

THE FORCED WINDOW—HAVERFIELD SCORES
—SO DOES EILEEN—A KISS!

EILEEN DARE did not lose a second. Having made up her mind, she set to work promptly. It was a pity that Nelson Lee was away, but it was evident, from Mrs. Jones's information, that he and Nipper had been called out of London hurriedly.

This was actually the case. A rich merchant, living on the outskirts of Northampton, had been robbed of a large amount of jewellery, and Lee had been wired for. Just before leaving, the detective had noticed that his client's telephone number was printed upon a sheet

of notepaper, and Lee gave the number to Mrs. Jones.

Eileen could not expect aid from her two professional friends. She must act on her own initiative. And she did act—immediately.

Hurriedly explaining matters to Aunt Esther, the girl hastened back to her bedroom. Here she donned a dark-brown costume and a small toque. The shoes she chose were rubber-soled, and noiseless. She realised that the adventure she contemplated might be hazardous.

Within five minutes Eileen was off. Poor Aunt Esther, it is to be feared, was sorely worried and flustered. Just when the dainty supper was ready Eileen dashes off! The old lady sighed, and hoped that Eileen's perilous work would soon be done. It—it wasn't right—it wasn't proper—for her to be dashing off at this hour of the night! Aunt Esther grew quite hot with anxiety.

Eileen managed to get on a motor-bus within a few minutes of leaving her flat. She had been unable to find a taxi; and, in any case, a motor-bus was practically as quick at this hour of the night. In due course she was deposited at the corner of Chancery Lane—the Strand end.

From here she walked, and very soon came to the small backwater in which the block of select offices was situated. It was impossible for her to enter in the usual way. Besides, she had no intention of entering—yet. Her object in coming here was to scout round, just to satisfy herself regarding her suspicions.

It was possible that Haverfield had no intention of breaking into Sydney Bradford's late offices. Yet, on the other hand, it was more than probable that the Birmingham steel manufacturer was bent upon a shady enterprise.

Eileen was extraordinarily clever at detective work. She was clever at anything, as a matter of fact. And now she instinctively made her way to a small alley. By going down this she presently came to a high wall.

Over this wall, she knew, there was a courtyard. It was the courtyard belonging to the block of offices, and Bradford's office was on the ground floor. The alley itself was in gloom, and quite deserted. The wall was six feet high, but the top was round and smooth.

Eileen looked quickly up and down, and then gave a leap upwards. The girl was splendidly athletic, and the effort was

nothing to her. Within two seconds she was crouching on the top of the wall. Right below her, on the other side, she dimly saw the clear asphalt of the courtyard.

Her rubber shoes prevented her from making the least noise as she alighted. Of course, if she was found here she would be liable to arrest—as a trespasser. But Eileen could not count such odds. She had no fear of being detected.

Creeping towards the building, she kept her eyes well open. But there was no sign of life, and every window was black. These offices, of course, were all locked up quite early in the evening, and the old porter lived in rooms on the other side of the building. The yard was quite deserted from about seven o'clock onwards.

At the very rear of the building Eileen came to the window of the small room which Bradford had used for storing papers, etc. Eileen had been all through the rooms with great care—she knew every inch of them—and she was quite sure that the only means of a marauder getting in would be through this window.

Bradford's private sanctum looked out upon this courtyard, but the window was round an angle. The windows of the outer office and the waiting-room were, of course, in front.

Haverfield would certainly make no attempt to break in by the front windows; and, of the rear, only the one belonging to the lumber-room was available. For Bradford's sanctum was heavily barred, although the bars themselves were highly ornamental and looked quite artistic. From a housebreaker's point of view, they were rather too substantial to be pretty.

Therefore, Eileen instinctively made for the lumber-room window. This was barred, too, but she remembered that the iron rods were quite inadequate, and could be easily removed by a determined man. There would be no fear of disturbance, and any slight noise could be made with impunity.

The girl caught her breath in rather sharply.

For she had seen that something was wrong. In that one second she knew that her surmise had been absolutely correct!

Two of the iron bars had been removed, and the lower sash of the window itself was slightly open! Eileen was quite cer-

tain that Haverfield was now actually within the offices!

This was a simple conclusion to arrive at. If Haverfield had left he would certainly have closed the window, and replaced the iron bars, which were merely screwed into position. He would, of course, be anxious to leave no trace.

But he was here—now!

Again Eileen did not hesitate; it was not her way to hesitate. Perhaps she was somewhat rash in her next action, but Eileen was filled with a vague fear that her enemy was now within the office, destroying the evidence which she needed so urgently.

And, with firm hands, she gently lifted the sash, and stepped into the lumber-room. She was thankful that she had been through the place thoroughly beforehand. She knew just what obstacles there were, and had no difficulty in avoiding them in the darkness.

She arrived at the door, and found it ajar. Opening it softly, she then saw a stream of light cutting across the passage and illuminating a patch of the wall close against the ceiling.

There was a fanlight over the door of Bradford's office—quite a narrow strip of glass, but useful for observation purposes. Haverfield, of course, had entered by the door, and Eileen thought it quite possible that he had a key. Having been a great friend of Bradford's, it was reasonable to suppose that he possessed a duplicate key, to be used in an emergency.

The sound of stealthy movements told Eileen that her quarry was within the sanctum. No light had shown outside, because there were heavy plush curtains which could be drawn to so closely that no ray could escape.

Eileen considered.

It was really impossible for her to stand there doing nothing. Haverfield might come out at any moment, of course, but she felt justified in taking a bold step. In any case, her little automatic pistol was in its secret pocket quite near to her hand.

"Oh, I must see!" she told herself. "If—if Haverfield is destroying the documents now, I must do something desperate!"

Turning quickly, she re-entered the lumber-room, and felt round her in the darkness. She grasped a chair, and carried it silently to the door. If Haverfield

came out now she would certainly be discovered, but Eileen felt that the circumstances warranted the risk she was taking.

Setting the chair down upon the soft mat, she nimbly raised herself, and found that her eyes just reached a point an inch above the level of the fanlight frame. She was thus enabled to see straight down into the room beyond.

Everything in the apartment was as she had seen it before. The big desk was covered with a drab dust sheet, and various hillocks here and there denoted the articles which lay beneath the sheet—ink-pots, stationery rack, etc. The furniture, too, was covered in a similar fashion.

The electric light was switched on, for there was no fear of interruption, and there, standing beyond the desk, was Roger Haverfield. He was still attired in the motor-cycling outfit, and looked as grimy as ever.

Eileen felt sure of one thing.

She would be able to see at once when Haverfield was preparing for departure, and would be able to slip away in safety. That was her first consideration. She was satisfied—quite satisfied—that she stood no risk of discovery.

And so she gazed down upon Haverfield with great interest. The man was hastening feverishly, and was going through a small despatch box, which lay upon a chair. He was examining papers hurriedly—not reading them, but just glancing at them.

In the wall, near the fireplace, the watching girl saw a small black cavity. It was a cunning little secret safe, and Eileen was astonished that Nelson Lee had not been able to discover it. He had gone over every inch of the walls.

But, then, this little safe was a masterpiece of construction, and could only have been detected by the means of demolishing the wall itself. How it was opened Eileen could not see, and its door formed one of the panels which lined the walls for the first four feet upwards.

Apparently, Haverfield had only just opened the cavity. And now he took out the bundles of papers and quickly stuffed them into an empty pocket-book. At first he had commenced looking at them; but then, after a glance at his watch, he had made no further attempt at an examination.

The pocket-book was well filled when he had done, and he at once consigned it

to the interior of his coat. Then, with a quick snap, he closed the box and replaced it in the little safe. The door closed with a click, which Eileen clearly heard, and there was now no sign whatever of the cavity's presence.

For just one second Haverfield stood stock still, biting his lip. Then he again looked at his watch. A gleam of anxiety came into his eyes. That which happened next was totally unexpected, and Eileen had not been prepared for it.

Roger Haverfield switched off the light abruptly, and Eileen heard his footsteps crossing the floor. Hastily, the girl got down from her chair. But then the door opened, and Haverfield blundered right into her.

The collision was so sudden that Eileen was knocked down by the force of it. She had previously told herself that she would be able to see when Haverfield was preparing for departure, but he had made the movement so abruptly that Eileen was taken completely by surprise. She was not to blame—it was just an unfortunate mishap.

A startled exclamation left Haverfield's lips. At the same time Eileen gave a little gasp. She really could not help it, for her elbow had struck the floor with agonising force.

"Who's that?" gasped Haverfield hoarsely.

Eileen quickly scrambled to her feet, with the intention of slipping away; she thought, perhaps, that Haverfield would stumble over the chair in his fright. But, before the girl could move away, she felt a groping hand in the darkness. It clutched her sleeve, and a few stitches ripped as he tugged. Then, as Eileen was endeavouring to free herself, Haverfield's other arm swept round and fastened upon her shoulder.

"By Heaven! It's a woman!" snarled Haverfield amazedly.

He dragged her forcibly back into Bradford's sanctum, and slammed the door to. There was nobody on the premises to hear that slam; these two were alone. It was absolutely impossible for any assistance to come to the unfortunate girl.

As she heard the door close, very real alarm flooded upon Eileen. She was strong, she was determined, but, how could she hope to get the better of this strong, desperate man?

She at last managed to grip her re-

volver. That gave her hope. The pair struggled in the darkness for some seconds. But, by an unfortunate chance, Eileen was forced against the desk. In a second the little automatic was jerked out of her fingers, and clattered to the floor.

Now, indeed, she was at the villain's mercy!

Haverfield succeeded in pulling the switch down, and the apartment became flooded with light. It was a dramatic moment. Haverfield was gripping Eileen cruelly now, and all her efforts to free herself were of no avail. The pair looked into one another's faces in silence for a few seconds.

"Eileen Dare!" grated Haverfield, in alarm and fury.

The girl said nothing. What could she say? And Haverfield found himself filled with vague uneasiness and genuine dread. It was strange that this girl could inspire such feelings within the man. But he knew that the downfall of his companions in crime had been mainly brought about by the activities of Eileen Dare.

And now, ever relentless, she was upon his track! More, she had succeeded in discovering this desperate exploit of his which was to render him safe for all time. Once those papers were destroyed, no atom of proof of his villainy would remain. Haverfield was in London unknown to a soul—so he had thought. And now, if Eileen was allowed to get away, all his plans would be wrecked.

The situation was—acute.

And, in a breath, Haverfield decided that there could be only one finish to this adventure. He had brought about the death of the father, and now he must bring about the death of the daughter! It was the only way out of a situation which was desperate to a degree.

And Haverfield glowed with vile joy at the thought. He hated Eileen with every ounce of hatred a man is capable of. She had dogged him for months and months; she had threatened to bring about his downfall again and again. And now, it seemed, she had nearly succeeded.

What if she escaped?

He might be safe for a moment—he might get out of the scrape—but, sooner or later, Eileen would fulfil her purpose. Roger Haverfield snatched at opportunity. If Eileen was discovered in this apartment in the morning—dead—there would be no possible chance of his being implicated in the crime.

All these thoughts flooded through Haverfield's mind in a few seconds. Why, nothing could have been better from his point of view. He had secured the documents he needed—the secret records of the Combine—and he would be able to rid himself of his worst enemy—the daughter of the man he had so foully wronged.

Moreover, he would be safe. Before embarking upon this adventure, he had prepared everything in his works at Birmingham so that he would be provided with a complete alibi if the necessity arose. Eileen's surmise had been quite correct.

For Haverfield had told his manager that he would be working at the works office all through the night—working on special matters which would brook of no delay. He was not to be disturbed on any account.

Then Haverfield had slipped away on a motor-cycle, tearing to London with all speed. He had no seconds to waste. Even now, he would only just arrive back in Birmingham before dawn. And that was necessary—that was essential. It was for this reason that Haverfield had been in such obvious haste.

This delay was unavoidable—but it would only be short. Haverfield decided that he could leave the office within five minutes. And, already, his plan of action had taken shape in his evil mind.

"So we meet again, Miss Dare?" he exclaimed at last. "Let me tell you at once that I have no time to waste, and that I am going to deal with you summarily. If you attempt to scream or break away, I shall not hesitate to stun you."

Eileen knew that he had uttered no idle threat.

"It was rather unfortunate, wasn't it?" she asked, in a perfectly even voice. "For me, I mean. Of course, you will return at once to Birmingham with the Combine's secret records, and destroy them? Your alibi will be quite sound, Mr. Haverfield. It is a pity this happened."

"You—you—infernal little witch!" exclaimed Haverfield harshly. "You seem to know everything! But what does it matter? Yes, I have got the Combine's records, and I am going to destroy them! But, by daylight, you will be dead!"

He offered no further information, but at once dragged the girl round to the

front of the desk, and then wrenched her hands behind her back. In doing so he caused Eileen the most intense agony, and resistance was impossible. Two minutes later her hands were securely bound by means of thin, strong string, which cut into her soft, white flesh cruelly. Every movement of her arms caused her fresh agony.

Then Haverfield bound her securely to a heavy chair which stood against the desk. It was quite impossible for her to move the solid chair, no matter how strenuously she tried.

"Now, my fine lady, you are helpless!" panted Haverfield, surveying her with satisfaction. "You may shout until Doomsday, but you will attract no attention. The heavy curtains are an excellent sound-muffler, and your voice would not carry out into the passage, once the door is closed."

"Why don't you gag me?" asked Eileen quietly.

"You will understand—in a moment!"

And Eileen did understand.

For Haverfield crossed to the fireplace. He stood for a few seconds breathing very hard, and looking about him with anxious eyes. Everything was all right, he told himself. There was nothing to prove that he had been there.

And he must hurry—he must speed away!

Bending down, he turned on the gas of the fire. It was a big gas fire, and the hiss of the escaping gas sounded loudly on the still air. Even one single wall-jet would have been sufficient to cause death—in time. But a gas fire! Within twenty minutes the helpless girl would be suffocated!

Haverfield did not speak again. He walked straight to the door, opened it, and passed out. His step was rather unsteady, for he was fully aware of the murderous ruse he had adopted.

And, fearful, he had stumbled away. In his haste he forgot to switch off the electric light. But this mattered little. Eileen was helpless, and with every moment that passed she would grow weaker.

Haverfield could not have killed the girl in cold blood—he did not possess the brutality for that, although he was a scoundrel to the finger-tips. But, by leaving the girl to die by degrees—to die by suffocation—he was taking no actual part in the killing.

Eileen heard him leave the premises. And she realised, with set lips, how utterly helpless she was. She knew why Haverfield had placed no gag over her mouth; a gag would have kept her alive for a full hour. The door fitted closely, and the window was covered by heavy plush curtains. The gas would soon fill the room from floor to ceiling.

But, quite suddenly, Eileen quivered with intensity. Barely fifteen seconds had elapsed since Haverfield's departure; she could hear him stumbling through the lumber-room. The smell of the gas was already strong.

Eileen was as keen as a razor; her wits were acute. And she had heard, as Haverfield had slammed the door, a faint quivering ring. The vibration had caused a bell to quiver! A bell!

In a second Eileen thought of the telephone. Her gaze rested upon the hummocks of the dust-cover on the table. The instrument was on the table, of course! But was it connected up?

There was not a second to lose. The gas was hissing into the room with appalling force. Eileen was filled with a vague hope. Although bound, she could bend forward a little, and in less than a second she had gripped the dust-sheet in her strong white teeth. She drew it off—and there, near to her, was the telephone.

Haverfield had not thought of this. Why should he think of it? If the instrument had been in full view he would, undoubtedly, have removed it from her reach. But he had been filled with alarm; he had been furious; he had been in a violent hurry.

Eileen, her heart beating quickly, next jerked the receiver from its hook. By bending forward as far as her position would allow, Eileen could place her ear near by.

And a thrill swept through her. The voice of the Exchange operator came to her clearly: "Number, please?" The telephone was connected! Instinctively, she gave the number of—Billy's telephone!

Nelson Lee was away—he could not come to her aid. And the police—She didn't know the number of the nearest police-station. Besides, she wished to avoid all contact with the police in this affair. And Billy had told her his 'phone number a score of times. She knew it by heart. She had spoken it almost without

thinking. She wanted Billy to rescue her.

At last, after an age, she heard his welcome voice. It was only about midnight, of course, and he hadn't gone to bed yet. The 'phone was in his own particular den. He'd told her that, too.

"Is that you, Captain Masters?" panted Eileen.

"Hallo! Why, it's Miss Dare——" came Billy's eager voice.

"I am in peril—I am in danger of suffocation!" called Eileen urgently. "Oh, please hurry, Billy! If you're not here within fifteen minutes——"

"Where—where?" roared Billy across the wires. He was furiously alarmed; but, at the same time, thrilled by the girl's words. She'd called him Billy! And she was in danger!

In a few words, she told him the exact address, and added that he was to go round to the alley, and get over the wall. He would find a window, with bars across it—but perhaps the bars wouldn't be there. He was to break in and—and——

Billy didn't wait to hear any more; he just roared that he was coming with the speed of the wind, and rang off. Eileen, gasping painfully, smiled to herself. Billy was coming—Billy was coming to save her!

The gas fumes were in her head, and she felt confused. But, at the same time, her wits were at work. Roger Haverfield had dashed off to Birmingham—he would arrive before dawn! By the time Billy rescued Eileen, and she had recovered, Haverfield would have arrived—and then the proofs would be destroyed!

And then—then—Eileen Dare thought of Nelson Lee.

No 5996 Northampton!

Northampton! Why, Nelson Lee and Nipper were fairly close to Birmingham! They would be able to forestall Haverfield if they were informed of the facts! They should be able to arrive first, and catch him red-handed!

Without a second's delay—for she was growing weaker with every second—she called the Exchange again, and asked to be put through to No. 5996 Northampton. It was a trunk call, but the line was clear at that late hour.

After a wait of five minutes, Eileen heard a voice dimly floating across the wires. It was a strange voice. Dully, she asked for Nelson Lee. She was be-

coming dizzy now; but, with an effort, she pulled herself together.

Then Lee's welcome voice came to her ears. The sound had the effect of reviving Eileen for a moment. She determined to speak calmly; Nelson Lee must not know of her peril. He could do no good, and would only be worried.

"Hallo! Is that you, Miss Eileen?" came the detective's cheery tones. "Anything the matter?"

Very briefly, she explained that Haverfield had succeeded in getting away from London with the secret documents. She wanted Lee to hasten to Birmingham, and forestall Haverfield. If he didn't, the valuable evidence would be destroyed.

Nelson Lee, plainly hearing that Eileen was speaking under the stress of great emotion, grasped the situation at once; and he promised to dash off with Nipper without a minute's delay.

As Eileen heard the words she seemed to grow dull. The acute crisis was over; she had, at least, ruined Haverfield's scheme. Nelson Lee could be trusted to attend to the scoundrel.

But would Billy be in time? Would he——

Eileen remembered no more. The gas had numbered her wits, and was fast bringing death upon her. Yet she was not unconscious; she was just on the verge. And—yes—she did remember something. She heard, as though at a great distance, the crashing of glass, and then heavy footsteps.

But it was all confused. Something seemed to be smashing near her; it was as though a door was being splintered to atoms. A bellowing roar, changing to a choking gasp, sounded in her ears. But everything seemed so unreal. She was dreaming. She felt herself lifted and carried.

Then, somehow, a cold wind fanned her cheeks. She felt something—somebody—near her. A voice—a strong, anxious, lovable voice—was saying something. What was it? The words were tender and concerned. Oh, it was a dream!

"Eileen! Great Heaven above! Speak to me, Eileen!" the voice was saying. "Oh, my darling little girl! They've nearly killed you——"

The voice broke off. Eileen felt something warm against her cheeks. Then her lips were touched—touched by other lips! She was crushed to a great, strong

chest. And other kisses were rained upon her.

"Speak to me, Eileen!" came the vague, delightful voice.

Why, it was Billy's voice! Of course! What a perfectly delicious dream! Eileen allowed herself to be pressed within those strong arms. She was contented and happy—oh, so happy!

And she realised, all in a flood, that it wasn't a dream at all! It was reality! Billy had rescued her.

But Eileen didn't move. She was happy in his arms.

CHAPTER V.

NELSON LEE STEPS IN—HAVERFIELD'S DOWNFALL—HAPPINESS FOR TWO—FINIS.

NELSON LEE had been greatly impressed by Eileen's urgent message.

When he had received it, he had been chatting with the client who had called him down to Northampton, and he and Nipper, without delay, had borrowed the good gentleman's car, and had hastened off to Birmingham.

Vaguely, Lee suspected that something "big" had happened in London. Eileen had been at work again, and she had achieved good results. Finding it impossible to go in chase of Haverfield, she had appealed to Nelson Lee.

Nipper was overjoyed. The burglary they had been investigating was a dull affair, and Nipper loved excitement. This unexpected trip to Birmingham was very welcome. It promised to be interesting. Roger Haverfield, Eileen's worst enemy, was to be caught red-handed. That was very satisfactory.

Details were lacking, but they would come later. All Nelson Lee and Nipper knew was that they had to get to Haverfield's office in advance, and capture the steel manufacturer when he arrived. According to Eileen's information, he was carrying the damning documents upon him.

Lee felt that he was justified in going to considerable lengths. Eileen had said that Haverfield was supposed to be in his office at Birmingham, but that the office was actually empty.

Well, Lee would enter that office, and wait.

So, by two o'clock in the morning, the great detective and Nipper were in the vicinity of the Haverfield Steel Works.

It was a perfect night, but utterly black. The moon had retired long since.

"I wish Miss Eileen had been a bit more explicit, guv'nor," said Nipper anxiously. "It's my belief she's been in danger. She may be hurt. Why did she ring off so abruptly?"

"I don't know, young 'un. I am uneasy myself," replied Lee. "But there is no sense in worrying ourselves. The work of the moment is to surprise Haverfield. Later on, in the morning, we will learn the details."

"But supposing Haverfield's got rid of the documents?"

"Well, then, we shall have to be careful," was Nelson Lee's reply. "But Miss Eileen would not set us on a false scent. I am sure of that, Nipper. Exactly how we shall act depends largely upon circumstances."

Having left their car at a garage, the pair set off on foot for the big factory of the Haverfield Steel Company, Limited. Nelson Lee knew his ground well. He had been here before. He had actually broken into Haverfield's office at the time of Mr. Lawrence Dare's death.

The office was an outbuilding, and was situated within the big yard of the works. Lee even knew exactly how to get into Haverfield's office with the minimum amount of risk and difficulty. He knew the precise window.

Upon arrival, Lee and Nipper found the gates locked and the yard deserted and dark. But beneath the blind of the office a faint strip of light showed. Haverfield was supposed to be within that apartment, but, according to Eileen, the office was empty.

With caution, Nelson Lee and Nipper scaled the wall—they had done so before—and then crept along the inner edge of it until they arrived at a spot beneath the office window.

The factory itself was humming with activity, but this side all was quiet. This was the "business side," and was closed at night, and there was little fear of interruption.

Nelson Lee cautiously examined the window. He could not see into the office, although that faint strip of light was visible. For anybody to boldly break into the office seemed an incredible undertaking with the place occupied!

But was it occupied. The light said "Yes." But Eileen said "No." And Lee preferred to take the girl's word.

The matter would soon be decided, anyhow. If, by some unforeseen circumstance, Haverfield had already arrived, he would soon make his presence known. Lee would be forced to make a certain amount of noise at the window, and that noise would attract attention from inside immediately.

Lee commenced operations steadily. The window was easily forced by Nelson Lee. Other people, perhaps, would have experienced difficulty. And not a sound came from inside the room.

The catch was conquered at last, and Lee pushed the sash up.

"After me, Nipper—quickly!" he muttered.

They scrambled through, and found themselves in an alcove, with thick curtains in front of them. On one occasion Eileen had hidden behind those curtains, and she had been discovered by Haverfield.

Lee closed the window again, and stepped boldly into the office. Nipper followed him. But they need not have been so cautious. The apartment was empty. The powerful electric light, however, was full on.

Eileen had been correct in her information.

Haverfield was away, although pretending to be at work in his office. Having gone thus far, Lee and Nipper could do nothing now but wait. They had succeeded in their object of arriving in advance.

Haverfield would come in due course, and then— Well, as Nelson Lee had said, what happened then would depend upon circumstances. In any event, Roger Haverfield was to be defeated.

It would be dawn in just over another hour, and it was pretty certain that Haverfield would arrive before the light of the new day. His visit to London had been secret, and unless he returned in the darkness he would be seen, and his plans would be spoilt.

And so the two intruders settled themselves to wait.

As it turned out, their vigil was not a long one.

Just before three o'clock they heard a soft, stealthy footstep outside. Both Lee and Nipper were behind the curtains, and were quite concealed from view. During the interval of waiting, however, they had provided themselves with tiny spy-holes, through which they could see the whole room with ease.

"Now, young 'un, not a sound!" warned Nelson Lee.

Haverfield had arrived. He had probably put his motor-cycle up secretly, and was now coming to the office to change his clothes and remove all traces of his journey. The next moment the watchers heard a key rattle in the door.

And then Haverfield strode into the office. His eyes were gleaming with triumph. Yet, at the same time, there was a haggard, hunted look in his expression. He was grimy with dust and travel, and he still wore the motor-cyclist's overalls.

Without a second's delay, Haverfield stripped the things off and locked them in a cupboard. He was now attired in quite a smart lounge suit, which the overalls had protected admirably.

For just a few seconds Haverfield hesitated. Lee easily surmised that he was deciding whether he should wash straight away or not. Haverfield glanced at the clock, nodded to himself, and then took from his pocket a bulky wallet.

"The proofs—the Combine secrets!" thought Nipper exultantly.

This was quite correct. Haverfield drew his chair to the desk, and, with a sigh, settled himself to examine the papers. Until this moment all had been rush and hurry. But he had done that which he had started out to accomplish. More, he had settled with Eileen Dare!

With a savage shrug of his shoulders at the thought, he opened the wallet, and took out its contents. One by one he examined the papers. Then, after a little while, he shifted his position and brought out a box of matches. It was easy for the watchers to see that Haverfield's intention was to burn the documents one after the other, dropping them into the fire grate as he did so.

The time for action had come!

"Pardon me, Mr. Haverfield, but I don't think it will be wise for you to strike that match," exclaimed Nelson Lee calmly.

Roger Haverfield gulped and stared at the two intruders with a face that was absolutely ashen. Then a furious flush suffused his face. He leapt to his feet with a wild, inarticulate cry.

But Lee was upon him, and Nipper had taken possession of the papers. Haverfield, however, was big, and possessed the strength of desperation. He

flung Lee aside, sprang to the door, and raced out.

Roger Haverfield was dead!

His downfall and destruction had been appallingly unexpected. Lee and Nipper had raced after him immediately following that burst from the office. The panic-stricken man had dashed into the factory. Workmen had stared with amazement at the chase, and the end had come with dramatic abruptness.

Wild with alarm, with his pursuers near him, Haverfield had attempted to leap over a casting-pit. At the moment the pit was filled with a mass of white-hot steel. He had tripped, had fallen——

Haverfield had been quite dead when willing hands had rescued him.

But when all the facts came out, it was agreed by everybody that his awful fate had been well deserved. The Combine's secret record was an amazing collection of documents. Every crime they had perpetrated was made clear, and the truth was made known to the world that Lawrence Dare had been falsely accused, and that the invention which Haverfield had appropriated was actually the child of Mr. Dare's brain.

At last, after all the months of peril and hard work, Eileen Dare had come into her own. More than that, she had triumphed completely over the enemies who had maliciously sent her father to his doom.

And now Captain Billy Masters was on the scene.

He and Eileen arrived in Birmingham during the morning after the tragedy had happened. Eileen was pale and rather weak, but smiling and cheerful. She had reason to be cheerful. She recollected those first few moments of returning consciousness with blushing cheeks and tender eyes.

Lee and Nipper were very pleased with Billy's part in the affair, and Nipper voted him to be "a thundering good sort." Nipper's keen eyes detected something else, too. Eileen Dare's campaign was over at last; but now, it seemed, Billy had started another campaign of a totally different character.

"He'll win, guv'nor!" declared Nipper, with a solemn shake of his head. "In fact, I believe he's won already. And we didn't know anything about it. Well, I don't think Miss Eileen could have chosen a better chap in the whole of Great Britain!"

Nipper's prophecy was quite correct.

Captain William Oliver Masters, D.S.O., did not pursue his campaign for long; in truth, he had already reached the decisive point. And Eileen Dare had before her days of happiness and joy. The stress of the past was over, the dark clouds had rolled by, and a clear, bright horizon shone ahead.

Eileen Dare had triumphed.

Billy, according to his own idea, rather fancied that he had triumphed.

THE END.

NEXT WEEK!—(See page ii.)

GRAND NEW SERIAL—JUST STARTING!

The Boxing Sailor

A STORY OF THE RING AND LIFE IN THE NAVY.

By ARTHUR S. HARDY.

Read this first!

TOM CRAWLEY, light-weight boxer and stoker aboard *H.M.S. Flyer*, makes his first public appearance in a contest with *Jimmy Yowl*, lightning feather-weight. He wins the fight, and with the prize-money is able to replace his father's torpedoed fishing smack. Tom is jealous of

BOB RANDLE—who, the lad considers, is a "slacker"—on the grounds that Bob seems to find favour in the eyes of

MARY THWAITES, the pretty daughter of *Fisherman Thwaites*, of whom Tom is very fond.

FISHERMAN CRAWLEY'S smack is chartered as a mine-sweeper, and one day is torpedoed by a German submarine in sight of land. The crew, with the exception of old Thomas Crawley, are cast adrift on a raft.

(Now read this week's thrilling instalment.)

HEINRICH WESER.

IT was some time before Thomas Crawley's eyes became accustomed to the strange light in the hold of the submarine. It was a veiled yet powerful light that illuminated the interior of the under-sea boat.

The throbbing of the engines created an almost painful impression upon the fisherman, who was used to the smoother running of his fishing-smack.

As his eyes took in the details of the hold, he began to admire the neatness and compactness of everything.

He could see the torpedoes set neatly in their places, many of them ready to be lifted and set in the air-chambers of the torpedo-tubes in a moment, and so discharged at the intended victim.

The air was warm and close. Almost amidships, there was an iron ladder leading upwards.

He could see a rack, filled with carbines and cutlasses, arranged in orderly fashion. The reek of oil was overpower-

ing. Drip, drip, drip, drip came drops of water, collecting on the iron sheets of the roof, and dropping down upon the floor.

Rust smears marred the painted sides of the boat. For'ard and aft there were chambers, shut off from the rest of the ship. The strident notes of a gramophone jarred the sensitiveness of his ears.

He felt tired and a little shaken.

While he was standing, a seaman came to him and pushed him savagely.

"Lie down there, you English dog—out of the way!" he shouted, pointing.

Thomas Crawley made no reply, but dropped to the floor.

It was no time to argue, though he would have given much to have closed his fist and have given the rascal one on the point of the jaw, in the good old British style.

He drew his knees up, clasped them with his hands, and made the most of his soaked condition.

Men came and went. Commands were issued and obeyed. He could see the officer now and then peering at the mirror of the periscope.

It showed nothing.

A strange ticking presently made itself heard. Crawley looked about him in puzzled fashion for a while, and then saw a clock in a case set in the framework of the wall.

How long had he been aboard the U-boat? What had happened to Mary and his mates? How was it that the destroyer had failed to sink them? Next he thought of home, of his son Tom, and wondered if he would ever see them or Weathersca again.

Slowly—ever so slowly—he felt a warm glow stealing over him, and his sodden clothing began to dry. Then his head nodded, and, giving way to the sense of drowsiness that possessed him, he closed his eyes and went to sleep.

He was awakened, he knew not how long afterwards, by someone shaking him savagely.

He opened his eyes, and saw two seamen standing beside him. One of them spurned him with his foot, and he was told to get up in German. He obeyed. He was then half pushed, half led forward, until he found himself standing face to face with the U-boat commander.

Thomas Crawley eyed the skipper of the murder-boat with some curiosity. He was unlike what he expected him to be.

Here was no brutalised specimen of a murdering Hun, with sensual mouth and bloated visage, but a clean-limbed, square-shouldered, sun-tanned young officer, with blue eyes and a thoughtful, expectant expression of face. The strain of the life beneath the waves, where he would remain for hours, sometimes for days and nights on end, with death ever lurking near, had set deep lines in his face, and had slightly touched his hair with grey; but he was still very young, and he wore the decoration of the Iron Cross.

The U-boat commander looked at him earnestly.

"Where do you come from?" he asked, and his voice, though stern, was not harsh.

"I am a fisherman from Weathersea," was the slow reply, "and I only wish, you murdering scoundrel, that I'd had a gun aboard. I'd have sunk you, or have died in the attempt!"

The U-boat commander shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm sorry I had to send your fishing-boat down," he replied, "but such are our orders."

"Your orders!" sneered Thomas Crawley.

"Yes. We cannot differentiate. We have to win the war somehow. Your fishing-boats sweep up the mines we sow. Sometimes they sink our under-water craft. We have been shelled from small boats before to-day. We are hunted like a fox by your wolves of the sea. And we hit back."

Thomas Crawley answered with a defiant laugh.

"Your name?" said the German naval officer.

"Thomas Crawley."

The commander started, looked into the fisherman's face, and then, with a low cry took a step towards him.

"Thomas Crawley! Thomas Crawley, of Weathersea!" he cried, and there was a throb in his voice. "Ah, yes, it is—it is! Mr. Crawley, don't you know me?"

It was now the fisherman's turn to start, and to regard his companion with astonishment.

"You know me? You speak perfect English!" he cried. "Why, then, I ought to know you!"

"You do! I am Heinrich Weser. Ah, Mr. Crawley—Mr. Crawley! And I was so happy when you and I used to know each other in the happy days before the war!"

"Heinrich Weser! Heinrich Weser!" gasped the incredulous fisherman. "Why, so it is! You have changed, but I know your voice and your eyes and your smile. And you have started on this murdering game—you!"

The German shook his head sadly.

"War spares no one," he said. "And who among the nations shall say where the blame rests?"

"It rests with your Kaiser, with your military leaders, with your grasping politicians, who thought they could seize upon the world's trade, and mould every nation to their will! They are the cold-blooded murderers who will have to answer for the blood that's been shed!"

"I do not know. I am a German. I have to obey orders."

"As they obeyed orders who trampled Belgium and her rights and liberties under foot—who have bled France white!" said Thomas Crawley scornfully.

Heinrich's face seemed to grow suddenly old.

"Old friend," he said, and his voice throbbed with emotion, "do not blame me for it! I was in England when the war broke out, and happy."

"Playing the spy there, in the pay of your accursed country!"

"No. I intended to stay there, for I loved England. I was going to marry an English girl." His face worked painfully. "I no more noticed the gathering storm than you did, Crawley, my old friend. When I came to live at your cottage in Weathersea in the happy summer before the war, I believed that destiny would shape our lives otherwise. I was no spy. And my hands are clean even now!"

"When you sink ships on sight, without warning!"

"I have to do it. Those are my orders. And often it is either sink or be sunk."

Crawley laughed derisively.

"At any rate, my old friend," the U-boat commander went on, while the German sailors about him craned their heads

to listen, "I am glad I saved you, though I would have saved any man who had come to me as you did, even had he been my bitterest enemy. And you are safe in my hands."

"I'll ask no favour from any German!" answered Thomas Crawley, folding his arms. "Treat me as you have treated the others!"

"You shall be well handled. I give you my word on that. And now, come and get those clothes changed and have some food. You must be starving!"

He swung hastily round, saw the gaping crew, and ordered them away in a manner that startled Thomas Crawley. He was like a tyrant in his treatment of the men. Every vestige of softness had vanished. And they scuttled away like rats before him.

Heinrich Weser beckoned to the fisherman to follow him, and led the way forward through the little iron door.

There a folding table was set up, and food and wine placed before the starving fisherman.

And Heinrich, after watching him with a smile for a moment, nodded his head in satisfaction, and then went out to command his ship.

HOW THE NEWS CAME TO WEATHERSEA.

IT was the morning after the sinking of the Dora Grey, and young Tom was lounging at the gate of the little cottage-garden, smoking, and looking up and down the road.

His mother was busy within, going about her work in silence, a thing Tom didn't like to see. It meant that she was uneasy in her mind about the long absence of the smack and her husband.

Never had Thomas Crawley been away for such a length of time save when he'd gone mine-sweeping, and every day there were alarming reports of ships sunk brought into port, and passed on by word of mouth.

What had happened to the old man? Tom wondered. Why hadn't he come back with that mighty catch he'd promised to bring?

Suddenly Tom sprang up, alert, with eyes flashing.

He saw a figure in khaki striding towards him, with swagger-cane neatly held in the left hand at an angle of 45 degrees, a figure with squared shoulders

and military swing which somehow seemed familiar.

The Tommy was hurrying, too.

When he was only fifty yards away, Tom recognised him.

It was Rob Randle.

But what the deuce was Bob hurrying for?

"What's the matter, Bob?" asked Tom as the Tommy came up, breathing quickly from his exertions.

It was "Bob" and "Tom" between them now, and the hatchet was fairly buried.

"It's about the Dora Grey, Tom. I just heard the news. The fishermen are talking about it on the quay, and I thought maybe you'd like a friend to come and tell you——"

"Tell me what? She's not sunk? Don't say she's sunk!"

Tom's face was the colour of chalk, and his eyes grew dull and heavy.

"She was sent to the bottom by a U-boat yesterday, Tom, old man, and——"

Tom Crawley stared vacantly at Bob for a moment as the full effect of the news sank home; then, with a low cry, he sprang at the soldier and seized him by the throat.

"It's a lie! It's a lie! You've made it up! It's not true!" fumed the hot-tempered sailor.

Bob wrenched Tom's hands away and shook himself. He bore no resentment for the rough handling.

"It's only too true, Tom, old man!" he cried. "Don't go for me! I came as a pal."

Tom broke down then, and blubbed like a child, hiding his face in his sleeve.

"Of course you did! Of course you did, Bob, mate," he sobbed. "Don't take any notice of me! I—I didn't mean it. Only, to think that my old dad, and Riley, and Sam, and—good heavens, there was Mary aboard!" He looked like a madman. "Has she gone, too?"

His voice sank into a low, hushed whisper, and he trembled.

It afterwards struck him that Bob had remained unnaturally calm and self-controlled through it all, and he grew to admire Bob.

"No, Tom. Mary has been saved, and Riley, and the boy, and the other man, too. There's only your dad missing."

"Drowned?" came in awed accents.

"No; only they took him aboard the U-boat. And they've taken him away a prisoner."

"A prisoner! Then, by gum, I and

the boys will have him out of the cage they've put him in! Bob, I'm going aboard the *Flyer* soon, to blow the bottom out of the German submarines! And you're going to fight the Hun in France. We're going to beat 'em! Don't say we sha'n't beat 'em!"

"Oh, we'll beat 'em right enough!" answered Bob soberly. "And now, Tom, just take hold of my arm, will you, and we'll get along down to the station."

"What for?" choked Tom Crawley, trembling to think of how his mother might take the news.

"To meet Mary and the others. They're coming through from Borrowmouth. They were landed there this morning, and we must be there to welcome them home."

Tom Crawley sighed, cast a longing glance back at the cottage in which his mother was working, and then went with Bob along the street to welcome Mary home.

The two friends had scarcely reached the railway-station ere the train from Borrowmouth steamed in.

Eagerly they quickened their pace, searching the opening doors of the different compartments for a sight of the survivors of the *Dora Grey*.

Then they saw the boy Sam leap down upon the platform, and Bill Riley follow him. Next Mary appeared, clad in strange-looking clothing, very pale and tired, with her pretty hair all tumbled about her face.

They ran to her. Bob let Tom pass, and shook hands with Riley.

"You had a narrow squeak, Riley," said the grocer's son.

"Pretty fair, sir," answered the seaman off-handedly. "But, lor' bless yer, it don't do to make a fuss o' things these times. It might have been worse."

"And Thomas Crawley? He's lost?"

"Well, he is and he ain't. Leastways, he was alive when we last clapped eyes on him. They took him aboard the German submarine. Adding sort of insult to injury, wasn't it, sir?"

"You mean that Crawley would have preferred to drown?"

"Of course, Mr. Randle. Far rather be dead than a prisoner among the Huns!"

And Riley burst into a flow of bad language, which he thought the occasion justified.

But Bob's face brightened up. While there was life there was hope. Thomas Crawley was not dead. The war could not last for ever, and when the end came the gallant fisherman would return to Weathersea, where he would be able to start afresh.

He had plenty of friends. There would be no difficulty in his making a fresh start.

Meanwhile, Tom had met Mary with the full flush of his grief upon him. The news Bob Randle had brought of the sinking of the *Dora Grey* and the loss of his father had clearly left its mark upon him.

His heart, swelling with emotion, forced the tears to his eyes. Mary, seeing this and understanding, set her arms about him and broke down.

"Oh, Tom—Tom—Tom!" she sobbed. "It's very hard! The brutes—the villains! They sank the smack without giving us a chance. And how proud your father was of her!"

Tears fell from Tom's eyes and guttered down his cheeks.

"It was a bad luck trip that last, old girl," he moaned. "Somehow I thought it would be. What's the good of trying? Now dad's gone——"

"But he'll come back again, Tom. He was taken alive aboard the submarine. One of the German sailors tried to stamp him down into the sea as he clung to the rail, but the officer saved him. Would you believe it, Tom, he struck the seaman down to the deck for all the world as if he were a Englishman!"

Tom stared and gaped, dashing the tears from his cheek with his hand.

"What?" he exclaimed. "A German officer, and he behaved like a man?"

"He did, Tom, whatever was the cause. And if the U-boat wasn't sunk by the destroyer that came to our rescue, Mr. Crawley will be taken in her back to Germany."

Oh, the relief of it! What a different story Tom would have to tell his mother now than that he would have told had he gone straight in to her immediately after Bob Randle had brought him the news.

But, though his grief was leavened, his hatred of the Germans and all that Germany stood for was in no sense diminished.

(To be continued.)

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