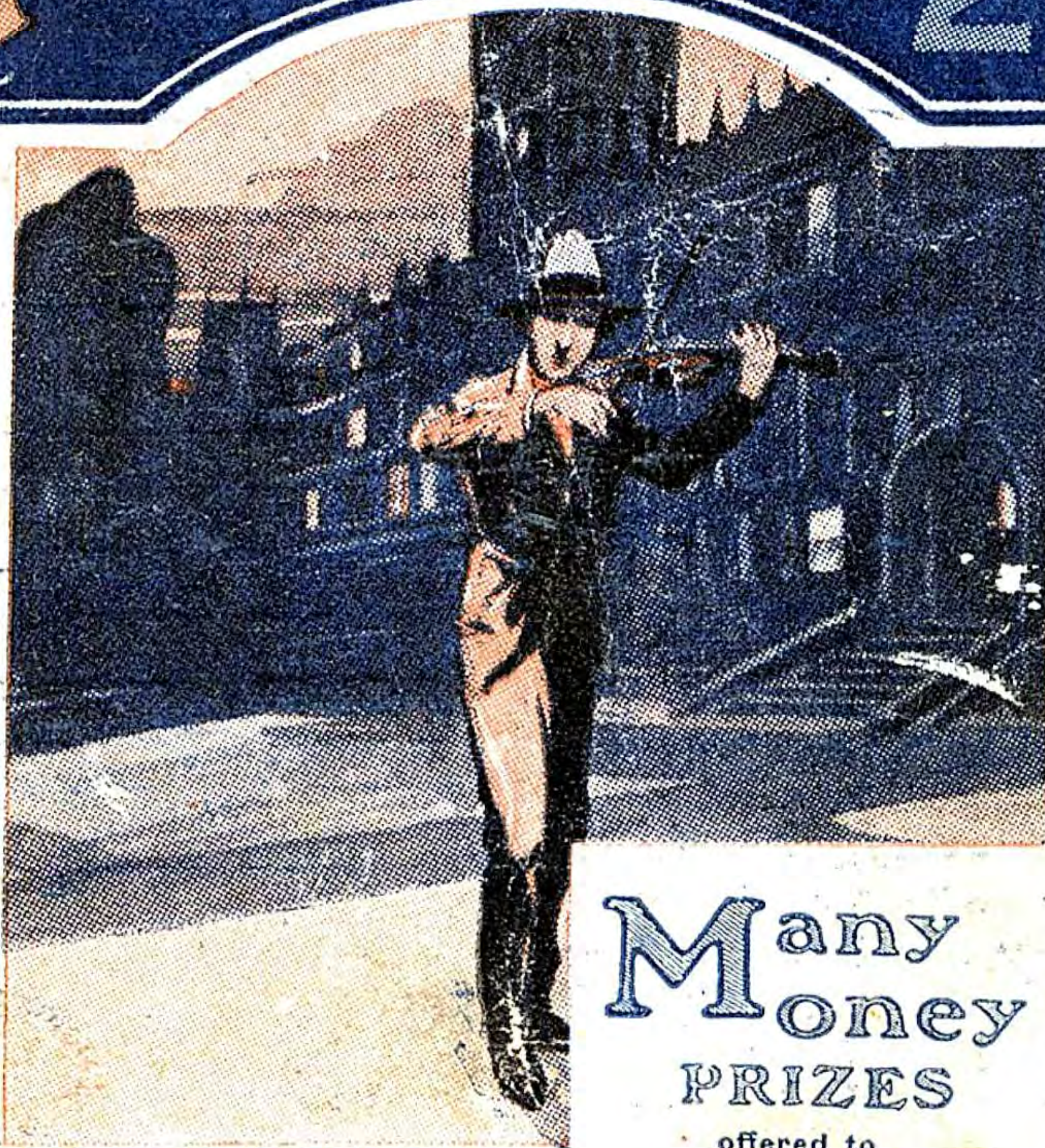


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# THE NELSON LEE

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The violin smashed to the ground, and Fullwood stamped his heel upon it. The instrument was splintered to matchwood in a second. The Jewish boy stood there, pale to the lips. And Fullwood laughed in sheer triumph.





A Light, Breezy Story of School Life and Adventure at St. Frank's College with a Strong Detective and Human Interest, which cannot fail to grip the reader from the first to the last page. Introduces NELSON LEE, as the Famous Schoolmaster-detective; and NIPPER, the Popular Captain of the Remove at St. Frank's; HANDFORTH & CO., ARCHIE GLENTHORNE, the Genial Ass, and many other Well-known Characters. By the Author of "Handforth Minor," "The Mystery of the Edgemoor Hermit," "The Riddle of Demon's Gap," and many other Fine Stories.

ARE YOU A DETECTIVE? Then test your powers of deduction, and see if you can win one of our Money Prizes offered to readers who can solve the mystery of "THE FLAMING GOD!" See page 30 and particulars of "Problem Story Competition" at the end of this number.—  
THE EDITOR.

(THE NARRATIVE RELATED  
THROUGHOUT BY NIPPER.)

CHAPTER I.

THE WANDERING JEW!

"WHAT'S that rotten noise?" asked Fullwood irritably.

"Noise?" repeated Gulliver.

"I thought it was rather decent you know. Sounds like a violin to me, an' I must say the chap knows how to wangle it. Those notes are toppin'."

Ralph Leslie Fullwood sniffed.

"Like a couple of tomcats squallin'," he said sneeringly.

The Nuts of the Ancient House at St. Frank's were just getting into their overcoats in the cloakroom. It was a half-holiday, and a keen, crisp November afternoon. Fullwood and Co. had decided to run into Barnington on their bicycles—not because they wanted to ride, but because there was a chance of playing billiards, with a little bit on the game, in the Wheatsheaf Hotel.





And from some mysterious source came the sounds of sweet, plaintive music. As a matter of fact, the source wasn't mysterious at all. For the player stood just inside the Triangle, and he was fiddling to the empty air.

Not a fellow was to be seen.

Most of the seniors and juniors were on the playing-fields, either playing football or practising. The rest were indoors, in front of their study fires or chatting in the common-rooms.

The fiddler himself was a slight but well-built youth of about seventeen or eighteen. He was rather shabbily dressed, although it is only fair to say that he was neat in the extreme.

He had an open face and dark hair, and he played in a dreamy kind of way, as though he was quite isolated from his surroundings. His whole soul seemed to be in the music he was creating.

And it was extraordinarily good music, too. The notes were pure and deep, and the melody was haunting. The only pity was that the violin was of poor quality, and did not permit the player to give of his best.

Fullwood and Gulliver and Bell, having got into their overcoats, sallied out through the lobby, and emerged upon the Ancient House steps. Fullwood came to a sudden halt and stared across the Triangle.

"Oh, there he is!" said Gulliver. "A giddy beggar!"

"I'll give him beggar!" explained Fullwood darkly. "My hat! The nerve, you know! Comin' in here as though he owned the place, an' scrapin' away at his rotten fiddle! We'll kick the cad out!"

"Oh, go easy," said Bell. "He's not doin' any harm, an' there's nobody to listen, anyhow. We don't want to waste time—"

"This is my affair," interrupted Fullwood sourly.

He went down the steps and approached the musician, who had just brought his sweet, plaintive melody to an end, and was tuning up afresh for another selection. And Fullwood looked indignant.

At close quarters he could see the stranger's features.

"See that?" he muttered. "The cad's a Jew!"

Gulliver grinned.

"Yes, he looks a bit Hebrew-ish," he agreed. "But that's not a crime—"

"Do you think we want any beastly Jews crawlin' about the place, cringin' for money?" demanded Fullwood. "I expect he's only here to spot what he can pinch.

"Better not let Solly Levi hear you!" said Bell.

Fullwood had utterly no right to order the musician to leave the school premises. Tra-

velling organ-men, conjurers, and the like, frequently entered the Triangle to collect a few coppers from the St. Frank's fellows. And they generally went away well satisfied, for the majority of the boys were far from mean.

But it pleased the cad of the Remove to sit on any unfortunate individual who laid himself open to such treatment. And it seemed to Fullwood that here was an excellent chance. He had no reason to dislike the youth because he was Jewish, but it was Fullwood's nature to be a cad.

The musician was about to start a fresh tune.

"Stop that!" said Fullwood sharply, as he strode up.

"Don't you like my music?" asked the Jewish youth quietly.

"Music!" sneered Fullwood. "Bally rotten scrapin', you mean! You'd better clear out of here before I kick you out! We don't like your sort hangin' about. Sling off—an' be quick about it!"

The musician flushed deeply.

"I have done nothing to deserve such talk!" he said. "I am trying—"

"I don't want any lip!" snapped Fullwood. "Clear out!"

The Jewish boy looked at Ralph Leslie steadily.

"Have you any authority to give me such an order?" he asked, with quiet calmness.

"Have I— By gad!" said Fullwood thickly.

If you don't want to be kicked across the Triangle, you'd better scoot! I expect you've only come in here on the look-out for what you can steal!"

The youth flushed again.

"That is a lie!" he said warmly.

"A lie!" roared Fullwood. "Did you hear that, you chaps? This filthy cad called me a liar!"

"Wipe him up," advised Bell. "I wouldn't let a Jew call me a liar!"

"I'm not goin' to dirty my hands by touchin' him," said Fullwood roughly. "All Jews are the same—greasy an' dirty! It's a rotten shame that they're allowed to live in the same towns as decent people!"

The Jewish boy's eyes blazed.

"I am sorry I came here," he said, with forced calmness. "I was foolish enough to think that St. Frank's College was a school for young English gentlemen. I was mistaken, and I am disappointed."

It was his tone more than his words that made Fullwood wince. There was a world of biting contempt in it. And, somehow, the young musician made the cads of the Remove feel small and mean and insignificant. His self-control was perfect.

Fullwood went mad with sudden rage.

"You—you!" he shouted fiercely. "Are you going to clear out?"



"No, I am not!" replied the other. "You have no authority— No, no! Don't touch— Let go—let go!"

Fullwood had made a sudden grab at the fiddler's violin. The Jewish boy gripped it firmly, but with a sudden wrench Fullwood dragged the instrument away. He raised it above his head.

"Oh, please, please——" began the stranger.

Crash!

The violin smashed to the ground, and Fullwood savagely stamped his heel upon it. The instrument was splintered to matchwood in a second. The Jewish boy stood there, pale to the lips. And Fullwood laughed with sheer triumph.

"That's what you get for being lippy!" he panted jeeringly.

The musician uttered a cry of despair and anger.

Then, with burning eyes, he flung himself at Fullwood. He was only slight, and none too-well nourished. But his temper was at fever heat. The wanton destruction of his violin—his means of livelihood—gave him strength.

Crash!

His clenched fist struck Fullwood right in the face, and the cad of the Remove went down like a log, measuring his length on the gravel of the Triangle. He lay there, howling for a moment.

Gulliver and Bell stared in blank astonishment at first. Then their faces clouded, and they turned fiercely on the youth. He was still very pale, and he was breathing hard as he stood over the fallen Fullwood.

"You—you blessed spitfire!" shouted Gulliver fiercely.

"Grab him!" snarled Fullwood, staggering to his feet. "Don't stand staring, you fools! By gad! We'll absolutely skin the cad! He hit me—he shoved his filthy paw into my face!"

"You have broken my violin!" exclaimed the musician passionately. "You have insulted me without reason, and——"

"On him!" shouted Fullwood thickly.

Before the youth could make any retreat—even if he had desired to do so—the Nuts of the Remove were upon him. He fought desperately, but he could not tackle such a fight with success.

He was probably a couple of years older than the Removites, but he was no larger, and very much slimmer. He put up his fists, and did everything in his power to beat the cads back. But they fairly swept him off his feet, and he descended to the gravel with a thud.

Fullwood and Co. sprawled over him, and held him down. Fullwood gave a gloating exclamation of triumph.

"Now we've got him!" he panted. "I'm goin' to rub his face in the gravel until his own mother wouldn't know him!"

Fortunately, such a move as this was not destined to be put into operation. In his

rage, Fullwood was quite capable of carrying out his threat. But a sturdy form came from the direction of the playing fields just then, and paused to have a look at the scene near the gateway.

"By my life!" said the newcomer. "What are those lozers up to?"

Solomon Levi easily recognised the sprawling figures as those of Fullwood and Co. He always referred to them as "lozers"—which meant something far from complimentary. And he walked over to the spot to investigate.

"Such goings on!" exclaimed Levi, as he halted. "You'll make your fine clothes look nice, kneeling in the gravel. Who's the chap— Great Scott!"

Solly Levi stared. He had just caught a clear glimpse of the stranger's face. And, instinctively, he knew that the fellow on the ground was one of his own race. Then his sharp eyes noticed the splintered violin.

"What's been happening here?" asked Levi sharply.

"Mind your own confounded business!" snapped Fullwood.

"Believe me, that's no answer," said Levi. "How did that violin come to be broken like that? And what are you doing with that fellow on the ground? Get up, you rotters!"

"This is my affair, an' I'll trouble you to clear off!" snarled Fullwood. "This dirty Jew hit me in the face——"

"He knew what to hit all right!" interrupted Solly briskly. "A dirty Jew, eh? My life! You've got a nerve, believe me! One of my own people, and you call him dirty! Is it trouble you want? Because, if so, you're going to get it!"

Solomon calmly and deliberately rolled up his sleeves—in something after the same manner as Edward Oswald Handforth. And his eyes glinted rather dangerously. Solly was an easy-going, good-natured fellow; but when he was roused he could do terrific damage.

"What about this violin?" he asked. "Who smashed it?"

"I did!" shouted Fullwood. "I'm not afraid of you, This beastly rotter was makin' an infernal din, an' when I spoke to him he checked me. So I smashed his fiddle for him!"

Levi nodded.

"It'll cause you a lot of pain, take it from me," he said. "Right now, you're going to howl for help. It's all serene, old man," he added, nodding to the musician. "I'll make these lozers sorry for themselves!"

Fullwood sneered.

"You'll do a fat lot——" he began.

"Biff!"

"Yaroooooh!" hooted Ralph Leslie. "Yow-ow! By gad! You—you——"

"Stand up, you gunuf, and let me smash you!" roared Solomon. "That's for being insulting! And this is for being a cad!"



Crash!

"Yoo-hoooh!" yelled Fullwood wildly. "You—you fools! Why don't you drag him away? By gad! You Jewish beast! I'll— Yow-ow!"

"You rogues!" shouted Levi. "You miserable puppies! Come on! You think you can drag me off, is it? Try it! By glory! We'll see about that!"

Biff! Bang! Crash! Biff!

Solly suddenly turned himself into a miniature edition of Kid Lewis. He struck out right and left. Fullwood had already suffered, and was on his feet. But now Bell and Gulliver received several terrific knocks.

They reeled away, and the musician was enabled to get to his feet. He stood looking on at the scrap with shining eyes. His face was flushed, and he warmed towards Solly Levi, who had come so opportunely to his rescue.

Fullwood, filled with rage, sailed in again—for he was no coward, whatever his other faults. But he was sorry a moment later. For Solly turned on him like a whirlwind.

Before Fullwood could get in a blow, Levi punched right and left. The leader of Study A reeled back, and he had a sort of sensation that all his teeth had been knocked out. And his left eye was curiously numb.

"You see!" shouted Levi triumphantly. "This is what you get! I'm the kind of feller who can stand any joke—even if it's against my own people. But when I'm called a dirty Jew, I start doing things. Don't worry, old chap," he added, turning to the stranger. "Your violin's smashed, but I'll make these cads pay for it—with a hundred per cent. interest!"

Fullwood hung back, scowling fiercely.

"If you think we're going to pay a penny, you've made a mistake!" he snarled. "It's just like your rotten race to talk about a hundred per cent. interest. You're a couple of swindlin'—"

"By my life!" shouted Levi furiously. "So you haven't had enough! Believe me, I'll make you sore——"

"One moment, Levi!" interrupted Nelson Lee quietly. "I suppose you are quite aware that fighting is against all school regulations. What is the meaning of this unseemly conduct in the Triangle?"

The famous Housemaster detective had come up unseen by the juniors. But now they turned towards him, flushed, and rather startled. Fullwood's eyes glittered evilly. He saw a chance to get the better of these Jewish boys.

"I'm glad you've come, sir!" he exclaimed tensely. "This—this chap flew at me without any reason. He behaved like a young hooligan——"

"Before you say anything about hooligans, Fullwood, I want to know the exact details of this affair," interrupted Nelson Lee curtly.

"I'll tell you exactly what happened——"

"No, this young man will give me the details, if you please," said Nelson Lee, indicating the musician. "Come, my boy, what caused the start of this trouble?"

## CHAPTER II.

### FEASTING THE STRANGER!



THE musician looked uncomfortable.

"I—I don't want to get anybody into trouble, sir," he said, in a low voice. "It was nothing much——"

"It seems to me that it was something of considerable gravity," put in Nelson Lee quietly. "Your instrument is quite smashed beyond repair—and that, I take it, is serious for you."

"Yes, sir," said the Jewish youth.

"You were playing here in the hope of collecting money?"

"Yes, sir."

"I heard the music, and thought it was remarkably good," went on Nelson Lee.

"What is your name, my boy?"

"Isaac Marks, sir."

"And you earn your living by fiddling?"

"Yes, sir; I've been doing it for a few weeks," said the musician. "It's because I couldn't get a proper job, sir."

"I see," said the detective. "Now, please be quite truthful. How did your violin come to be smashed?"

Isaac Marks hesitated.

"It—it was a bit of an accident, sir," he said. "These boys told me to go away, and I refused. They insulted me, and then there was a bit of a scrap. My violin was dragged away and trodden on."

"What have you to say, Fullwood?" asked Lee, turning to him.

"The fellow's a liar, sir!" shouted Fullwood furiously. "He dropped the violin by accident, and trod on it himself! I didn't insult him at all—in fact, I was just puttin' my hand in my pocket to give him a shillin', when he said somethin' I can't repeat."

Levi took a deep breath.

"Believe me, what that lozer doesn't know about lying isn't worth learning, sir!" he broke out. "Five minutes ago he told me that he smashed up the violin himself! And he called this fellow a dirty, greasy, thieving Jew!"

Nelson Lee nodded.

"No, Fullwood, you needn't speak!" he said sternly. "Knowing you as I do, I accept Levi's statement. It is quite apparent to me that you deliberately insulted this young man, and with no justification. You will each write me five hundred lines for despicable conduct."

"But—but——" began Fullwood.

"Silence!" commanded Lee. "Tell me, Marks, what was the value of your instrument?"

"It was only a cheap one, sir," said



Marks. "I only paid thirty shillings for it, second hand. It was a bargain at that price, sir."

"So I should imagine!" said Nelson Lee. "It seems obvious that you are not attempting to make any profit, Marks. Fullwood, Gulliver, Bell! You will each contribute ten shillings at once, and make good the loss. This will be poor compensation, for I doubt if another violin can be procured at such a price."

Fullwood and Co. fairly reddened with indignation.

"Thirty shillin's, sir!" shouted Fullwood. "Why, it wasn't worth half-a-crown! It was a rotten old thing——"

"I shall not tell you again, Fullwood," interrupted Lee. "You will pay this money at once—or, if you are short of cash, I will pay Marks out of my own pocket, and deduct from your weekly allowance. Which is it to be?"

"I don't see why——"

"Another objection, Fullwood, and I shall increase your imposition to a thousand lines!" snapped Nelson Lee. "I will stand no further nonsense!"

And Fullwood and Co., to their intense fury, were compelled to fork out the money. They did so with black scowls. And, in the meantime, quite a little crowd of fellows had collected. They looked on with great interest.

The defeated Nuts of Study A went off as soon as they had paid, and they not only hated Marks, but they detested the whole Jewish race. Not that this affected the Jewish race in the slightest degree.

Nelson Lee turned to Marks with a smile.

"I have done the best for you, my boy, and we must let it go at that," he said. "I only hope that you will obtain another violin, so that you can continue your very excellent fiddling. And do not judge all the boys by the conduct of those three. I should be very sorry to think that they are characteristic of St. Frank's."

"Thank you, sir," said Marks. "It was very good of you, sir. I—I don't exactly know what to say, sir."

Solly turned to Nelson Lee.

"May I take him indoors, sir?" he asked eagerly. "I mean, I'd like to give him some tea. He's one of my own people, sir, and——"

"You can do as you please, Levi," said Nelson Lee. "If you wish to be generous, it is not my intention to stand in your way. Marks appears to be quite a respectable young man, and you are at liberty to use your own discretion."

"Thanks awfully, sir," said Levi. "You're a brick; believe me!"

Nelson Lee nodded, and smilingly walked away. He was a keen judge of character, and he was quite satisfied that Marks was by no means the ordinary type of travelling musician. And it was only natural that Levi should want to treat him to a little spread—particularly as he was also Jewish. Further-

more, Lee had an idea that Solly wanted to do something to help the stranger.

Levi grinned cheerfully when he found himself left standing alone with Marks. The latter was still rather flushed and unsettled.

"There you are, Izzy, my son," exclaimed Levi. "How's that? We're not all cads here, you know, and Mr. Lee's one of the best. Come along indoors, and have some tea. I've got heaps of good things."

Marks looked rather uncomfortable.

"No; it wouldn't be right," he said. "It's not fair for me to butt in here; and it was too good of Mr. Lee to let me have that money——"

"Rats!" interrupted Solly. "He simply made those cads fork out. They're the worst rotters at St. Frank's. Besides, what are you going to do about a violin? How are you going on? Answer me that!"

Izzy Marks shook his head.

"It's a pity about the violin," he said. "I don't think I shall be able to get another one so cheap. My luck! It was a good violin, and it earned me a good bit, on and off."

"Well, we don't want to stand talking here," said Levi briskly. "As a matter of fact, I've got a fiddle indoors. You see, my people thought they'd make me learn the violin, and they set me up with everything. I can play a bit, but it's not in my line. I'd like you to have a look at it."

And, although Izzy Marks seemed to think that he was pushing himself forward, Solly forced him into the Ancient House. And together they went to the end study, which Solly shared with Dick Goodwin.

When they arrived they found Dick already there. The Lancashire boy was just preparing tea, and was busily spreading bread-and-butter. A kettle was steaming in the fireplace, and there was a delicious smell of freshly-brewed tea in the air. Altogether, the study was comfortable and attractive.

"Good man!" said Solly cheerfully. "This is Izzy Marks—a feller who popped in for a bit of a chat."

"Pleased to meet you," said Goodwin, extending his hand.

"I'm not really entitled to be treated like this," said Marks, as he sat down.

"And I'm tremendously surprised to find a Jewish boy here. I didn't know there was one in St. Frank's."

Solly grinned.

"You can take it from me, you'll find a Jew nearly everywhere you go!" he grinned.

"A Jew is something like a Scotsman—he goes everywhere. You can't jolly well get away from him, even if you want to!"

Izzy Marks sat down, and in a very few minutes he was partaking of a cup of tea and some bread and butter. Then Solly produced something from the cupboard. It was contained in a jar, and Dick Goodwin grinned as he looked at it.

"Some of your patent fish stuff, eh?" he said. "Eh, lad, it may be gradely to your taste, but it doesn't suit me. I think these



sardines are champion. You can get on with that stuff!"

"Gefilter fish!" exclaimed Izzy, in astonishment. "My life! I didn't expect anything like this."

"Wait!" said Solly. "Wait, my son! Gefilter fish—pickled cucumbers—pickled herring—and all sorts of things that you and I know about! Believe me, in the cupboard I've got a pound of Barnett's sausages—all nicely cooked by my mother, and sent down by post. Ever tasted 'em?"

"Rather!" said Izzy. "Who hasn't had Barnett's sausages?"

"All right—you needn't worry," said Solomon. "You'll have some before you go. And, after the grub, we'll have a look at that violin. I'll fetch it down later on. Now then—slide into it!"

He indicated the food, and in next to no time the boys were eating heartily. Izzy Marks seemed more delighted than he could say, and it was certainly a great surprise for him to be treated in such a manner.

"I don't know why you've done this for me," he remarked at length. "I'm an absolute stranger to you—"

"You're one of us!" said Solly cheerily.

"That may be, but I've met other Jewish people on the road, and they haven't treated me like this," replied Izzy. "Some of them are all right, and some of them are all wrong. And I don't mind saying so—although they are Jews."

"You can't expect everybody to be good!" replied Levi. "Now, look here, if you don't think I'm inquisitive, I'd like to know the idea?"

"What idea?"

"How is it that you—a decent-looking, strapping fellow—should be going about the country playing a violin? What's the scheme? It's not like one of our people to descend to that!"

Izzy smiled.

"Descend?" he repeated. "There's nothing dishonourable or dishonest in it, I suppose? I earn a living like that just the same as a man earns a living in an orchestra. What's the difference?"

"Well, not much, I suppose," admitted Solomon. "After all, those chaps at the seaside are very much the same. There's a crowd of pierrots on the beach, and they do a few turns, and then go round with the hat! It's a queer thing, making a living."

"I've had a bit of a rough time," said Izzy. "You can believe me, I've gone through a few things. I've tried for weeks to get a job in an orchestra, but there was nothing doing. I tried everything—except tailoring. And I wasn't going into that!"

"Jolly sensible!" said Levi. "Tailoring's played out, and, anyhow, a feller can't go very far in that line. It's a lot better to stick to music."

"And so you couldn't get a real job?" asked Goodwin. "Can you play well?"

"I think I can play decently," said Izzy.

"It's a pity my violin's broken, or I would give you a tune."

"Don't worry about that," put in Solomon. "I'll bring mine down before long. Where do your people live?"

"In Kilburn."

"Sure! I knew it!" said Levi. "At least, I knew you didn't come from the East End. You haven't got the cheek. Besides, your talk is different from the East End yids. They're a good crowd, but you can always spot 'em!"

"My people have lived in Kilburn since I was born," said Izzy. "My father died about two years ago. He was an antique dealer, and after he died the business went right down, and we had to sell it for next to nothing."

"Hard times, eh?" said Solly sympathetically.

"Yes—very hard!"

"Do you mind telling me a few details?"

"After you've been so kind, it wouldn't be fair if I didn't," replied Marks. "You see, I've got a mother and three brothers and two sisters. They're all younger than I am; and Joe and Sadie are only two and three—quite babies."

Solly looked rather surprised.

"But who earns all the money to keep the family?" he asked.

"I do!" said Izzy quietly. "At least, I try to."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Levi. "Believe me, I'm surprised! And your mother? What about her?"

"Well, she's not in the best of health," said Izzy. "She's been unwell ever since my dad died, and the business started going to pot. We had to sell everything, you know, and get into a smaller place."

"But haven't you got any uncles who could lend a hand?"

The musician smiled rather grimly.

"Mother doesn't care about asking other people to help her," he said firmly. "I don't, either. I'm seventeen; I'm old enough to earn money! If I can't keep the family going, it's a pity! It's been a bit of a struggle lately, but they've always had enough to eat, although it hasn't been of the best."

"I see!" said Solly. "Plenty of relations, but you don't let 'em know, eh? My pater would be just the same. If he fell on hard times, he'd starve rather than ask anybody for help. But it so happens that he's got bags of it! That's just how things are in this life—a few have got tons of money, thousands have got enough to be comfortable, and a few million have to scrape along and make ends meet! I reckon it's up to the energetic ones to push ahead!"

"That's what I always say," declared Izzy. "It's up to a fellow to improve himself; it's no good grumbling because others have got the luck! There isn't such a thing as luck, after all. It's pluck every



time! And I haven't got much of it, or I wouldn't be where I am!"

"Don't you believe it!" said Solly. "Why, my only hat! I reckon it needs a cartload of pluck to take a fiddle, and tramp about the country roads, earning money in that way. I'll bet you tried everything first!"

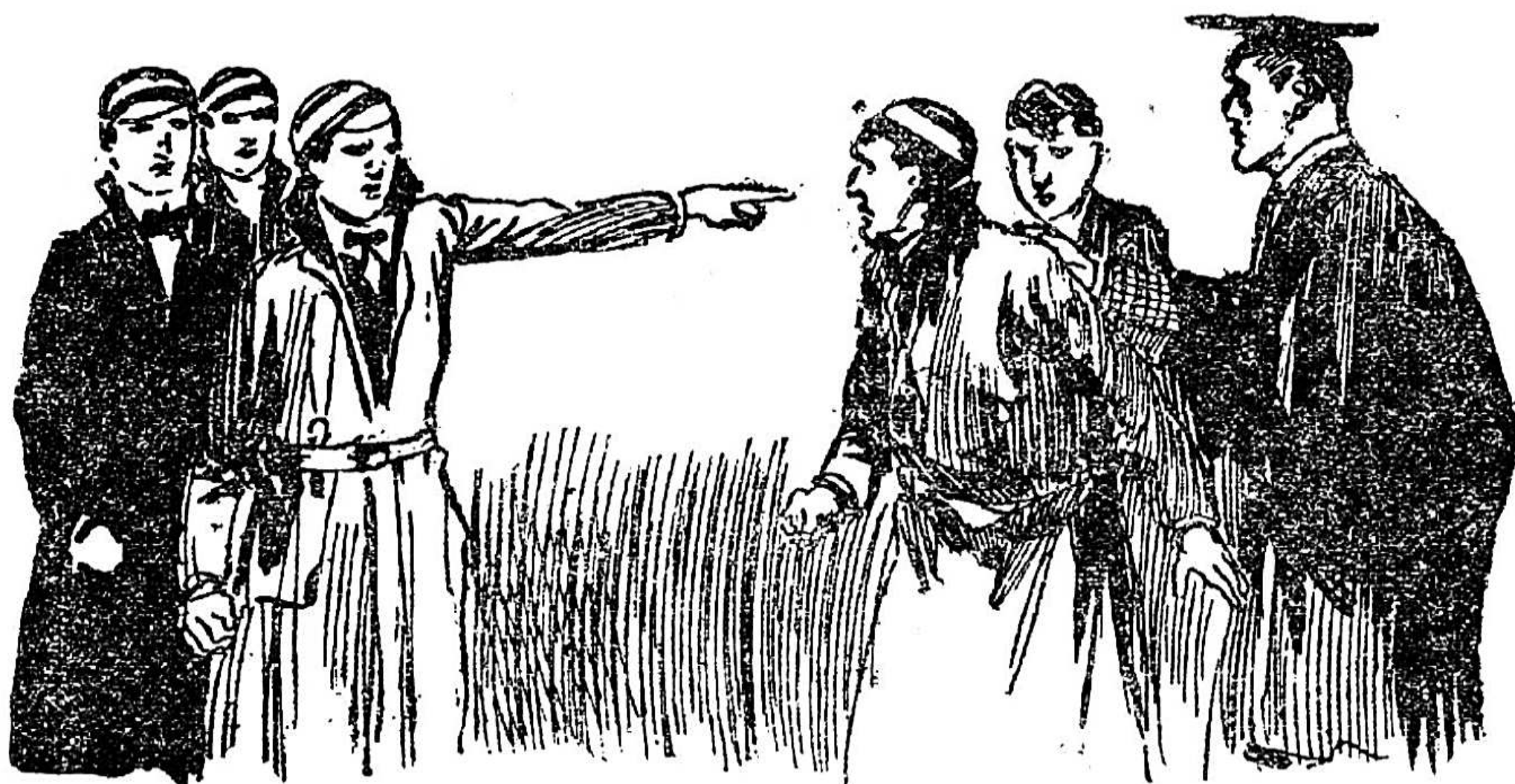
"I did," agreed Izzy quietly. "But when I couldn't get a job of any kind—and when the kiddies were going short—I just had to do something. I'd heard that other people could make money by playing in the streets, and so I tried it. But I didn't like doing it in London, and so I came into the country—where I'm not known. I've been able to earn enough money to keep myself, and to

"It's good of you—too good of you!" said Marks. "I can see what a generous chap you are, and I thought perhaps you had that idea. My family live at No. 25, Sunrize Terrace, Kilburn."

"Good!" said Solly. "The next time I'm in London I'll pop along and have a look at them. I always like making new friends. And you're too good to be going about the country roads, like a blessed organ-grinder! Oh, by the way—sha'n't be more than two ticks!"

He got up, and hurried out of the study.

"Just like Solly!" said Dick Goodwin. "He's one of the most generous chaps I ever knew. By gum! He's a champion, when



**"One moment, Levi!" interrupted Nelson Lee quietly. "I suppose you are quite aware that fighting is against all school regulations. What is the meaning of this unseemly conduct in the Triangle?"**

send plenty home to mother and the youngsters to keep them going."

Solly sat back and looked at Marks warmly.

"By my life!" he said, in a deliberate voice. "And you say you haven't got pluck! Why, you've got piles of it! You couldn't get a job, and so you did this! Why, you're just the kind of fellow I admire! Pride's all very well, but when mouths need feeding, pride's got to take a back seat! You'll have to give me the address of your people, Izzy—"

"No!" interrupted Marks quickly. "I won't do that!"

"Why not?"

"Because—well, I'd rather not."

"You're pretty deep!" grinned Solly. "You think I'm going to get my dad to send some cash on, eh? Or some food, or something? Not on your life! I wouldn't insult your mother like that!"

it comes to helping anybody. It's all rot about the Jews being mean. I've found 'em quite different."

Izzy smiled.

"Believe me, some of 'em are mean!" he said feelingly. "I don't want to talk against my own people, but the truth's the truth. After all, we're all human beings. There are plenty of mean Englishmen, and plenty of generous Englishmen. It's just the same among the Jews. But when a Yid is mean, he's so mean that he wouldn't take a penny out of his pocket. Thank goodness they're mostly the other way."

Solly came back a minute later, and with him he brought a violin case. He planked it on the table, opened it, and produced quite an excellent instrument. It was probably worth eight or ten pounds.

"Oh, it's a beauty!" said Izzy, his eyes shining. "May—may I pick it up?"



"Sure—play it!" said Solly.

Marks lifted the violin tenderly, as though it was too fragile to receive rough handling. And as soon as he had it in his grip, he seemed to forget all about his two companions and the study, and his unaccustomed surroundings.

A far away look came into his eyes, and he tuned up the instrument rather dreamily. Then, picking up the bow, he drew it across the strings. And Solly and Dick Goodwin listened while their visitor played a slow, plaintive air.

"Kol Nidre!" murmured Solomon. "One of our Jewish things, you know."

Dick nodded, and listened attentively until the piece was over. Then Marks laid the violin down on his knees, and looked about him with a bit of a start.

"It's wonderful—a glorious violin!" he said enthusiastically.

"And you can play it, too!" declared Solomon. "My life! If I could play like that, my mother would go meshuga for sheer joy, and then she'd tell everybody in Maida Vale! I was going to play a tune, but I won't now!"

"It isn't me, really!" said Marks. "It's the fiddle!"

"Rot!" said Solly. "I've used the same fiddle, and I can't make it do that! And you're going about the roads, playing to nobody! Why, you ought to be at the Queen's Hall, giving recitals!"

Marks smilingly shook his head.

"No, no!" he said. "I can't even get a job in an orchestra, let alone give recitals."

"Then it's because you play too well!" declared Solly. "What you need is more jazzy stuff now-a-days. In these new orchestras they're a bit dotty on syncopation, fox-trots, and all that sort of stuff!"

"Listen!" said Izzy.

He started playing, and his style was so absolutely different from what it had been a few minutes earlier that Solly sat still and stared. But he couldn't sit still for long. In less than fifteen seconds he was on his feet, grabbing hold of Dick Goodwin.

Marks was playing a fox-trot, and he was syncopating the music so wonderfully that it was practically impossible to listen to it and keep still. The music was full of vim and "pep," and extraordinarily catchy.

"Great!" gasped Solomon Levi at last. "My hat! You can play anything! I say, that stuff's the real goods! And you can't get a job!"

"Hard lines, isn't it?" said Marks. "Of course, I don't suppose I can play good enough for most orchestras. It's one thing to play solo, and it's another to take a place in an orchestra."

"I don't care anything about that!" said Solly. "I know you can jolly well make that violin talk. And it's a downright shame that you should have to tramp about the country roads like this. If you'll let me, I'll try to wangle something. How would you like a job in a picture-theatre?"

"You mean in the orchestra?"

"Of course."

"I've tried for many jobs like that," exclaimed Izzy. "But I never have any luck. Some other fellow has always managed to get there first."

Solly smiled.

"I've got an idea!" he said, with a nod. "Believe me, it's some wheeze, too! I've got an idea that things are going to buck up, Izzy. By the way, about that violin. How would you like to own it?"

Izzy's eyes sparkled.

"Very much, indeed!" he replied. "But I'm not likely to have a violin as good as this for many a year. I—I'll tell you what!" he added eagerly. "Do—do you particularly need it?"

"No!" said Levi. "I told my mater last holidays that I didn't like the thing, and would probably sell it. She said it was a pity, but resigned herself to it after a bit. Playing the violin is too much like hard work to my mind."

"Then—then supposing I give you this thirty bob?" asked Izzy. "That'll be like a first instalment, you see? I'll send you something every month—or every week——"

"Put the thirty bob back in your pocket, and you can consider the fiddle yours!" interrupted Solomon gruffly. "By glory! I didn't pay for it! So why should I worry? It's yours, Izzy; you need it more than I do."

Marks could hardly believe his ears.

"You—you mean that you'll give it to me," he gasped blankly.

"Sure!"

"But—but— Oh, I couldn't accept it!" declared Marks. "It's not right that you should offer it! It's—it's worth ten pounds, at least! Your father would be terribly angry——"

"A lot you know about my father!" interrupted Solly. "You think you can tell me anything? You take the violin, and say no more! By my life! Listen to him, Dick! A Jewish chap, and refusing to take something for nothing!"

Dick Goodwin grinned.

"By gum!" he said. "He thinks he's robbing you!"

"But—but really!" protested Izzy, his face flushed and excited. "I say, you know! Do you honestly mean that I can keep it?"

"By my life!" sighed Solly. "Here I've been talking to him for ten minutes, and he asks me if I mean it! You—you meshugener—you madman!"

"It's altogether too good of you, Levi——"

"Good, am I?" asked Solly, with a sniff. "Believe me, if people weren't any gooder than I am, there wouldn't be much generosity! That fiddle has been lying in the box-room for weeks. I don't need it—and I shall never play it. So I'm giving something away that I sha'n't even feel. Such generosity! And you can play beautiful music on it, and earn money to send home. My life! Get busy on some more jazz stuff. In fact,



Yiddle On Your Fiddle! Play Some Rag-time!"

Izzy Marks grinned.

"I'll play anything you like," he said cheerfully. "My, but it's good of you to treat me like this! I'm a stranger, too! But—but what were you saying about a job in a picture-theatre?"

"Ah!" replied Solly. "I've got a wheeze!"

"I can guess what it is!" said Dick Goodwin. "You see, Solly's pater owns the big new cinema in Bannington—that's only about a couple of miles from here. It's a huge place, this picture-theatre, and they show champion films, too. And they've got an orchestra that makes you forget the pictures!"

Izzy Marks stared.

"You—you mean the Bannington Palladium?" he asked breathlessly.

"That's it!" replied Solly. "You see, my father thought he'd give it a swell name just lately, and it's worth it, too."

"I passed through Bannington yesterday!" said Izzy. "I saw that place. It's one of the finest picture theatres I've ever seen, and—and it belongs to your father? That's wonderful!"

"My dad built it," said Levi. "It's still pretty early, so we'll go along directly after tea. The manager's a fine chap, and he'll give you a fair hearing. You can be pretty certain, my son, that everything will be O.K. Now, let's have some more of that syncopation! I love it!"

Izzy was almost too excited to play at first. In this short space of time his fortunes were entirely changed. A golden prospect lay before him. And it was rather curious to realise that this entire change had been mainly brought about by the vindictive cad-dishness of Fullwood and Co.

Izzy commenced playing, and after a few moments he found himself entirely lost in his music. And he proceeded to treat the chums of the end study to some syncopated tunes that fairly enchanted them.

### CHAPTER III.

#### ARCHIE FEELS JAZZY!



"I MEAN to say, what?" Archie Glenthorne raised himself languidly and drowsily from the soft lounge in his own private study. He adjusted his monocle, and gazed round with a somewhat astonished expression on his elegant face.

"Absolutely!" he murmured. "That is to say, sweet strains of the good old jazz material! In fact, several yards of the right stuff! Absolutely!"

Quite unconsciously, Archie commenced tapping a foot on the carpet, and keeping time to the catchy, exhilarating music which was wafting into the apartment from some unknown source.

The music was somewhat remarkable. Such a thing had never been heard at St. Frank's before—particularly in the junior quarters. Certainly none of the regular inhabitants were capable of playing with such skill and ability. And Archie, who was rather fond of music—and quite enchanted with syncopated melody—instinctively kept time as he wagged his head to and fro.

Dashed extraord.!" murmured Archie. "At the same time, the old music is decidedly priceless. Absolutely! I mean to say, a chappie hardly expects to find the notes of a bally fox-trot wafting through the old atmosphere! Something, apparently, is doing. Absolutely twice!"

The music was played on a violin, and the fact that it sounded so clearly in Archie's room was not remarkable. For Solomon Levi's study was only just a few steps down the passage—indeed, next door.

For Levi and Goodwin shared the End Study of the Remove passage, and Archie occupied the first study of the Fifth Form passage. He wasn't in the Fifth, but as this apartment had been empty, Nelson Lee had allowed Archie to have it. They were rather overcrowded in the Remove.

The music continued, and Archie got to his feet, and commenced fox-trotting up and down the carpet. He knew how to dance all right, and now he fairly let himself go. Archie was a fellow who loved lounging about, but a dance was always calculated to arouse him from any condition of lethargy.

"Topping!" he remarked, as he spun round. "I mean to say, this, as it were, is absolutely the life! Jazzing, and all that! Archie for the good old trickly stuff every time. What-ho!"

The door opened at that moment, and Phipps appeared, carrying a daintily-set teatray, complete with silver teapot, and all the other necessary articles. Phipps was expecting to find Archie dozing on the lounge—and it came as something of a shock to the valet to discover his young master fox-trotting with a will and gusto which was really remarkable.

Phipps was a most invaluable fellow. He had come to St. Frank's mainly for the purpose of looking after Archie—for the elegant junior had always been accustomed to having a valet, and was a most helpless individual.

"Really, sir!" murmured Phipps, stiffly. He set the tray on a side table and gazed at Archie. The latter was not even aware of the valet's presence, for he happened to have his back to the door, and the music was now coming in with much greater strength.

"If you'll pardon me, sir—" began Phipps.

He broke off and coughed loudly. "What-ho! What-ho!" exclaimed Archie, as he came to a halt. "Oh, there you are, Phipps! I mean to say, you've just flowed in, what? Good lad! Tea, and all that



kind of rot! Slide it forward, Phipps—the old throat, as it were, is dashed parched!”

“Really, sir, I’m astonished!” said Phipps severely.

“What? I mean, what?”

“You apparently forgot, sir, that it is somewhat undignified—”

“Stop!” interrupted Archie. “In other words, cease! So that’s it? So, to be exact, that’s it? My dear old scream, calm yourself. You mean the twisting and twirling stuff?”

“Precisely, sir.”

“You don’t approve, what?”

“Hardly, sir.”

“But, look here, Phipps—look absolutely here!” protested Archie. “A chappie simply must let it go now and again. I mean, bottled energy, and what not! The stuff’s simply got to ooze forth at a suitable opportunity! The old tissues are in what I might term a ripe condition, and the good old strains of music have positively set me going. Dash it all, a chappie simply can’t keep still. What about it, Phipps?”

Without warning, Archie dashed forward, seized Phipps, and commenced fox-trotting round the study. Phipps was not exactly an expert at this sort of thing, but he managed to lumber round somehow or other.

And then, just as things were getting interesting, the music suddenly ceased. At the moment, Archie was just in the middle of a movement.

“I mean to say, what?” he gasped.

“That, I might say, is dashed inconsiderate! I mean, the chappie might have continued the merry stuff for another jiffy. Absolutely! I’m positively hung up, Phipps! I need another half-a-dozen notes to get me down!”

Phipps smiled forcedly, and tried to straighten himself.

“Dancing in school is scarcely the thing, sir!” he exclaimed coldly.

“No?” said Archie. “Right you are, Phipps—don’t worry the old bean. The young master will remember it in future. But what about the music? I mean to say, Phipps—fairly priceless stuff, what? In other words, the real goods, gilt-edged, and absolutely studded with knobs!”

Phipps repressed a smile.

“The music is certainly catchy, sir,” he admitted.

“Catchy!” repeated Archie. “But, dash it all! The old language is frightfully inad., Phipps. Catchy, what? It’s positively the real material to give ‘em! I’ve never heard a violin played so frightfully frightful before. That is to say, I mean it’s topping, and all that kind of rot!”

“Yes, sir.”

“It was proceeding from some mysterious source, Phipps—”

“I hardly think so, sir.”

“What-ho! You saw the chappie wangling the dashed instrument?”

“Hardly, sir, but the music was certainly emanating from the next apartment,” said

Phipps. “That is to say, the apartment occupied by Master Levi and Master Goodwin.”

Archie straightened himself.

“Lead on, laddie—we proceed at once!” he said firmly.

“You wish to enter the next study, sir?”

“Absolutely!”

“Might I suggest, sir, that you wait until a little later?”

“Absolutely again!” said Archie. “You can suggest it as much as you like, old bird, but I’m frightfully afraid the young master will shove the old veto on it with a somewhat healthy thud. In other words, Phipps, we go at once.”

“But your tea, sir?” asked Phipps.

Archie adjusted his monocle rather blankly.

“The goodly brew, what?” he said.

“Gadzooks! You’re right, Phipps—a cold cup of tea is not only distasteful, but absolutely foul. At the same time, I cannot wait. Absolutely not, in large quantities. If it comes to it, Phipps, you can easily buzz into the rear quarters and make some more juice!”

“Very good, sir,” said Phipps resignedly.

“I don’t mind admitting, laddie, that I’m somewhat staggered,” went on Archie. “I mean, I never dreamed that Levi or Goodwin could wobble the violin so pricelessly. The dear chappies are worth vast quantities of gold. I shall absolutely compel them to play like the very dickens!”

Archie lounged out of the study, and in a few seconds he was tapping on the door of the next apartment.

“Come in!” sang out a cheery voice.

“Absolutely!” murmured Archie.

He opened the door and walked in. He adjusted his monocle and looked at Dick Goodwin. Then he looked at Solomon Levi, and finally he bestowed his gaze upon the stranger.

“What-ho!” he said. “Frightfully sorry to intrude, and all that kind of rot. Visitors, what? What-ho! The old bean begins to function, as it were! It was this priceless chappie who produced the good old jazz, what?”

“You can bet your life on it!” grinned Solly. “Allow me to introduce Mr. Izzy Marks, of Kilburn, London.”

“Honoured to meet you, laddie,” said Archie, as he shook hands. “And do you absolutely mean to tell me that you’ve really wangled the violin in that topping fashion? No tricks, or anything, what?”

“Of course not,” smiled Izzy. “I was just playing.”

“Good man!” exclaimed Archie. “In other words, stout lad! Kindly allow me to shower a few quantities of the most excellent congratulations. I mean, you’re just the cove to cheer up the lads of the village. I sincerely trust, dear one, that you have come to St. Frank’s for good.”



"I'm afraid not," said Marks. "It's very nice of you to—"

"Not?" said Archie. "Gadzooks! That's rather a stunner, don't you know. Straight between the eyes, and all that sort of thing! I was trusting, fair stranger, that you would continue to operate the good old fiddle."

"You'll be able to hear Izzy as often as you like if you go to the Bannington Cinema," said Solomon. "He's going to get a job there, and he'll make things buck up, unless I'm mistaken. Believe me, he's the goods!"

"Absolutely!" agreed Archie. "Dear laddie, I believe you every time. But it's dashed rotten that you're trickling forth at once."

"Can't be helped," said Levi. "We're late already. We've got to buzz straight away."

"That's rather poisonous!" said Archie. "I don't mind admitting, laddie, that I'm frightfully disappointed. But couldn't we come to some other arrangement? What about it? I mean to say, couldn't your pal stay on at St. Frank's—for the purpose of providing music for all and sundry? What about putting it to the Head?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I mean—"

"By gum!" grinned Dick Goodwin. "The Head would never agree to that, although I'll admit that the idea's champion."

"I'm afraid there's nothing doing, Archie," said Solomon, as he got to his feet. "Come on, Izzy. If we buzz off now, we shall just be in time to catch the evening train. Sorry, Archie, but we've got to hop off."

Archie was greatly disappointed, and he went back to his own study, feeling slightly fatigued. In fact, he needed a short doze before partaking of tea, in order to restore himself to a fit condition.

And, in the meantime, Solomon Levi and Izzy Marks marched out of the Ancient House briskly. Fullwood and Co. scowled at them as they passed through the lobby—but Fullwood dared not attempt any unpleasantness. He was not only afraid of Solly, but he was more afraid of Nelson Lee.

At the same time, Fullwood managed to twist his face into a bitter sneer as the two Jewish boys passed. But they took no notice. They could easily afford to ignore their bad manners.

Just when they got out into the Triangle, three juniors confronted them, and a few others were hovering in the background, including myself. Of course, we had all heard about Izzy and his violin.

"Oh, so here you are!" said Handforth, planting himself in front of the musician, and eyeing him up and down. "H'm! Not so bad! So you're the chap who can play the giddy violin, eh?"

"Yes," said Izzy nodding.

Handforth gave him another critical look.

"Well, I must admit you're a bit different to what I expected," he said. "I heard that you were a giddy beggar, you know—dressed in rags and tatters. You cheeky fathead! You've been trying to spoof us!"

"No, really I haven't!" replied Marks.

"Believe me, this chap will keep us here for hours, if we let him talk!" put in Solomon. "My Aunt Becky can talk plenty, but when it comes to a real chin-wagging contest, Handforth takes first prize every time."

"You—you cheeky rotter!" roared Handforth.

"Of course, he's quite harmless!" went on Solly calmly. "He makes a big noise, and he's got a pretty decent right fist. But he's a good-natured chap, and you needn't take any notice of his glare. That's just his usual expression."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth glared harder than ever.

"You—you funny Jewish fathead!" he snapped. "Up to now I've rather liked you, Solly, but if you start chipping me, I'll jolly well biff you on the nose! What's the idea of this chap pretending to be a street beggar?"

"My dear old ass, he doesn't pretend to be anything of the sort!" said Solly patiently. "A feller who goes about playing jolly fine music earns his money—he doesn't beg it! Besides, he's finished with that now—he's booked for the orchestra at the Bannington Palladium."

"I'm glad to hear it!" I put in. "Good luck to you, old son. I'll be along on Saturday, with some of the other fellows."

Izzy looked round, and flushed slightly.

"It's—it's jolly good of your chaps to wish me luck like this," he said. "I didn't know I should find so many friends here—"

"Cut it out!" interrupted Solly. "By my life! The train goes in six minutes, and we shall never do it. Come on!"

And he dragged Izzy away, and they sped off for the station.

## CHAPTER IV.

### SOLLY FIXES THINGS!



**I**ZZY MARKS looked at Levi rather uncertainly as they took their seats in the local train.

"You seem to be very confident!" he remarked. "I mean, you told those fellows

that I'm booked for the orchestra at the Bannington Palladium. But it's only a chance, after all. The manager might not even look at me."

Solomon grinned.

"Don't you believe it!" he said. "I've got a pretty good say in things at the cinema—my father trusts me when it comes



to a deal. And if Rosey refuses to take you on, he'll get it hot from the old chap!"

All the same, Izzy was by no means confident. He knew that his new friend was full of optimism, but he had had so many setbacks in his own short career, that he took nothing for granted. He knew a great deal more of life than Solly did.

They soon arrived in Bannington, and passed out of the station, and presently turned into the High Street.

It was, of course, quite early, and practically all the shops were open, and the whole High Street was a blaze of light. For Bannington was by no means a sleepy country town.

Most of the big shopkeepers knew the value of big electric lights, and on this dark November evening, with a touch of frost in the air, the lights looked dazzling and attractive.

But the brilliance of the shops was entirely eclipsed by the glare which proceeded from the vicinity of the Bannington Palladium. This was a really superb structure, and was up-to-date in every particular.

At one time there had been one small cinema in Bannington, and it had been badly managed, and the best people in the town would not patronise the place. But the Palladium was a very different proposition.

It had been specially built by Solomon Levi's pater, and was really one of the finest provincial picture theatres in the country. The films were always the latest, and a good, sound programme was provided, and the orchestra at the Palladium prided itself upon its excellence and modern methods.

Solly and his new friend arrived outside, and found that queues were already forming up for the cheaper priced seats. For the cinema was filled at every performance. Mr. Levi had placed the house in the hands of a capable manager, and this gentleman knew how to keep his patrons.

Solly mounted the white steps, and walked past the commissionaire, who respectfully touched his cap. And the two boys went inside, up some red carpeted stairs, until they arrived at a door which was slightly set back from the beautifully decorated entrance.

"Manager" was written on the door.

Solly tapped, and went in, motioning Izzy to follow him. The latter did so, and they found themselves in the presence of a big, stoutly built man with a good-humoured, clean shaven face. But for his name—which was Mr. Joseph Rosen—one would never have guessed that he was a Jew.

"Hallo, Solly, my lad!" he said cheerfully. "I didn't expect you this evening. Who's your friend?" he added curiously.

"He's Izzy Marks, of London," said Solly. "And, believe me, Mr. Rosen, he's the finest violin player you'd hear in a month of Sundays! I brought him along, because it's up to you to give him a job in the orchestra."

Mr. Rosen's smile vanished, and he looked serious.

"A good violinist is difficult to find!" he said. "The one I've got now—that is, the

first violin—is only just about passable. I've tried scores of fellows, but I can never manage to get the right one. I'm looking for a player who can put some pep into the orchestra!"

"You're not!" said Solly.

"What?"

"You've found him!" said Levi calmly. "He's here! Pep? By glory! This feller could make a row of Egyptian mummies do the fox-trot!"

"You always were inclined to exaggerate, Solly, my boy," smiled Mr. Rosen. "Well, I don't mind telling you that the man I've got at present isn't satisfactory. He's under notice, to tell the truth, and I've got another man coming down from London on Friday."

"Write to him to-night, and say that he won't be needed!" said Solly promptly. "Here! Talk's cheap! If you've got five minutes to spare, Izzy will make you wish this was a dance night!"

Mr. Rosen glanced at his watch.

"Can you play from music?" he asked, looking at Izzy.

"Yes; of course, sir."

"From ear as well?"

"Yes, sir."

"Know anything about syncopation?"

"I think so, sir."

"Play me 'The Sheik'," said the manager. "It's getting a bit old now, but I know it well, and I can judge better."

Mr. Rosen was a man of business—brisk and quick. He never believed in delaying matters. In two minutes he would be able to know whether this extremely youthful violinist would be any good. He was quite convinced in his own mind that Solly was far too optimistic.

With his face flushed, and his eyes gleaming with hope, Izzy Marks snapped open the violin case and took out the instrument. He gave one or two twangs, and then started.

Mr. Rosen listened indifferently for a second—but only for a second. After the first three or four notes he gazed at Izzy fixedly. Then, in spite of himself, he commenced moving his shoulders slightly, and tapped one foot on the floor.

Izzy played the haunting melody of "The Sheik" with such a wealth of effect, and such amazing syncopation that Mr. Rosen knew at once that this fiddler was out of the ordinary. He could never have had a fair chance, or he would be playing in some big orchestra.

At last Izzy held his bow aside, and looked at Mr. Rosen anxiously.

"Well?" asked Solly eagerly.

"You're engaged!" said Mr. Rosen, laying a hand on Izzy's shoulder. "You can start as soon as you like, and the wages will be five pounds a week. This sum will be increased if you give full satisfaction."

Izzy went absolutely pale.

"You—you mean it, sir?" he asked huskily.

"I do!"

"Five pounds a week!" exclaimed the Jewish boy. "Oh, but—"



"You're worth it!" interrupted Mr. Rosen crisply. "I always believe in paying a man what's he's worth. Even if you're no good in the orchestra, it'll pay me to have you here to give a solo at every performance. Nowadays the people need livening up. They want jazzy stuff. We'll give it to them."

"There you are!" grinned Solomon. "What did I tell you, my son? I knew that once Mr. Rosen had heard you, he couldn't resist you. Jolly good luck, Izzy! Let's hope you stay here for good."

"Business is business," said the manager. "Marks, I want your address, and the name and address of your last employer. And I'd like to know how it is that you're out of a job?"

"I simply couldn't get one, sir," replied Izzy. "Wherever I went, they wouldn't even hear me."

"That's the reason!" declared Mr. Rosen. "If some of these fool managers would only have heard you, they wouldn't turn you down. I must see about a reference concerning you, but until then you can carry on."

"Thanks awfully, sir," said Izzy, his voice rather shaky. "This—this is more than I dared hope for, sir."

He was almost dazed by his good fortune; and, indeed, shortly afterwards he confidentially told Solly that he must be dreaming. It simply couldn't be true. He'd never had so much luck in all his life before.

For Mr. Rosen had taken to Izzy at the very start, and had promised him that he could go home with him that night, and lodge at his own house. And so, just because Izzy had visited St. Frank's—just because Fullwood had acted like a cad—the young Jewish musician had now got an excellent job, friends, and a home. It was hardly to be wondered at that he was nearly overcome.

When Solly Levi took his departure, he did so with a feeling of gladness in his heart. Solly was never happier than when he was helping others. And the very expression on Izzy's face was all the reward that the Jewish junior needed.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE BAGS OF MONEY!



SIR MONTIE TREGELIS-WEST nodded.

"Yes, dear fellows, I think we might as well go," he said. "Of course, the roads are frightfully muddy, and I'm shockin'ly afraid that our boots will get splashed. The weather has turned rotten—it has, really!"

"Can't be helped!" I said cheerfully. "We've got permission to go to Bannington, and we might as well take advantage of it. I'm feeling good, because we won this afternoon, and we'll enjoy ourselves."



Without warning, Archie dashed forward, seized Phipps, and commenced fox-trotting round the study. Phipps was not exactly an expert at this sort of thing, but he managed to lumber round somehow or other.

It was Saturday evening—just after tea-time—and the threatening clouds of the afternoon had at last commenced to send down an uncomfortable, drizzling rain. The evening, in fact, was what Archie would have described as a poisonous one. The drizzle was cold and bitter, and the roads were choked with mud. A typical November night, promising to be pitchy and cheerless.

We had played the River House juniors that afternoon, and had beaten them by the odd goal in five after a strenuous game. And now, having changed, and having had tea, we felt in festive mood, in spite of the weather.

A number of us had received permission



from the guv'nor to run into Bannington to see the pictures. We were naturally more keen upon going because Izzy Marks had made a bit of a sensation at the Palladium.

According to what we heard, his first appearance there had been a tremendous success, and there was every prospect that Izzy would soon become a general favourite.

One of his first tasks had been to write home to his mother, and tell her the glorious news—and, incidentally, he had enclosed the thirty shillings which Fullwood and Co. had been compelled to dub up for the smashed violin.

Solly was going, of course, and he looked into our study just as we were preparing to leave it. Dick Goodwin was with him, too, and they were both wearing their overcoats, with the collars turned up.

"You fellers coming?" asked Solly briskly.

"Yes," I replied. "Ready in two minutes."

"Good! We'll wait for you."

"I hear that your pal has been getting on well," remarked Watson.

"Believe me, he deserves to," declared Levi. "That chap's a wonder. And as soon as my dad hears him playing, he'll give him fifty per cent. increase in wages."

"What-ho! What-ho! In other words, what about it?"

Archie Glenthorne lounged in, elegant as usual.

"Hallo!" said Solly. "What about what?"

"Well, there you are?" replied Archie.

"I was thinking, old fruit, of trickling forth, don't you know. I mean to say, the good old jazz stuff—music and pictures, and this and that!"

Tommy Watson clutched at the table.

"You!" he said, aghast.

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "Dash it all! Why the expressions of astonishment, dear old chappies?"

"It's raining!" I explained.

"Absolutely!"

"A horrible, cold drizzle!" I said.

"The weather, in fact, is most foul!" agreed Archie.

"And the roads are smothered with mud!"

"Dear old onion, it so happens that my eyes are useful!" said Archie. "I am quite aware of the fact that the roads are in a shocking condition. I'm also aware that the evening is what one might term dashed fearful. I mean to say, it's the kind of night when a chappie longs to cling to the fire-side."

"And yet you want to go out?" asked Solly.

"Absolutely!"

"You're the last chap I should have thought of—"

"The fact is, Levi, old son of Israel, the flesh is most dashed unwilling, but the spirit moves me, don't you know!" explained Archie. "I mean, I'd bally well like to rest the tissues in front of the cheery blaze. But I keep thinking of that jazz merchant—the Izzy chappie. Absolutely! And I've posi-

tively got to go to Bannington and spread myself in one of the stalls at the Palladium. I mean to say, it's got to be done—absolutely!"

"Good, old Archie!" chuckled Levi. "Bravo!"

"If I remain at home, I shall feel somewhat pipped!" went on Archie. "Consequently, I've just been massaging the old chivvy with a rough towel, singing slightly at the same time. And I must admit that I feel frightfully braced. So, now what about it? Shall we drape a few garments about us, and reel forth?"

"We shall!" I agreed.

"Good lad!" said Archie. "Stout work! The scheme, I might say, is sound. The weather is rotten, but the lads of the village care nothing for the weather. So we'll have a stab at it, what?"

Archie was quite determined to come, and the fact that he was willing to face the unpleasant weather conditions proved how strong the attraction was. And when we got out into the passage we found that Handforth and Co. were emerging from their study with the same idea in mind.

So, five minutes later we all set off through the mud and drizzle towards the station. Cycling in such conditions was by no means pleasant, and on Saturday there was always a late train to bring us home. So we left the bikes at home.

When we got to the Palladium we found that the place was filling rapidly. There were a number of the best seats left, however, and we bagged these just in time. Solly sat at the end of the row near the centre gangway. The special feature picture was half-way through, and the orchestra was playing.

Our seats were just about mid-way down the floor of the big cinema. Mr. Levi was different from most cinema proprietors, and he had arranged the seats in the Palladium in the finest manner possible.

Instead of the higher-priced seats being at the very rear—as they are in most picture theatres—they were in the centre. And this section of the hall is, without doubt, the finest of all. If you get too far back the picture looks far away and remote. If you sit too near it seems coarse. The centre is the idea spot, and I'm rather astonished that all cinemas don't have their best seats there. I suppose the managers will learn sense some day.

Of course, we frequently visited the Palladium. And now we noticed a distinct difference in the orchestra. The violin playing was exceptionally good, and although the musician himself was not visible, we knew that he was Izzy Marks. Levi's new friend had made good, and was a big improvement to the orchestra.

And when the picture was over there was a special selection of music; and here Izzy came into his own. A spotlight was turned on him, and he treated us to some really excellent playing. As an encore he performed



some syncopated melody, and the applause was enthusiastic. In fact, the demands for an encore were so insistent that there was no sign of them dying down until the next picture was thrown on the screen.

"Dashed good!" said Archie approvingly. "I mean to say, the chappie knows all about twiddling the old violin, and so forth! But what's the idea? The orchestra, as it were, has trickled away!"

"Well, they must have a bit of a rest, I suppose," remarked Church. "This is only a comedy, and they'll probably come back for the next big picture. Hallo! That's Marks coming up the gangway now."

"So it is!" murmured Levi.

As Izzy Marks came by, Solly touched his arm.

"Oh, hallo!" said the young musician. "I say, this is fine! I shall be on duty again in about half-an-hour, but I've got a free spell—"

"Right you are!" interrupted Solly. "I'll buzz up in about five minutes—I just want to see a bit more of this comedy. Your playing was top-hole, believe me! You're improving."

"I can hardly believe that everything's all right!" whispered Izzy. "Last week I was nowhere—but now I've got a regular job, and lots of friends! Isn't it funny how a chap's luck can change?"

"Rather!" said Levi. "But we'll have a chat up in Mr. Rosen's office. I suppose you'll be there?"

"Yes."

Marks passed on up the gangway, and Solomon Levi continued enjoying the picture. It was one he particularly wanted to see, as it featured a favourite comedian. And he gave all his attention to the screen.

Izzy Marks, feeling happier than he had felt for many a week, passed through the sumptuously-decorated lounge entrance, and made his way to the manager's office. This was the end of his first week—or, rather, half week. And he was due to draw his money—which he intended sending straight off to his mother. He meant to seize this little interval to write a letter home, so that it would catch the post. And his face was flushed with real happiness as he entered Mr. Rosen's office.

The manager was there, and he looked up with a smile as Izzy entered.

"Well done, young man!" he said approvingly. "So far you've covered yourself with glory, and I intend to give you three pounds for your work this week. I'm more than satisfied with you."

"Thank you, sir," said Izzy. "I shall always try to do my best, and I hope you'll be satisfied."

"That all depends," replied Mr. Rosen. "If you keep yourself up to the mark, I shall be more than content. Don't forget that the Palladium is a go-ahead place, and we're always after something new."

"I'll do the best I can, sir," said Marks.

Mr. Rosen nodded and passed out of the room. Izzy had none too much time, for he wanted to write his letter so that he could catch the night mail—and he wanted to get it done so that he could have a quarter of an hour with Solomon Levi.

He was busily writing, when there was a tap at the door, and a man in uniform entered. He was elderly, and his name was Kennard. He was the commissionaire, who stood in all his glory in the cinema entrance.

But at present he was on other duty. The house was full up, and Kennard had come along to the manager's office with a number of cloth and paper-bags. They contained money—the takings for the afternoon and evening. Mr. Rosen always checked these in his own office. The money in these bags amounted to about one hundred and twenty pounds, for the Palladium had been doing good business.

"I thought Mr. Rosen was here," said the commissionaire.

"No—he just went out," replied Izzy. "What's that—the takings?"

"Yes, Master Marks," said Kennard. "I'd better leave the bags on Mr. Rosen's table here. I thought he was in the office, or I wouldn't have come now."

"That's all right," smiled Izzy. "I sha'n't pinch it!"

The commissionaire didn't seem quite certain—he was an old fellow who had the interests of the cinema at heart, and he had been there since the opening.

He put the money on the table and passed out. Izzy Marks stopped writing his letter and looked at the money-bags in a thoughtful kind of way. It occurred to him that there was a certain amount of slackness here, and he was rather surprised that Mr. Rosen should allow it. A large sum of money like that ought never to be left openly on the office table.

Izzy still sat there, and while he was doing so, Solomon Levi was enjoying the comedy. It was certainly a very humorous picture, and Solly thoroughly enjoyed it. And when it was over he slipped out of his place with the pleasant thought that he would have ten minutes with Izzy.

As this theatre was owned by Solomon's father, the junior had practically the run of the place, and could go where he liked without question. He walked briskly up to the manager's office and entered.

The apartment was empty.

"That's queer!" murmured Solly. "I thought he was going to be in here, writing to his mother. Must have gone out for something, I suppose."

Solly walked in, and strolled over to the desk. He could not help noticing that the chair was pushed back, as though somebody had risen hurriedly. And upon the writing-pad lay a sheet of notepaper, the upper half of which was covered with writing. Solly didn't read it, but he was quite sure that



this was Izzy's letter. He had evidently been interrupted in the middle of it.

"Oh, I didn't know you were here, Solly!" exclaimed Mr. Rosen, bustling in. "I thought Marks was writing a letter home. He'll have to hurry up, because the second feature begins in five minutes."

"I thought he was here, too," said Levi. "He won't be a minute——"

He paused, looking at the manager curiously.

"Anything the matter?" he asked. "Lost something?"

Mr. Rosen was looking about the office very sharply. He didn't reply to Solomon at once, but strode over to the desk, opening drawer after drawer. Then he went to a side table and disturbed a pile of papers.

"By my life!" said Solly. "What's all the fuss about?"

"Fuss—there's no fuss!" exclaimed Mr. Rosen curtly. "I saw Kennard in the lounge, and he told me that he brought the takings up here ten minutes ago. I should have been here, only I was detained by that infernal fellow from the Wheatsheaf! Where could the fool have put the bags to?"

Solomon looked pretty alert now.

"I say, there must have been a pretty good bit of money in those bags," he said.

"Something between a hundred and twenty and a hundred and thirty pounds!" replied Mr. Rosen. "I've told Kennard on several occasions that he wasn't to leave the bags here, under any circumstances, unless I took them from him."

"Great Scott!" said Levi. "I hope nothing's happened!"

The manager touched the bell-push rather fiercely. And a minute later the commissionaire came in, with an inquiring look on his face.

"You rang, sir?" he asked.

"I did!" said Mr. Rosen. "You told me that you had brought some money into my office. Where is it?"

Kennard stared rather dazedly at the desk.

"Why, I—I put it on that desk, sir!" he exclaimed, his face paling. "Over there, sir—just against the letter tray! Four or five bags there was, sir, with notes and silver, and——"

"Confound you, man, the money isn't there!" interrupted the manager anxiously. "Are you certain you put it on that desk?"

The commissionaire was now white and shaky.

"You—you don't think, sir, that I——"

"I'm trying to get at the truth!" snapped Mr. Rosen. "Don't get frightened

—I'm not accusing you of anything. Did you put that money on the desk or not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Was the room empty at the time?"

"Why, no, sir."

"Eh?" said Mr. Rosen sharply. "Who was here?"

"Young Mr. Marks, sir, the new violinist."

"Oh!" exclaimed the manager. "Marks was here, was he?"

"I say, Mr. Rosen, you're not trying to hint that Izzy touched the money, are you?" asked Levi indignantly. "He wouldn't interfere——"

"Why, good heavens, sir!" broke in Kennard, clutching at the edge of the table, "talking about young Mr. Marks reminds me——"

"Reminds you of what?"

"Not more than three minutes after I left the money in this office, the young gent. came dashing out!" said the commissionaire, his voice husky with anxiety. "That's what he did, sir! I was standing near the box office, and young Mr. Marks rushed out in a awful hurry. I never thought anything of it at the time, sir," but it do seem a bit queer now."

Mr. Rosen set his teeth.

"Which direction did Marks take?" he demanded.

"That's more than I can say, sir," replied Kennard. "The young gent was wearing his overcoat and hat, and seemed in a rare hurry. But I never thought that there was anythin' wrong——"

"Go away, Kennard—and come the very instant I ring," interrupted Mr. Rosen curtly. "Don't say anything about this to anybody else. Understand?"

"Yes, sir—I won't say a word."

The commissionaire backed out, very startled and alarmed. And Mr. Rosen turned to Solomon Levi. There was a grim look in his eyes, and his lips were set in a thin line.

"Well, young man!" he said fiercely. "This is what your fine friends do! Can't you understand? Your glorious musician! Leave him alone for five minutes with some money, and he runs off with it."

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE HUE AND CRY!



**S**OLOMON LEVI turned red with fierce indignation.

"It's not true!" he shouted hotly. "You think that Izzy would do that? You think he would run off

with your bags of money? I don't believe it—I won't believe it! There's some other explanation!"

"Don't be a fool, my boy!" snapped Mr. Rosen. "Haven't you got any brains? This boy is left alone in the room, after seeing

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the money brought in. For weeks he's been almost starving. Those bags of notes and silver turned his head. The sudden temptation was too much—he saw his opportunity, and seized it!”

“It's all nonsense!” persisted Solomon. “You wait till I tell my father! He won't be so ready to accuse the chap——”

“Your father knows nothing about the matter!” interjected Mr. Rosen. “If Marks didn't take the money, why did he run off? You think I'm a fool? Isn't he due to play in the orchestra at once? Why should he run out of the place, wearing his overcoat and hat? And who else but he could have taken the money?”

Solly, calming down, was silent. Now that he began to look at the matter in a colder mood, he could see the awful force of Mr. Rosen's arguments. At the same time, Levi rejected it.

“But Izzy wouldn't do it!” he persisted. “He's one of us, Mr. Rosen—one of our own people——”

“Bah!” interrupted the manager sharply. “Do you think I care about that? It makes no difference—Marks took the money! You think there are no thieves among the Jews? We're not so good as all that! There are thieves everywhere, in every race! And Marks is the dirtiest little dog I've ever met! I give him work—I take him to my own home—I feed him—and this is what he does! The first time he gets a chance, he robs me.”

Solly simply wouldn't believe it.

“But couldn't somebody else have come into the office?” he asked eagerly. “Perhaps Izzy had another reason for leaving in a hurry——”

“It's no good your trying to whitewash the young blackguard,” said Mr. Rosen. “And we're wasting time! That boy's got to be caught—and it ought to be easy enough. I'm not worrying—the police will see into this matter!”

He strode over to the telephone and jerked the receiver from its hook. And two minutes later, he was talking to Inspector Jameson, of the Bannington police. The inspector promised to be over in five minutes.

In the meantime, Mr. Rosen rang for the box-office keeper, and obtained the information that the bags contained one hundred and twenty pounds, seven shillings, and a penny.

The Palladium had also been searched, and there was no sign whatever of Izzy. He had certainly gone—he had fled suddenly, and without any reason other than that he had stolen the money.

Regarded clearly, it was quite evident that Izzy must have committed this robbery. Apart from the money, he had every reason to remain in the theatre. His work was there, he was due to go on the orchestra at once, and he was enthusiastic about his employment. No ordinary matter would

have taken him away without informing Mr. Rosen, or anybody else.

He had been left alone in the office, he had seen the bags of money, and the sudden temptation had been too great for him. Having lived amid poverty practically all his life—or, at least, since he was able to earn—his brain had been turned by this enormous amount.

To Izzy a sum of a hundred pounds or over was a small fortune. He saw a chance of taking it and getting away. But he could only have acted in a fit of momentary madness, for he must have known that the police would soon be on his track.

Solomon Levi, thinking things over in a miserable frame of mind, was aware of a keen, bitter sense of disappointment. He had thought that Izzy was different. He had judged the young musician's character to be an excellent one. And yet here, at the very first chance, Marks had betrayed his employer.

It was a horrible business, altogether. Solomon stood by idly while the inspector and Mr. Rosen talked. Jameson took down all the details, and he seemed quite pleased with himself.

“It's all right, Mr. Rosen—you needn't worry,” he said, rather pompously. “As a matter of fact, I happened to be near the station a short time ago. And this boy came rushing in, evidently excited.”

“Was a train leaving at the time?”

“The London express!” said the inspector. “It's the best train of the evening, and goes straight through without a stop. That fact makes our task quite simple, for I shall telephone to Scotland Yard, and have the boy arrested as soon as he arrives in town.”

Mr. Rosen nodded. “Good!” he said. “And I can assure you, inspector, that I shall never employ another person until I have assured myself of his character.”

“Look here, Mr. Rosen, I don't care what you say—I don't believe that Izzy took the money!” put in Levi. “I've been thinking things over, and it couldn't have happened.”

Even while Solly was speaking, he knew that his words failed to ring true. For, inwardly, he felt that Marks must be guilty. Otherwise, why did he feel that dull, miserable sense of disappointment? If he really thought Izzy to be innocent, he would be indignant.

Mr. Rosen did not reply to him, but went on talking with the inspector. And Levi wandered out of the office, and went down to the big lounge. It was all quiet now, for the house was practically full, and there were not likely to be any more patrons coming in.

Solly was just crossing the lounge with his hands in his pockets, when I came out with two or three other fellows. Tommy Watson and Sir Montie Tregellis West and Archie Glenthorne were with me.



"Oh, here he is!" I said, striding up. "By Jove! What on earth's the matter, Solly? You look as miserable as the dickens!"

"I can't believe it!" muttered Solly absently.

"What!"

"Believe me, it's too much!" said Levi. "Izzy isn't the kind of feller—eh? Did—did you speak? I didn't notice you chaps!"

"Well, dash it all, we're large enough—what?" said Archie. "We just trotted out, old scream, to find out what had become of the music merchant. That is to say, the orchestra appears to be somewhat devoid of the good old pep!"

Solomon looked at us curiously.

"Izzy Marks has gone!" he said shortly.

"Gone!" I echoed. "Where?"

"Gone away—for good!"

"Absolutely not!" exclaimed Archie. "I mean to say, don't breathe such a thing, laddie! Izzy gone? Gadzooks! A pun, don't you know? You follow, dear ones? Izzy gone—is he gone! Deuced smart! But I must add that the grammar is somewhat poisonous."

"Blow the grammar!" growled Levi. "Do you think I care anything about your silly, rotten puns?"

"Dash it all!" protested Archie. "There's hardly any necessity for such terseness, old fruit! A mere jest, as it were. The old bean positively sparkled for a few moments, and I simply had to unload—"

"I can't stand your tommy-rot now!" interrupted Levi gruffly. "At any ordinary time you amuse me, but just now I can't help being irritated! Your voice grates on me, Archie; your face pains me!"

Archie dropped his monocle.

"Now that, in a way of speaking, is what a chappie might call straight from the shoulder, and all that kind of rot!" he said.

"A dashed hard knock, in fact. I am frightfully sorry, old horse, but I must kindly request you to burst forth into a fairly large-sized apology. I mean to say, a self-respecting chappie can't allow his bally voice to be called a grating!"

"It's all right, Archie; Solomon is worried over something," I put in gently. "You mustn't take any notice of him. What's the trouble, old son?"

"I understand perfectly; but I insist!" said Archie firmly. "The blood of the Glen-thornes boils, don't you know. Absolutely boils! So it's up to Levi, our dear old son of Israel, to discharge a well assorted apology—"

"By my life!" exclaimed Solomon, breathing hard. "If you don't dry up, Archie, I'll do something desperate! Can't you understand? Marks has gone—in disgrace! They think he's pinched the takings, and hooked it!"

"What!" I exclaimed sharply. "Izzy has gone away?"

"My dear old lad!" said Archie, laying a fatherly hand on Solly's shoulders. "This, as it were, throws light upon the posish. A

large burst of understanding bursts upon the old brain. The mind, so to speak, is flooded with understanding. But I mean to say! Absolutely not! I don't believe it, old scout! Izzy buzz off with the jolly old doubloons? Never! Never, with the addition of knobs!"

"Of course not!" said Tommy Watson. "He's not that kind of chap."

Levi felt rather ashamed. He was ready to believe Marks guilty; and yet Archie Glenthorne wouldn't even hear of it. But, of course, Archie didn't know the facts.

As quickly as possible Solomon explained what had occurred. There was no sense in keeping the thing secret, for the story was bound to get out quickly, and then we might receive a wrong impression. Solly thought it better that he should have the first say. He wanted to excuse Izzy's conduct, if possible. Marks was one of his own people, and the disgrace of it hurt him deeply.

"Well, I don't know what to think," I said at length. "He was left alone in the office with the money, you say? He left in a hurry, and got on the train for London? It certainly looks suspicious."

"He must have been dotty!" growled Solomon.

"There's no absolute proof that he did take the money," I went on. "I rather liked Izzy, and he was the last fellow in the world I should suspect of a thing like this. The circumstantial evidence is rather deadly. But that doesn't mean to say that he's guilty. The guv'nor and I have investigated many cases a lot blacker than this, and yet we've proved the suspected man to be innocent."

"But—but if Izzy didn't take the money, who did?" asked Solomon. "To think of it! A fellow like that—a gunf—a thief!"

"It seems to me that a certain amount of time must be accounted for," I said thoughtfully. "The very fact that Jameson is so certain about the case makes me suspicious. Jameson is a born ass, and all he can do is to be pompous and important. When it comes to brain work, he's a wash-out. We'll suppose, for example, that Izzy had another reason for leaving in a hurry—"

"But what other reason could he have?" asked Solomon.

"My dear chap, I'm not trying to do the impossible," I said. "I don't know any facts, and so it's foolish to theorise. But we're quite safe in assuming that there might have been something which called Izzy away. If that really happened, he left Mr. Rosen's office empty, didn't he?"

"Well, yes."

"And the money was lying on the desk," I continued. "Seeing that Izzy went off in a hurry, there's a bare possibility that he left the door half open. For about five minutes the office was deserted, because Mr. Rosen was engaged down here. Anybody passing the office could have seen that the room was empty, and that the money was lying on the desk. It wouldn't have taken a



tick to nip in and lift it. So, instead of Izzy being guilty, any one of the employees of this theatre could be equally guilty."

Solomon's eyes sparkled.

"I hadn't thought of that!" he said slowly.

"At the same time," I reminded him, "it's only a suggestion. There's no doubt that the most probable explanation of all is that Izzy took the money. Yet I can't believe it—"

"By glory! I don't believe it, either!" shouted Solomon abruptly. "I'm a rotter—a suspicious lozer! Of course, Izzy didn't take the money! I call myself his friend, and yet I'm ready to believe him guilty!"

"Stout words, laddie!" said Archie approvingly. "As a matter of fact, I agree with you with lumps of heartiness. I mean to say, a chappie who can produce music like Izzy is absolutely all serene. He's not the kind of lad to roll away with the old banking account. Izzy, I mean to say, is a deucedly brainy cove."

"Thanks, Archie," said Levi. "It's nice of you chaps to talk like this. I thought that you'd be down on Izzy at once. You see, he's Jewish, and most people are ready to accuse—"

"Rats!" I interrupted. "We're not narrow-minded, like that. I always judge a chap by what I see of him. And I've a dashed good mind to look into this case. By jingo! I—I wonder if—"

I broke off, and pulled out my watch.

"The last train for London leaves in twenty minutes!" I said quickly. "It's a good train, too. Perhaps the guv'nor might let me run up, and look into this affair at the other end."

Solomon nearly jumped with sudden excitement.

"Ring him up!" he exclaimed eagerly. "There's a telephone down here, in the box-office. Ring up Mr. Lee, and ask him if you can go—and if I can go, too. I've got an idea."

"I'm not sure that the guv'nor would agree—"

"But look here," exclaimed Solomon. "We'll look at things at their worst, and assume that Izzy really took the money. I'm absolutely sure he didn't do it when he was in his right mind. But I want to go and see my father, and ask him to stop the prosecution. It'll be the end of Izzy if he gets sent to prison! It'll ruin his whole life. We might be able to save him from that, anyhow."

"Well, there's no time to waste!" I said briskly. "We'll see what the guv'nor says. Let's hope he's somewhere handy to answer the 'phone."

"It'll be dashed ripping, too, if the dear chappie is in a good temper!" observed Archie. "I always notice that a chappie in a good temper is far easier to wangle and all that!"

We hurried into the box-office, which was now empty, for they had ceased taking



"Confound you, man, the money isn't there!" interrupted the manager anxiously. "Are you certain you put it on that desk?"

money for the evening. I quickly got through to St. Frank's, and asked to be connected with the guv'nor's telephone. And a few moments later Nelson Lee's voice came over the wire.

"Something's happened, guv'nor," I said crisply. "Something pretty awful, too. Listen carefully, and I'll explain."

Nelson Lee was a good listener, and he hardly interrupted once while I told him, as rapidly as possible, what had taken place. At last I had finished, and I asked him if Solly Levi and I could go up to London by the last train, in the hope of helping the young musician.

"Well, Nipper, I hardly know what to say," replied Nelson Lee. "On the face of things, the evidence against young Marks is quite conclusive, and he really deserves no mercy. But if you think there is a possibility that a mistake has occurred, I might be inclined to agree."

"There's more than a possibility, sir," I said eagerly. "And, in any case, Solly wants to see his father about the matter. Can we go—that's the main thing? As soon as we've finished, we'll stay at Mr. Levi's place, and be back at St. Frank's by the first train in the morning."

"All right, Nipper; you have my permission," said Nelson Lee promptly. "I have half an idea that your visit to London may be fruitful. I will have a chat with Dr. Stafford, and accept full responsibility. I know I can trust you not to take advantage of this situation."

"Good old guv'nor," I said heartily. "Thanks awfully, sir!"



## CHAPTER VII.

## UNDER ARREST.



IZZY MARKS looked very anxious as he sat in the corner of a third-class compartment in the London express. He had the carriage to himself, and he was glad of this, for he was not compelled to keep a straight face.

He was intensely worried.

He had something in his hand—a crumpled piece of pinkish paper. It seemed to be a telegram, and Izzy read it repeatedly. For about the twentieth time he spread it out, and glanced at the words on it.

It was hardly surprising that he was anxious, for this is how the telegram read:

“Marks, Palladium, Bannington. Mother suddenly ill. Very serious. Come as soon as possible.—SAM.”

Sam was Izzy's brother, and the eldest of the other children, being fourteen. And a wire of this nature was well calculated to upset the young violinist. He was hastening to London with all speed, every other thought driven out of his mind.

His mother was ill, and it was up to him to get home as soon as possible. For weeks past Mrs. Marks had been in poor health, and it was cruel that now that the luck had turned she should have a collapse. Izzy hoped against hope that Sam had exaggerated.

In any event, the only thing was to get home at once. Izzy loved his mother dearly, and to think of her lying ill was a terrible thing. But his eyes sparkled when he remembered that he had money, and he would get the best doctor. He would do everything in his power to bring his mother back to health.

And so, thinking in this way, he impatiently drummed his feet upon the floor as the train speeded on its journey. It seemed to him that the train was going with aggravating slowness. But, as a matter of fact, it was travelling rapidly, being an express.

And, at last, the journey drew to an end.

“Thank goodness!” muttered Izzy, as he stepped on to the platform.

He hurried towards the exit, and was soon in the Strand, for he had come to Charing Cross. It was an easy matter for him to get a 'bus to Kilburn, for it was early in the evening, according to London standards. The time was just after ten, and most of the 'buses were comparatively empty, for the theatre crowds had not yet been discharged, and it was a slack time.

Izzy had never known a motor-'bus to travel so slowly as this one. It generally happens that when one is in a particular hurry, a motor-'bus crawls. It makes unnecessary stops, and you feel that you could do the distance quicker by walking.

“I ought to have taken a taxi-cab!” muttered Izzy impatiently. “But it would have been more expensive, and I want all the money I can keep. I wonder if mother's really bad? I'll pulverise Sam if he exaggerated. It might mean the loss of my job, for all I know. But mother's first every time.”

Kilburn was reached after Izzy had been on the top of the 'bus for five and a half hours—according to his own calculations. He was rather astonished to find that the time was only just after half-past ten. And Izzy had been so occupied with his thoughts that he had not noticed a man who seemed to be taking a particular interest in him. In fact, there were two men. And these had been paying him attention ever since he had stepped out of the train at Charing Cross.

After getting off the 'bus at Kilburn, Izzy walked sharply along the main thoroughfare for two or three hundred yards, and then turned into Sunrise Terrace. It was a quiet street, with small villas on either side.

A little further on they were half-houses, or flats. Outwardly, they looked like the ordinary type of suburban dwelling. But the only difference was that each house had two front doors—one for the upstairs tenant, and one for the lower.

At No. 25 Izzy made a dive for the gate, and was just about to enter when the two men came up close behind him. Until now they had apparently been strangers to one another, but at this point they joined forces.

“Just a minute, young man!” said one of them sharply.

Izzy turned, rather surprised.

“Speaking to me?” he asked.

“Yes.”

“Sorry, but I'm in a hurry—”

“I can't help that,” interrupted the man who had spoken. “Is your name Isaac Marks?”

“Why, yes.”

“Have you come from Bannington, in Sussex?”

“You seem to know all about it?” said Izzy, in astonishment.

He stared at the two men in real surprise now, wondering who on earth they could be. They were certainly strangers to him, and it was most remarkable that they should know his name and his starting-point.

He was still looking at them when the door of No. 25a opened, and a postman came out. Izzy took very little notice of him, but knew this man to be Wilkins, who occupied the upper floor. The postman was just off to duty, and he paused, looking on.

“What's the idea?” added Marks, addressing the two men.

“I don't want you to make a commotion, Marks, but you'll have to come with us,” said one of the men, in a quiet voice.

“Come with you?” repeated Solly. “What for?”

“We are police officers from Scotland Yard, and we have been instructed to keep our eyes on you,” replied the man curtly.



"Take my advice, Marks, and say as little as possible."

Izzy started back in amazement.

"Police officers!" he gasped. "But—but I don't understand! Oh! It must be a joke—you can't be serious—"

"Come, come!" interrupted the other. "It won't do, my lad. I should advise you not to try any bluff of this kind. I've got to do my duty, and if you refuse to come quietly, I shall have to use the handcuffs. I shouldn't like to do that, because you seem to be a quiet young fellow."

Izzy's mind was in a complete whirl.

Police officers! Scotland Yard! It was impossible—unthinkable. Why should police officers want to take him away? And now—just at his very doorstep, with his mother ill indoors!

It seemed like some horrible nightmare, and Izzy hardly knew whether he was on his head or his heels for the moment. Then, suddenly, he became quite calm. He was dimly aware that he felt curiously faint.

It was the shock of it, and he was vainly trying to think what blunder could have occurred.

"It's all right; I won't cause any trouble," he said quietly. "But you've made a mistake. I think you ought to know that. I've done nothing wrong, and it's a mystery to me why—"

"I've already told you to say as little as possible," interrupted the officer. "When you get to the police-station you'll hear what the charge is. Come along. And don't start any nonsense."

The Scotland Yard man took hold of Izzy's arm. It looked a friendly grip, but it would have been a very difficult matter for Izzy to make any break for freedom.

Although still bewildered, he was calm, and he had hardly progressed more than ten steps before he halted. The officers were obliged to halt, too.

"Can't you wait just for five minutes?" asked Marks anxiously.

"No; you've got to come now."

"But—but my mother is ill!" said Izzy. "I've come up from Bannington on purpose to see her. Can't you let me just go in for a few minutes? I'll promise to come straight out again."

Both the Yard men smiled.

"There's nothing doing!" said one of them.

"You may be a pretty cute youngster, but we're not such mugs as that. Come on! Don't try any more of your dodges. We've wasted enough time already."

"But—but I wanted to have a word with that postman, anyhow!" said Marks eagerly. "Can I ask him not to tell my people anything about this? If mother gets to know, she'll be terribly upset, and it might make her illness worse!"

But the officers were firm. Possibly they suspected that Izzy might be trying to give some warning to a friend in the know. At all events, they would not allow him to do anything.

And so, at length, he walked between them towards the main thoroughfare. In the meantime, Wilkins, the postman, had turned back. He had some rather startling news to impart, and he intended that his wife should learn of it first.

Izzy walked along as though in a kind of dream. He could not understand the thing at all. Had he been arrested because he had run off from the picture-theatre without telling Mr. Rosen? But that seemed impossible. It wasn't a criminal offence, even if he lost his job over it.

And the charge against him was evidently very serious, for these men were from Scotland Yard, and, apparently, they had been shadowing him for some time. The thing was an utter mystery, and Marks gave it up.

And very soon afterwards they entered the cold, cheerless lobby of a police-station, and Izzy was ushered straight into the charge-room, where a station inspector sat in solitary state.

The two detectives made a rather long statement, explaining that they had followed Marks from Charing Cross, and that they had arrested him at the gate of his mother's house.

"Yes, I know most of the facts," said the inspector, nodding. "I had a 'phone call through an hour ago to be on the alert. But why did you follow the boy from Charing Cross? I was only to take action if he eluded you."

"We thought it possible he might have arranged to meet a friend, so that he could pass the stuff off on him, sir," replied one of the officers. "But he didn't meet anybody, and we kept him in view the whole time. We took him just as he was about to enter the house."

"What does it mean?" demanded Izzy hotly. "Perhaps you can tell me, inspector? Why have I been arrested like this—like—like a common thief? It's outrageous—it's—it's—"

"Now, now—don't get excited!" interrupted the inspector. "Your name is Isaac Marks, and you've just come from Bannington?"

"Yes; that's right."

"You have been arrested on the charge of stealing the sum of one hundred and twenty-four pounds, seven shillings, from the Palladium Cinema, Bannington," said the inspector curtly. "You will appear—"

"A hundred and twenty-four pounds!" shouted Izzy, suddenly blazing into feverish excitement once more. "But—but it's mad! I haven't touched a penny! By my life! You—you think I'm a gunuf? You think I'd take Mr. Rosen's money—"

He paused, gulping.

"The takings!" he panted huskily. "Is that it? You think I ran off with the money that was on Mr. Rosen's desk? I didn't touch it! This telegram came, and I took the first train—"

"What telegrams?" snapped the inspector.



Izzy frenziedly took it out of his pocket, and handed it up.

"What's this?" said the inspector, adjusting his glasses. "H'm! 'Mother suddenly ill—very serious—come as soon as possible.' I'll keep this; it may be important. It's no good, Marks, you can't gain by pitching me a tale. If you didn't take the money, there's nothing to fear. If you did, the best thing you can do is to hand it over at once, or tell us what you've done with it."

"I didn't touch it at all," insisted Izzy excitedly. "I was writing a letter when the telegram came, and I rushed straight to the station, because there was only five minutes to catch the express. I suppose that's why they suspected me. I ought to have seen Mr. Rosen first, but I couldn't find him. Somebody else took the money. It's not fair to keep me here—"

"Take him away and have him searched," interrupted the inspector gruffly.

With his mind in a whirl, Marks was led down two or three passages by a constable in uniform, then, with his face flaming with shame and indignation, he was submitted to the ordeal of being searched from head to foot.

Everything on him was taken away, even his used 'bus ticket. And then he was taken back to the charge-room, and all his belongings were displayed before the inspector.

"No sign of the money?" asked the official.

"Only these few pounds, sir," said the constable.

"That money is his own, I think," said the inspector. "He had his wages on him, I understand. What did you do with the money, Marks?"

"I tell you I didn't touch it!" said Izzy thickly.

"You stick to that yarn, then?"

"It's not a yarn; it's the truth."

"Very well, you'll go into a cell now, and in the morning you'll appear before the magistrate," said the inspector calmly. "I'm sorry you seem to be so obstinate. It won't help you in the slightest degree."

The Jewish boy fought with himself, and stood there clenching his fists.

"You're going to put me in a cell?" he asked hoarsely. "But—but my mother's ill! she may be dying, for all I know! I must see her to-night—I must! You've got to let me go to Sunrise Terrace—"

"I'm sorry, but you can't do anything of the sort," interrupted the inspector. "If you want to communicate with your mother, I'll have a message sent—although that's purely unofficial. I don't believe in being too hard on a young fellow, particularly if he looks all right. You don't seem to be the kind of youngster to get into much mischief. I'll let your mother know."

Izzy clutched at the inspector's desk.

"Oh, but that'll be worse than anything!" he said. "If my mother gets to know like that, she'll be horribly upset. Can't I go?"

I'll promise not to run away, and a policeman can come with me, if you like. He can stand outside the door until I come out—"

"Take him away!" interrupted the inspector gruffly.

And, in spite of the lad's almost pitiful appeals, he was firmly seized and led down a stone passage. He found himself in a tiny, barren cell, and the door closed with a hard clang.

And Izzy felt limp and shaky and faint.

All this had come so unexpectedly—so dramatically. Accused of theft! Arrested and placed in a cell! It was worse than any nightmare that Izzy had ever experienced.

And the fact that his mother was lying ill made the whole thing ten times as bad. It was enough to bring despair to the stoutest heart.

Izzy Marks was certainly going through the mill!

## CHAPTER VIII.

### GETTING AT THE TRUTH.



"At last!" said Solomon Levi, with relief.

Our train was just steaming into Victoria, for we had arrived at a different terminus. The train was a fairly fast one, but not an express, and the time was getting on for eleven-thirty.

"We'll have a bit of trouble getting to Kilburn," I said, as we walked out of the big station. "The 'buses stop running pretty early nowadays, particularly on some routes. We can't do better than go by Underground."

"That's what I was thinking," said Solomon. "Shall we go straight to Kilburn first? Or do you think it would be better if I popped in to see my pater?"

"No need to worry about him," I replied. "He probably knows all about it by this time. Mr. Rosen was bound to put a trunk call through to him. By the way, if we want to ring up the Palladium, we shall probably find Rosen there."

"Of course we shall," said Solomon. "You can take it from me, that he'll be hovering about that telephone until well after midnight. But why should we want to ring him up?"

"There's never any telling," I said. "All right, I'll get the tickets."

By this time we had passed along the short subway to the Underground booking-office, and I purchased two tickets to Kilburn.

And less than five minutes later we were being whizzed along in a fairly packed train—for it was full of theatre-goers, on their way home. Not that we took much notice of them.

We had come up to London to find out the exact truth about Izzy Marks.

The more I thought about the matter, the



more I feared that Izzy had succumbed to a sudden temptation. I didn't like to think so, for he had struck me as being a very decent fellow. And, after all, to take that money would have been a mad thing. Sooner or later he was bound to be arrested.

And, apparently, he had gone straight home, and it was our intention to make inquiries at Kilburn, to begin with. Even if Izzy wasn't there, we might be able to hear something about him.

We got to Kilburn at length, and only had a brief difficulty in locating Sunrise Terrace. The first policeman we met instructed us as to the best route to take, and after ten minutes' walk, we arrived outside the gateway of number twenty-five. Everything was quiet and still.

"I don't know whether we ought to bother 'em now!" muttered Levi. "It's not far off midnight, you know, and I expect they're all in bed. Hallo! Two front doors! They're only flats."

"Yes, I noticed that," I replied. "They seem to be very respectable, too, and Izzy was evidently telling you the truth all along. Well, it's no good standing about here; we'll make inquiries."

And then I noticed that the next door to number twenty-five had opened, and I also became aware of the fact that there were people standing at one or two doors on the other side of the street.

And we appeared to be the centre of interest.

"What's the idea?" I murmured. "These neighbours seem to be pretty nosey! They're looking at us as though—"

"Pardon me, young men, are you going to knock at the Marks' door?" asked somebody who had come out of No. 25a.

We turned, and found that we were being addressed by a stoutish woman who practically filled up the doorway. Although we didn't know it at the time, she was the postman's wife, and what she didn't know about Izzy's address wasn't worth learning.

"Yes," replied Solomon. "It's a bit late, I know—"

"Oh, that's all right. They're still up—even the youngsters," said the woman. "Such goings on, too! You never did see! And young Izzy arrested, too! I can't abear to think of it, with his mother on her sick bed!"

"Arrested!" I said sharply. "So they got him?"

"Not much more than an hour ago, young gents," replied the woman. "Two of them, there was, dressed in plain clothes like they were just ordinary people. My husband saw it all. Young Izzy was took off without even seeing his mother. Cruel, I call it! Them police wouldn't care if a body was dyin', that they wouldn't."

"Do you know where they took him to?" I inquired.

"Why, to the police station, to be sure!" replied the postman's wife. "Where else? It's not more than five minutes' walk from

here, if you want to find it. And there's his poor mother, worried out of her life. It's enough to kill any woman, that it is!"

"What do you think we'd better do?" muttered Solly.

"First of all, we'll pop inside and see Mrs. Marks," I replied. "After that we'll go along to the police station and see Izzy."

Levi stared.

"But they won't let us see him," he said.

"I'll bet they will!" I replied grimly.

"Don't forget that the gov'nor and I are known pretty well at these suburban police stations, and it'll be a funny thing if I'm not allowed to have a few words with Marks. After all, he's not convicted—he's only been arrested on suspicion. But we'll see his mother first—she may want us to take a message to him."

Solly's eyes sparkled.

"That's jolly thoughtful of you," he said.

"But you'll be a marvel if you can get the police to let us see Izzy."

We didn't waste any more time, but knocked at the door of No. 25—closely and interestedly watched by the inquisitive neighbours. After a few seconds, we heard quick running footsteps, and then the door was opened.

A rather smallish boy of fourteen stood before us. From his rear a gaslight streamed out into the entrance porch, and he could see us distinctly, although his own face was in shadow.

"I expect you'll be Sam?" said Levi.

"Yes, I'm Sam Marks," replied the boy.

"Who are you?"

"My name's Levi, and this is Nipper—we're from St. Frank's," said Solomon.

"We've come here about Izzy—"

"Oh, so you're Solly, are you?" said the boy eagerly. "Izzy told us all about you in his first letter. You got him his new job, didn't you? Have you come here to tell us that it was all a mistake? He's been taken by the police, you know, and we thought—"

"I'm not so sure about it being a mistake," interrupted Solly gravely. "I don't believe that Izzy took the money with the intention of stealing, but it's a certainty that he's been arrested. Is it right that your mother is ill?"

"Of course she's ill," replied Sam. "I telegraphed to Izzy early in the evening, when mother was first taken bad. We had an awful scare—mother fainted, and at first I thought she—she was going to die!"

"But how is she now?" asked Solly.

"You'd better come in and speak to her," said the boy. "It's all right—she's a lot better. It wasn't half so bad as I thought at first."

"A telegram?" I put in quickly. "Did you send Izzy a telegram?"

"Yes."

"By Jove!" I murmured. "A wire—saying his mother was ill! I say, Solly, that



explains why Izzy buzzed off in such a hurry, doesn't it?"

Solly stared.

"Great Scott, yes!" he ejaculated. "But—but why didn't Izzy say anything about it? Mr. Rosen knew nothing about a telegram, or he would have told us! I'm beginning to be a bit more hopeful."

By this time we were in the little passage, and we went straight through to a cosy little sitting-room, where a cheerful fire was burning in the grate. In an easy-chair sat a pale, worried-looking woman, and she half started up as we entered.

"Have you come to tell me something about my boy?" she asked anxiously.

"I'm afraid we can't tell you much, Mrs. Marks," I replied. "I suppose you've heard about—about—"

"It's shameful that the police should take him!" interrupted Mrs. Marks, her voice trembling with indignation and weakness. "As if Izzy would steal! He's the most honest boy anybody could see! He wouldn't touch a penny of anybody's money! It's a shame, and if I wasn't so ill I'd go to the police station—"

"Please don't excite yourself, Mrs. Marks," I put in gently. "We are going round to the police station almost at once, and will do everything we can. It seems that all the trouble came about because your son left the picture theatre in such a hurry. I'm pretty sure that there must be some blunder, and we'll get at the truth."

"I told you, Sam!" said Mrs. Marks, turning to the boy. "You ought not to have sent that telegram—on Saturday night, too, with business so big! You frightened my Izzy, and brought about all this trouble."

"Oh, but, mum, I thought you were terribly bad!" said Sam. "I didn't know what to do, and—"

"Well, it's too late now!" said Mrs. Marks, with a sigh. "But I'm not worrying too much. Izzy didn't steal anything—and the police can't hurt him. I know my boy too well to believe that he did anything wrong."

There was something rather splendid in Mrs. Marks' implicit faith in Izzy. She was so absolutely certain of him that she didn't worry greatly. She took it for granted that her son would soon be free.

I was very glad of this, because if anybody in the world knew Izzy's character, Mrs. Marks did. And I was becoming more and more convinced—particularly after hearing about that telegram—that there had been some misunderstanding.

"Well, Mrs. Marks, we won't bother you any more," I said gently. "We just came to see if there was any further news of Izzy, and it seems likely that we shall find him at the police station. We'll do all we can, and if we can bring good news, we shall soon be round here."

Mrs. Marks looked very grateful.

"You are such good boys!" she exclaimed thankfully. "I'm so glad that my Izzy has made good friends in the country. And you came all the way up to London to help him?"

"We did, believe me!" said Solomon. "You see, it's my father's picture theatre in Bannington, and I don't believe that Izzy took any money. I was an idiot to ever suspect him at all! Some lozers have been making a bloomer!"

Mrs. Marks smiled faintly, and her eyes sparkled with warmth.

"You must forgive me for not thanking you before, Solly," she said. "I seem to know you well—Izzy has told me so much about you in his letters. And I want to thank you with all my heart for helping my boy as you did—"

"We'd better be moving, old son!" muttered Solly uncomfortably. "It's all right, Mrs. Marks—I didn't do anything for Izzy at all. He's a marvellous musician, and he deserves every success."

We only stayed a few minutes longer, for we realised that the time was getting on, and so we soon hustled out, with the intention of going straight to the police station. If we could only see Izzy, we should probably get to know more of the truth.

We had seen none of the younger children—but, of course, these were evidently in bed, and possibly they knew nothing of the disaster which had overtaken their big brother.

But I had certainly been impressed by the little house, and by Mrs. Marks herself. The place was spotlessly clean, and although there were many evidences of poverty, the little home looked cosy and comfortable.

"I can't understand about that telegram," I said, as we walked briskly along. "That's the point that's puzzling me all the time. We heard nothing about it till we got here. But it's pretty certain that Izzy rushed off in such a hurry because he wanted to get to his mother."

"Don't you think he took the money?" asked Solly.

"He might have taken it, but not to steal it!" I replied. "I'm wondering if he took it just for the sake of keeping it safe. In a fit of sudden excitement, he might have done that, without even realising that it would look black against him. But we'll soon see when we get to the police station."

It wasn't long before we arrived, and we marched into the charge-room. Levi was just a little uncertain, but I was full of confidence. Nelson Lee and I had had so much experience in all quarters of London that I was pretty certain that we should be lucky.

And my optimism was justified.

"Hallo, Inspector Street!" I exclaimed cheerily. "How goes it?"

The inspector looked up at us with a start, and adjusted his glasses.



"Good gracious me!" he exclaimed. "I'm hanged if it isn't Nipper! Why, young man, what are you doing here at this hour of the night?"

"We came to inquire about a chap named Marks," I replied. "Do you know anything about him?"

"He's here," replied Inspector Street.

"Run to earth!" I said, with satisfaction. "Well, look here, inspector, did you find that money on him—I mean the hundred and twenty quid that's missing from the cinema in Bannington?"

"Not a cent!" replied the inspector. "Only his own money."

"Then he didn't take it!" I said.

Izzy looked quite startled.

"But—but didn't he tell you about the telegram?" he asked quickly.

"Kennard didn't know about the telegram," put in Solly. "He—"

"But he did know!" shouted the other. "Two or three minutes after he brought the money, he came back. He had a telegram for me, and stood there while I read it."

"In Mr. Rosen's office?"

"Yes! Of course!"

"And Kennard didn't say a word about that!" exclaimed Levi. "What was the idea? Why didn't he tell us—"

"Why? Because he took the money!" I



**"I saw this man take from the pockets of his overcoat a number of heavy bags," replied Nelson Lee.**

"There's been some bloomer here, Mr. Street, and we've come along to clear things up."

We were taken along the passage, and then a cell door was opened. Izzy Marks jumped forward as soon as we appeared in the doorway.

"Oh!" he gasped. "Solly! I say, this is wonderful! I didn't think that anybody cared about me now."

"You're in a pretty tight fix, my son," I said. "You've been arrested for stealing some money from the Palladium, and we'd like to hear a few details. What on earth made you rush off so quickly?"

"Didn't Kennard tell you?" asked Marks in astonishment.

"Kennard?" I repeated. "Why, he told Mr. Rosen that he took the money up to the office, and left you alone with it. And he said that five minutes later you came rushing out."

put in grimly. "It's as clear as anything now—I can spot the whole game. But just tell us a few more things, Izzy. Kennard stood by while you read that wire?"

"Yes," replied Izzy. "I was so worried that I hardly knew what to do. All I thought about was getting home quick, so that I could see my mother. I asked Kennard if there was a train for London, and he told me that one left in five minutes."

"Oh!" I said. "And you rushed off?"

"Yes—and I told the commissionaire to explain to Mr. Rosen, and to tell him that I had rushed off on a matter of life and death. Do you mean to tell me that Kennard didn't say a word about that?"

"The o'd humbug didn't say a thing!" exclaimed Solomon indignantly.

"No—because he saw an opportunity of taking that money," I declared. "He let Izzy rush off, and then lifted the cash, knowing jolly well that Izzy would be



accused. And, after all this time, it'll be very difficult to prove anything against him. He's had time to get rid of the money by now, and there's no direct evidence."

"That's just where you're wrong, Nipper."

I turned round, gasping.

For Nelson Lee stood in the doorway.

## CHAPTER IX.

QUITE SIMPLE, AFTER ALL!



"GUV'NOR!" I exclaimed breathlessly.

"Don't look so startled, Nipper—I'm not a ghost!" said Nelson Lee, as he came into the cell.

"Pardon my intrusion, Inspector Street, but I was rather anxious to see you, and a constable informed me that you were here."

"I'm very pleased to see you, Mr. Lee," said the inspector. "Nipper didn't tell me that you would be coming along."

Izzy was still looking bewildered as we left the cell. It was closed and locked, and then we went along to the inspector's own room.

"In a few minutes I shall ask you to ring up Scotland Yard," said Nelson Lee, as he sat down and lit a cigarette. "In the

meantime, however, I should just like to explain a few trifling incidents which have been taking place in Bannington."

"So you went straight to Bannington, sir?"

"I did," replied Nelson Lee. "I hung about the vicinity of the Palladium until the attendant left—which was at about ten-thirty. I followed him home, to a small cottage in one of the quiet streets."

"And then, sir?"

"The rest was so childishly simple that it scarcely bears relating," said Nelson Lee. "I crept into the cottage garden, passed round to the rear, and saw a light in one of the small windows. It was the window of a kind of scullery, and Kennard was ridiculously careless enough to leave the blind up. He obviously took it for granted that the small garden was quite empty and deserted."

"And what did you see, Mr. Lee?" asked the inspector.

"I saw this man take from the pockets of his overcoat a number of heavy bags," replied Nelson Lee. "He placed them on the table, one after the other. He unrolled two or three bundles of currency notes, and emptied at least three bags of silver. I came to the conclusion that it was clearly my duty to take action."

(Continued on next page.)

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"Did you get him, sir?" I inquired tensely.

"The arresting of Mr. Kennard was quite a humorous little affair," replied the guv'nor. "I watched for some little time, and then Kennard went out of the small apartment. It took me four or five seconds to enter my means of the window. And when Kennard came back, I faced him and informed the man that he was my prisoner."

"That was certainly very swift work, Mr. Lee," said Street.

"By Jingo! That was easy work, sir," I said.

"Of course it was easy," replied Nelson Lee. "The whole case turned out to be ridiculously simple. And you will see, inspector, that it is obviously impossible for you to keep young Marks in custody."

The inspector looked dubious.

"I can't act without instructions, sir," he said. "I'm not doubting your word, Mr. Lee, but I should be exceeding my duty if I permitted Marks to leave his cell."

"I should like you to ring up Scotland Yard," said Nelson Lee. "You will probably speak to Chief Inspector Lennard, of the C.I.D. Please tell him that I am here, and that everything is all right."

The inspector agreed, and he was soon talking over the wire with the famous Scotland Yard sleuth—for Chief Inspector Lennard was one of the smartest men in the official detective force.

At last Inspector Street hung up the receiver.

"Of course, the boy will be allowed to go free at once," he said. "But I can't understand, Mr. Lee, how it is that I didn't get my instructions through earlier."

"That, I think, was my doing," smiled Nelson Lee. "You see, it was rather a whim of mine to come up personally."

"But how did you get into London so quickly, sir?" I asked. "Levi and I came on the last train—"

"And I came by road," interrupted Lee. "I can safely say, Nipper, that my little racer will generally make better time of the journey than any express."

Izzy could hardly believe it when he was brought into the inspector's room and told that the charge had been withdrawn, and that he was free. Liberty had come as unexpectedly as the arrest.

"I am very glad, my boy, that you are innocent," said Inspector Street kindly. "I was reluctant to believe the charge, even though I was compelled to make it. You have to thank Mr. Nelson Lee for your deliverance so early."

Izzy looked at the guv'nor with shining eyes.

"I—I don't know what to say, sir!" he muttered.

"In that case, Marks, it would be far better to say nothing," smiled the guv'nor.

"I am very glad if I have been of any

little service to you. I will not detain you, for I have an idea that you are particularly anxious to hurry home."

"Yes, sir, my mother is seriously ill—"

"Don't you believe it!" grinned Solly. "Nipper and I saw her only half an hour ago, and she is heaps better. A bit shaky, perhaps, but as soon as you buzz round, she'll buck up no end."

"Oh, that's splendid!" said Izzy. "I've been thinking all sorts of awful things in that horrible cell. I hope to goodness I never find myself in one again!"

He wanted us to go with him, and we made no objections. But just as we were about to start off a huge car pulled up outside, and a well-built, prosperous-looking gentleman emerged from the enclosed saloon.

"By glory!" shouted Solly. "It's dad!"

Mr. Levi came up, beaming.

"I got your telephone message, Mr. Lee, and I came over from Romford at once," he said genially. "I thought I should be in time. Well, Solly, my boy, what's it all about? A nice place for you to be in at one o'clock in the morning!"

"It's all right, dad—I'm jolly glad I came up now," said Solomon. "Everything's all serene—and the money is safe. It was Mr. Lee who recovered it. And I think Rosen is a first-class chump for being so jolly ready to accuse Izzy of theft."

Mr. Levi shook his head.

"You mustn't blame Rosen," he said. "He's a good man—he only did what he thought was right."

They continued talking for a few moments, and it could be seen that Marks was very anxious to be off.

And so, soon afterwards, we started away—Nelson Lee and I in the former's racer, and all the others in Mr. Levi's big car. We forthwith invaded Sunrise Terrace, and there was much joy in number twenty-five. We only stopped long enough to see Izzy in his mother's arms. And then, all of us feeling pretty good, we left, and made tracks for Maida Vale.

Mr. Levi insisted upon us remaining at his beautiful house for the night. And we returned to St. Frank's easily and enjoyably on the Sunday morning. Izzy had received permission from Mr. Levi to remain at home until Monday afternoon—and even then he was not to return to Bannington if his mother showed no signs of improvement.

And, later, it didn't surprise me to learn that a famous doctor called at number twenty-five, Sunrise Terrace. Solly's pater had seen to that, and so everything turned out splendidly after all.

Solly was particularly glad, because his judgment had not been at fault. The Wandering Jew was destined to wander no longer—for he now had a permanent position at the Bannington Palladium.

THE END.



# Nipper's Magazine

No. 52.

EDITED BY NIPPER,

Nov. 18, 1922.

## One Year Old To-day!

*"Nipper's Magazine" Celebrates Its First Birthday.*

It will probably come as a surprise to most of my readers that this week sees the first anniversary of Nipper's Magazine. Nevertheless this is the case. It is now just a year since our little journal first saw the light of day.

### A Birthday Banquet.

In order to celebrate this momentous event, a little dinner was held in the Remove Dormitory last Wednesday. The company present included the Editor, the chief contributors, the Staff, and some others whose only claim to fame is that they are in the Remove.

Unfortunately, Dr. Stafford and Mr. Nelson Lee were unable to be present owing to the fact that the ceremony took place after "lights out."

In spite of these unavoidable absentees, the dinner, or rather supper, was a great success. Owing to not wishing to waste money on electric light, bicycle lamps and candles stuck in saucers provided the illuminants.

### The Feast Described.

By this splendid light the whole Remove sat down on the floor to a grand repast. At the head of the table-cloth—there was no table—Nipper took his place. At his right and left sat Watson and Handforth respectively. The rest of the Remove were grouped picturesquely round in various attitudes of repose.

The menu was extensive and varied. There was condensed milk, sardines, potted meats, bread, butter, jam, fruit, pork pies, veal and ham patties, pastries, jam puffs, and chestnuts already roasted in the studies. The meal was washed down by ginger-beer and lemonade.

### Toasting the "Mag."

After everyone—with the exception of Fatty Little, who had only just started his second course—had finished, Nipper proposed a toast.

"The Magazine!" he said.

The health was drunk in silence, except that Fatty Little had some nuts in his

mouth and choked. A piece of nut hit De Valerie in the eye, but he took no notice other than catching Fatty Little on the ear with a couple of doughnuts by way of evening up things.

### Nipper's Speech.

Nipper then rose to make his speech.

"Gentlemen," he began, "I am glad to see so many of you present to-night. Some people might say that this splendid attendance is only due to the fact that you all sleep in this dormitory. But I know better. It is because you are all loyal to the good old paper (Loud applause). Well, I am glad to know it. I think everyone will agree that we have had a most successful year. Never in its history has the Mag. been more popular than it is to-day (Applause). And that, when it has been unavoidably reduced in size (Cheers. A Voice: Little and good!) Exactly. This being the case, I should like to know that the present Editor and Staff have the confidence of all of you. If anyone has a new Editor to propose—"

### Handforth Rises to the Occasion.

There were a number of subdued cries of "No!" A loud voice rose above the general murmur. Needless to say, it belonged to Handforth.

"Of course, you fellows," he roared, "we shall be sorry to lose Nipper, but I'm quite willing to take his place. You all know I'm a modest chap, but I'm not exaggerating a bit when I say I can run the Mag. miles better than he can. I know you want me as editor. Well, now you can elect me. All those in favour shove up their hands." (Uproar. Handy, who had stood up while speaking, suddenly disappeared amidst a shower of pillows, bolsters, and slippers. Fatty Little even threw three jam tarts at him). When order was restored the whole staff were re-elected. The lights were quickly put out in case a prefect should have heard the noise. So ended a most satisfactory evening.





## CHAPTER ONE.

### THE MASKED BANDITS.

**A**BOUT eight o'clock one bright, sunny Sunday morning, when most people were abed, Mr. Podge and Mr. Midge, the deadly sleuths, were taking a walk before breakfast along by the Embankment. Just as they were passing Cleopatra's Needle they saw two villainous-looking ruffians leaning on the parapet and gazing across the river. They wore black masks and carried revolvers.

Suspecting the men of some evil design, Mr. Podge and his companion quietly took up a position of observation behind the ancient monument. Their astonished ears picked up the following conversation, uttered in low, confidential tones:

"You understand wot you got ter do?"

"Sure! Soon as that there grey car passes yonder lamp-post, I darts out into the middle of the road an' holds 'er up, while you——"

"Never mind abaht me! You'll 'ave all your work cut out to cover the driver. Directly I gits the sparklets, you an' me will 'ave to cut it mighty quick for this 'ere motor-boat. She's due 'ere in another minute. Get ready! I hear 'er coming."

## CHAPTER TWO.

### THE GREY CAR.

"The situation demands our immediate intervention," whispered Mr. Podge. "I leave you, Mr. Midge, to cut off the retreat of these scoundrels by removing the sparking plug from the motor-boat. You can then assist me in arresting these bandits."

By this time the villains had sidled off and Mr. Midge, seizing a favourable opportunity, stole up to the parapet, climbed over and dropped into the waiting motor-boat and completed his task.

While Mr. Midge was absent, Mr. Podge was attracted by the approach of a powerful limousine. Peeping out from his place of concealment, he saw one of the masked ruffians standing in the middle of the road, his revolver raised at the oncoming car. *It was a grey car!*

## CHAPTER THREE.

### MR. PODGE INTERVENES.

There was a loud creaking of brakes and hissing of tyres as the great car pulled up in its own length. The first highwayman covered the chauffeur, as arranged, while the other, apparently the leader, relieved the victims of their valuables.

Mr. Podge could hardly believe it possible that such a thing could happen in broad daylight within the shadow of Scotland Yard. Acting with commendable daring, Mr. Podge

leapt with a bound from his hiding-place. Before the first ruffian could turn round, Mr. Podge had sprung on him and bore him to the ground. Wrestling the revolver from his captive's hand, the great detective used it to cover the other ruffian, who seemed too dazed with surprise to make any resistance. "Hands up!" he shouted.

The second ruffian rubbed his eyes as if he could hardly believe what he saw. "Tryin' to be funny, boss?" he said. "Look 'ere, mate! If you don't cut out that gaff an' chuck that toy away, I won't be responsible for wot I might do to your ugly countenance!"

For answer, Mr. Podge thought it best to keep off his daring opponent by firing the revolver at the man's feet. The ruffian rushed at Mr. Podge and then *click!* The detective had pulled the trigger.

## CHAPTER FOUR.

### A DESPERATE ENCOUNTER.

The revolver dropped from Mr. Podge's nerveless fingers—for it was not loaded—just as Mr. Podge received a crashing straight left on the point of the jaw. The two men grappled with deadly embrace, swaying backwards and forwards. Mr. Podge's superior weight gave him an advantage until the other ruffian joined in the bout. Between the two of them, Mr. Podge was thrown on the ground.

A crowd of amused spectators had now assembled. "'Ere comes Tiny!" yelled a small boy. The crowd cheered and rocked with laughter as Tiny, or rather Mr. Midge, entered the fray.

The timely arrival of a policeman brought the fight to an inglorious end. The crowd was dispersed and Mr. Podge and Mr. Midge were told to "move on!"

## CHAPTER FIVE.

### AN UNEXPECTED DEVELOPMENT.

An important looking gentleman alighted from the grey car and advanced towards Mr. Podge and Mr. Midge.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I must congratulate you on your wonderful performance. The film will score a tremendous hit as a farce, and will be released to the public as soon as possible. Will you accept a contract for six more pictures for the princely sum of £200,000?"

Glaring at his questioner with frozen contempt, Mr. Podge, accompanied by Mr. Midge, walked off.

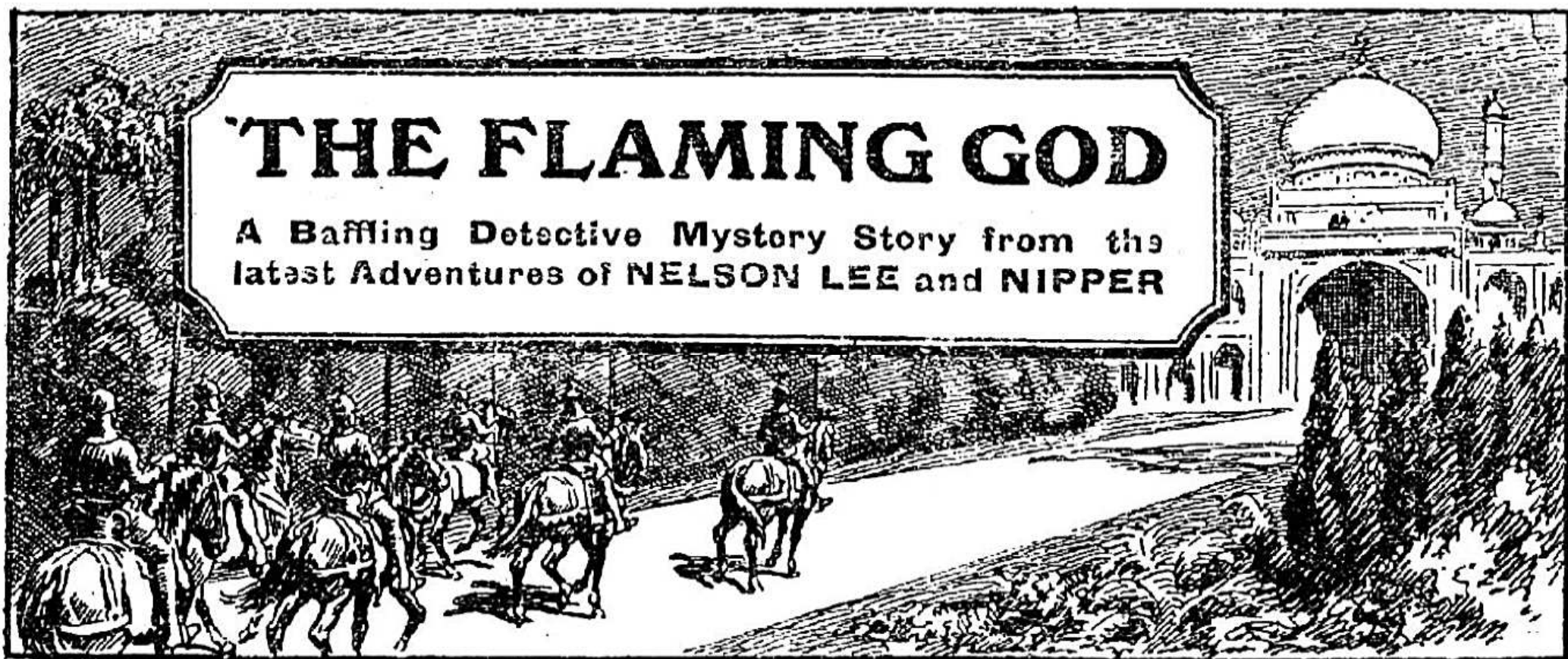
The tempting offers that followed were not accepted, for the Firm felt that they could not forsake their old profession for film acting, not for all the gold of Los Angeles.

THE END.



# THE FLAMING GOD

A Baffling Detective Mystery Story from the latest Adventures of NELSON LEE and NIPPER



"Such is the tale of that noble, reigning house, and of the secret of its prosperity, so far as is known to even the wisest of men, save for a dim legend which hath it that, even before the days of Tamerlane, the Mogul conqueror, a starving fakir who was given hospitality for a night within the palace walls, did leave behind him at departing in the morning the precious gift with a parchment scroll attached to it."—  
From the Ancient Book of the Rajas.

## PART ONE.

### I.

#### THE SHADOW ON THE PALACE.

"**T**HOUGH they have been gone for two days, father, it was a difficult task they had to do. You cannot be sure that they will return to-night."

"It is in my mind that they will. Something seems to tell me so."

"But why wait? You have had little sleep since the departure of Gondal and his men, and it were better that you should rest."

"No, my child, I will wait yet a while longer."

The speakers were Thakur Sind, the Raja of Purana, and a daughter, the Princess Lativa. The raja, a tall and handsome man of forty, with a black moustache, richly attired, was pacing to and fro with restless steps in an upper apartment of his palace; and the princess, whose slender figure was robed in silks, was seated on a couch.

She was eighteen years of age, and of the purest type of Hindoo beauty, slim and graceful, with oval features of a delicate olive tint, and raven hair that was confined by a golden circlet studded with jewels.

"It would be better for you to rest, father," Princess Lativa repeated, after a pause.

"No, my child, I will wait," the raja again declared.

They were as highly educated, these two people, as were any of the most advanced of the native potentates of India. Thakur Sind, a man of great wealth, ruled over a

state of considerable extent, and ruled it by modern methods.

He and his pretty daughter, who had recently become engaged, spoke the English language perfectly. They had been once to England, where they had been received by London society, and they had travelled on the Continent.

But they retained many of their ancient customs, and at heart they were still true Hindoos, proud of their old race, and superstitiously devoted to their religion.

In other respects, also, they were superstitious, having strong faith in prophecies and legends; and thus it was that they had been for several days in much distress, regarding as a dire calamity a loss which would have been a trivial matter to a European.

It was as hard a blow to Lativa, for a certain reason, as it was to her father. She sat on the couch with sorrow in her eyes, thinking of the future; while Thakur Sind, with sombre countenance, paced the floor in feverish anxiety and impatience.

They waited in suspense, watching the stretch of dark forest beyond them, while the sound of beating hoofs rang nearer and louder. Presently there appeared on the moonlit road, within half a mile, a group of dim, moving figures; and soon there could be distinguished half a dozen mounted troopers wearing helmets of polished metal, and tunics of chain-mail.

Rapidly they came on, pounding through the bronze gateway into the palace grounds, where they checked their steeds. The leader of the party dismounted, and the others rode towards the stables.

Thakur Sind and his daughter now hastened from the balcony to the room, and shortly afterwards a pair of curtains at the rear of it were drawn aside, and into the apartment strode Gondal, the captain of the guard.

He was a tall and handsome man of middle age, with a moustache and a split beard. A sword hung at his hip, and in his cummerbund was a brace of silver-mounted revolvers. He saluted the raja as he advanced.



"Greetings to you, your Highness," he said. "I have returned to report."

"And what news do you bring for me?" Thakur Sind cried eagerly. "Is it good or bad? Be quick!"

"It is good, your Highness," Gondal replied, "though it might be better."

"So you have not recovered my lost treasure?"

"No, I have not. But knowledge of it has been had from a merchant in one of the bazaars of the city, and by that knowledge I think it will one day be restored to you. I did your bidding, going first to the person whom you named, and, with his assistance

Gondal broke off abruptly, and, continuing, he told of his journey, and of what success he had met with. And then, his tale finished, he drew from beneath his tunic a sealed envelope, and handed it to the raja.

"Here is a full report of the matter, your Highness," he went on. "It was written by the English police-sahib at Lalapur, who bade me give it to you."

With that the captain of the guard saluted again, and left the room. And when Thakur Sind had opened the envelope, and read aloud to his daughter what it contained, the two looked at each other in consternation. For what the English police-official at Lalapur had written was of a startling nature.

"Oh, father, what is to be done?" Lativa exclaimed in distress.

The raja considered briefly. "Need you ask?" he replied. "You and I will go to London, and we will take with us the faithful Gondal, who will help us in our search. The task may be a difficult one, and I feel that it will be wise to observe precautions, of which I will speak hereafter."

Thakur Sind paused for a moment. "Go now to bed, my child," he added. "Sleep well, and have pleasant dreams. It is good news that Gondal has brought to us this night, and we may hope to recover the precious treasure we have lost. Put your mind at rest. I believe that when the time comes for you to marry the noble youth you have chosen for your husband, the flaming god will not be missing from the wedding festivities."

## II.

### AN ADVENTURE IN THE WOODS.

NELSON LEE, and his young assistant, Nipper, had motored down to Hastings one morning to have luncheon with a friend of the detective's who was staying there. Leaving early in the afternoon, they returned through the prettiest parts of Kent, avoiding the main highways; and the close of the day found them four or five miles from Bromley, driving along a quiet road that was bordered on both sides by large plantations.

Though it was late in the autumn, the leaves still lingered on many of the trees, and

their vivid colouring, painted by the frost, made bright splashes here and there amongst the evergreen foliage. A faint mist hovered in the calm air, and a bank of clouds, glowing dull crimson and purple, had hidden the sun, which was almost below the horizon. Nelson Lee was in a pensive mood.

"How peaceful it all is!" he remarked. "This is my favourite season of the year, when the weather is fine. I feel sometimes, my boy, that I would like to give up my profession, and live in an old house in the heart of the country, far from the madding crowd, and the——"

"I say, what's that?" Nipper interrupted. "Look, guv'nor! Over there!"

"Yes; I see," Lee murmured in a puzzled tone.

A ray of sunlight, breaking from the clouds, had just flashed into the plantation on the right, a dozen yards ahead of the motorists. It faded as quickly, but not until it had disclosed to view the dusky figure of a man who was crawling on all fours through the leafless undergrowth, away from the road.

"A poacher, I should think," said the lad.

"I doubt it," Nelson Lee replied. "The fellow must have been in hiding yonder before we approached. We had better go after him, and have him give an account of himself."

The crawling figure had vanished. There had only been a fleeting glimpse of it. Nelson Lee promptly checked the car, and he and Nipper jumped out and plunged into the woods. Holding to the direction in which the man had gone, they hastened through the undergrowth, trampling the dry fern and bracken, for some distance.

They saw nobody. There was only the sound of their own footsteps. At length they stopped to listen, and the next instant, to their amazement, there arose from the ground several yards in front of them the tall form of a Hindoo.

Such he unmistakably was—brown of skin, with a black moustache and a split beard, wearing a white turban, a garment of blue cloth that reached to his knees, and was confined at the waist by a cummerbund, and cotton drawers that tapered to his ankles. It was as if there had appeared by magic a native from the far land of India.

"My word!" gasped the lad. "Are we dreaming, guv'nor?"

For a moment he was dumbfounded by the Eastern apparition, and so was Nelson Lee. The man had not stirred or spoken. Lee moved closer to him, and addressed him in English.

"Who are you?" he demanded. "What are you doing here?"

There was no answer. The man stood there dumb, as motionless as a graven image. It seemed that he was not familiar with the English tongue.

"Who are you?" Nelson Lee repeated in Hindustani. "What are you doing here?"

Still no answer. For a second or two the



Oriental merely stared at Nipper and the detective, his gaze resting on one and the other, while there crept into his dark eyes an ominous glitter.

Of a sudden he muttered something that sounded like an oath, and with that, as swift as lightning, he clenched his fist and leaped forward.

Nelson Lee had no time to meet the attack. Taken by surprise, he received a blow on the chest that sent him staggering, and, losing his balance, he crashed down on his back in the undergrowth.

Having aimed a second blow at Nipper, who dodged it, the man swung round, and took to his heels.

Nelson Lee was still on his back, struggling to extricate himself from a clump of bushes which had gripped his limbs. With the lad's assistance he rose, and at once they set off in chase of the Hindoo, who had got a good start.

They could not see him, for he had disappeared amongst the trees. Guided by his floundering steps ahead of them, they held to the pursuit, running as hard as they could, until Lee tripped on a trailing vine, and fell, and Nipper pitched on top of him.

They scrambled to their feet, jarred by the fall, and stopped to listen. Beyond them the plantation was shrouded in gloom, and was almost as dense as a tropical jungle. Not a sound floated to their ears now. All was quiet.

Either the fugitive was hiding, or he was moving noiselessly. The dull glow had faded from the western sky, and the shadows of night were gathering.

"No use going any farther," panted Nipper.

"Not a bit," Nelson Lee assented. "We'll have to abandon the chase."

"It's a queer business, gov'nor."

"It is, my boy. I don't know what to make of it."

Lee paused, and shrugged his shoulders. "We shall very likely hear more of this strange affair, Nipper," he added, as he turned back towards the road.

### III.

#### ROUSED IN THE NIGHT.

A FEW days after this incident, and at an early hour of the morning, while it was yet quite dark, Lee was roused from slumber by the sound of a car that stopped outside the house, and as he listened he heard somebody rapping loudly on the street-door.

"A visitor in the night!" he murmured. "Who the deuce can it be?"

He got out of bed, and called to Nipper, who had also been roused, and the two hastily put on their dressing-gowns and slippers, and went to the consulting-room, where Lee switched on the light and touched a match to the fire that was laid in the grate.

The rapping had ceased. The servant, who slept in the basement, had just admitted the

visitor. Footsteps were heavily and quickly mounting the stairs.

The lad threw the door open, and there walked into the room a gentleman with whom both Nipper and the detective were acquainted. He was a man of between fifty and sixty, with a greyish beard and moustache, and a florid complexion.

Charles Stannard was his name. He was a retired banker, with a hobby for collecting antiques; and he lived at White Lodge, in Kent, a country dwelling that was some few miles to the south of Bromley. Nelson Lee stared in blank surprise.

"My dear Stannard!" he exclaimed. "What brings you here at this hour? What is wrong?"

"I am sorry to have dragged you out of bed," Mr. Stannard replied, ignoring the question. "It was stupid of me. You will think I am a fool. I acted on a sudden impulse. The circumstances were such that I thought I had better consult you promptly."

"There has been a burglary at White Lodge, I suppose," said Lee.

"No, there hasn't been. That's the problem, Lee."

"You interest me, Stannard. Go on with your story."

Charles Stannard nodded. Having taken off his hat and motoring-coat and thrown them on to a couch, he dropped into a chair by the fire, and held out his hands to the crackling flames that had ignited the wood.

"It is a strange affair," he said. "Most extraordinary. You have been to White Lodge, Lee. You have seen my collection of antiques, and you know that they are in a large room on the first floor, which is not far from my bedchamber."

"And now for the story. I awoke in the night an hour or so after I had retired, and heard what sounded like somebody walking stealthily to and fro in some room on the same floor."

"I didn't pay much attention at first, for I was in a dreamy sort of a state. I listened for a few moments, still hearing the faint sounds, and then, suspecting there was a burglar in the house, I partly dressed, and went quickly to the collection-room, and turned on the light."

"There was nobody there, but I noticed at once that a window at the farther end of the room was open, and as I hurried to it I was startled by a shout, which was followed by the crack of a revolver."

"The window overlooks the grounds at one side of the dwelling, and the wall beneath it is thickly clothed with ivy. As I stood there I saw the dim figures of two men struggling in the shrubbery at a distance of a number of yards."

"I ran downstairs, and with a couple of the servants who had meanwhile been roused, I hastened to the spot where I had seen the struggle. And, to my consternation, found lying there unconscious my old butler, Timbs, with the back of his head resting on the bole of a tree."



"With the exception of a bruise on his forehead, caused by a blow, he was not injured. When we had carried him indoors and put him to bed, I got my car out, and drove to Bromley, and returned with Dr. Knapp, who said that the butler must have struck his head with great violence in falling, but that there was no fracture of the skull, and he would probably regain consciousness in the course of several hours.

facts, Lee," he continued. "What do you think of them?"

"You can't expect me to give any opinion," said Nelson Lee, who had listened attentively to the narrative. "How can I? If you are right, though, it is indeed a very mysterious affair. By the way, did you make a thorough search of the collection-room?"

"No; rather a hasty one," Charles Stannard replied.



Of a sudden, he muttered something like an oath, and, as swift as lightning, he clenched his fists and leaped forward.

"After the doctor had gone I went back to the collection-room, and observed, to my surprise, that nothing was missing, though the man must have been there for some minutes, and could have carried off valuable objects of gold and silver.

"He had got access to the room, it was obvious, by climbing the ivy-clad wall, and opening the window.

"Why he had not stolen anything, when he had the opportunity, I could not understand. It puzzled me, and as I was anxious to get to the bottom of the mystery, and felt that it would appeal to you, I came up to town in my car without delay. I couldn't use my telephone, as it is out of order."

Mr. Stannard paused. "Those are the

"Are you sure that nothing was missing?"

"Nothing was, so far as I could perceive."

"Your antiques are in a number of glass cabinets, I remember. Were they locked?"

"Yes; they always are. I carry the keys."

"Was not a single one of the cabinets broken into? Are you certain?"

"I can't be positive, I will admit. I did not closely examine the locks of the cabinets."

"You should have done so, my dear fellow."

Nelson Lee shrugged his shoulders as he spoke. "You didn't go after the fellow who attacked your servant?" he resumed.

"No; I was too much concerned about



Timbs," Mr. Stannard answered. "But it should be an easy matter for you to follow the scoundrel's tracks, at least, for some distance."

"Why? How is that?"

"Because a hard shower of rain fell shortly after I went to bed."

"Ah, I see! You are right, Stannard. I heard the shower."

Nelson Lee was silent for a brief interval. He lit a cigarette, and paced to and fro with knit brows, considering what he had been told.

"I shall be glad to investigate this affair," he said at length. "It has roused my interest. Make yourself at home, Stannard, while Nipper and I get dressed, when we will drive down to White Lodge with you. By the time we arrive the butler may have recovered consciousness, and, if so, he will perhaps be able to throw some light on the mystery. As for there being nothing missing from your collection of antiques," he added, "I am inclined to be doubtful about that. We will see when we get there."

#### IV.

##### THE BUTLER'S STORY.

**T**HE night was over, and it was almost fully daylight, when Mr. Charles Stannard's car swung round the top of the drive, and stopped in front of White Lodge, an old-fashioned dwelling with large grounds attached to it.

A servant opened the door, and informed his master that Timbs had not long ago recovered consciousness; and Mr. Stannard and his companions at once went upstairs to a small chamber where Robert Timbs, the butler, was lying in bed.

He was an elderly, clean-shaven man. A flush crept into his haggard cheeks as the little party entered the room, and by an effort he raised himself high on the pillow.

"Ah, here you are, sir!" he said eagerly. "I haven't told anybody yet. I thought I had better wait until you returned. I've known some strange things, but what I've got to tell you beats them all. Though you may not believe me——"

"Don't excite yourself," Mr. Stannard interrupted. "How do you feel, Timbs?"

"There isn't much the matter with me, sir, except for a dull headache."

"I am glad to hear it. I was afraid you had been seriously injured. I have been to London, and I have brought back with me Mr. Nelson Lee, the detective, and his young assistant. And now you can go on with your story, if you are able. You were roused in the night by a suspicious noise, I daresay."

"Yes, sir, I was. I heard queer sounds, but I couldn't be sure where they came from. Thinking a burglar was in the house, or was trying to break in, I pulled on my clothes, and slipped downstairs to the library."

"And I had no more than entered the room, when I saw from the French window at the end of it a man who had something

white on his head, and was running across the lawn. Out I went by the window, and after the fellow, who had disappeared in the trees and shrubbery.

"I gave chase, shouting to him to stop. He wasn't far in front of me, and I gained on him until there were only two or three yards between us, when he suddenly whipped round. And, to my astonishment, sir, I saw by the moonlight that he was one of those brown-skinned people who are called Hindoos."

"He was a Hindoo?" exclaimed Mr. Stannard. "Nonsense!"

"It is quite true, sir," the servant declared. "That's what the man was. There isn't a doubt of it. He wore a white turban, and a long garment with a sort of sash at the waist, and he had a black moustache, and a big beard that was split in the middle."

Mr. Stannard looked in bewilderment at Nelson Lee, and Lee and Nipper exchanged glances. They were satisfied that the Oriental was the same person who had escaped from them a couple of days ago in the neighbourhood of White Lodge.

"The scoundrel took me by surprise," Robert Timbs continued. "He drew a revolver and fired, but the bullet only grazed me, and before he could shoot again I sprang at him and seized him by the throat. I couldn't hold him, though. He soon broke my grip, and dealt me a blow that knocked me down. I fell backwards, striking my head, and knew nothing more until I came to my senses here in bed."

"Did the man say anything to you?" Nelson Lee asked.

"No, sir, he didn't utter a word," the butler replied.

"Did you notice if he was carrying anything?"

"Yes; he had a small sack with something in it slung over his shoulder. He—he dropped it when I——"

Robert Timbs paused, exhausted by the effort of speaking. He sank lower on the pillow, panting for breath, his eyes half closed.

"That is enough," Mr. Stannard said to him. "You mustn't talk any more, Timbs. Try to get some sleep."

The three withdrew from the bedchamber, and, at the detective's bidding, Mr. Stannard, who was amazed by what he had learned, took his companions to the collection-room on the floor below.

It was a large apartment, and in the middle of it, and ranged along the walls, were glass cabinets filled with rare and curious antiques from nearly every part of the world.

Nelson Lee went from one to another of them, and at length, pausing by a cabinet near the window, he examined the door, and pulled it open.

"It has been forced with some sharp implement," he said quietly. "Do you see?"



"By Jove, you are right!" cried Charles Stannard. "I overlooked this!"

"Is anything missing?"

"I think not. Yes, Lee, there is. It stood behind these Aztec bowls, else I should have missed it before."

"What, Stannard?"

"A small idol of an odd shape, bearing a rough resemblance to the Indian god Brahma, that was about eight inches in height. It was carved from some strange kind of wood, and was ornamented with silver filagree work, and was daubed with yellow and crimson paint."

"Where did you get it, and when?"

"I bought it a little more than a month ago from Mark Judah, the curio-dealer of Wigmore Street. I noticed it in his shop window, and it was such a quaint thing that I took a fancy to it. I paid Judah three pounds for it."

"It could not have been of any great value, then?"

"Oh, no; I thought that I had paid rather too much for it."

"I am acquainted with Mark Judah," said Nelson Lee. "Where did he get the idol?"

"He picked it up somewhere in India, he told me," Mr. Stannard answered. "He had recently returned from a tour in the East."

"You don't know where he picked it up?"

"No; I didn't ask him that. I daresay he got it in a bazaar in some city."

"Well, this is a very queer business. From the statements made by your butler we can believe that the thief was a Hindoo, which is extraordinary in itself. Moreover, it would appear that his sole object was to steal a comparatively worthless idol."

"I am not so sure. Probably he meant to steal more valuable things, and, alarmed by hearing me get out of bed, he hurriedly snatched the idol and took to flight."

"But he forced open this cabinet, Stannard, and there are no articles of gold or silver in it."

"That is true, Lee. Your theory may be right, though it is almost incredible. A Hindoo burglar! That is the most amazing feature of the case. It is an utter mystery to me, and I am willing to bet that it will baffle your skill."

Mr. Stannard shut the door of the cabinet, and gazed at the detective, shaking his head in perplexity.

"What are you going to do about it?" he asked.

There was no reply. Nelson Lee was absorbed in thought, pondering the mystery. He had a slender theory of a kind, but it did not go far towards helping him to solve the problem. He was certain, at all events, that he had a most peculiar case to deal with, and that it was likely to be a sensational one.

"I'll get to the bottom of the mystery sooner or later," he said at length, rousing from his abstraction. "The first step will be to find the Hindoo's trail, and follow it as

far as we can. Nipper and I will see to that at once, and when we come back—I don't suppose we shall be absent very long—we will be glad to have some breakfast."

## V.

### ON THE TRAIL.

THE sun was not yet above the horizon when Nelson Lee and the lad left the house with Charles Stannard, who accompanied them as far as the spot where the butler had been knocked down.

There they promptly discovered the dim footprints of the mysterious Hindoo on the damp earth and grass; and, Mr. Stannard having turned back, the two set off on their quest.

Nipper wanted to talk about the affair, but Lee was not in the mood for conversation.

"Yes, of course, he was the thief we chased the evening we were returning from Hastings," he said, in answer to a question. "No doubt he meant to steal the idol that night, but he changed his mind because we had seen him."

"As for his object, my boy, it would be futile to discuss that. We have no clue at present, and I don't expect to find one down here in the country. I merely wish to learn how far the fellow has gone on foot."

Having passed from the private grounds of White Lodge into a plantation, they went through that for half a mile, guided by the trail, and emerged from the cover in an open meadow where flowed a narrow and rapid stream.

They crossed it by a footbridge, observing immediately below them on the left a deep, dark pool that swirled slowly round and round. A short stretch brought them to another plantation, and when they had pressed through that for a quarter of a mile, still holding to the footprints, they found themselves at the edge of a road, and stopped.

They were at fault now. The hard shower in the night had washed all the dust from the surface of the road, and obliterated the trail.

"This is the end, guv'nor," said the lad. "We may as well go back."

"Not yet," Nelson Lee absently replied. "Perhaps we can get some information."

Turning to the right, in the direction of Bromley, they walked along for three or four hundred yards, and presently came to a small, ivy-clad cottage. There was a strip of garden in front of it, and an old rustic was standing at the gateway, smoking a pipe. He nodded to Lee and the lad, and the detective spoke to him.

"I wonder if you saw or heard anybody go by in the night?" he said.

"I did, sir, as it happens," the old man answered. "I'm a bad sleeper, and I was lying awake when I heard footsteps on the road, and thought it strange that any per-



son should be passing at so late an hour. So I got out of bed and looked from the window, and what I saw gave me a start."

"What did you see?" Nelson Lee inquired.

"A foreigner of some kind, sir. He was no Englishman, and I have never seen the like of him before. He had a white cloth wrapped around his head, and he wore a gown, as I should call it, that reached to his knees, and had a belt to it. He went swiftly by, as if he was frightened. I had only a glimpse of him."

"Did you notice if he was carrying anything?"

"Yes, sir; he had a small sack slung over his shoulder."

One point had been settled, and it was an important one. The Hindoo had gone in the direction of Bromley, which in all probability meant that his destination was London. Nelson Lee thanked the old rustic, and slipped a coin into his hand; and then he and Nipper returned to White Lodge as they had come, and told Mr. Stannard what they had learned.

"I sha'n't trouble to make any inquiries at Bromley," Lee continued. "The next step will be to search for the Hindoo in London, as I am sure he came from there."

"Do you think you will be able to find him?" Charles Stannard asked.

"I haven't much doubt that I will. It ought not to be a very difficult task."

"I hope you will succeed. I am now inclined to believe that the stolen idol was of considerable value, and I am anxious to recover it."

"Possibly it was not of any great value. Perhaps the Hindoo had another motive for stealing it."

"That may be," Mr. Stannard assented.

"At all events, I want to get to the bottom of the mystery. Shall I leave the case entirely to you, or shall I have the police assist in the search?"

"You can do as you like about that," Nelson Lee replied. "It won't make any difference to me."

"Then I will write to Scotland Yard, relating what has occurred, and giving a description of the Hindoo."

"Very well. But if you write to the Yard, Stannard, be sure to request that the affair shall be kept quiet. Otherwise, if it were to get into the papers it would be much more difficult to trace the Hindoo."

"You are right about that, Lee. I will do as you suggest."

Mr. Stannard paused. "I will have a further talk with you later," he added. "Come along to breakfast now. It has been waiting for a quarter of an hour, and you must be hungry after your long tramp."

During the morning Nelson Lee called on Mr. Mark Judah, the curio dealer of Wigmore street. He learned that the dealer had picked up the Brahma idol during his recent travels in India, and had sold it to Mr. Stannard for three pounds about a

month ago. Except that Mr. Judah expressed some astonishment on hearing that the idol had been stolen, Nelson Lee could get no other information from his visit.

## VI.

### THE THREE HINDOOS.

IT was past the hour of noon, and from end to end the Gray's Inn Road was choked with humanity. The pavements were thronged with people. Tramcars went clanging to and fro, and cabs and 'buses, drays and carts, were streaming in both directions.

But Nelson Lee saw none of it, scarcely heard the grind of the traffic, though he sat by a window of his consulting-room.

"It is a question of time," he muttered, "and time is precious."

During the remainder of the previous day, after his visit to Mark Judah, Nelson Lee had made inquiries at various hotels in the West End district of London; and Nipper had done the same in Bloomsbury, where foreigners from the East, and from many other lands, are always to be found.

They had met with no luck, however. Not discouraged, the two had set off at an early hour this morning to renew their quest; and a few minutes ago, still unsuccessful, Lee had returned home for luncheon.

"Time is precious," he said to himself again. "Every minute of it. That man I want! The man who probably has now in his possession that baffling idol! Where am I to search for him?"

Lee broke off at the sound of footsteps. Somebody was ascending the stairs, and a moment later the door was opened, and Nipper walked into the room, whistling cheerfully.

"You seem to be very well pleased with yourself," said Nelson Lee, his gloomy face brightening. "You have traced the Hindoo, I suppose?"

"Yes, I have," the lad declared. "I have traced the three of them."

"Three? What do you mean?"

"What I said, guv'nor. There are three in all."

"And one of them is—"

"Yes, one is the man we want. At least, I am pretty sure he is."

Nipper briefly told his story.

"I didn't learn anything at Bloomsbury," he began, "though I called at a lot of places where I hadn't been yesterday."

"I was hungry by twelve o'clock, so I thought I would have some luncheon at the Popular Restaurant, instead of coming home. I took a 'bus to Piccadilly Circus, and, just as I got to the Popular I noticed three Hindoos looking in a shop-window a little beyond me."

One of them was exactly like the description of the thief we had from Mr. Stannard's butler—a tall man, with a black moustache and a split beard, wearing a



white turban, a blue robe with a cummerbund, and calico drawers.

Another was a shorter man, with a black moustache; and the third was a youth about my own age, or a little older. Of course, I followed them, and, to cut it short, they went to the Kenilworth Hotel in Ryder Street."

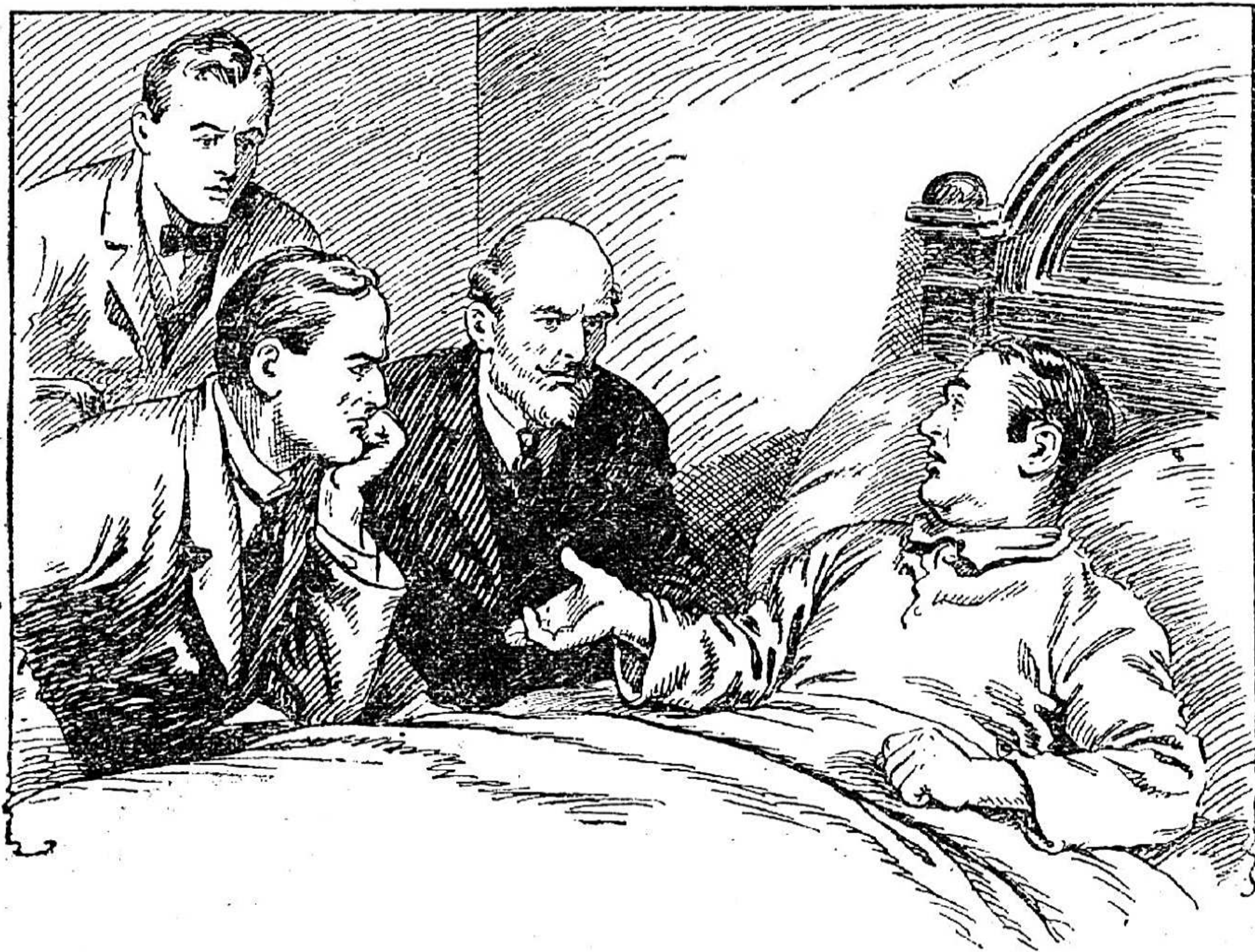
"The Kenilworth!" Nelson Lee exclaimed. "I forgot to inquire there, oddly

"And how long have they been staying at the Kenilworth?"

"They arrived a week ago."

"From where, Nipper? From what part of India?"

"I don't know, guv'nor. Mr. Frank couldn't tell me that. He said they spoke English perfectly, and he had an idea they had come to London to search for somebody."



"And, to my astonishment, sir," continued Timbs, "I saw by the moonlight that he was one of those brown-skinned people that are called Hindoos."

enough. The manager is Alfred Frank, who used to be at the Royal Court."

"Yes, that's right," the lad assented.

"This is good news. Very good. Three Hindoos, and the tall one is presumably the man we want. And he is not afraid to show himself openly in the streets. That is highly satisfactory."

"Satisfactory? Why, guv'nor?"

"Never mind. Go on, my boy. What else?"

"I waited until the party had entered the hotel, and then I went in and questioned Mr. Frank, who talked freely about the Hindoo. They must be wealthy, for they have a suite of three bedchambers and a sitting-room. The name of the tall one is Gondal. The other is Meerza, and the youth is Naryan."

"Just so, my boy. The person they wished to find, and did find, was Mark Judah, the curio dealer of Wigmore Street."

"But Mr. Judah told you that no Hindoos had called on him."

"He didn't tell the truth, for some reason."

"At all events, guv'nor, there can't be any doubt that the tall Hindoo stole the idol."

"It would appear so, Nipper, wouldn't it?"

"Yes, it is as clear as daylight. Knowing that Mr. Judah had bought the idol at a bazaar in Bombay, the Hindoos came to London to buy it back from him, and he told them he had sold it to Mr. Stannard. But why do you suppose they were so keen on getting it?"



Nelson Lee did not reply. He was so pleased with what his young assistant had learned that he was rubbing his hands together and smiling. He glanced at his watch and pressed an electric-button on the wall.

"We will have something to eat," he said, "and then we will go down to the Kenilworth Hotel and interview the Oriental guests. I don't think I shall have any difficulty, Nipper, in persuading them to explain the mystery."

"And make them give up the stolen idol?" asked the lad.

Nelson Lee shook his head. "No, they will take the idol back to India with them," he replied. "Mr. Stannard will doubtless let them have it."

## VII.

### AT THE KENILWORTH HOTEL.

IT was shortly after two o'clock when Nelson Lee and Nipper got out of a cab in Ryder Street and entered the Kenilworth Hotel. They walked into the office, and learned from Mr. Frank, who was behind the desk, that Inspector Lennard had forestalled them.

"What is the meaning of this Lennard?" Lee quietly asked, as he entered shortly afterwards a luxuriously furnished apartment in which were the three Hindoos mentioned by Nipper.

"You ought to know," the inspector replied, in a tone of triumph. "I have got ahead of you this time."

"So you have heard from Mr. Charles Stannard?"

"Yes. I had a letter from him this morning, telling me of the mysterious theft at his residence in the country. He stated that you were working on the case, but that he would like to have the assistance of the police as well.

He sent me a description of the thief, and with the aid of that I soon succeeded in finding the man at the Kenilworth Hotel. It was quick work, wasn't it?"

"Yes, Lennard, very quick. I will give you the credit that is due to you."

"I should think you would."

"But have you sufficient evidence to justify you in making an arrest?" Nelson Lee inquired.

"Sufficient evidence?" Inspector Lennard exclaimed. "I should think I have. The fellow answers to the description of the thief, and when Mr. Stannard's butler comes up to town to-day he will identify him."

"Very likely. Go on. What else?"

"There is further and stronger evidence, Lee. I got it from the hotel porter who was on duty all of Thursday night. The Hindoo went out at eight o'clock in the evening, and when he returned, shortly before daylight, he appeared to be ex-

hausted, and was spattered with mud to the knees."

"Has he admitted that he was absent so long?"

"He hasn't denied it. He has refused to make any statements."

"Was he carrying a sack when he returned?" Nelson Lee continued; "or had he any bulky object hidden under his clothing?"

"He had no sack," the inspector replied, "and the porter didn't notice whether or not he had anything large concealed on his person."

"You haven't found the idol, I suppose?"

"No, Lee, I haven't, though I have thoroughly searched the whole suite of apartments. It isn't here. The rascal must have hidden it somewhere, from fear of being caught, after he escaped from White Lodge."

Not one of the three Hindoos had opened his lips. Their haughty attitude, and their seeming indifference to the situation, puzzled Nelson Lee.

He wondered what their inscrutable features masked. He bent his gaze on Meerza and the youth, and when he had studied them closely for a moment he gave a slight start, and his eyes sparkled. Then he turned to the prisoner.

"Will you tell me what you did on Thursday night?" he asked.

"Yes, to you I will speak freely," the man Gondal replied, "for you are not insolent like the others, sahib. This great city has a fascination for me. I am fond of wandering about.

Therefore, I went out for a walk that evening, and found my way to a strange and distant part of the city by the river, where I met a man of my own race. I had much talk with him, sitting in a cafe where people were drinking and gambling, and when the night was nearly over I walked back to the hotel."

"You were not in the country, at the house that is called White Lodge?"

"No, sahib, I was not out of London."

Nelson Lee turned to the Hindoo with the black moustache. "I am a detective," he said to him, "though I am not of the police. I have been employed to find the stolen idol, and I know that for some reason you set a high value on it. Will not you also speak freely of this strange affair, and throw full light on it?"

"No, sahib, I cannot, Meerza doggedly answered. "The matter is of a secret nature, and it concerns only myself and my friends. Yet it will not be long, I think, until you will learn that which you wish to know, and justice will be done."

"It were best I should know now."

"You must wait, sahib, and have patience."

(Continued on page 40.)



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(Continued from page 38.)

Inspector Lennard shrugged his shoulders. "You are a queer chap, Lee," he said. "If you want to have a further talk with these people, I will leave you here. I am not interested in the mystery. I am positive that I have got the right man, and I am going to take him to Scotland Yard, to await the arrival of Mr. Stannard's butler."

With that he spoke to his prisoner, and Gondal, rising from the chair, passed calmly from the room with his captors, not utter-

ing a word. The door swung shut behind him, and there was a brief silence. Then, springing suddenly to his feet, the youth, Naryan, put his hand on Meerza's arm, and looked at him pleadingly.

"I feel that we can trust this Englishman!" he cried. "Confide in him, my father, and he may help us. Why should you not? What is in my mind is in yours also, as I can read in your eyes. Tell everything to the English sahib, I beg of you, and he will see to it that our devoted servant Gondal is set free!"

(To be continued.)

## Editorial Announcement.

MY DEAR READERS,—Below you will see that I am giving you another opportunity of sharing with Nelson Lee the honour of solving a real detective mystery and winning more pocket money. So get busy all you budding detectives and send along your theories. There is not much time to lose, as the competition closes on Tuesday owing to Part 2 of "The Flaming God," which gives the solution, appearing next Wednesday.

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There is yet something else for you to look out for next week, and I want you to tell all your chums about it. I am shortly presenting every one of my readers with a *free gift*: As to what this gift is going to be, that is the secret which will be revealed in our next issue. I can tell you this much, however. It is going to be something you all like.—Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

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The decision of the Editor is final.

Competitors must send their attempts to "The Nelson Lee" Problem Story Competition, Gough House, Gough Square, Fleet Street, London, E.C.

Last day for sending in—Tuesday, November 21st.

Employees of the Company are not eligible for the competition.

The results of the competition, with the names and addresses of all prize-winners, will be published in "The Nelson Lee Library" in about a month from the date of this issue.



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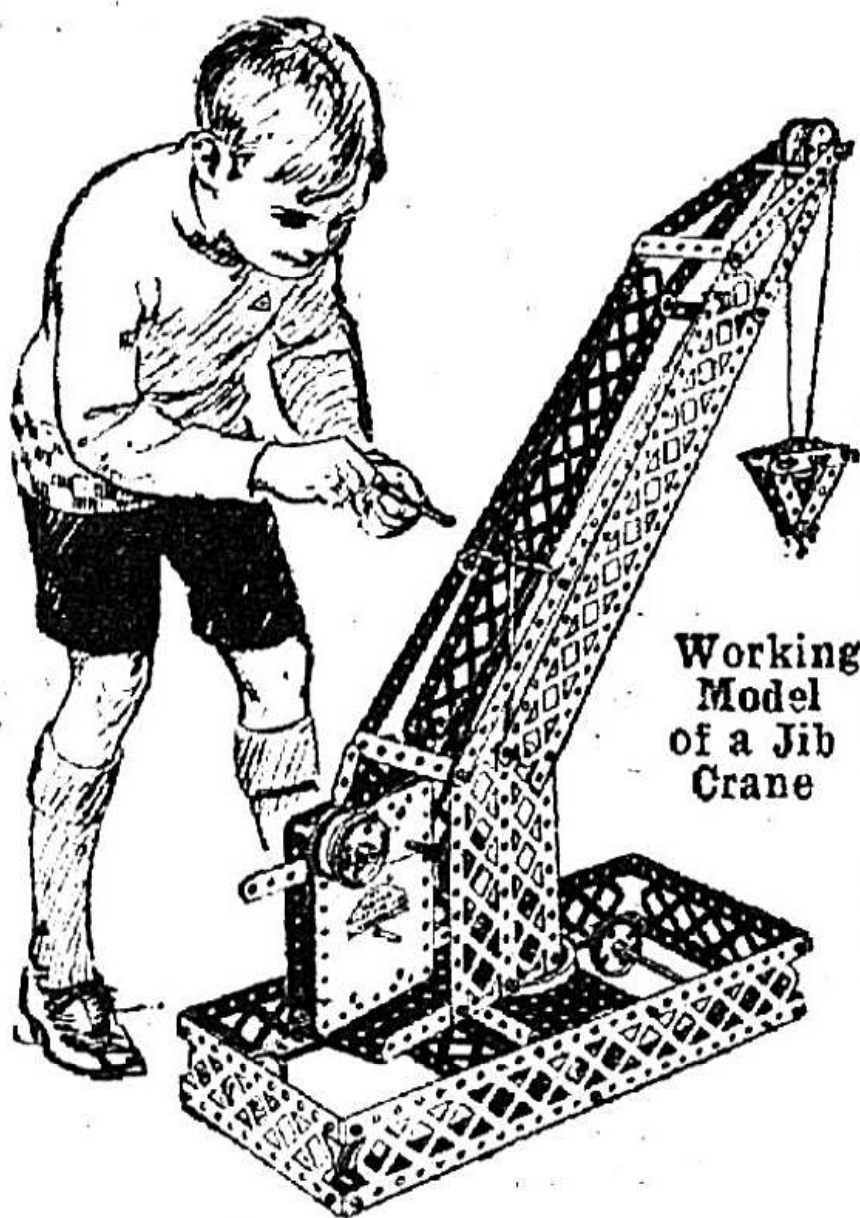


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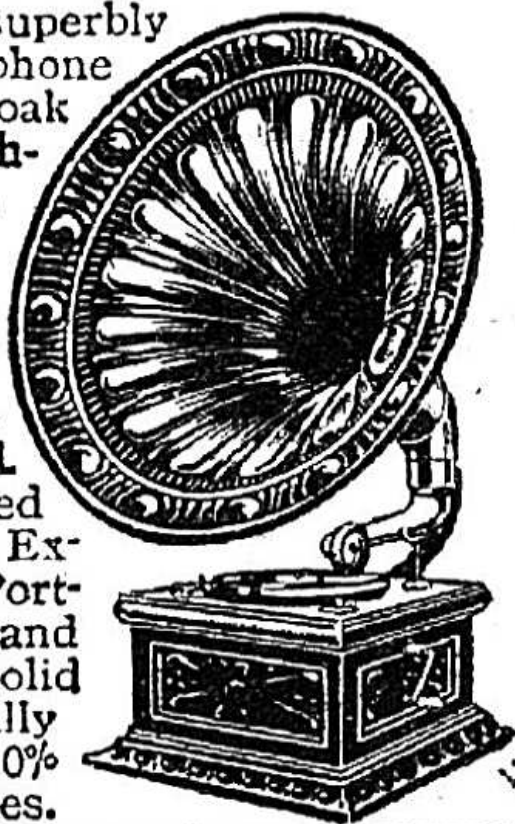
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