

£300 IN PRIZES—BIG FORECAST COMPETITION SEE INSIDE!

The **NELSON LEE** *Library* **2D**



This Thrilling HOLD-UP
incident occurs in this
week's Great Story:

ON THE CALIFORNIA EXPRESS; OR, WESTWARD HO!

Being the stirring ad-
ventures of NELSON LEE
and the boys of ST.
FRANK'S on a 3,000-mile
train journey across
AMERICA.

GREAT COMPETITION FOR CRICKET LOVERS!

**First Prize £100 ! Second Prize £50 ! Third Prize £30 !
And 120 Prizes of £1 each !**

CAN YOU FORECAST HOW THE COUNTIES ARE GOING TO FINISH UP?

We offer the above splendid Prizes to the reader who is clever enough to send us a list showing exactly in what order the seventeen first-class County Cricket Clubs will stand at the end of the season.

For your guidance we publish the order in which each of the clubs stood last year, which was as follows :

- | | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Yorkshire. | 5. Lancashire. | 9. Sussex. | 13. Gloucestershire. |
| 2. Nottinghamshire. | 6. Hampshire. | 10. Somerset. | 14. Leicestershire. |
| 3. Surrey. | 7. Middlesex. | 11. Derbyshire. | 15. Northamptonshire. |
| 4. Kent. | 8. Essex. | 12. Warwickshire. | 16. Glamorgan. |
| | 17. Worcestershire. | | |

What you have to do is to fill in on the coupon on this page your forecast of the order in which the counties will finish up. To the reader who does this correctly we shall award a prize of £100, and the other prizes in the order of the correctness of the forecasts.

In the case of ties any or all of the prizes will be added together and divided, but the full amount of £300 will be awarded.

All forecasts must be submitted on coupons taken from this journal or from one of the other publications taking part in this contest.

You may send as many coupon forecasts as you like.

They must all be addressed to "Cricket Competition," Gough House, Gough Square, E.C.4, and must reach that address not later than Thursday, August 16th.

You may send in your forecasts at once if you like ; but none will be considered after August 16th.

The decision of the Editor in all matters concerning this competition must be accepted as final and binding, and entries will only be admitted on that understanding.

Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.

This competition is run in conjunction with "Football Favourite," "Sports Budget," "Mag-net," "Young Britain," "Champion," "Boys' Realm," "Boys' Friend," "Popular," "Pluck," "Union Jack," "Rocket," "Boys' Cinema," and "Gem," and readers of these journals are invited to compete.

I forecast that the Counties will finish the season in this order :

No. 1	No. 10
No. 2	No. 11
No. 3	No. 12
No. 4	No. 13
No. 5	No. 14
No. 6	No. 15
No. 7	No. 16
No. 8	No. 17
No. 9	

I enter "Cricket" Competition in accordance with the rules as announced, and agree to abide by the published decision.

Name

Address

Closing date, August 16th, 1923.

N.L.

ON THE CALIFORNIA EXPRESS;

or,

WESTWARD HO!



A story of the wonderful experiences of the Boys of St. Frank's during their five days journey in an American

Pullman express across America. The actual route described in the narrative below was accomplished by the Author when he wrote the story, and the impressions contained therein are therefore absolutely true to life. In fact, much of the story was written in the train, being finally com-

pleted when the Author reached Los Angeles. As for the story itself, it throbs with excitement throughout, one of the most thrilling moments being the hold-up by train bandits.

Don't forget to fill in your coupons for the Great Cricket Forecast Competition! There is no time like the present, and you may win one of the big money prizes.

THE EDITOR.

CHAPTER I.

WESTWARD HO!

FATTY LITTLE, of the Remove, wiped his mouth regretfully.

"Jolly good grub, but not enough of it," he remarked. "Somehow, this American air gives a chap a keen appetite."

"You never had one in England, I suppose?" chuckled De Valerie.

The St. Frank's Remove was on board a Pullman train on the Pennsylvania Railroad, in the United States of America. They were en route for Chicago—the first stage of their journey across the great continent to Los Angeles, California.

In a way, I was the leader of the party, for Nelson Lee was elsewhere. We were taking our summer holidays on a tour, but had never really expected to go over to the Pacific Coast.

It was really Lord Dorrimore's doing.

That genial peer, being a millionaire, could do very much as he liked, and he had brought his steam yacht, the Wanderer, into Los Angeles harbour, and had then wired us all in New York, urging us to come out.

Dorrie had, indeed, booked our sleeping berths for the entire journey, paying our fares as well. So we couldn't very well stay behind. All the fellows were eager and animated about the trip.

We had, indeed, only just started out on our long cross-country journey. It is a five-days' affair to get from New York to California, living on the train all the time. It is nearly as ambitious as a cross-Atlantic voyage, taking almost the same period of time.

The first stage is to get to Chicago, where one is compelled to change on to another railway—for there are no trains that go right through from coast to coast.

At Chicago, one can travel on the Santa Fe, or the Union Pacific, or other systems. The time is about the same whichever way. We had started from New York on a Friday, and were due in Los Angeles on Tuesday.

It was Friday evening, and we had been on the train since early afternoon. We had disposed of a very excellent dinner, wonderfully cooked and served, considering the limitations of the train kitchen.

"Well, bedtime soon," I remarked, as we left the table in the dining-car. "It's rather a rummy business, sleeping on these trains. Some of you fellows have never experienced it."

"Just the same as sleeping anywhere else, I suppose," said Owen major. "What's the difference? I can't exactly see where we shall sleep, but I suppose there must be some bedrooms somewhere."

I grinned.

"Each pullman coach is turned into a bedroom at night," I explained. "It looks like an ordinary railway carriage in the daytime, but it soon changes its character when these black porters get busy on the job."

There had been over a dozen of us in the dining-car—the rest of the Remove having either dined previously, or were belated. Most of them, I think, had been there before us.

"I've got an idea that we shall have a bit of a lively time before we settle down to sleep," I confided to Tommy Watson. "Handforth's in our carriage, and he's bound to make a fuss—particularly as he's got an upper berth."

"Oh, well, he always makes a fuss," said Watson. "We know him, and can't expect anything else."

"What's that?" said Edward Oswald Handforth, coming up behind.

The leader of Study D had been laying down the law in his usual manner ever since the train had started. He wasn't one of those adaptable persons who make the best of everything.

Anything new or uncommon in Handforth's experience generally aroused his ire. He seemed to think that these things were especially sent to try him. And he was never tired of voicing his disapproval.

One of the best in the world at heart, Handforth was what the Americans would call thoroughly English. If the thing deserved praise he would praise it; if it deserved condemnation, he would condemn it.

It didn't matter where he was, Handforth would always give a perfectly truthful criti-

cism. He wasn't out to please anybody. If a party of Americans took him to see one of their particularly special sights, Handforth wouldn't go into ecstasies over it unless he thought it deserved it.

In other words, Edward Oswald was not the kind of fellow who would praise a thing just to please his hosts. And because of this he was called "terribly English." To put it quite bluntly, he was straightforward. He was as true as a die, and was just simple John Blunt.

And there are certain people in America who don't like bluntness. They expect praise for everything, and if they don't get it they regard people as being antagonistic. America is a nation of boosters, and if visitors are not inclined to boost "God's own country," they are regarded with disfavour.

So it seemed quite likely that Handforth would not become very popular—unless everything happened to please him mightily.

But old Handy was made of the right stuff, and if people didn't like what he said, it didn't worry him. At the present moment, he entered the coach where his own berth was situated, and found that a great change had taken place.

When he had left it, accompanied by Church and McClure, it had been an ordinary pullman carriage, with plush seats on either side, and an aisle in the middle.

There now appeared to be nothing but the aisle left.

All the seats were curtained off on either side. The black porter, in fact, had been busy. He had prepared the coach for the night. The upper berths had been pulled down, the partitions had been placed in position, and the curtains hung. And now, all along, on both sides of the aisle, there were little sleeping compartments, something after the style of ships' bunks, and each bed made for the accommodation of one person—although two could sleep in each berth with ease, if necessary.

Dorrie could easily have booked berths so that two fellows occupied each, but he was a lavish individual, and had allowed them one apiece. Handforth opened his eyes a little wider as he entered the aisle, staggering slightly from side to side, owing to the jolting of the train.

"So this is how they do it!" he exclaimed. "H'm! Not so bad. I dare say we shall be pretty comfortable. Where's my giddy berth?"

"What's yo' number, sah?" asked the pullman porter, coming up and grinning.

"Number?" repeated Handforth. "What do you mean—number? Do you think I'm a prisoner or something?"

"He means the number of your berth," said Church. "If you've forgotten, it's No. 16. Mine's 15, and McClure's is 14."

Handforth was shown his own particular berth, and he gave another of his grunts when he found that it was an upper one. He looked into it and nodded.

"Of course, it's a dotty idea, sleeping up

here, but I suppose we've got to put up with a few things on the train. Who's underneath?"

"I am," said Church.

"Oh, are you?" snapped Handforth. "All right, my son—we'll change berths. And if you start objecting——"

"My dear ass, I don't care—you're welcome to it," said Church, with a grin. "I expect you'll get a draught from the window, anyhow."

Handforth sat on the edge of his bed, pushing the curtains aside. Then he commenced undressing. He removed his jacket and waistcoat, and was just unfastening his tie when two young ladies appeared from the end of the aisle, attired in silken kimonos. Handforth stared, gasped, and sat back.

"My goodness!" he gasped. "Those giddy girls have made a bloomer! They've come into the wrong carriage!"

The two young ladies proceeded to climb into two berths further up the aisle, and Handforth regarded this procedure with a kind of horror.

"Better tell 'em—quick!" he hissed to Church. "This ain't the ladies' sleeping quarters at all!"

"You—you ass!" breathed Church. "It's all the same—ladies and gentlemen occupy all these berths. Why, I believe there's a lady immediately opposite us here."

Handforth gave a gulp.

"My goodness!" he panted. "I've never heard of such a thing! I'll jolly well complain to the company! It's a pity if they can't make better arrangements than that in these modern times!"

"Say, young man, don't you think you'd best quit that dope?" asked a keen-faced young man, putting his head out of another berth.

"Eh?" said Handforth.

"You've got too much to say, kid!" said the stranger.

Handforth bristled. The man who had spoken was a travelling salesman, by his appearance, and the juniors had heard him boasting about his experiences in every quarter of the country, some time earlier.

"My hat!" said Handforth warmly. "I wasn't talking to you!"

"See here——"

"I'm seeing!" interrupted Handforth. "And if you butt into a conversation again, you'd better look out! I'm entitled to my opinion as much as anybody else! This is a free country—at least, you said it was not long ago, when you were talking about the way you made ten thousand dollars on a deal in Kentucky!"

The stranger gave Handforth one glare, and subsided into his berth. There was a look about Handforth's eye that was not very encouraging. When it came to bluster, the keen-faced salesman was all there, but he didn't quite like a fellow who was as direct as Handforth.

Of course, the leader of Study D was a famous grumbler. Even at St. Frank's, there

was very little to please him. But those who knew him took no notice of this, and liked him just the same.

His remarks concerning the American trains, and the sleeping accommodation thereon, were justified to a certain extent. These trains are beautifully equipped, and the service is really wonderful. The beds are far more comfortable than many on first-class ocean-going ships.

But, at the same time, there may be a little room for improvement regarding privacy, but as the majority of Americans care nothing for privacy, it probably suits them perfectly well. After all, these trains are made for the accommodation of Americans, and if English people don't like it, they've got to lump it.

By dint of many soothing words, Church and McClure succeeded in getting their candid leader into his berth. Once there he soon got to sleep, and after that the entire carriage settled down to a comfortable night's rest.

Most of the fellows were surprised to find how soundly they slept on the train. The majority of them did not awaken until close upon breakfast time the following morning. And by now the train was well on its way to Columbus, Ohio.

Ahead lay Indiana, with Chicago on the other side of that state, towards the north. There was very little in the country to attract attention—practically nothing of interest to see, or to note.

Most of the towns we passed through that morning were strikingly similar in appearance. One was almost an exact replica of the other, and almost inconceivable to anybody who has not been outside England.

The majority of these towns were insignificant places, although they were grandly dubbed as cities. Practically all the houses were of the frame variety—drab-looking wooden buildings, with unpicturesque verandahs.

Sometimes the train would pass straight down one of the main streets for a time, with the great bell on the engine clanging noisily. And none of the fellows could truthfully say that they were wonderfully impressed.

"My hat!" said Reggie Pitt. "No wonder the Americans go dotty when they pass through the English counties. There's something fresh to see almost every mile or so—nestling villages in the hollows—wooded hills, hedged country lanes, and all that sort of thing. But here it's nothing but sameness all the way along."

And Reggie was right.

There are, of course, many parts of the United States which are picturesque in the extreme—grand, indeed wonderful. But on the journey from New York to Chicago on the Pennsylvania Railroad, there is nothing much in the way of scenery.

So it won't be my business to give any description—because there's really nothing to describe. Chicago loomed out of the dis-

tance at last—a great city, with flourishing industries of all kinds.

We had passed through Pittsburgh in the night, and had seen very little of it, except for glares in the sky from sundry blast furnaces and smelting works. Chicago is different.

There are the great stockyards, of course, but it need not be supposed that Chicago is a city of stockyards. There are immense manufacturing works of every kind.

As the train went onwards, we passed through the suburbs, and soon found ourselves in the heart of the big city. And here it was almost a relief to see the paved streets and the solid brick houses and skyscrapers, and the electric street-cars.

At length we pulled into the station, and there was a great hustle and bustle as everybody prepared to alight.

Our tickets had all been examined, and we had been informed that there was a supply of motor-buses waiting to take us to the Santa Fe Station. And this bus ride was all included in the fare. Our tickets, by the way, were great long things, with numbers of different divisions. These were due to be torn off at the various points of our trip.

Nobody was greatly charmed with the Pennsylvania Station in Chicago.

Handforth, with his usual bluntness, declared that it looked like a goods yard. There were no platforms, and we were obliged to walk over various tracks on our way to the exit.

And here we found a little more life. There were officials here, who guided us where to go—who directed us towards the buses that would take us to the Santa Fe "depot."

But we did not go on these buses.

It was only a little after four o'clock, and so we had well over three hours before the California Limited was due to start on her long trip to the far West. We reckoned that we would have a look round Chicago while we had a chance.

CHAPTER II.

A GAME FOR THREE!



THE California Limited was almost due to start.

It was a few minutes before eight o'clock, and the beautifully appointed train stood in the station all ready for departure. It leaves Chicago daily at eight o'clock in the evening, bound for Los Angeles and San Diego—a trip which this train accomplishes straight through without any changing being necessary.

It is generally run in two sections, and sometimes three, or even more. At present, being summertime, only two sections were due to leave—the first at eight sharp, and the second fifteen minutes later.

The Remove was booked for the second

section, and so none of the fellows had turned up as yet. There was plenty of time.

The two trains stood side by side, one the replica of the other. They were both exceedingly long, and composed of perfectly equipped pullman coaches, many of them complete with drawing-rooms. In front, next to the enormous engines, there were library, lounge, and dining cars. And at the extreme end of each was the famous observation car.

This latter is quite a feature of American trains—particularly the Western trains. One may enter this just when one pleases, and sit down in the big, spacious armchairs, and look at the passing scenery at one's ease.

The end portion of this car—which is, of course, the extreme end of the train—there is an open section. It is a kind of platform, where folding chairs are placed. A comparatively low rail protects the passenger from falling off. But it would be perfectly easy for anybody to tip over on to the receding track, unless quite careful.

There were three very interesting persons on the California Limited this day.

They were travelling in the first section, and the first of these interesting persons was a bluff old gentleman with iron-grey hair and goatee beard—a typical American gentleman of the old school.

His name was Mr. Jefferson Parkes, and his ticket indicated that he was bound for Los Angeles. He was a very genial man to speak to, with a pronounced American method of speaking.

It would be very difficult to realise, unless positively convinced, that this old gentleman was really no less a person than Mr. Nelson Lee, the famous English criminologist.

But such was the case.

Nelson Lee was disguised with all his wonderful skill. If I had seen him just then, I would never have recognised him, although the gov'nor had trained me to penetrate all manner of disguises.

Needless to say, there was a reason for Lee's present get up.

Strictly speaking, he was supposed to be languishing in a New York hospital, badly wounded in the left lung. He had been shot by a couple of gunmen on Broadway, and had taken great care that the public should be deceived.

For Nelson Lee wanted his enemies to believe that he was badly winged, and utterly spent as a fighting force.

He was greatly interested in the activities of Mr. Simon Hawke and Mr. Al. Roker—the two other interesting persons who were on the train. They were not American crooks, as might be supposed, but English swindlers and tricksters with international records.

To be brief, they had stolen the title deeds to some valuable oil properties in the vicinity of Los Angeles. The game was worth millions to the two rascals, and they were intent upon pulling it off, and retiring for life.

Nelson Lee, on the other hand, was intent upon frustrating them.

He knew exactly what their plans were, and was fully aware of the fact that they carried the valuable documents on them. He could have had them arrested earlier if he had chosen—but there were many reasons why Nelson Lee should see this game through to the finish.

He knew that he could nab them just when he wished. And it was highly important that he should go through to Los Angeles, and effect their capture there—on the actual spot. He had first believed that the two men were planning to travel on the day following, and he had hoped to be in the big California City a day in advance.

But Messrs. Hawke and Roker had sprung a surprise. They had started on the Friday instead of the Saturday. Thus, they were

It will thus be seen that the situation was interesting.

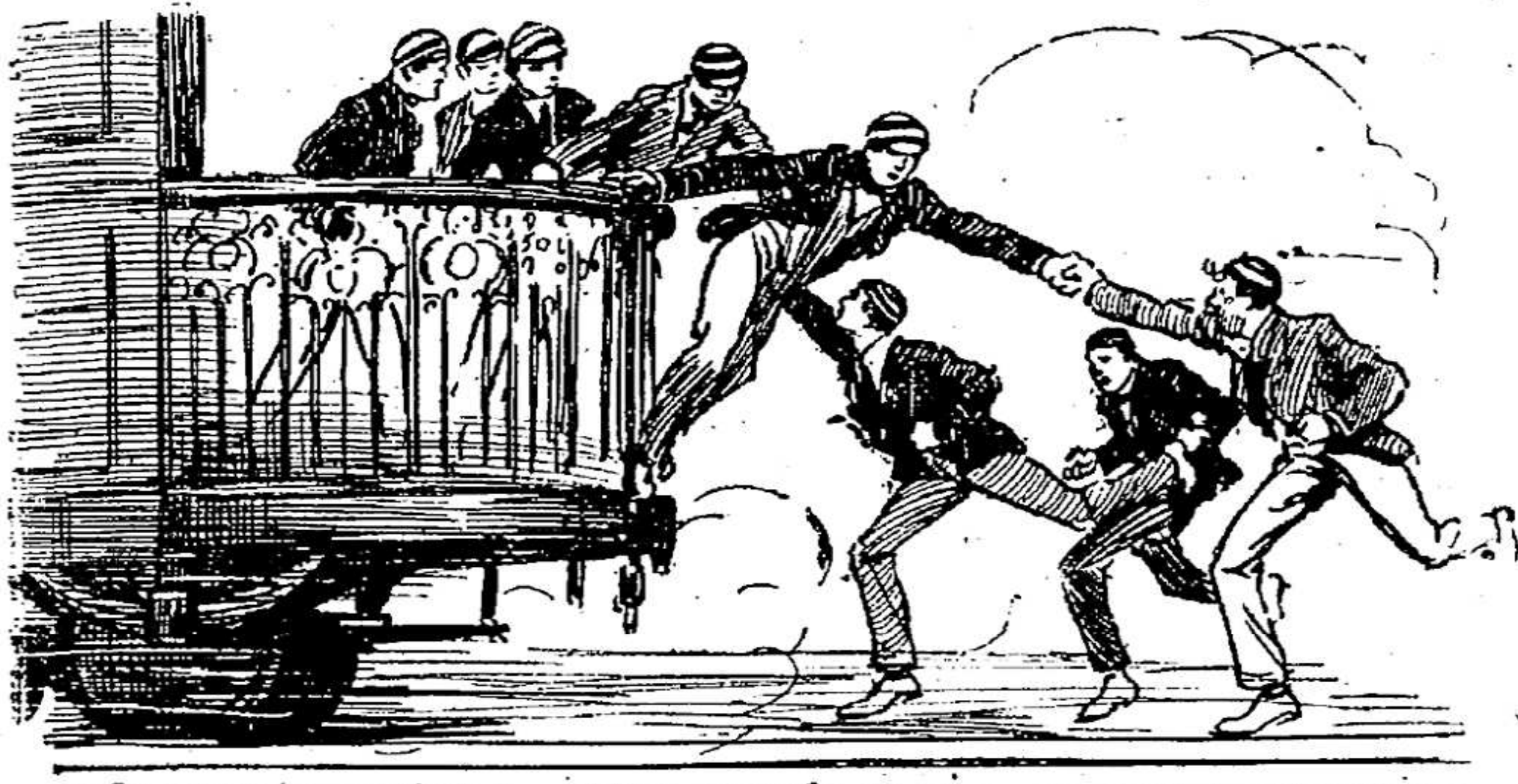
Nelson Lee, in spite of all his precautions, was known. But he believed that the enemy had no knowledge of his presence, and that he held all the trump cards—that the situation was entirely in his favour.

The opposite was the case.

It was Hawke and Roker who held the trump cards. For they knew Lee, and were fully determined that he should never reach Los Angeles.

That was the little game that was afoot when the California Limited was due to pull out on her long journey to the West.

Nelson Lee was sitting in his own private drawing-room, leisurely reading one of the Chicago newspapers. He was not worrying



Handforth and Co. ran as they had never run before. Five or six fellows had climbed on to the outside of the guarding rail, and were now crouching down with their hands outstretched. "Quick, or you'll be too late!" they gasped.

travelling on precisely the same train as Nelson Lee himself.

But Lee had complete faith in his disguise, and was certain that his presence was not suspected. Indeed, these men believed that he was away back in New York unconscious and helpless.

At least, that is what Lee supposed.

But Hawke and Roker knew better. They had an ally in New York—a certain crooked lawyer named Schultz. And this questionable gentleman had discovered, through one of his numerous spies, that Lee had actually left the city. And by means of graft—by bribery—Schultz had learned the full truth.

And he had wired to Simon Hawke, while the latter was on the train from New York to Chicago, the startling revelation that Lee was bound for Los Angeles at that very time, cleverly disguised, and using the name of Jefferson Parkes.

at all. Until Los Angeles was reached he could do nothing. He looked upon this trip as a little holiday, and meant to take a complete relaxation.

It was now Saturday, and Los Angeles would not be reached until mid-day on Tuesday. So he had nearly three days of rest in front of him. And it was rather amusing to think that the enemy was on the same train, unsuspecting and fully believing in their security.

In another private drawing-room—as these separate compartments are grandly termed—Mr. Simon Hawke and Mr. Al Roker were having a little heart-to-heart talk, so to speak.

"It's all very well for you to be comfortable, Hawke, but I'm not," Mr. Roker was saying, as he partook of a little illicit whisky from a brandy flask. "I don't like Lee being on this train."

"But I do," said Mr. Hawke, genially.

"You like it?"

"My dear Al, it's the very thing I've been chuckling about ever since we got the information through from Schultz," said Hawke. "Lee thinks he has the best of us—but we've got the best of him. If he ever gets to Los Angeles, it'll be a miracle."

"How can we prevent it?"

"There are plenty of ways," replied Hawke. "We can adopt any one of several little schemes in order to get rid of him. I have been thinking rather deeply on the subject, and I have come to the conclusion that there is nothing to beat the simple way."

"We thought it was the simple way to have him shot in New York—"

"Precisely, but we left that in the hands of other people," said Hawke. "In this life I have always found that one must do a thing one's self to have it accomplished thoroughly. And you can take it from me that we can deal with Lee in the very easiest manner possible."

"We can't shoot him again?"

"We could—but it wouldn't be advisable," said Mr. Hawke drily. "In fact, it would be distinctly foolish. But we can do something else, Al. These trains are admirably suited to our purpose."

"How do you mean?"

"I'm referring to the observation car," said Mr. Hawke significantly.

"The observation car?"

"Exactly."

"But I don't quite follow—"

"It seems to me, Al, that the American climate is dulling your wits," interrupted Hawke, with a show of impatience. "You are an excellent ally, but I fear that you would go to pieces if left to your own devices."

"Oh, cut out that foolery," growled Mr. Roker.

"It is necessary to be blunt now and again," smiled Mr. Hawke. "Here we are on a Santa Fe train with a most convenient observation car at the rear—a car with only a comparatively low rail for protection. At many points this train will speed along at fifty or sixty miles an hour. At night, when things are quiet, our chance is sure to come."

Mr. Roker started, and stared at his companion.

"Good Heavens!" he muttered. "You—you don't mean— You're not suggesting that we should pitch Lee overboard, are you?"

"That," nodded Mr. Hawke, "is the idea."

"But, man alive, it's too risky!" protested Roker. "We might be seen—and there's no guarantee that Lee will be killed! And I don't like the idea of committing—"

Al Roker paused, reluctant to say the word that was on his lips.

"Look here, Al!" said Hawke tensely, suddenly changing his bantering tone. "This game means millions to us—understand? Millions! And if you think I'm going to let

this infernal detective stand in our way, you've made a mistake! Lee has been bothering us ever since we were on that ship. He hasn't taken any decisive action yet; more fool him! Well, we're going to settle him once and for all now that we've got the chance."

"Yes, I can easily understand that something drastic is necessary," admitted Roker.

"I am glad that you appreciate the position, anyway," growled Hawke. "There are just two alternatives for us, old man. Either we get rid of Lee, and become millionaires—or we remain as hard up as ever, with the distinct possibility of going to prison for a most unpleasant number of years."

Roker's mouth grew hard.

"We'll settle with Lee, then!" he said thickly. "But I wish I could see how it's going to be done."

"Have a little patience, and you'll see all right," declared Mr. Hawke. "If we pitched Lee over the end of that observation car, head downwards, while the train is running at sixty miles an hour, I don't think there'll be much question about his decease. It's a thousand to one chance that he survives, even for a minute. The thing'll be instantaneous."

"Gosh! I believe you're right!" muttered Al.

"I know it," continued Hawke. "It'll be a very queer thing if we don't get the chance sooner or later. We've simply got to watch—keep our eyes on Lee constantly. The very first time we find him alone on the observation car at night, we'll act. And this little idea has a further supreme advantage."

"What's that?"

"My dear man, it's obvious," said Hawke. "When Lee's body is found on the line, there will be no question or thought of foul play. Anybody's liable to fall off that observation car. A man's only got to lean over a little too far, and he loses his balance. There will be no witnesses—no suggestion of crime. We shan't even be suspected by anybody on the train."

Roker's eyes gleamed. He could see that there was truth in every word that Hawke uttered. Roker did not possess his companion's deadly coolness—but when it came to an emergency, he was ready enough for work.

There would be a period of great anxiety while waiting for the opportunity—but, as Hawke had said, it was certain to come sooner or later. It was a long journey to Los Angeles, with three nights, at least. And during the course of that extended trip, the chance would arrive.

The position was improved by the fact that Nelson Lee would not be expecting any activity. For Nelson Lee laboured under the delusion that his presence on the train was unknown.

Certainly, the odds were in favour of the enemy.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE SECOND SECTION.



"ALL here?" I said briskly. "Yes, everybody—except Fatty Little," replied Pitt. "He'll be found in the station restaurant, so you needn't worry about that. We've got about eight minutes, so there's plenty of time."

The Remove had arrived at the Santa Fe station, in Chicago.

It was not a particularly imposing structure—very different from the palatial station in New York. The time was about six minutes past eight, and the first section of the California Limited had gone.

Thus, Hawke and Roker had no knowledge that the Remove was so near at hand—not that it would have made much difference, in any case.

Fatty Little was soon rounded up, and then there was a great show of tickets, and a few other formalities. As I was formally in charge of the party, I kept all the tickets myself, and it was as much as I could do to keep the crowd in order.

Numbers of interested spectators watched us go through the barrier. Chicago had not impressed the Remove very particularly. But the stay there had been so brief that it was really impossible to give any true opinion.

Most of the fellows decided that the city was noisy and very much on a par with New York. Nobody could get accustomed to the clattering, roaring overhead railroad. These great elevated steel structures—many of them running over the streets for miles—gave the city a gloomy, depressing effect. We had felt just the same about the New York Elevated.

And, on the whole, we were quite glad to get on the train.

The Remove had been doing a lot of walking about, and were tired. It was now past eight, and the first thing after getting on board the train would be—naturally—dinner.

The fellows were ready for it, being very hungry.

"My hat! This is a better train than the one we came on from New York," said Tommy Watson admiringly. "Good old Santa Fe! These carriages are ripping, and that observation car at the back is a wonderful idea."

"Rather!"

There had been no observation car on the Pennsylvania train, and all the juniors were making up their minds to be the first on the observation car on the following morning. It was quite a novelty, and the prospect was alluring.

Tommy Watson was quite right about the train.

The California Limited is, indeed, splendidly equipped, and we were further delighted by the fact that two complete pullman

coaches had been set aside for our special benefit.

We should not be mixed up with any other passengers, but would have the two cars for ourselves during the whole journey. And even before the train pulled out, we were in the dining car, hungrily examining the menu.

The food on the California Limited is supplied by the Fred Harvey organisation, and the service can only be described as perfect. On this train one can eat just as well as in the Trocadero.

Sharp to the minute, the second section of the California Limited pulled out. One or two of the fellows, out of curiosity, had taken a look at the locomotive before stepping into the train.

They got a surprise.

The engine was a staggering affair. Compared in size to the express locomotives on the English railways, this Santa Fe giant was almost overwhelming in its enormous bulk. Standing there, on the track, it seemed impossible that such a gigantic mass of metal and machinery could even cling to the track.

These engines are of the most powerful type in the world, and need to be—for the trains they haul are frequently of very great length and weight. And there are many steep and difficult gradients to be negotiated on the Western Railroads. On some sections of the track two of these giant engines, even, have to be employed. At night they carry a headlight of many thousand candle-power. One can see these searchlights for miles ahead. And on the blackest night they make the track almost as brilliant as day.

On the first section of the California Limited, for example, one may sometimes go out on the observation car at night and see the headlight of the second section gleaming in the rear. It sometimes seems quite close, owing to its brilliance, but is really many miles distant.

It was almost like travelling on a huge hotel in that train.

That night the Remove went to bed in real comfort. It was a great advantage to have these two pullman cars to ourselves. Each coach was more or less of a dormitory.

But the fellows did not get up to many games.

They were rather tired, and were only too glad to get into bed, and there was something rather lulling about the motion of the train. After darkness has fallen, one does not have much to do on these trips.

And the juniors wanted to be up with the lark, so to speak—so that they could take note of the scenery as they continued on their journey right across the United States.

The route itself seemed to be a fascinating one—through a portion of Missouri, right across the State of Kansas, into Colorado, and then south to New Mexico, and so on westward through Arizona to California.

And none of the youthful travellers wanted to miss the sights

One or two fellows, certainly, went out on the observation car after dinner, but there was nothing to be seen. The car was brightly illuminated with electric—even outside, on the open platform. And it is extremely pleasant sitting on this part of the car listening to the rhythmic tune of the wheels.

But it is far better by daylight, when one can see the surrounding country. And on the following morning quite a crowd of fellows got out there early. Handforth and Co. were among the first.

There had been all sorts of scrambles in the dressing-rooms, many of the juniors having to wait in line, in order to use the wash-basins. But Handforth and Co. were lucky enough to have been amongst the first batch.

"Doesn't seem to be much scenery!" remarked Handforth, as he gazed round. "I can't see any mountains, or prairie, or anything!"

"I heard that we don't get much real scenery until to-morrow," said Church. "To-morrow we shall be well into New Mexico, and there's plenty of desert there, I understand."

"Desert!" sniffed Handforth. "Call that scenery?"

"Well, it's jolly nice out here," declared McClure, as he settled himself in one of the folding chairs. "It's a bit novel to see the track rushing away from the end of the train like this."

Handforth walked about the wide platform quite carelessly, although the rail was by no means high. But there is really very little danger unless one is deliberately on the lookout for trouble.

At about nine o'clock the train arrived in Kansas City.

The first section had left only a few minutes before, but we didn't know anything about this at the time. Kansas City proved to be quite a large town, and there were many signs of much activity. It is practically the metropolis of the Missouri Valley, and is a great railroad centre.

Quite a number of the passengers got off the train in order to stretch their legs, for we stopped there about fifteen minutes, then pulled out, and continued our journey towards Topeka, the next important stop. By night we were scheduled to be at a place called La Junta, in Colorado. This meant that for the whole period of daylight we should be travelling through the State of Kansas.

Having started off from Kansas City, and breakfast being over, the Remove settled itself down to indulge in an orgy of sight-seeing. The fellows all wanted to be on the observation car, or at the windows, gazing at the passing scenery.

They were greatly disappointed.

For there wasn't any—at least, nothing that could truthfully be called scenery. The monotony of that morning was rather appal-

ling. The journey, indeed, became absolutely tedious.

For Kansas State is flat—flat and uninteresting, and atrociously hot and dusty. The Remove, expecting to see some wonderful sights, saw nothing but flat agricultural country stretching out as far as the eye could see—as far as the distant haze in every direction.

At intervals the train would pass through a town or a city. They were astonishingly alike. Just a dump of frame houses set down in a straggling array on the flat surface of the great plain.

And each city was just as drab as its next-door neighbour. As Reggie Pitt remarked, we couldn't exist in a place like that for more than a month. There was nothing to see, and nothing to interest one, and nowhere to go. It was the most monotonous part of the world the fellows had ever seen.

And it continued the same, hour after hour. Having passed through Topeka, the country remained unaltered—and, indeed, was due to continue so throughout the rest of the day.

One could go to sleep for a couple of hours, wake up, and find precisely the same vista in front of them.

At one o'clock, or approximately that time, the train halted at the city of Emporia, the county seat of Lyon County. The station itself was not so bad, but the surrounding country was no better than the rest.

And at close upon four o'clock the train reached Newton. It remained here for ten minutes, and most of the Remove fellows were only too glad to get out in order to stretch their legs. Quite a number of other passengers did so, too.

The heat was oppressive. It was July, and Kansas State was simply sweltering under the broiling sun. At the same time, it was a relief to be off the train for a bit, in order to take a little exercise.

Fatty Little, of course, made a bee-line for the station restaurant, or lunch counter. It is never called refreshment-room in America. On some trains all the passengers take their meals in these places, being compelled to scramble somewhat in order to satisfy their appetites at the various stops.

But on the California, Limited, we had our dining-car, and it was not necessary to seek food elsewhere. But, lunch having been over for some hours, and dinner not being scheduled for another two, Fatty took advantage of the shining hour.

He wasn't even missed by the other fellows.

Handforth and Co. strolled up the platform, and Edward Oswald was inclined to be very curious. There were some buildings across the street that caught his attention.

"Come on, we'll have a look at this place," he said briskly. "Might as well see all we can now we're here. Personally, I think this part of America is pretty awful, but we've got to make the best of it."

Church and McClure were doubtful.

"Better not leave the platform," said Church.

"Why not? We've got seven or eight minutes yet."

"What if the train starts?"

Handforth stared.

"You ass!" he said witheringly. "Do you think they'd dare to start without us? Why, even if we're five minutes late they'll wait! There'd be a pretty big pile of trouble if the train pulled out without us."

"There would!" said McClure, with conviction.

Handforth's chums were not very keen upon accompanying him. But there was really nothing else for it—because they wanted to make sure that he returned in time. And they wandered out into the main street.

In the meantime, Fatty Little was making hay while the sun shone.

He heard one or two bails after a while, but took very little notice. Then Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey and Bob Christine rushed in.

"You—you glutton!" shouted Pitt.

"Just a minute," said Fatty hastily. "I've only got to finish these sandwiches, and this piece of pie, and——"

"You'll finish nothing!" snapped Christine. "The train's just off!"

"But I'm so hungry!" protested Fatty. "Great doughnuts! I've hardly had a chance to start yet! They might give a chap time to get a bit of grub into him!"

The man behind the lunch-counter gave a kind of gulp.

"Gee whizz!" he ejaculated. "Say, this guy is sure the doggone limit when it comes to feeding! I guess he's cleaned up pretty good! The things he ain't eaten ain't worth mentioning! I've seen a few hungry folks in my time, but this guy beats the lot!"

Fatty glared.

"I've only just started——" he began warmly.

"And this is where you finish!" interrupted Pitt, with a grim note in his voice.

Fatty was yanked off his seat by sheer force, and he was whirled out of the restaurant, bundled across the platform, and just managed to get into the train a second or two before it started.

The members of the train crew had been shouting "All aboard!" for some few moments, and everybody appeared to have heeded the advice. Only one or two officials stood on the track, idly looking at the moving train.

"Where's Handforth?" demanded Tommy Watson suddenly.

"Eh? Isn't he on board?" I asked.

"I saw him going off towards the street five minutes ago," replied Watson. "I hope to goodness the ass hasn't got himself left behind! Church and McClure were with him——"

"Great Scott!" shouted somebody. "Handforth and Co. ain't on board?"

"What!"



Even as Nelson Lee was springing to his feet, Mr. Hawke flung himself forward. Roker did exactly the same at the precise second. They seized Lee, and gave him one tremendous, violent lurch towards the low rail.

Those juniors who were nearest the observation car made a rush for it, and succeeded in getting out on to the platform. They looked round anxiously. And at that moment Handforth and Co. came into sight.

"Hi! Stop!" howled Handforth wildly.

He and his chums, just outside the station limits, had been rather startled to hear the clanging of the engine-bell. Glancing round carelessly, Handy had nearly fallen in a fit when he saw the train slowly moving out.

"We're left behind!" he gasped dazedly.

"Didn't I say so?" panted Church.

"Come on—quick! We might just be able to catch up if we're sharp! If we don't get aboard, goodness knows what'll happen! There's probably no other train until tomorrow."

For once Handforth didn't argue.

He ran like mad, with Church and McClure at his heels. Arriving on the tracks, they saw the train just ahead of them, still moving slowly—for these trains are so heavy that they never gather much speed during the first minute.

On the observation car a number of juniors were yelling encouragement.

And Handforth and Co., running with all their energy, were gaining—overtaking that last coach slowly but surely.

"Buck up!" roared Pitt. "You'll do it, my sons!"

"Go it, ye cripples!"

"Put your best foot foremost!"

Handforth and Co. ran as they had never run before. Five or six fellows had climbed on to the outside of the guarding-rail, and

were now crouching down, with their hands outstretched.

"Quick—or you'll be too late!" they gasped.

Handforth and Co. came up in a bunch, and only in the nick of time.

For the train was now gathering speed, and within another few seconds would be beyond reach of Handforth and Co. for good. But those outstretched hands of the juniors clinging to the observation car were the deciding factor in the case.

The chums of Study D grabbed hold, were seized, and literally yanked along. Puffing, gasping, and exhausted, they were hauled up, and dumped into a heap on the floor of the observation car.

"My goodness!" panted De Valerie. "That was a narrow shave!"

"The fathead!" said Christine. "I thought Fatty was the only idiot! There would have been awful trouble if these lunatics had been left behind."

Handforth slowly sat up. He was smothered with dust, and streaming with perspiration. The strenuous exercise in such great heat, had made his face as red as a beetroot.

"You—you rotters!" he said thickly—and ungraciously.

"What?"

"Why didn't you tell me the train was going?" demanded Handforth.

"Well, that's rather rich!" said Owen Major. "It's a pity you couldn't keep your eye on the giddy train! You ought to thank your stars you're on board at all—we only just managed it!"

"He needs a keeper!" gasped Church, as he got to his feet. "We told him all the time what would happen, and he wouldn't listen! He seems to think the whole railway company will wait for him!"

"Dear, dear!" observed Timothy Tucker, gazing down at Handforth and Co. through his big spectacles. "Most distressing. Allow me to point out, my dear sirs, that such exercise on a hot day is decidedly the reverse of beneficial! Absolutely! Let me give you some valuable advice, my dear Handforth—"

"Go away, face!" said Handforth rudely.

"What? What? Are you addressing me, my dear sir?" asked Tucker in his mildest voice. "How dare you? Kindly allow me to point out that your remarks are decidedly uncomplimentary. You need to be calm, my dear sir! Let us discuss some soothing subject—as, for example, the Domestic Policy of the Ancient Peruvians! Most interesting—most interesting!"

Handforth got fully to his feet, and pushed his fist into Timothy Tucker's face.

"See that?" he asked pointedly.

"Absolutely!" said T. T. "Dear, dear! What is the idea, my dear sir?"

"Any more of your dotty piffle, and you'll get this in your eye!" said Handy. "I'm blessed if I know why you were brought

along! It's a pity they couldn't leave all the freaks behind!"

"Quite so!" said Tucker. "Quite so! You must permit me to point out, my dear sir, that one freak was nearly left behind a few moments ago!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's one for you, Handy!" grinned Pitt. "T. T. is not such a duffer as he looks, you know—and he can generally give as good as he receives. Well, you're all on board, so there's nothing more to worry about."

"Isn't there?" demanded Handforth. "I'm jolly well going to write to the railway company about this! The awful nerve! Deliberately tried to leave me behind!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth failed to get any sympathy, and at last he stormed into the train, in order to seek a good wash and a change of attire. Church and McClure followed his example.

The chums of Study D were not likely to be late a second time!

CHAPTER IV.

MR. HAWKE ACTS—SO DOES NELSON LEE!



CLICKETY - CLICK!
Clickety-click!

It was night, and the California Limited, section No. 1, was making good time on the long stretch between La Junta, Colorado, and Albuquerque, New Mexico. It was just after eleven-thirty, and the train had left La Junta half an hour before.

The next stop was at about one o'clock, at a moderately-sized town of the name of Trinidad.

Mr. Jefferson Parkes, alias Nelson Lee, was enjoying a final cigar in the cool air outside—on the platform of the observation car. He was quite alone, for practically all the other passengers had retired.

The noise of the wheels, as they clicked over the alternate joins of the rails formed a kind of soothing lullaby, and Nelson Lee lay back, musing over the case he was engaged upon.

The click on these American trains is quite different from the sound on the railways at home. The chief reason for that is that the rails themselves are shorter, and laid differently. The joins of the two rails are never opposite, as in England, but alternate.

Nelson Lee, for all his astuteness, was still unaware of the fact that the enemy knew him. He believed that his disguise was sufficiently good to completely deceive Mr. Hawke and Mr. Roker.

And, indeed, it was.

But for that warning telegram, the rascals would never have suspected this staid-looking old gentleman with the goatee beard.

This was the second night out from Chicago. The rascals had no opportunity on the previous night—but now it seemed

that Nelson Lee had deliberately made one. He was there, on the observation car—alone. And, moreover, he was unsuspecting. It was his usual custom to remain up later than other people, and he always enjoyed a final smoke before turning in. The heat had been very oppressive all day, and even now there was not much relief.

Mr. Hawke was well named. He had been watching Nelson Lee with a very acute eye, but had not allowed the detective to be aware of this fact. Hawke was a clever rogue, and knew his business well.

At the present moment he was hurrying along one of the corridors of the train two coaches from the end. And he entered one of the private drawing-rooms hurriedly.

Mr. Al Roker was within, just preparing to undress.

"Wait a minute!" exclaimed Hawke sharply. "Our chance has come."

"Well!"

"Lee's outside on the observation car."

"Alone?"

"Yes."

"But do you think—is it worth the risk?" Roker broke off, and gave a kind of

gulp. "Look here, Hawke, it's too dangerous!" he went on huskily. "I've been thinking it over, and—"

"You—you skunk!" snarled Hawke contemptuously. "Are you going to fail me at the last minute? You know very well that I can't do it alone. Lee's a powerful man, and he's bigger than I am. There must be two of us!"

Roker gulped again. He had not been expecting anything of this sort to-night. He had, indeed, just congratulated himself upon the fact that another day had gone by, and the chances of putting the evil scheme into execution were lessening.

For, privately, Roker didn't approve. He badly wanted to share in that big fortune, but he wasn't the type of man that can take part in a cold-blooded murder. He was hoping against hope that Hawke would not be able to materialise his plans. And this sudden summons had come as a big shock.

But there was one way of forcing Roker to act—and that was to jibe at him.

"You're nothing but a confounded coward!" said Hawke, his voice filled with scorn. "You want to share this money, but you don't care to take any of the risks! By Heaven! I'll finish with you for good, and all unless you help me now! You cur! Leaving me in the lurch—"

"Don't be a fool!" interrupted Roker harshly. "It's not that! I'll help you if you want me to; but it seems to be a mad idea now that it has come to the actual thing—"

"You've lost your nerve—eh?" sneered Hawke. "Cold feet—that's your trouble!"

Roker swore.

"I'll show you whether I've got cold feet!" he said tensely.

He whipped his cap off the bed, and

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jammed it on his head. Then he made for the door. Hawke, with his eyes gleaming, followed. He had been with Roker quite long enough to know the man's ways. Al was worked up now, and would prove to be an efficient assistant.

The two men, bent upon one of the most dreadful errands imaginable, passed along the corridor. They soon arrived in the Observation Car. The interior was brightly illuminated with electric lights, and it was quite deserted. It was a big lounge, with easy chairs lining both the sides. At one end there was a neat writing desk, with pen, ink, paper, and envelopes—very much the same as one will find in the reading-room of an ocean liner.

A door at the end led out on to the open platform, which was also well illuminated. Not a soul was within sight except that one solitary passenger lounging in the folding chair on the outer platform.

"It's got to be quick work—over in a flash!" said Mr. Hawke, in a low voice, as they paused for a moment.

"All right!" said Roker grimly.

"We didn't pass anybody out there in the corridor, and there's no chance of an interruption," went on Hawke. "It'll be over so rapidly that you won't know it. And the train's making sixty, if she's doing any at all. He'll just disappear, that's all! Head downwards, don't forget!"

Both the men were worked up, and their hearts were beating rapidly as they pulled open the door. If they had had time to think more deeply they might have hesitated.

For it was a diabolical thing they contemplated doing.

Everything was in their favour. Nelson

Lee had even pulled his chair slightly forward, so that it was possible to suddenly seize him from behind, and give him one swift push towards the rail. He would go over before he had any possible chance of grappling.

The detective glanced round as he heard the door open.

His look was just one of mild interest, and there was no sign of recognition in his eyes. But that one glance gave him an instantaneous warning. He had just one second to prepare himself.

Lee was a man who had had experience with criminals of all types, and he had dealt with desperate men in every kind of mood. And in that flash he read murder in the eyes of Simon Hawke.

And there was a kind of desperate ferocity in Roker's eyes, too—not the same cold-blooded intensity as his companion.

But Lee knew that vital action was necessary.

In that swift second he knew, also, that these men had penetrated his disguise in some way. There was no question about giving himself away by taking action. They knew—they knew!

Even as Nelson Lee was springing to his feet, Mr. Hawke flung himself forward. Roker did exactly the same at the precise second. They seized Lee, and gave him one tremendous, violent lurch towards the low rail.

It was touch and go.

Unprepared, Lee would have pitched overboard without the slightest chance to save himself. He would have crashed head downwards upon the track, with the absolute certainty of meeting instant death.

The train was going at full speed, making its best time. And, meeting the stony track head downwards, no human being on earth would have stood the faintest chance of alighting without fatal injury.

But Lee had tensed himself to the possible.

He had not had sufficient time to dodge, or to actually resist the attack. But he certainly had had time to tighten his muscles. As a result, he pitched forward, but there was that resistance in his body that just meant the difference between life and death.

Instead of plunging over to instant doom, he managed to clutch at the rail, and pull himself up in the nick of time. Then, with one instantaneous movement, he twirled round, and faced his attackers. His blood was up, his eyes were gleaming, and his fists were clenched.

All disguise was at an end—all pretence dropped. And Nelson Lee boiled with an intense fury. He had known these men to be bad, but he had hardly credited them with such atrocious villainy.

"You murderous curs!" he shouted.

Crash!

As he spoke, Lee acted. His left fist

plunged out, and struck Hawke in the neck. The man staggered back with a grunting cry, and nearly lost his balance. But he was as wiry as nails, and recovered. His blood was up, too, and he was in a state of deadly fright.

"Quick, Al!" he panted. "Pitch him over!"

Roker, too, was startled. The failure of their first attempt had shaken both the men to their very cores. The whole success of this dastardly scheme had depended upon its swiftness.

But, having started, they had to continue.

The only thing to do was to fight Nelson Lee, and to throw him over. It was too late now to draw back—the only thing was to continue. For, having failed at first, it would mean dreadful things if they failed altogether.

For they had shown their hand—they had revealed their trump card.

They sprang at Lee like a pair of maddened tigers.

"All right; I'm ready!" panted Lee serenely. "Oh, no, my friends! You can't do it now; your chance has gone! That one upward glance saved me, and you'll never succeed now that I am on the alert."

It infuriated his attackers more to hear him talking in that calm, matter-of-fact tone whilst fighting all the time. For Lee was hitting out right and left, beating off the men with success.

But this was no fair fight, no pretty boxing contest.

With a snarl of frustrated fury, Hawke kicked with every ounce of his strength. If his heavy shoe had struck Lee on the shin squarely, the detective would have crumpled up on the spot.

But he divined Hawke's intention, and half dodged. The blow only struck him glancingly, but it was severe enough, nevertheless. He gave an involuntary gasp, and lurched sideways.

The next second the pair seized their chance.

They closed in, and grappled with Lee. It was a wrestle now—not a fight. The two men clung to Lee, panting, gasping, and using every ounce of their strength. They were striving with might and main to drag him to the rail, so that they could pitch him clean over.

Indeed, for a short time, Lee's life hung in the balance.

Both Hawke and Roker were powerful, and they were utterly desperate. They fought like maniacs in order to gain their object. But Lee was fighting for his very life, and his strength was equal to that of the two.

He resisted. At the very edge of the rail, and even when he was being pressed back further and further, he was victorious. Inch by inch he fought his way to a position of greater safety, his muscles as taut as whipcord.

And then, at that crucial moment, a man in uniform appeared.

He was the guard, and he had probably come to the end of the train to see that everything was in order—the lights burning correctly, and so forth. The man pulled open the door, and then gave a startled exclamation.

What he saw was enough to surprise anybody.

Three men were struggling with deadly desperation—two of them doing their utmost to pitch the third overboard from the train. He didn't hesitate. He gave one shout, and dashed forward.

"By gosh!" he exclaimed. "What the heck's all this?"

Crash!

His fist—a fist of great brawn—struck Mr. Hawke on the side of the head with a thud that caused that gentleman to lose nearly all interest in the proceedings. He sagged at the knees, and his grip relaxed.

Roker backed away, panting and sobbing for breath. His face was as pale as chalk, although the perspiration streamed down it.

"By glory!" he muttered. "We've failed!"

If there was any tone in his voice at all, it was a tone of utter hopelessness. Exactly as he had warned Hawke, the worst had happened. They had failed, and discovery had come.

"Thanks, guard!" said Lee breathlessly. "It was a near thing! They almost got me!"

"The infernal scum!" snapped the guard. "Gee! What's the big idea? Trying to croak you, or what?"

Further conversation was rather difficult, for Roker made an attempt to dash through the doorway, and into the train. He was seized by the scruff of the neck, and pulled up short.

And Nelson Lee and the guard had a few lively minutes whilst they tied Hawke and Roker together. Their task would have been more difficult if Hawke had been active. But he was still dazed from that terrific blow.

Lee had produced some thick cord, and the men were tied back to back by their wrists.

"Yes, they tried to croak me, as you picturesquely term it," exclaimed Nelson Lee, at length. "They nearly had me over, too. And I don't think I should have had much chance if I had struck the track with the train going at this speed."

The official looked at Lee curiously.

"Say, sir, you don't seem kind o' right to me," he said slowly. "Didn't I have a chat with you earlier in the evening?"

"I believe so."

"Well, I figured you were from the South," went on the guard. "Guess I've met most kinds in my time, and you talk



Red lights were gleaming in the distance, waving to and fro. Quickly the fireman commenced tolling the big bell, and hooting the powerful siren.

like a gentleman from Louisiana. But now you've got a kind of English accent."

Nelson Lee smiled.

"Considering that I am English that is hardly surprising," replied Lee drily.

His goatee beard was decidedly askew, and this had caused Mr. Guard additional surprise.

"I don't get you, sir," he said bluntly.

"No; but the behaviour of these two men will probably enlighten you as to the position," said Nelson Lee. "They are very well known crooks—both in Europe and America. My name is Nelson Lee, and I am a private detective by profession. I was under the impression that these fellows did not know me, but my vanity has received a slight jar. And my beard, I fear, has received a somewhat heavier one."

The guard grinned.

"You said it, sir," he observed. "Gee! So you're Mr. Nelson Lee? Why, I've surely heard of you, Mr. Lee. Proud to meet you, sir. Glad to have been of assistance, too. These guys deserve lynching, sure!"

"You infernal fool!" panted Hawke. "You've got it all wrong! This man is an escaped lunatic, and we were guarding him—"

"Tried to throw himself off the train, and you were kindly saving him—eh?" interrupted the guard grimly. "Say, you'd best quit that bunk, my lad! The less you say the better. You'll be handed over to the sheriff of the first city we hit! We don't carry scum on this train!"

CHAPTER V.

NOT WANTED!



"THIS," said Archie Glenthorne, "is rather priceless!"

"Best time of the day," declared Reggie Pitt. "There's nothing like being up bright and early in the morning—particularly in this hot part of the world."

On the second section of the California Limited several juniors were out on the Observation Car—although the time was only just five-thirty in the morning. Quite a number of fellows had got up at five o'clock.

Having gone to bed in the neighbourhood of eight or nine, they couldn't very well sleep much longer, and as it was a beautiful morning, quite cool before the sun gained power, it was an ideal time to be out.

The train was due to arrive at a place called Las Vegas soon after five-thirty, but it probably wouldn't get in until six, being a little late. But, considering the length of the journey, this was very excusable.

It was really five minutes to six when the train slowed down. Pitt, leaning over the side of the Observation Car, gave a little whistle. There was another long train standing in the station, just ahead.

"By Jove!" said Reggie. "We've caught up with the first section, I believe!"

There was some excitement at once. Anything out of the common was quite interesting, and fellows crowded round, looking ahead.

"Yes, it's the first section all right," I said. "We shall be able to stop here, and stretch our legs, too."

At the same time, I was wondering what effect this would have on Nelson Lee's plans. The guv'nor, as I well knew, was on the first part of the train, and he was disguised, too. He might not welcome the fact that the Remove was so near at hand.

But he would have to make the best of it.

It could hardly be expected that the juniors would keep on the train all the time, without showing themselves.

Besides, it couldn't do any harm.

Our train came to a halt, and it did not take the juniors long to jump down. Las Vegas was a comparatively small place, and was very quiet and still at this early hour of the morning. Nobody

was about except one or two railway officials.

We saw no sign whatever of any of the passengers.

The hour being only just in the neighbourhood of six o'clock, the staid and sedate people were still in their beds. Only the juniors were up at such an hour.

Thus, nobody was about, except railway officials and the St. Frank's boys.

I jumped down, and saw that the first train of the California Limited was standing on the tracks just next to our own section. And a group of train officials were standing there, talking to a man in flannels.

And I stared hard when I recognised Nelson Lee.

"The guv'nor!" I muttered, amazed.

For Nelson Lee was wearing no disguise—he was just himself. Tall, upright, looking in the best of health, and talking animatedly with the train man. I hurried up to him at once.

For, seeing that he had abandoned his make up, it occurred to me that secrecy was no longer necessary.

"I was expecting you to show yourself, Nipper," said Nelson Lee drily as I approached. "Well done, my lad! For once in your life you have got out of bed at a reasonable hour."

"Jolly glad to see you, sir," I said enthusiastically. "Just fancy! The last time we met it was in New York, and here we are in New Mexico! We've travelled a bit during the last few days, sir."

"Yes, we certainly have," agreed Lee. "Hallo! I observe that a number of other boys are early risers, too. Well, well! And what do you expect now?"

"What's happened, sir?" I asked eagerly. "Why have you killed Mr. Jefferson Parkes, as it were?"

Lee took me just a little aside.

"Hawke and Roker were on this train with me," he explained.

"What!"

"And they very considerably attempted to throw me overboard during the night," went on the guv'nor. "Obviously, they failed—and the precious pair are now languishing in one of the drawing-rooms—securely bound, and awaiting the arrival of the sheriff."

"My goodness!" I exclaimed. "Things have been happening!"

"Personally, I would prefer to take the men farther on—all the way to Los Angeles," continued Lee. "But the railway officials are not very enthusiastic about that suggestion."

Nelson Lee was obliged to turn away from me at this point, for two men came hurrying up from the station buildings. It will be understood that there were no platforms whatever at any of these American railroad stations.

(Continued on page 15)

READ OUR POWERFUL NEW NELSON LEE SERIAL!



CONTAINS THE VERY BEST DETECTIVE STORIES.

OUR DETECTIVE STORY SECTION

No. 36.

PRESENTED WITH "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY." August 11, 1923.



THE SILVER DWARF



In this amazingly clever detective story, NELSON LEE is matched against the brains and subtle skill of Professor Mark Rymer, an exceedingly dangerous type of intellectual criminal—inhuman, crafty, resourceful and daring.

FOR NEW READERS.

If the rascally cousin of the late Lord Easington, Professor Mark Rymer, can destroy certain documents hidden inside the silver effigy, known as the Silver Dwarf, he will inherit his cousin's title and wealth. There is a son living by a secret marriage of the late peer, evidence of which is contained in the documents aforementioned. So far, the Silver Dwarf has eluded the clutching fingers of the unscrupulous professor. Nelson Lee, who is determined to frustrate Rymer's evil designs, is also in quest of the effigy. Owing to a fire at the late peer's house, the effigy is lost. News comes of its having been taken to Paris, and thither Rymer proceeds, followed by Nelson Lee on his heels. The detective traces the effigy to Spain, and after some exciting adventures, during which he is kidnapped and imprisoned by Rymer, and makes his escape, the detective discovers that the Silver Dwarf has been sold to a tribal chief in Algeria—the Kaid of Kelelin. Lee goes to Algeria and interviews the Kaid. When approached about the Silver Dwarf, the Kaid becomes annoyed and orders Lee to be shot.

(Now read on.)

THE BASHA OF TETUAN.

IT has already been explained how Nelson Lee, at the same instant as he hurled the bomb at the fountain, flung himself flat on his face.

Thanks to this timely manœuvre, he escaped from the fate which overtook the Kaid and his four retainers; and almost before the echoes of the explosion had died away the detective leaped to his feet again, and darted through the passage which led from the courtyard into the street.

Alarmed by the roar of the explosion, men and women swarmed out of their cottages like bees out of a hive. Some of them, catching sight of Nelson Lee, attempted to bar his progress, and one man even went so far as to pluck a pistol from his belt and fire point-blank into the detective's face. Luckily, the bullet merely grazed his cheek, and before the Moor could fire again, the detective felled him to the ground with a blow between the eyes.

Eventually, after several narrow escapes of being captured, the detective reached the spot where he and Hassan had left their horses. By that time Hassan had unhobbled the beasts, and was in the act of riding away, leading the detective's horse by the

bridle. Upon seeing Nelson Lee he hastily dismounted; but at a sign from the detective he sprang back into his saddle again.

"How far are we from Tetuan?" panted Nelson Lee, as he vaulted on to his horse's back.

"About six miles," replied the guide.

"Do you know the road?"

"Yes, Excellency."

"Then lead the way, and ride for your life!"

Hassan needed no second bidding, but promptly put spurs to his horse and dashed away, with Nelson Lee at his elbow. Before they had covered half a mile, a score of armed and mounted Moors, with the Kaid at their head, streamed out of the village in hot and furious pursuit. But half a mile in a six-miles' race is a serviceable start, and when at last the white walls of the little seaport town of Tetuan came in sight, the Moors were still five hundred yards or more in the rear.

"They'll never catch us now!" said Nelson Lee exultingly.

"They will not try, your Excellency," said Hassan. "The Kaid is a bold man, but he will not dare to venture into Tetuan. See! Already they are slackening speed."

The detective glanced back over his shoulder, and saw that the guide had spoken the truth. The Kaid and his followers had pulled up their steaming horses, and a moment or two later they wheeled round in a body and rode back in the direction of Kelelin.

A quarter of an hour later the detective and his guide rode through the quaint arched gateway of the little town, and dismounted at the door of the British vice-consulate.

"Proud to make your acquaintance!" said the consul, when Nelson Lee had introduced himself. "What can I do for you?"

The detective rapidly narrated his strange and perilous adventures.

"I have come to you," he said, in conclusion, "in the hope that you may be able to suggest some way of persuading the Kaid to sell me the Silver Dwarf. Of course, I am quite aware that he cannot be compelled to part with it unless he chooses, for he has bought it in a perfectly legitimate manner, and consequently he has a legal right to stick to it if he wishes."

"Legal right!" said the consul, with a laugh. "My dear sir, we are not in England! We are in Morocco, where legal right is an empty phrase. If you and I are Moors, and you have something which I want, I take it from you by force if I am strong enough; and if I am not strong enough to take it from you by force, I bribe the Government to take it from you and hand it over to me. If I am neither strong enough to take it from you by force, nor rich enough to bribe the Government—why, I have to do without it. That's the law of legal right as practised in Morocco!"

"A convenient law for the rich and

strong," said Nelson Lee; "but a mightily inconvenient law for the poor and weak."

"True," said the consul; "but I do not think you need have any scruples about applying it to the Kaid of Kelelin. Of course, if you wish, I will make a formal complaint to the Basha about the way the Kaid threatened to murder you. But you can take my word for it that nothing will come of the complaint. The Kaid may possibly receive a mild reprimand, but you won't get any compensation, and you certainly won't get your so-called Silver Dwarf."

"Then what do you advise me to do?" asked Nelson Lee.

The consul answered his question with another.

"Is the Silver Dwarf worth fifty pounds to you?" he asked.

"It is worth five thousand!" said the detective.

"Good! Then you wouldn't mind giving fifty pounds to get it back?"

"I would give five hundred."

"Have you fifty pounds with you?"

"Yes."

The consul consulted his watch.

"It is too late to see the Basha to-day," he said. "Come to my office at ten o'clock to-morrow morning. Bring the fifty pounds with you, and leave the rest to me!"

Somewhat mystified by the consul's words, the detective took his departure, paid and dismissed his guide, and engaged a bed at one of the local apologies for an hotel.

At ten o'clock the following morning—Tuesday morning—he presented himself at the consul's again, and together they wended their way to the Kasbah, which was the name given to an imposing block of buildings, some of which were used as a prison, others as a barracks, and others as Government offices.

Seated in the principal gateway, surrounded by a bodyguard of troops, was an aged, white-haired Moor, who was dispensing justice to such as could afford to pay for it. This was the Basha, who was a kind of mayor, magistrate, chief-constable, and military commander rolled into one.

Upon catching sight of the British vice-consul, he beckoned him to approach.

"We would speak with your nobility privately," said the consul; and he slipped ten pounds into the Basha's hand.

The Basha made a sign, and the troopers drove the crowd back out of earshot.

"It is written in the Koran," said the consul, "that images are an abomination to the faithful. The Kaid of Kelelin has broken the law of the Prophet, whose name be held in everlasting veneration. He has purchased a silver image in Tangier, and has hidden it in his house."

Another ten pounds changed hands.

"The Nazarene speaks wisely," said the Basha gravely. "The Kaid of Kelelin has committed an abomination, and it is meet that he should be punished."

"My friend here," continued the consul,

glancing at Nelson Lee. "went to the house of the Kaid to reprove him for his faithlessness. He offered to take the accursed image away, but the Kaid replied by threatening him with death. My friend is an Englishman, and it is not meet that Englishmen should be threatened with death. If my friend were minded to complain to the Sultan, whom Allah preserve, there would be much trouble for the Kaid of Kelelin and for those who are responsible for his good behaviour. But we do not wish to disturb the dignity of his Majesty with this matter.

They shall surround the house of the Kaid, and take away the accursed image. They shall bring it with them to Tetuan, and deliver it to your friend. Bismillah! I have said what I have said!"

"Ask the old gentleman if I can go with the soldiers," whispered Nelson Lee in English.

"My friend would fain accompany the soldiers," said the consul, pressing the last instalment of the fifty pounds into the Basha's plan. "Your nobility does not object?"



The magician waved his hand, and, to Mark Rymer's unbounded amazement, the ink burst into flame with a sharp report, and vanished in a puff of scented smoke.

We prefer to leave it in the hands of your nobility."

More money passed into the Basha's hand.

"It is the silver image we desire to possess," continued the consul. "It is now in the house of the Kaid. Your nobility has many soldiers, and the followers of the Kaid are few. Your nobility has but to say the word, and the matter is ended."

Another ten pounds changed hands. The Basha gravely stroked his long white beard.

"It shall be even as you say," he said. "I will send a hundred soldiers to Kelelin.

"No, I do not object," said the Basha. "The soldiers will start from the citadel in an hour's time. If your friend wishes to go with them, let him be there at the time I have named."

The consul thanked him, and withdrew with Nelson Lee.

And almost before they were out of sight, one of the Basha's bodyguard slipped quietly away, mounted his horse, and galloped off towards Kelelin, with the object of warning the truculent Kaid of the trouble which was brewing.

RYMER AND THE MOORISH MAGICIAN.

IT was on Sunday morning, as the reader knows, that Nelson Lee and his guide set out from Tangier on their fifty miles' ride to Kelelin. That same night, shortly after gunfire, the muffled figure of Professor Mark Rymer stole out of Maclean's Hotel, passed through the great Pink Gate of Tangier, and entered the sok, or market-place, which is situated just outside the walls of the town, at the foot of the hill which leads up to the British Legation.

In the middle of the sok a band of Moors from the interior had pitched their little encampment.

In the upper corner was a cluster of tiny gunny-bag tents, inhabited by the shoemakers of the town.

Beyond them was a herd of sleeping mules and camels, and beyond the camels, standing all by itself, was a small, low tent, made of striped canvas.

It was towards this tent that Mark Rymer wended his way. It was all in darkness, and was apparently deserted; but the moment he raised the door-flap, the shuffling of slippered feet was heard, followed by the short, sharp query:

"Who comes?"

"A friend!" replied the professor, striving in vain to pierce the darkness. "One who wishes to test thy powers, and will well reward thee."

There was a sound of flint upon steel. A lamp burst into flame, and revealed the seated figure of a venerable Moor, clad in a blue jelab, and with a beard that well-nigh reached to his knees.

Hanging all round the tent were the dried skins of snakes and lizards, and here and there a grinning human skull.

"Art thou Mohammed el Susi, the magician?" asked Rymer.

The old man bowed assent.

"And thou?" he asked.

"My name is of no importance," said the professor. "I have heard of thy marvellous powers of divination, and would put them to the test."

He slipped a couple of golden coins into the magician's hand.

"I have come from England in search of a silver image, fashioned in the form of a dwarf," said Rymer. "It was brought to Tangier last Tuesday morning by Isaac Benzaquen, the Jew. It may be that the silver image is still in his possession, or it may be that he has sold it. He will not speak. He will tell me nothing. So I have come to thee. They say in the city that naught is hidden from thy magic. Canst thou tell me what has become of the image whereof I have spoken?"

The old man thrust the gold coins into his leather wallet, and hobbled across the tent.

He opened an ivory box, and drew out a crystal phial, which was three-parts filled with perfumed ink.

"Give me thine hand!" he said.

The professor held out his hand, and the "magician" poured a few drops of the ink into his palm.

For a second or two he stared at it in silence. Then, muttering strange words to himself, he thrust his hand into his wallet, drew out a tiny silver box, opened it, and sprinkled a grain or two of yellow powder into the ink.

Instantly the ink began to effervesce, as though it were boiling; then it settled down into a glistening, jet-black bead.

"I see," chanted the magician, staring into the ink, and rocking himself to and fro—"I see the house of the dread Kaid of Kelelin. I see an upper room, and I see a lighted lamp. There are women in the room. One of them has an image in her hand. It is an image of silver, and is wrought in the shape of a dwarf."

He waved his hand, and, to Mark Rymer's unbounded amazement, the ink burst into flame with a sharp report, and vanished in a puff of scented smoke.

"Marvellous! Stupendous!" murmured the professor, gazing at his empty palm. "They do well to style thee the Prince of the Magicians of the South. So the silver image is now in the possession of the Kaid of Kelelin?"

"I have said what I have said!" replied the old man.

"Dost thou know the Kaid?" asked Rymer. "Will he sell me the silver image if I go to him and offer him much money for it?"

The old man shook his head.

"He would not sell it to thee if thou wert to offer him the weight of his house in gold!" he answered.

"Why not?"

"Because thou art a Nazarene. The Kaid would deem it a pollution to accept thy money. There is but one of all the Nazarenes with whom he hath ever been friendly."

"And who is he?" asked the professor eagerly.

"A fair-haired man from the land of Sweden," replied the old magician. "His name is Dr. Olsen. He is a mighty traveller and a wondrous medicine-man. He cured the favourite wife of the Kaid when she was sick unto death, and in return for that the Kaid hath allowed him to pitch his tents in the garden of the house."

"Perchance if I were to go to this Dr. Olsen," said Mark Rymer, "he would be able to persuade the Kaid to sell me the silver image."

Again the old man shook his head.

"I can tell thee a better way than that," he said. "The Kaid of Kelelin hath a brother named Achmed, who is a servant at the Spanish Legation in this city. Now, Achmed hath great influence over his brother, the Kaid, and I doubt not that if

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thou wert to pay him well, he would coax the Kaid into selling thee the image."

"Good!" exclaimed Rymer. "I will see this Achmed at once, and if thy plan succeeds, I will reward thee further on my return from Kelelin."

He quitted the magician's tent, and made his way to the Spanish Legation, where he first had an interview with the minister and afterwards with Achmed.

The latter readily fell in with the professor's suggestion, and at sunrise next morning the two set out for Kelelin.

Monday night found them still over twenty miles from their goal. They hobbled their

"Greetings, my brother!" he cried, taking the Kaid's head between his hands and kissing him on the brow. "What art thou doing here?"

"Hiding!" said the Kaid curtly. "But who is thy companion?"

"An Englishman from Tangier," said Achmed. "He hath heard that thou hast a silver image—"

"Curse the silver image!" cried the Kaid, interrupting him. "It is that which has driven me into hiding. A Nazarene came to my house yesterday and demanded that I should sell him the accursed thing. I refused, and would have put him to death,



Without drawing rein, Lee whipped out his revolver and fired at Mark Rymer's horse. The bullet reached its mark, and the next moment horse and rider were floundering in the dust.

horses and encamped by the side of a little stream—exactly where Nelson Lee and his guide had encamped the night before—and at daybreak resumed their journey.

Shortly after noon they came within sight of a lonely saint-house—one of those small, square structures with a domed roof, which the Moors erect over the burying-places of their departed saints.

"We are now about five miles from Kelelin," said Achmed. "In another hour we shall—"

He broke off suddenly, for at that moment his gaze encountered the scared face of a Moor peering at them through the doorway of the saint-house.

"It is my brother!" gasped Achmed; and, springing from his horse, ran forward.

but he escaped and fled to Tetuan. He hath given money to the Basha, and the Basha hath sent out the soldiers against me. Allah be praised, I have a friend in Tetuan who warned me, and I fled ere the soldiers arrived."

"And what hast thou done with the silver image?"

"I have given the accursed thing away!" replied the Kaid.

"To whom hast thou given it?" asked Achmed.

The professor strained his ears to catch the Kaid's reply; but ere the latter could speak the clatter of hoofs was heard, and the next instant a troop of soldiers galloped round the turn of the road, with Nelson Lee at their head.

"Quick!" cried Achmed. "Take my horse and ride for thy life!"

The Kaid shook his head.

"It is one thing to hide—it is another to flee!" he said, with some show of dignity. "The Kaid of Kelelin will not shame himself by running away."

The soldiers had now perceived them, and were approaching at full speed.

Mark Rymer ground out an oath, then addressed Achmed.

"Ask thy brother to whom he hath given the silver image!" he said hurriedly.

Achmed turned to his brother and put the question.

"I gave it to Dr. Olsen," was the Kaid's sullen reply.

"Dr. Olsen!" cried the professor. "Is that the Swedish explorer who has pitched his camp in thy garden?"

"The same," answered the Kaid.

Without another word Mark Rymer sprang into his saddle, and rode off at a gallop in the direction of Kelelin.

Nelson Lee, who was then about twenty yards away, saw the action, and instantly guessed its meaning. Without drawing rein, he whipped out his revolver and fired at Mark Rymer's horse.

The bullet reached its mark, and the next moment horse and rider were floundering in the dust.

"Tit for tat, my dear professor!" remarked Nelson Lee, as he dismounted and raised his hat with mock politeness. "You shot Mr. Langley's horse on the cliffs at Penleven, and now I've balanced the account by shooting yours. May I ask if you have found the Silver Dwarf?"

By way of reply the professor scrambled to his feet, livid with rage, and fumbled for his revolver. Ere he could draw it, however, two of the soldiers flung themselves upon him, and bore him to the ground.

"Don't be too rough with him," cried Nelson Lee. "Take his revolver from him, and then, if he hasn't the silver image, set him at liberty again."

One of the soldiers accordingly took possession of the professor's revolver, whilst the other subjected him to a rapid but thorough search. In the meantime the rest of the soldiers had surrounded the saint-house, and had plied the Kaid with eager questions. One of them now came running to Nelson Lee with excitement writ large on every feature of his chocolate-coloured face.

"The Kaid hath confessed!" he said. "He hath given the silver image to the Swedish medicine-man!"

"The Swedish medicine-man! Who's that?" asked Nelson Lee.

"His name is Dr. Olsen," said the soldier. "He came to Kelelin many moons ago, and he cured the favourite wife of the Kaid when the magicians had said she must die. In gratitude for this the Kaid permitted him to pitch his tents in the garden of his house. If your Excellency will mount and ride back

with me, I will take you to the camp forthwith."

The detective turned to the soldiers who were guarding Mark Rymer.

"Let him go," he said. "We will now return to Kelelin."

"And the Kaid?" asked one of the soldiers. "Does your Excellency wish that we should bring him before the Basha?"

"Not at all!" said the detective promptly. "I have no further quarrel with him now. My only wish is to see Dr. Olsen as quickly as possible."

He sprang into the saddle again, and a moment later he and the soldiers were cantering back towards Kelelin, leaving Mark Rymer and the Kaid and Achmed to follow on foot.

It was half-past one when they reached the Swedish explorer's camp, which consisted of three small tents on the shady side of a picturesque Moorish garden.

"I wish to see your master," said Nelson Lee, addressing a tall young Moor, whom one of the soldiers pointed out as Dr. Olsen's dragoman.

"My master is not here," replied the Moor. "He left for Tetuan a couple of hours ago."

"When do you expect him back?" asked Nelson Lee.

"Perchance in a week, perchance in two, perchance in three," said the Moor.

The detective uttered an exclamation of dismay.

"Three weeks!" he said. "But Tetuan is only six miles from here. Do you mean that your master is going to stay in Tetuan for two or three weeks, or has he merely gone to Tetuan on his way to some other place?"

"I cannot say," replied the Moor. "I have told you all I know. My master left for Tetuan two hours ago, and he said to us that he might return in a week, or it might perchance be three."

"Did he take any baggage with him?"

"Nothing save a leather bag, which he strapped to his back."

"The Kaid of Kelelin gave him a silver image this morning."

"I know it. I was with him when the Kaid presented it."

"Has your master taken the image with him, or has he left it behind?"

"He has taken it with him. With my own eyes I saw him place it in the leather bag."

An expression of despair swept over the detective's face.

"Am I never to find it?" he muttered to himself. He turned to the soldiers. "We will return to Tetuan," he said bitterly. "There is nothing to be gained by remaining here."

They mounted, and rode to Tetuan, where the detective presented each of the soldiers with a handsome gratuity as an acknowledgment of their services. Then he set to work to hunt for Dr. Olsen.

He inquired at all the local hotels, at the principal shops, at the various Legations. He questioned the mob in the market place,

the soldiers at the citadel, the sentries at the gates, the beggars in the streets.

But it was all in vain. Here and there he came across a man who had seen the Swedish explorer in the town earlier in the day; but of Dr. Olsen himself he could find no trace. In other words, the doctor and the Silver Dwarf had vanished from Tetuan as completely and mysteriously as though they had melted into air.

THE SCENT RECOVERED, AND THE CHASE RESUMED.

THE following afternoon, whilst Nelson Lee was at lunch at his hotel, the British vice-consul appeared.

"Barak-Allah-o-fik!" he said, as he dropped into a chair by the detective's side—"which, being translated, is to say; 'The top of the morning to you!' Heard anything more of Dr. Olsen?"

"Nothing," said Nelson Lee. "Have you?"

"I have," said the consul. "I know where he is."

"The deuce you do!" exclaimed the detective. "Where is he?"

"On board the Marie Antoinette, a French cargo-steamer which plies between Marseilles and Gibraltar. She called here last Wednesday, on her way to Gibraltar, and she called here again yesterday morning, on her way back to Marseilles. Dr. Olsen, it appears, interviewed the captain last Wednesday, and arranged to go on board yesterday and go back with them to Marseilles."

"How have you discovered this?"

"By the merest fluke. One of the English residents here called upon me this morning to lodge a complaint against the captain of the Marie Antoinette with reference to a bill of lading. He casually mentioned that he had been on board the vessel yesterday, that he had seen Dr. Olsen arrive about half-past eleven, and that the captain had told him that they were going to take the doctor with them."

"Then Dr. Olsen is now on his way to Marseilles?"

"Of course."

"How far is Marseilles from Tetuan?"

"Roughly speaking, six hundred miles."

"Is the Marie Antoinette a fast boat?"

"Not particularly. Ten or twelve knots an hour, at a guess."

"Then she'll take best part of three days to steam to Marseilles?"

"Yes. She left Tetuan at noon yesterday. She is due in Marseilles about seven or eight o'clock on Friday morning."

"Good! If I cable to Marseilles at once my message will be waiting for Dr. Olsen when he arrives."

The consul smiled.

"Where are you going to cable from?" he asked.

The detective scratched his head.

"I'd forgotten that," he said. "There's no telegraph in Tetuan, of course?"

"Of course not."

"Then Tangier will be the nearest place from which I can cable. I suppose?"

Again the consul smiled.

"Have you forgotten that the cable between Tangier and Gibraltar has been broken down for more than a week?" he said.

"Then I must go to Gibraltar, that's all!"

The consul shrugged his shoulders.

"How will you address your cable?" he asked.

"To Dr. Olsen, on board the steamship Marie Antoinette. To be delivered on the arrival of the vessel."

"That's what I thought," said the consul.

"It is now Wednesday afternoon. If you do not spare your horse you will arrive in Tangier on Thursday night. There is no such thing as a private steamer in Tangier. You will have to wait for the regular boat, which leaves for Gibraltar on Friday morning. You will arrive at Gib about half-past ten or eleven, if the passage is a good one. By that time the Marie Antoinette will have been at Marseilles a couple of hours or more, Dr. Olsen will have disembarked, and your cable, which will take another hour or more to reach Marseilles, will be returned to you marked 'Gone away. No address.'"

"I'll try the experiment, at any rate," said Nelson Lee. "It is just possible that the Marie Antoinette may be delayed on her voyage sufficiently long to enable my telegram to reach Dr. Olsen before he disembarks."

The detective left Tetuan within the hour, and arrived at Tangier on Thursday evening. He crossed to Gibraltar next morning, and cabled to Marseilles, giving Dr. Olsen the briefest outline of the facts with regard to the Silver Dwarf, and asking him not to part with it.

But the consul proved a true prophet. Later in the day the detective's cable was returned to him with the intimation that Dr. Olsen had left the steamer before the cable arrived, and that nobody knew where he had gone.

By Sunday night the detective was back in Tetuan. On Monday morning he interviewed the consul again.

"You were right," he said. "I've had my journey for my pains. The doctor had left before my telegram arrived. Nothing now remains for me to do but to settle down in Tetuan, and wait as patiently as I can until he condescends to return!"

"There is something else which I should do if I were you," said the consul meaningly.

"What's that?"

"Have you heard what has become of your rival, Professor Rymer?"

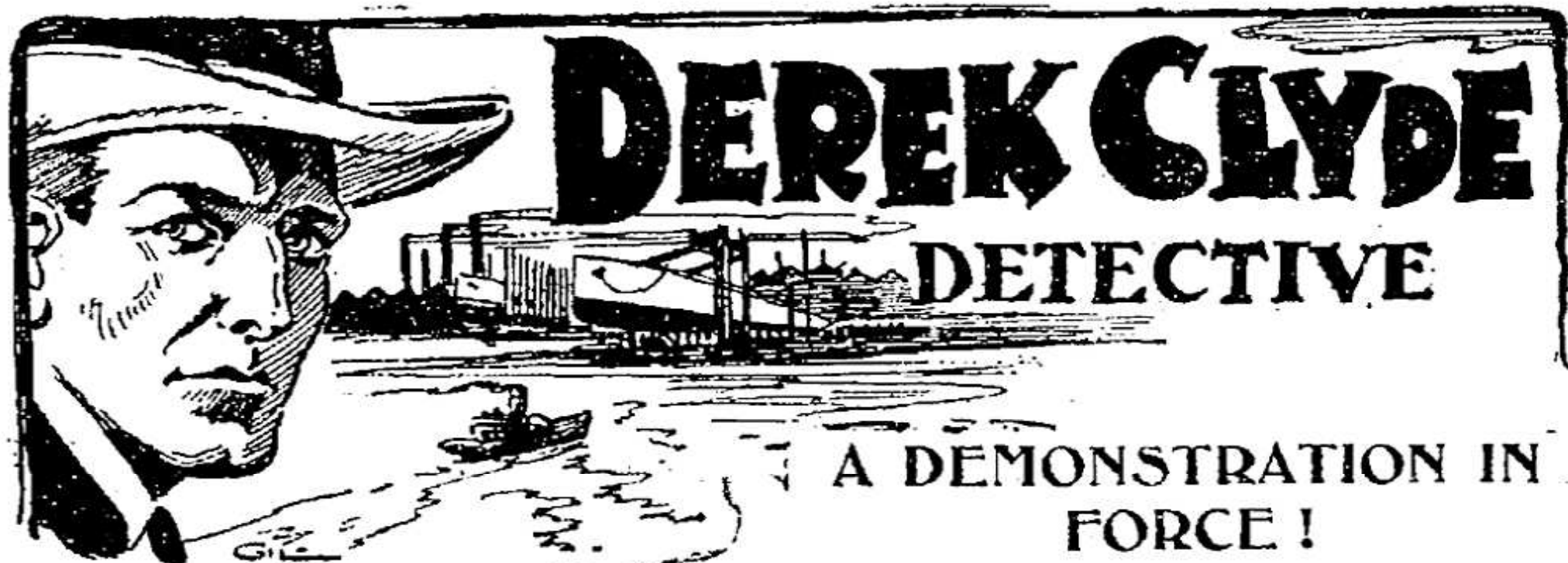
"No."

"He is staying with the Kaid of Kelelin."

"Never!"

"It is true. Through the influence of Achmed, the Kaid's brother, the Kaid and the professor have sworn eternal friendship, and the Kaid has invited the professor to stay at his house until Dr. Olsen returns. Now, it is quite possible, of course, that

(Continued on page xii.)

GRAND NEW COMPLETE TALES OF THE FAMOUS SCOTS DETECTIVE !**A DEMONSTRATION IN FORCE !**

AT the close of the day, as the lingering glow of the sun was melting into the shadows of evening, a disreputable-looking old man crept through a plantation that was on a large estate in Lanarkshire.

His beard and moustache were nearly white, and had evidently not been trimmed for months. He wore a bowler hat that was cracked and battered and rusty, and a long grey overcoat, that was shabby and greasy, and frayed at the edges.

He hobbled along slowly and wearily, leaning on a stick, and he was the more vigilant after he had passed from the plantation by a narrow gate into the private grounds of Beltingham, the stately residence of Lord Clanmaris, its gables and turrets and chimneys rising above the lofty trees, two or three hundred yards beyond.

It held several guests at the moment, for next day his lordship's daughter Beatrice was to be married at the neighbouring little church to Sir Piers Dalrymple, a young baronet whose country-seat was within a dozen miles.

Owing to the social prominence of the two families, and their many wealthy friends, the wedding gifts sent to Beltingham were of enormous value; and they were on display there, as this shabby old man was aware.

Whatever his object might be, he took great pains to elude observation. Now and again he paused to listen, and to peer into the foliage. He glided from tree to tree, from one clump of bushes to another, until at length he reached a terrace at one side of the dwelling.

When he had mounted to the top of it, he was screened from view by a blank wall on one side of him, and on the other by a tall row of clipped yews. And now the burden of his years dropped from him as if by magic. He stood erect, as straight as an arrow; then moved on for several yards, and paused by a small door.

It was not locked, as he had expected. He opened it, and stepped into a passage, and from that he walked quietly into a cosy little smoking-room, where a tall, middle-aged

gentleman, with fair beard and moustache, was selecting some cigars from a cabinet.

"Good heavens! Is it you, Clyde?" exclaimed Lord Clanmaris, screwing a monocle into his eye.

Clyde nodded and smiled, and lifted a warning finger. He went to a door that led to the library, and softly closed it.

"I don't want my presence to be known," he said in a low voice, as he discarded the false whisker and ancient coat.

ELABORATE PRECAUTIONS.

THAT will be all right," replied Lord Clanmaris, who had recovered from his stupefaction. "Nobody is likely to come in here. By Jove, what a start you gave me!"

"You need not have been surprised," said the detective. "I told you I should be down, and that you should leave the side-door unlocked for me."

"Yes, I had your letter this morning. I didn't expect to see you in disguise, though. It was good of you to come, Clyde. I appreciate it very much. But why? You merely stated that you proposed to keep an eye on the wedding gifts."

"Exactly. I felt that they ought to be protected."

"Then you must have had reason to fear that there would be an attempt to steal them."

"There is always that danger when there is so much wealth as there is in this house at present," replied Clyde with a curious smile. "No, I don't know for certain that there will be an attempt, but, all the same, it must be a mighty temptation to the Phantom Cracksman, who has been operating in Scotland recently."

"That thought occurred to me, too," said Lord Clanmaris, "and I think the precautions I have taken should reduce the danger of robbery to a minimum. My servants are armed, and they keep watch in the house. Three constables in plain clothes are in the private grounds night and day, while the outlying parts of the estate are patrolled by gamekeepers."

"The men in the grounds don't seem to be particularly vigilant, then," observed Clyde dryly, "for I have just slipped through without being seen."

"You could have done that, but nobody else could."

"Don't deceive yourself. What I have done the Chief could do as easily. Where are the wedding gifts, by the way?"

"They are in the picture gallery on the floor above. You know it, as you have been there. It is a large apartment, with a skylight overhead. Bagley is posted there—a very trustworthy man."

"The gifts are very valuable, I believe?"

"Oh, yes; the jewels alone are worth at least a hundred thousand pounds."

"Well, you can't be too careful, my lord. There was never a criminal so daring and resourceful as the Chief, this strange man of mystery."

"I am not a bit afraid, Clyde. I am very glad that you are here, though. I shall feel much easier in mind. There will be no attempt at robbery to-night, and to-morrow, after the departure of the bridal couple, the most valuable of the wedding presents will be removed in a motor-van to a bank in Glasgow, where they will stay until my daughter and her husband return from their honeymoon. There are about a dozen guests in the house, and Dalrymple is one of them. We dine at eight. You will join us, of course."

Clyde shook his head.

"No, thanks," he said. "I should prefer not to. It might be imprudent to let anybody know that I am on the premises."

THE CRACK OF A REVOLVER.

IT was growing dark now. Lord Clanmaris switched on the lamps, and left the room. And Clyde, having disguised his features by a false brown moustache, lit a cigar and dropped into an easy chair.

Close in front of him an open doorway led to the picture gallery, and here the splendid assortment of wedding gifts were spread on several long tables.

The large apartment had a skylight overhead. At one end of it a stained-glass window opened on to the garden at one side of the house, and at the other end was a door giving access to the main staircase.

Bagley, with whom Clyde was acquainted, was seated on a couch directly beneath the skylight; the servants were on the alert below, and the plain-clothes constables were on watch in the grounds. Clyde did not think it possible that a robbery could be successfully carried out.

Yet he had a growing feeling that the Chief did contemplate one, and he had no doubt that if it were attempted it would be by some audacious and original stroke. He was, however, satisfied that the precautions which had been taken were sufficient to baffle even this clever and unscrupulous gang.

He glanced at his watch, observing that it was ten minutes past eight o'clock; and he was refilling his pipe when a brazen, clanging sound fell on his ears from no great distance. It was the bell in the neighbouring church, and it was pealing curiously.

Clyde was vaguely puzzled. He was sure that there was no service that night. He stepped into the picture gallery, and, with a word to Bagley, he descended the stairs, and at the door of the dining-room he met Lord Clanmaris.

"What is all that row about?" he asked. "What are they doing at the church?"

"It is only a lark, and a very stupid one," Lord Clanmaris replied. "Some idiot from the village must have got into the tower, and he is pulling the bell as a serenade to the bride and groom."

"Somebody ought to slip over there. Don't you think so?"

"No, Clyde, let the fool alone. He will soon tire of his sport."

His lordship returned to his guests, and Clyde went upstairs again. He was not quite reassured, yet he had no reason to doubt the explanation Lord Clanmaris had given to him.

For several minutes after he had seated himself in the study the church bell continued to clang, and it had hardly more than ceased when there was the crack of a revolver from somewhere in the vicinity, promptly followed by a volley of shots and lusty shouts.

"Good heavens, they're making an attack in force," Bagley called to the detective.

"Yes, that's what it looks like," exclaimed Clyde, who had at once stepped into the picture gallery. "They must have approached the dwelling from the front, and they have been discovered and held up by the men on guard. It is rather curious, though, that the Chief should not have been aware that a watch was kept. The gang will be beaten off, of course, now that the alarm has been raised. Stay at your post, Bagley," he added, as he darted from the room. "I will come back shortly."

A REGULAR BATTLE.

CLYDE sped down the staircase, and in the lower hall he mingled with Lord Clanmaris and his guests, who had streamed from the dining-room. Accompanied by some of the servants, the excited party flocked out to the wide terrace at the front of the house, where they stood gazing beyond them.

The clamour had increased, and at the bottom of the garden, which was of considerable extent, red jets of flame could be seen spitting amongst the trees and shrubbery. Revolvers were cracking intermittently, and there were vague glimpses of moving figures. A dusky form shaped in the darkness, and one of the plain-clothes constables came unsteadily over the lawn, and climbed to the top of the terrace.

"How are things going, Raker?" Lord Clanmaris eagerly inquired of him.

"It is a regular battle, my lord!" the man answered breathlessly. "There are quite a number of them, but our men are holding them at bay. We have had the best of it so far, and in the end the scoundrels will be compelled to—"

"You are wounded, my good fellow!" Lord Clanmaris interrupted. "Your sleeve is dripping with blood!"

"It is only a scratch, my lord," the constable declared. "It don't amount to anything. I will have my arm bandaged and hurry back."

Clyde had been standing with the others, looking calmly on. Then suddenly, as a startling suspicion flashed to his mind, he whipped into the house and ascended the stairs. The door of the picture gallery was partly shut, and, as he threw it open and sprang over the threshold, he was almost stupefied by the scene that met his gaze.

Bagley was lying in a limp attitude on the couch, his eyes closed, a smudge of blood on his brow. A rope-ladder dangled from the skylight, and a masked man was at one of the tables, sweeping articles of jewellery into a sack, to which was tied a rope that ran up through the aperture overhead.

All this Clyde perceived in one swift glance, and the next instant, as he levelled his revolver, it was struck from his grasp by another masked man, who leaped at him from behind the door, and as quickly seized him by the throat.

In a trice the two were at grips scuffling to and fro; and, after a brief struggle, they reeled into the adjoining study, and pitched to the floor, where they fought again for a short space. By a strenuous effort Clyde tore himself free, and rose; but his assailant was up as soon as he was, a pistol in his hand.

"Don't move a finger, or I'll kill you!" he said with an oath. "I mean it!"

Clyde would have dashed at him, heedless of the risk. As the man spoke, however, he let fly with his clenched fist, and dealt the detective a smashing blow, then slipped from the room, and slammed the door shut behind him.

A THRILLING SIGHT.

CLYDE had been felled by the stroke, and his head had forcibly struck the leg of a chair. He was half dazed for a few seconds, and by the time he had scrambled to his feet and rushed into the picture gallery the two masked men had disappeared, and the rope ladder had been hauled up through the skylight.

They had escaped with their plunder. Clyde observed at once that the greater part of the jewellery was missing, and he did not delay to raise an alarm. With a glance at the huddled form of Bagley, he bounded to the large window at the end of the room, flung it open, and swung over the sill.

He was some distance from the ground, but, without hesitation, he lowered himself and dropped, and, fortunately, landed in a clump of shrubbery.

When he crept out of the shrubbery, he held along the side of the house towards the rear of it, still hearing from the front garden as he ran the crackling of pistols and ringing shouts.

Blind instinct guided him. He felt sure that he had chosen the right direction, and he did not turn back to get assistance, though he knew that his temerity might cost him his life. He had meanwhile realised that the attack at the front was a diversion, with the object of covering the theft of the jewels, and, as he remembered the clanging of the church bell, he suddenly realised what that also meant.

At the start of the chase he had noticed a ladder leaning against the wall under the picture gallery, and he was certain that the thieves could not be far ahead of him, as they would have lost time in their descent from the roof. But he could see or hear nothing of them.

He had passed the back of the dwelling, and another stretch of a hundred yards, through the private grounds, brought him to the verge of the plantation, into which he plunged. As fast as he could he hastened on in darkness, still shrouded in silence, until he had gone for some distance.

Then he heard a muffled, throbbing noise, and a moment later, as he burst from the thickets on to the edge of an open meadow, he beheld a thrilling sight. Close beyond him, within twenty yards, was a big, grey-winged aeroplane that was in the act of rising from the ground.

Levelling his revolver instantly, he took quick aim, and fired half a dozen shots in rapid succession. And more by chance than skill one of them hit a human target. There was a sharp cry and a savage imprecation.

The aeroplane, which had soared to a height of half a dozen yards, was in difficulties, beyond control. It dipped and swerved, lunged against a tall and solitary tree that was in the meadow, and with a thunderous crash dropped to earth.

A SMASHING BLOW.

HURRYING to the spot with his electric torch in his hand, Clyde played the golden beam of light into the wrecked aeroplane, which was lying on its side. Within it he could see three men, and one of them, who was bleeding from a bullet wound in the shoulder, he judged to be the pilot.

He could also perceive the bulky sack which contained the stolen gifts. He had no time to make a thorough examination, for he suddenly heard footsteps, and saw five dusky figures gliding towards him from the left.

Resolved to protect the plunder, he darted to the shelter of the big tree, and discharged

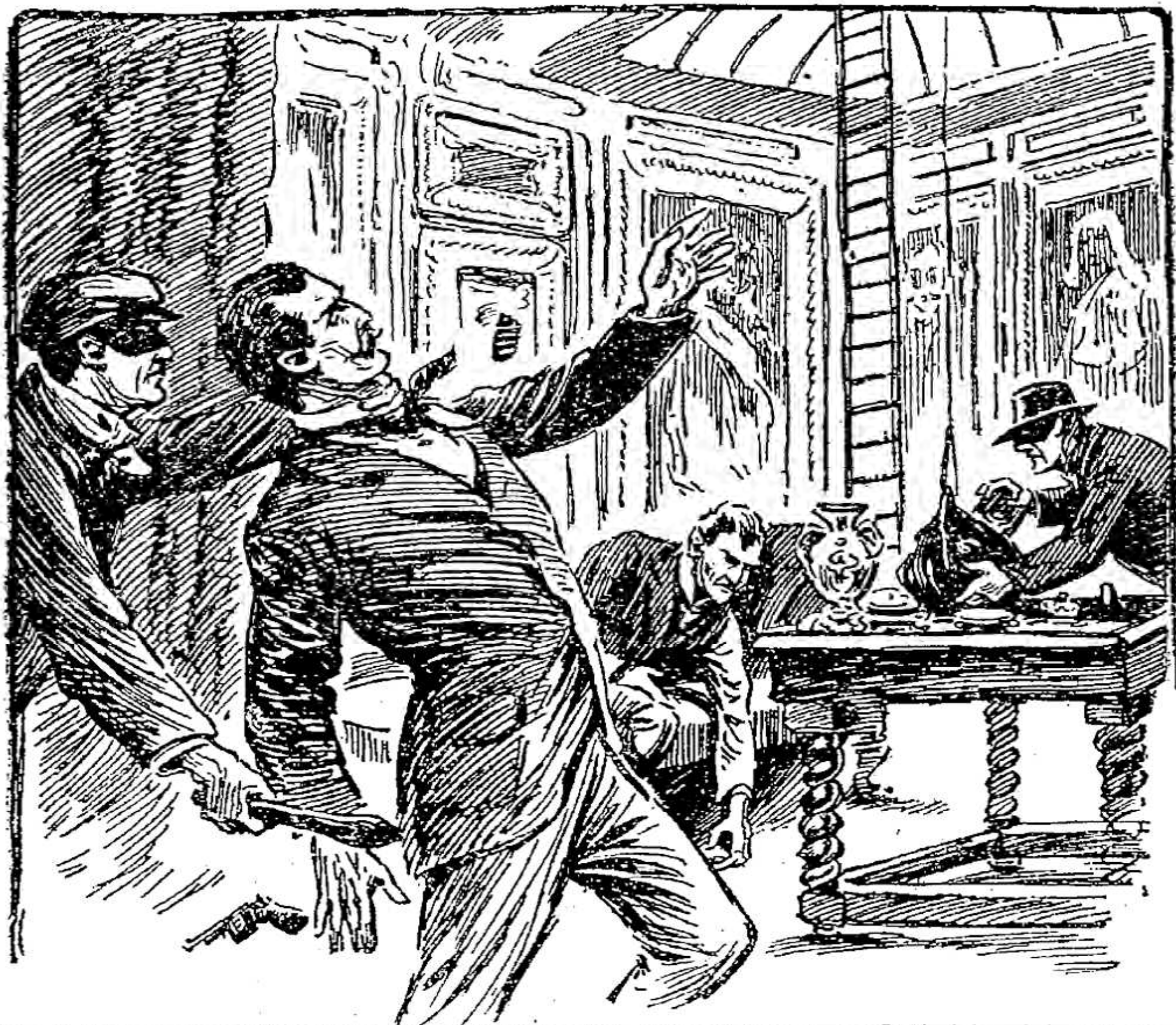
his revolver at the men, who returned the fire. But as they were a number of yards away Clyde did not hit any of them, nor did any of their shots touch him. They soon drew back, melting into the gloom.

They advanced again, however, continuing to fire at the detective. And they would have probably rushed him in the end, and got the better of him, had not the shooting meanwhile attracted attention at the house. Lanterns flashed amongst the trees in the plantation, and there was shrill clamour of voices.

them in the shoulder, and I dare say the others have been seriously injured, though they are breathing.

"The affair was cleverly planned. When the throbbing of the approaching aeroplane was audible to the gang, one or two of them hastened to the church. They rang the bell so that the noise of the engine should not be heard as the machine passed over the house, and they kept on ringing until they knew that it must have descended here in the meadow.

"As for the attack in the garden, that



A rope-ladder dangled from the skylight, and a masked man was at one of the tables, sweeping articles of jewellery into a sack, to which was tied a rope that ran up through an aperture overhead.

Help was coming, and the baffled crooks took to their heels as Lord Clanmaris and his servants arrived on the scene, followed by some of the guests. They found Clyde standing quietly by the aeroplane he had brought to earth. They gathered around him, and when the excitement had calmed down he told the whole story.

"There are the jewels, in that bulky sack which you see in the wreck," he continued. "As for the three men, I have shot one of

was, of course, designed to draw you and your guests to the front of the house—a sort of demonstration in force—and give the crooks an opportunity of getting into the picture gallery through the skylight. They may have killed Bagley, but I don't think so.

"They anticipated just this sort of pursuit, and had arranged to carry off their plunder by aeroplane as the best means of escaping with it. To depend on their cars, of which

they must have several in the vicinity, would have been too risky. To have saved themselves they might have been compelled to drop the plunder.

"I don't think we can do much to-night. By this time the scoundrels will be in full flight in fast cars, and the chances of catching up with them are very slight."

When the party returned to the house it was found that Bagley had recovered consciousness, and that he had not been badly hurt. He could only remember having received a sudden and mysterious blow, but it was to be presumed from the ugly bruise that was on the top of his head that a leaden weight attached to a rope had been

forcibly dropped on him at the moment when the skylight was noiselessly opened.

There had been no casualties on either side during the fight in the garden, as in the darkness the firing had been wild.

As for the three occupants of the aeroplane, one died of his injuries, and the others recovered, and were committed for trial.

No information was gleaned from them. They doggedly asserted that they had no knowledge of the mysterious leader of the gang, and they probably told the truth. But, if Clyde did not have the satisfaction of capturing the Chief, he had the satisfaction of knowing that he had dealt him a smashing blow, and brought to nought the plans and labours of months.

THE END.

THE SILVER DWARF.

(Continued from page vii).

Dr. Olsen may return to Tetuan in the Marie Antoinette, in which case you would be able to interview him before he went up to his camp at Kelelin. On the other hand, it is equally possible that he may return by some other route—by Gibraltar and Tangier, for instance—in which case he would reach Kelelin without coming to Tetuan. If he did this, it is quite on the cards that he might return to Kelelin and give Professor Rymer the Silver Dwarf, or tell him where it is, and go away for another journey without your ever knowing that he had been back. If you take my advice, therefore, you will go to Dr. Olsen's camp—secretly, if possible—and you will bribe one of the servants to let you know at the earliest possible moment whenever they hear from Dr. Olsen, or whenever he returns."

The detective smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"You are a day behind the fair," he said. "I called at the camp last night before I came to Tetuan. At a cost of five pounds sterling I bought the doctor's dragoman, body and soul. I have given the fellow a note, which he has sworn to give to the doctor the instant he returns. In this note I have told Dr. Olsen all about the Silver Dwarf, and have asked him not to part with it, and not to give any information about it to anybody until I have seen him. In addition to this, I have arranged with the dragoman that the moment the doctor returns a mounted messenger is to be sent post-haste to Tetuan to inform me of his arrival."

"Good!" said the consul approvingly. "You have taken the wind out of the professor's sails with a vengeance. There's not much fear of him forestalling you now."

Will NELSON LEE Forestall the PROFESSOR?

SEE NEXT WEEK'S EXCITING INSTALMENT OF

THE SILVER DWARF!

More Thrilling Adventures of DEREK CLYDE

WILL APPEAR NEXT WEEK IN

THE MYSTERY OF A TAXICAB!

(Continued from page 14)

There are just the tracks, with a small ticket office, and sometimes a restaurant. But there are no platforms or waiting rooms as we find in England.

The two men who approached were real natives — loose-limbed, bronzed, and hardy looking specimens.

"Say, Mister, I guess we can't take those men here," exclaimed one of the strangers as he came up. "You're figgerin' to leave them with the Sheriff, ain't you?"

"That is the idea," said Lee. "It is not my scheme, but the train officials don't want the men to remain on board."

"Guess they'll have to remain on board," said the other.

"Why?"

"Waal, the sheriff's out o' town," replied the man. "My name's Jenkins—I'm a deputy. But I guess I ain't takin' any chances on these guys. Say, we've got no jail here that would be likely to hold 'em, anyway. Guess they're pretty slick birds, ain't they?"

"They are," agreed Nelson Lee. "Of course, if you don't accept the responsibility, we shall be compelled to carry the prisoners further on."

Deputy-Sheriff Jenkins nodded.

"You'll make Albuquerque around ten-thirty, or eleven," he said. "Maybe you'll be able to land the guys there. Anyways, there's nothin' doin' right here. Sorry, Mister, but we ain't in need of 'em!"

Nelson Lee smiled.

"Very well—we must let it go at that," he said.

He turned to the guard of the train, and talked with him for some time.

It was arranged that Simon Hawke and Al Roker should be taken straight on to the end of the trip. Instead of leaving them at one of these small towns, they would be given into the hands of the police in Los Angeles.

This was just as Lee wanted it.

But the train crew plainly told the gov'nor that he would have to be responsible for the prisoners. The train men had their own duties to attend to, and would not be answerable if the pair escaped.

Lee gave the officials his assurance that Hawke and Roker would be kept under strict guard until Los Angeles was reached. And, after all, this was the main thing. The pair had planned their big coup for Los Angeles, and it was only right that they should be brought to trial in that city.

It appeared that the sheriff in this particular town—Las Vegas—was away in the country, accompanied by a posse, hunting down a gang of horse thieves, or outlaws of some kind.

Thus the place was left rather destitute of authority. Jenkins was not inclined to

be bothered with two such prisoners as Hawke and Roker.

Nelson Lee was only able to briefly explain this to me, for the first section was due to start at once—it had been delayed over fifteen minutes already, and the train men were impatient.

I was delighted with the news, and so was the Remove.

"Then everything's all right?" asked Reggie Pitt.

"You bet it is," I agreed. "No more secrecy now—the giddy case is over."

"Pretty tame finish," said Handforth, with a sniff.

"Tame?" I echoed. "I don't suppose the gov'nor called it tame—considering that he was nearly murdered last night! Well, there's no need for any further mystery. The rotters are captured, and we shall have nothing to worry about when we get to Los Angeles."

"It seems to me that Mr. Lee ought to have somebody to help him," remarked Handforth, shaking his head. "Two crooks like that might get up to any sort of tricks, you know. In fact, it's quite likely that—"

Handforth paused, and stared.

The first section was just commencing to pull out. We had not taken much notice, for we knew that our train would stay for another five minutes, at least. I had already said good-bye to the gov'nor, knowing that I should see him again in Albuquerque—where the two sections would come together once again.

"Quick!" gasped Handforth. "The giddy train's going!"

"Eh?"

"Don't stare!" roared Handy. "We nearly got left behind last time—that's not going to happen again!"

He seized Church and McClure, and whirled them along.

"Fathead!" howled Pitt. "That's not your train at all!"

But Handforth didn't hear.

"We'll just do it!" he gasped breathlessly.

"You—you dotty ass!" panted Church. "This—this—"

He couldn't say any more, for Handforth literally pushed him on to the step of the last coach. The black porter had just arrived on the platform, and was about to close the door. And then Handforth and Co. bundled in.

"Holy smoke!" gasped the porter. "Say, what's all dis? I sure guess yo'se in de wrong train, sah!"

Handforth and Co. picked themselves up, triumphant.

At all events, Handforth was. Church and McClure were hot, flustered, and somewhat concerned. They knew well enough that Handforth had made another of his famous blunders. They were on the wrong train, and the thought of it filled

them with something that was very akin to alarm.

"You — you lunatic!" said Church breathlessly. "You pushed us on to the wrong train, you jossler!"

"Yes, you ass!"

"Ain't this the California Limited?"

"Of course it is, but——"

"Then don't be dotty!" said Handforth. "The California Limited is our train, and we nearly lost it. 'I've never known such a rotten system! They don't even give you a fair warning. They just start straight off, and they don't care tuppence whether you're left behind or not!'"

Church and McClure were exasperated.

"But this is the first section, you mad-man," roared McClure.

Handforth started.

"The first section," he repeated, light dawning upon him.

"Yes, you chump!"

"My only hat!" said Handforth blankly. "Now I come to think of it, I believe you're right! That's why the other chaps didn't rush on board!"

"Of course it is!"

Handforth fixed his unfortunate chums with his coldest glare.

"You—you brainless idiots!" he said witheringly. "You knew this all the time, and yet you let me come on this train! I've never known such mad fat-heads in all my life——"

"Great Scott!" shouted McClure. "Do you think we could do anything at all, with you pushing us like that. We tried to tell you, but you wouldn't listen!"

Handforth calmed down.

"Oh, well, it doesn't matter," he said. "Didn't they say we should stop at Albuquerque at about eleven o'clock? All we've got to do is to get off, and wait for our train to arrive."

Church grunted.

"Yes, I know that," he said. "But what about brekker?"

"There's a dining car on this train, I suppose?"

"Yes, but we shan't be allowed to eat," said Church. "It's not our dining car—we haven't even got tickets for this train."

"If we don't get any breakfast, there'll be a row!" said Handforth grimly. "I'll jolly well see the chef, or the steward, and biff him on the nose. That'll teach him I mean business!"

The three juniors entered the coach, and made their way back to the Observation Car—for it wouldn't be time for brekker for another hour. They were passing down one of the corridors when they saw Nelson Lee.

"Oh!" said Lee. "And what is the meaning of this, boys? I saw you get on, and I require an explanation."

Church and McClure explained, and Handforth explained as well. Nelson Lee listened with difficulty.

"By what I can understand, it was a mistake, eh?" he said, at length. "Very well—you'll have to get off at the next stop."

Handforth suddenly flushed.

"By George! I've got an idea!" he said excitedly.

"An idea, my boy?"

"Yes, sir! We'll stop on this train all the way to Los Angeles!"

"Indeed!"

"And we'll help you to guard these crooks, sir," went on Handforth confidently. "We'll take it in turns, to keep on the watch. It's too much for you alone, sir," he went on eagerly. "There are three of us here, and we can all help!"

Nelson Lee chuckled.

"Oh, and so you have made up your mind?" he asked. "Well, my boys, I am not sure that I can give my sanction to such a scheme."

"Oh, sir! We'd love to do it!"

"All right," smiled Nelson Lee. "We'll see!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE HOLD-UP.



THE night was hot, stuffy and very black. The California Limited had progressed considerably, and left the junction of Williams behind. Williams

was the place where people changed in order to visit the famous Grand Canyon. The time was now close upon midnight, and the next stop would be at a place called Seligman.

Here the hour would be altered—as it is altered twice on this trip from Chicago to Los Angeles. There is a difference of three hours between New York time and Los Angeles time.

For example, when the hour is noon in New York, it is nine o'clock in the morning in Los Angeles. And there are eight hours' difference in time between Los Angeles and London. At noon in London the time is just four o'clock in the morning in Los Angeles.

And at Seligman the time was generally changed. Thus, the train was scheduled to arrive at twelve-ten, to stop ten minutes, and to leave at eleven-twenty! And after this stop, there would be no other halt until Needles was reached, at about half-past-three.

It was a long stretch, mainly over desolate country—semi-desert, with sage brush and cactus and plenty of sand.

It was the first section of the California Limited that was speeding along now. The second section was a good few miles behind.

Having passed Seligman, the train settled down to its long run through the night.

The great searchlight pierced the darkness, illuminating the track for a great distance ahead.

And the enormous locomotive was hissing and puffing and labouring like some huge living monster. She was climbing up a fairly stiff gradient, and the effort was a big one.

Speed was not possible under such circumstances, but the great engine was performing her task splendidly.

Practically everybody was asleep on board.

Nelson Lee was one of the exceptions. He sat in his private compartment, keeping a strict eye on Mr. Hawke and Mr. Roker. The pair were not bound now, but were sleeping in their little bunks—for Nelson Lee had undertaken to keep these men in his own room all the time.

There were four beds there, and there was no chance of the rascals doing any harm to Nelson Lee. They were quite unarmed, and practically all the spirit had left them. If they made the slightest attempt to attack Lee, he had only to shout for help, and the porters would soon arrive on the scene.

And by day, Handforth and Co. assisted.

Nelson Lee had seen that the juniors were really in earnest, and they were quite capable of keeping their eyes on the prisoners whilst Lee slept. And by doing it in this way, the responsibility was entirely with Lee. The train crew was not called upon to help.

As Lee told me afterwards, he would have liked me on the job, but Handforth had been first in the field, and three were quite sufficient.

The juniors were near by, in another compartment, sound asleep. And the train was labouring along strenuously.

That great light on the front of the engine gave the engineer a full view of the track ahead.

And, suddenly, the driver stared.

Red lights were gleaming in the distance—waving to and fro. Quickly, the fireman commenced tolling the big bell, and hooting the powerful siren—for these engines do not have shrill whistles.

The engineer shut off the power.

For not only were there red lights, but some big obstruction appeared to be across the track. And as the train grew nearer the men on the footplate could see that this obstruction was really a crowd of men on horseback.

"Say, Ed, this looks funny!" said the engineer grimly. "Guess there's some queer business on foot to-night!"

"It sure looks like it, Sam," said the fireman.

And they were right.

These men were veterans—they had driven the Santa Fe trains for years—for the men who are in charge of the footplate of the California Limited are tried and trusty servants of the company. They are men who

had travelled the road from one corner to the other, and who knew every inch of it.

Their life is not so humdrum as one might imagine. In the old days, particularly, hold-ups by outlaw bands were quite a common occurrence. But to-day they are few and far between, and becoming less frequent.

But even in these highly-civilised times a Western train will sometimes be held up by train robbers. And there is very little else for the engineer to do but to stop. He knows that well enough.

To drive on, in defiance of the gang, will probably mean disaster to his train—for it is almost certain that some obstructions will be placed across the line further on. And no engineer can afford to take the risk of wrecking his train, and probably causing the death of passengers.

The driver applied his brakes, and the great, lumbering engine slowly groaned its way to a standstill. And in a few minutes the long train stood there on the tracks, hissing and impatient to continue its onward journey—for the steam was at a high pressure and in readiness for the steeper gradient ahead.

Within the train, no suspicions were aroused.

Stops of this kind may occur at any time. There might be a hot oil-box that needed attention, or some slight adjustment may be necessary to the engine. None of the guards or other officials on the train took any notice.

But the engineer and the fireman were fully alive to the truth.

Even as the train stopped, three men leapt up the sides of the engine, and others stood near by, levelling rifles at the cab of the locomotive.

"Hands up—an' slick!" rasped out a harsh voice.

The men who had climbed on to the footplate itself were armed with revolvers. They were desperate-looking ruffians—two of them being half-breeds.

The driver and the firemen were brave men, but it would have been sheer madness to resist these scoundrels. At the first show of defiance, those revolvers would spit death.

For a gang of robbers such as this never hesitate at murder.

Within three minutes the men in charge of the engine were helpless. They were swiftly bound with rope and thrust into a corner of their cab. And one man was left in charge, armed with a levelled revolver.

And then the hold-up began.

It was a grim, desperate business.

The first the passengers knew about it was a series of startling revolver shots. The bandits relied upon terror to start with. The main thing was to make all the passengers realise the truth, and to drive fear into their hearts. Two or three of the gang rode up and down the train on both sides, firing their rifles into the air.

And other men boarded the coaches, and

scared the helpless people with fusillades of revolver shots, aimed at the roof.

Pandemonium reigned.

Ladies fainted, screaming and crying for help. Men became cowards, and acted like a lot of sheep, handing over their valuables without the slightest show of resistance. They could not be blamed.

For it means death to resist.

And these American travellers know it.

It is all very well to be very brave and to defy the robbers. But the advantage is all on the side of the bandits. If, indeed, an attempt was made to overpower them, it could undoubtedly be done.

But what would the cost be? Probably the loss of five or six lives—for there would be grim shooting and bloodshed. And human lives are of more value than dollar bills and diamond trinkets.

So the ransacking of the train continued.

Coach after coach was visited.

Nelson Lee was aware of the truth almost from the outset. And Mr. Hawke and Mr. Roker, knew, too. Awakened by those shots they sat up in their beds, listening eagerly.

Handforth and Co. came piling in, with scared faces, and hastily attired in nothing but shoes, trousers and shirts.

"What's wrong, sir?" asked Handforth huskily.

"The train is in the hands of robbers!" replied Lee.

"My goodness!"

"What—what shall we do, sir?"

"You had better go back to your room and stay there," said Lee. "When these men enter, obey them! Under no circumstances attempt resistance, Handforth. You must not—"

"I'll jolly well biff them on the nose, sir!" said Handforth warmly.

Nelson Lee gripped his arm.

"Listen, my boy!" he said quietly. "I order you to do nothing whatever! It will mean your death if you so much as lift a finger! These men are utterly cold-blooded and desperate. Obey them!"

There was something in the detective's tone that almost scared the juniors.

"Yes, sir," said Handforth soberly.

Lee took him outside into the corridor.

"Handforth, I'm going to place this packet in your keeping," he said softly. "Put it in your jacket pocket, and leave it there. One moment! Scrawl across the front of it in blue pencil: 'notes of the journey.' Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," said Handforth promptly.

He took a sealed, bulky-looking envelope from Nelson Lee. It contained all the valuable papers connected with the oil property in Los Angeles. Lee had taken it from Mr. Hawke, and had been keeping it in his own care.

But these train robbers would be on the spot at any moment. They would take it from Lee without doubt. But it was more than likely that they would leave it with Handforth, for they would conclude that it

was of no value. These rascals were not likely to give much attention to schoolboys.

Handforth thrilled with joy at the opportunity to prove of use. And Nelson Lee returned to his own compartment, and looked grimly at Hawke and Roker.

"Take my advice and keep quiet," he ordered curtly.

The men made no reply.

And, in the meantime, the ransacking of the train continued. Two gunmen were already on board this very coach, and were going from compartment to compartment—for this coach was composed of private drawing-rooms only.

Shouts and screams near by told Nelson Lee that the robbers were near at hand. For a few minutes the famous detective had had a mind to resist—to do his utmost to save the train.

But wiser counsel had prevailed.

He knew that it was impossible—and Nelson Lee, brave as a lion when there was the slightest chance of success, never attempted the impossible. Not only his death would result, but probably the death of others. For once one life was taken, these men would get the lust and take others.

The door of the compartment opened with a crash.

And, even as it did so, Simon Hawke hurled himself clean out of the bunk, and grappled with Nelson Lee. Roker did the same. They fought desperately, Lee being taken by surprise.

"Say, what's this, anyways?" demanded a harsh voice.

The bandit was standing in the doorway, revolver in hand. He was an American—a Westerner of middle age and a pretty tough customer. His face was scarred, blotchy with drink, and he wore a grizzled moustache.

"Quick—this man's a detective!" shouted Hawke. "We're the same as you—crooks! We're being taken to Los Angeles, to go to gaol!"

"Bunk!" said the robber curtly.

But he could see in a very few moments that it wasn't bunk.

Nelson Lee was still fighting, for he had no wish to be overpowered. And the bandit was still uncertain when one of his companions appeared. And this man explained that two of the porters had told him that crooks were on board—a pair of thieves who were being taken to gaol by an English detective.

It was touch and go for Hawke and Roker—but fortune favoured them.

They were accepted as crooks—and treated by the robbers as fellow-brethren. And in next to no time Nelson Lee was made a helpless prisoner, bound hand and foot.

"This brute's got some papers of ours," exclaimed Hawke curtly. "We're on a big deal in Los Angeles—something that's going to net us about ten thousand dollars! We need those papers badly."

Very cunningly Hawke refrained from



"Say, what's this, anyways?" demanded a harsh voice. The bandit was standing in the doorway, revolver in hand. He was an American, a Westerner of middle age, and a pretty tough customer.

mentioning that the papers were worth millions. Had he done so, the bandits would probably have taken them for themselves. But they were not likely to bother about a mere ten thousand—considering that they would net four times that amount from the train.

But a feverish search was without result.

The papers were not on Lee, and not even in the compartment. Mr. Hawke was nearly purple in the face with rage. He demanded to know what Lee had done with that packet.

He threatened torture unless the detective spoke. Again and again, Hawke drove his clenched fist into Lee's helpless face, until Lee was bruised and battered. But still he would not speak.

"Look here, you men!" said Hawke, at length. "This guy's a peril to us. We want to come off the train with you, and we want you to take Lee away with you. We'll arrange it afterwards."

And, in the meantime, Handforth and Co. obeyed their orders.

One of the bandits entered, and found the three boys apparently speechless with terror. The bandit only made a very cursory search.

He found the packet, but gave it one glance and tossed it aside. He found a number of dollar bills and some loose silver. This he took.

"Gee! You're a set of mutts, ain't you?" he jeered. "All right, kiddoes! I ain't gonna hurt you!"

He went out, laughing harshly. And Handforth and Co. gazed at one another, their hearts thumping rapidly. Nelson Lee's ruse had succeeded. The papers were still safe—and Handforth grabbed them up and put them in his trousers' pocket.

"My hat!" he panted. "We're all right now! As soon as the train goes on we'll give these to Mr. Lee and——"

"But—but Mr. Lee's outside!" gasped Church.

"He's bound, and in the hands of these bandits!"

Church was at the window. He had pushed up the blind, and was staring out into the darkness. The light from the train's windows was not very penetrating, but Church just caught a glimpse of Nelson Lee being pushed violently along beside the track, his wrists bound, his ankles tied with rope so that he could only take small strides.

Handforth gave a gulp.

"They've pinched Mr. Lee!" he muttered tensely. "I expect they're going to carry him off into the hills and hold him for ransom!"

Handforth always thought of the romantic thing. But here he was pretty near the mark. For these bandits had, indeed, decided upon something of that sort. If they took Lee, they were going to make some capital out of him. And they could easily do so, for he was a man of international fame.

Handforth badly wanted to do something big.

"Look here!" he said fiercely, his eyes gleaming. "I've got an idea!"

"But, Handy, we can't——"

"Can't never did anything!" snapped Handforth. "Are we going to see Mr. Lee taken off like this, without making any attempt to help him? Not likely! There's a chance here to do something fine!"

"But—but how?"

"Open that window!" commanded Handforth tensely.

"You—you mean we're going to get out?"

"Yes—we'll slip outside without being seen, and crouch away in the darkness," said Handforth. "Then we'll follow these beastly bandits and find out where they go. We shall be able to rescue Mr. Lee like that!"

It was a typical Handforth scheme, impracticable, well nigh hopeless, but full of really good intention.

The window was pushed up with difficulty, for they are very seldom used. But the juniors succeeded at last, and then, one by one, they slipped out head first and jumped on to the track.

As they alighted, they lay flat down so as to be unseen.

It was more by luck than anything else that they were unnoticed. It so happened that none of the bandits were near this part of the train at the time. And in a very few moments Handforth and Co. rolled down a little slope, and finally crouched behind some neighbouring bushes.

And five minutes later the train was allowed to go on.

Every passenger had been stripped of all his valuables, and the robbers had obtained a big haul. But no lives had been lost, there was not even an injury.

But as the train continued its journey, nobody slept. Indignation meetings were held in every coach. Ladies were brought round after fainting fits, and there was general confusion.

And everybody was quite convinced that the second section was due to suffer the same fate as the first.

CHAPTER VII.

A SET-BACK!



SIMON HAWKE was a fluent speaker.

By means of his ready tongue, he got himself into the full confidence of the train robbers. And the papers on Nelson Lee, proving that he was indeed the famous English detective, automatically turned the bandits against Lee.

"This man is just as dangerous to you as he is to me!" Hawke exclaimed grimly. "He's an absolute fiend when it comes to tracking anybody. I've done you a good service by warning you. If he had been left

on the train he would certainly have brought about your capture later on.

"I guess there's no guy living who could do that!" said the chief of the men.

"Well, anyway, he's safer here," said Hawke. "What I want you to do is to take him away into the hills, and keep him a prisoner."

"And what do we get out o' this lay-out?"

"What do you get?" said Hawke. "Why, man alive, he's worth thousands to you! There's not another man living who's more valuable. If you go about it properly, you can get a hundred thousand dollars for his release."

"Gee! Mebbe you're right!" said the man slowly.

They were still standing on the track, and the train had gone on. The lights still twinkled in the distance. But now that the train was out of the way, this spot seemed amazingly desolate and lonely.

The track stretched as far as the eye could see in a perfectly straight line for miles and miles—a steep gradient upwards, mounting to the top of the desert rise.

It could not be seen now, for all was dark and black. On both sides stretched a great, monotonous vista of sage-brush and cactus, with low hills rising towards the north.

Close at hand, Handforth and Co. crouched behind the bushes.

So far the three adventurous juniors had had no opportunity of moving, for some of the bandit gang had come quite near by. Indeed, Hawke and Roker were now talking to two of the robbers within earshot. Handforth and Co had heard all that was said.

Nelson Lee was there, too—standing by, a prisoner.

And when Lee found himself in a bad condition, with no immediate chance of improving it, he said nothing. He just accepted the position, and waited for his own time to come.

Hawke discussed plans with the men. And it was finally arranged that Lee should be taken to a little place comparatively near by—straight over the desert to a deep hollow. It was invisible from the railway—a kind of natural gap in the surface of the desert. New Mexico is full of such spots—most of them being of volcanic origin.

Down in this gap two of the bandits would take charge of Lee, and hold him until he could be shifted further on to the main camp, up in the hills. And Handforth and Co. heard all these plans being discussed.

They heard something else, too.

The men were determined to clear off at once. They were not going to hold up the second section of the California, Limited. For it was just possible that the second train would be warned by telegraph, and the train crew would be prepared.

This was a bit of a shock to the juniors.

"We reckoned to get on board the second section," whispered Church. "This means it will go straight by, and we shall be left

stranded—here in the desert. It might be miles and miles to the nearest town."

"Can't help it," breathed Handforth. "We're going to rescue Mr. Lee, anyhow."

"I don't see how we can do it," muttered McClure.

"Just a matter of determination," said Handy. "One great point is that we're not known. These brutes don't suspect we're here. But don't talk. I'm trying to hear what they're planning."

Handforth listened intently.

But the group had moved slightly away—not intentionally, but in that fashion that is sometimes done almost unconsciously. And now it was very difficult for the juniors to catch all that was being said.

"This is no good!" muttered Handforth. "I'm going to creep a bit nearer."

Before Church and McClure could object, their leader had commenced working his way forward. As long as the three were still, they were safe, with practically no possibility of discovery.

But Handforth, in his usual way, became reckless.

He took advantage of another bush near by in order to get comparatively close. And he was just settling himself down again when there was a sharp crack, a spurt of fire, and a bullet thudded into the ground within an inch of Handforth's knee.

"Great pip!" he gasped, scared and startled.

"What the deuce—" began Hawke.

"All right, stranger. I saw something movin' against that bush," said one of the men. "Say, you! Come right out here! I sure thought you was some prowlin' animal, but I figure I was wrong! Step lively, or I'll let daylight through your vitals!"

Handforth knew that he was discovered, and rose to his feet.

"You—you rotters!" he gasped. "You 'You might have killed me!"

"Gee! If it ain't one o' them kids from the train!" said the robber. "I guess he must have slipped out without bein' seen. Wal, boy, what's the game? What's the big idea?"

Handforth didn't know what to say. As a rule, he could talk quite freely—but just now he was almos tongue-tied. For he had suddenly remembered that Nelson Lee's precious packet was on him.

Church and McClure, still behind the original bush, looked on with fading hope. The capture of their leader was a blow that they had never suspected. It was, in fact, nothing short of a disaster.

"Oh, the ass—the idiot!" moaned Church. "It's all up now!"

"Stay still, and don't breathe!" hissed McClure. "Perhaps they won't spot us!"

Mr. Hawke was rapidly going through Handforth's pockets. He was a quick-witted man, and he had called to mind how Nelson Lee had gone out into the corridor of the train to speak with the boys.

A minute later Hawke uttered a cry of triumph.

"Ah!" he shouted. "Here's that package! On this boy all the time! Lee must have slipped it over to him!"

"Good heavens!" said Roker. "Then—then there's still a chance!"

"A chance!" repeated Hawke. "Why, it's a certainty now. With Lee out of the way, we shall be able to work the thing easily. If we can borrow a couple of horses from these men, we can get into the next town, and take the morning train for Los Angeles!"

"Say, how'd ya get that way?" demanded the leader of the train robbers. "What's the idea of all this planning?"

"We told you about that scheme of ours," said Hawke. "We stole these papers from a man on a liner, and if we get to Los Angeles quickly, we can put the deal through and clear a cool ten thousand dollars. We thought perhaps you'd lend two of your horses——"

"Can't you get on the next train when it comes along?"

"Too risky," said Hawke. "They know all about us on that train, and we should be made prisoners. No. We want to take a train in the morning—we can easily fake up a plausible yarn by then."

"Sorry, mister, but you'll get no hosses from us," said the other. "But you don't need to worry any. Guess you can both manage a ten-mile walk. It ain't a heap of a way to a station, an' there's plenty o' trains goin' through."

"And what will you do with these two?" asked Hawke. "I'd like you to take the boy as well—his father, don't forget, is one of the richest men in England, and will pay a big ransom for his release."

"Guess we'll figger that out later," interrupted the chief. "I guess I can see the headlight of the second section comin' along. We don't want to be around here right now. Yep, we'll take the boy, but I ain't sayin' we'll keep him. You'd best come along with us."

"No—I think we'll keep to the railroad," replied Hawke.

He was cunning. Having got rid of Nelson Lee and Handforth, he was fairly certain that these bandits would stick to their prisoners. And in the meantime Hawke and Roker would have an opportunity of getting to Los Angeles, and would pull the deal over.

Hawke had plenty of confidence in his own ability to bluff the thing out once the property was actually in his possession: Nelson Lee might come on the scene, and might bring direct charges, but he would have great difficulty in proving them.

In any case, the main thing was to get to Los Angeles.

Thus, five minutes later the railway track was completely deserted.

Hawke and Roker had commenced their long walk to the next station. They would allow the second section of the California,

Limited to go on, for they couldn't risk going on that train. But in the morning they would catch another.

"It's all very well to say we can get on a train to-morrow, but it'll be risky," remarked Roker, who was rather flustered by all the changes of fortune which had taken place during the last few hours.

"Risky?" said Hawke. "You don't know what you're saying. By the morning the whole country will be talking about this hold-up. We've simply got to bluff out that we were carried off as well as Lee and the boy. We had a fight with the bandits, and escaped. Why, man alive, we shall be sympathised with. We've got our tickets, and everything's in order. Lee was the only man who mattered—the only man I'm afraid of. The American sheriffs and police are no more harm than a bunch of kids."

"Well, I hope you're right," said Roker, relieved.

And while they walked along, Nelson Lee and Handforth were being taken to that cleft in the desert, where they would be held by two or three of the bandits until other preparations could be made. The main gang intended to get out of the district at once.

And when the second section came labouring along up the gradient, with its brilliant searchlight gleaming on the front of the engine, there was no indication that anything serious had happened to the leading part of the train.

But the engineer of this section got a surprise, too.

For he saw two figures standing in the track, waving their arms wildly!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RESCUE PARTY.



CHURCH and McClure were wildly excited.

They were alone on the track. The bandits had gone, and the two juniors had remained undiscovered. In fact, they held

the key to the whole situation. The bandits believed that their plans were unknown to anybody, and that they would be able to get clear away before any chase could be put into effect.

As soon as the two juniors found themselves alone, they rose to their feet. And they found that the second section was coming towards them at an aggravatingly slow rate of speed.

They could hear the locomotive puffing with all its strength, and the powerful searchlights beamed out in a most dazzling manner.

"Nothing could be better!" said Church breathlessly. "We can stop this train, and tell them all about it! We know all the facts—we know that Mr. Lee and Handy have been taken over in that direction," he

added, pointing. "If we're quick, we can overtake those rotten bandits."

"But we've got to stop the train first!" exclaimed McClure.

There was no difficulty about that.

The juniors planted themselves in the track, and stood there waving their arms wildly. The light was so powerful that there was no possibility of them being unseen. And, to their great joy, the engine ceased its puffing.

They would never have been able to stop an English train in such a manner—for in the dark night the driver would have known nothing. But that great searchlight made all the difference.

The huge train laboured to a standstill, and the juniors rushed up to the panting engine.

"What's wrong?" shouted the engineer, leaning out of his cab.

"The first section was held up by train robbers!" shouted Church. "Mr. Lee and one of our chaps have been taken away, prisoners. We want some help. They only started a little while ago, and if we're quick we'll overtake 'em."

"I guess the boy's sure mad!" said the fireman.

They both got down, and listened more intently to Church and McClure as they explained. Several other members of the train crew appeared, and there was quite a little commotion.

It was obvious that the boys were not spinning a yard.

Their story was well connected and perfectly clear. And, indeed, unless there had been a hold-up, they could never have been on this spot. And there was no earthly reason why they should tell a false story.

It wasn't long before the St. Frank's crowd heard of the excitement.

I was one of the first to know the truth. And I hurriedly dressed, and jumped on to the track. Pitt and Grey and Christine and Co. and De Valerie and a host of others followed.

And when the truth was known the excitement was intense.

"The guv'nor kidnapped!" I exclaimed breathlessly. "Something's got to be done! We've got to go to the rescue!"

"That's what I said!" exclaimed Church eagerly.

"There's Handforth, too!" I went on. "Look here, Church, do you know exactly which way these men went?"

"Yes—and you can follow the footprints and the marks of the horses easily," said Church. "It's all loose, sandy ground. If we back up, we might be able to rescue 'em straight off."

"All right!" I said briskly. "This is a job for the Remove!"

"Hurrah!"

"Back up, you fellows!"

"St. Frank's to the rescue!"

Enthusiasm ran high. The very thought of chasing across the desert in order to

rescue Nelson Lee and Handforth was fascinating. And the Remove's example was so good that fully a dozen men who were on the train decided to accompany them.

The guard was rather concerned—for it would mean a long delay for his train.

But it couldn't be helped—the train would be compelled to wait there until the rescue party returned. It wasn't a bit of good ordering the fellows to give up the idea. They wouldn't dream of it.

And in less than ten minutes the rescue party started.

It numbered over fifty, including every available junior. Only one or two hung back—cowardly fellows like Teddy Long and Gulliver and Merrell. Fullwood was as eager as anybody to join in the chase. Fullwood may have been several kinds of a rotter, but he was not a coward, and he liked adventure as much as anybody else.

The whole quest was something of a problem.

If that crevice in the plain was found, all well and good. But if it could not be located, the chase was a mere waste of time. However, the only thing was to set out and see.

If there had been more time to think, this enterprise might have been stopped. For, after all, it was a very risky thing for the boys to go chasing a gang of desperate train robbers who were armed to the teeth.

But, in the tense excitement, the only thought was to save Nelson Lee and Handforth. And the train was compelled to wait.

The St. Frank's fellows were well to the fore, with Church and McClure leading. They had seen the robbers go, and knew the general direction which had been taken. But there their knowledge ended.

However, there were the footprints. After a short distance our eyes grew accustomed to the gloom, and we were able to dimly see the marks in the sandy soil.

"Sure it's only a mile or two?" I asked, more than once.

"That's what they said, anyhow," replied Church.

"If it's a distance like eight or ten miles, we've taken an a pretty hefty proposition," I went on. "Still, it's got to be done—even if we go twenty miles. There's no telling what might happen to the guv'nor in the hands of a gang like that."

I was, as a matter of fact, filled with great anxiety and alarm.

These bandits knew that Nelson Lee was a detective, and they would have no compunction about knocking him on the head, or riddling his body with bullets. The one fact that they had taken him away, a prisoner, was encouraging. It seemed that the worst had not happened.

We plodded on and on, a great, straggling mob of men and boys. If anybody had told me, two days previously, that an adventure of this sort would take place, I should have laughed.

It seemed so utterly wild and extra-

ordinary. Practically the entire Remove of St. Frank's going across the desert on the trail of a band of train robbers! But there it was—an absolute fact.

And not so extraordinary, after all. Considering that Nelson Lee had been kidnapped, it was about the only thing to be done. And when it came to an adventure, the St. Frank's Remove would be hard to beat. They found most of it that was going.

Many of the fellows were beginning to give up hope after nearly an hour's trying walk over the desert. And then, suddenly, Church gave a little cry. He had nearly fallen down a steep gully.

And it was so astonishing, too.

It seemed that there was nothing ahead but straight ground—a gentle rise stretching for mile after mile. But, actually, there was a great cut in the wide surface of the desert—a kind of canyon, with steep sides leading downwards for practically a hundred feet.

And there, gleaming in the darkness, was a light.

It was the bandits' camp!

They had never believed that any chase would come so soon, and they were probably prepared to leave at once for the hills—just pausing here to sort out their booty.

If there had been a little organisation in the rescue party some careful plan of action might have been adopted. But as soon as ever the juniors saw the light they set up a terrific yell of triumph.

And, without any more ado, they commenced pelting, helter-skelter, down the steep side of the gully.

"Hurrah!"

"The Remove to the rescue!"

"Down with the bandits!"

"Come on, you chaps!"

And the remove hurled itself onwards to the attack. There had been no chance to take the enemy by surprise—to creep down and to make a sudden attack.

The rescuers were heralded from afar.

And perhaps, under the circumstances, it was better so. For the train robbers heard a terrific commotion—shouts, yells, and all sorts of other noises. And, staring about the gully in sudden alarm, the robbers saw scores of figures outlined against the dark sky.

The effect was magical.

The first impression among the robbers was that a vast posse of sheriffs and other men were on the trail. There was not the slightest thought of stopping on the spot to show fight. The only thought among the robbers was to flee—and to get out of the landscape as quickly as possible.

They knew this gully well, and were certain that they would be able to make a clean get-away. If they had known that practically all the attackers were school-boys, and that hardly a soul in the party was armed, they would have stood their

ground—and terrible bloodshed might have followed.

But they fled.

And, believing the very worst, they fled precipitately. It seemed that capture was at their heels, and they didn't even wait to take their spoils with them. They left the greater part of the money and valuables strewn about—just as it had been as they were sorting out and dividing the booty.

And Nelson Lee and Handforth were completely forgotten.

They had been shoved into a kind of cave, bound up, and left there.

As those figures appeared on the sky there was only one thought in the minds of every robber. He dashed for liberty. And the whole gang simply faded away like so much smoke.

Thus, by the time the Remove arrived on the scene there was not a soul within sight. The place was completely deserted, and there was nothing there except a camp fire, a few portable cooking utensils, and some half-prepared food. And somebody was bellowing loudly from near by.

"Hi! Rescue!" came a well known voice.

"Handy!" gasped Church gladly.

He and McClure rushed into the cave, and there they found Handforth and Nelson Lee. Knives were soon got to work, and in less than three minutes, the late prisoners were released.

"My hat!" said Handforth. "That was pretty good, you know! I reckon this is a bit of a triumph for me!"

"For you?" gasped McClure faintly.

"For us, you mean!" snorted Church.

"Well, of course, you had a bit of a share in the victory," admitted Handforth. "But it was I who thought of the idea of getting out of the train—"

"And it was you who got yourself captured, and it was you who allowed those rotters to get Mr. Lee's papers!" interrupted Church.

Handforth sobered down somewhat.

"Yes, that was a bit of a mistake," he confessed. "But you needn't worry. Mr. Lee's a marvel, and he'll put things right in no time. Anyhow, it's a triumph for Study D!"

Church and McClure were not likely to disagree with that point of view.

"The affair has ended very satisfactorily, on the whole," Nelson Lee was saying. "It is rather a pity that Hawke and Roker got away with the documents, but I think we can settle them before long."

"I hope so, sir" I declared. "Thank goodness you're all right—and that's the main thing. I'm getting fed up with all this bother! The case doesn't seem to be worth while, sir."

"I shall continue it until the end," declared Lee quietly. "And I rather fancy that the end is near at hand."

The gov'nor's face was rather battered about—bruised considerably. But he made light of this. And soon afterwards we were all hurrying back towards the waiting train.

And then we continued our journey.

It had been extremely exciting up till now, but the rest of the trip to Los Angeles was perfectly uneventful. We were glad of this, for we were given an opportunity to view the scenery.

And there was plenty to be seen on this last day—the day we were due to arrive in Los Angeles. For we went through the mountains. From Barstow, we climbed up and up, and the last stage of our journey lay through the most picturesque mountain scenes.

Many of these were grand in the extreme. The train, as it wound round the many curves, brought into view the most glorious hills and deep valleys. One could look out of the train window and gaze down for miles and miles—right down into the heart of glorious, fertile hollows.

The train seemed to be perched upon the hillside, in imminent peril of side-slipping, and crashing down to destruction. But, actually, it was safe enough. And in due course we arrived at San Bernardino, where we had excellent views of the orange groves and the glorious Californian palm trees.

And then on through Pasadena, to Los Angeles itself.



"Hi! Rescue!" came a well-known voice.

"Handy!" gasped Church gladly. He and McClure rushed into the cave, and there they found Handforth and Nelson Lee.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FINISHING TOUCH!



MR. SIMON HAWKE was quite confident.

"Of course, you fully realise, Mr. Barclay, that this matter is completely and absolutely confidential," he said. "I

should like you to thoroughly understand that I am suggesting the best way for all concerned."

"I realise that, Mr. Hawke," said Earle Barclay, real estate agent. "And I think it is most probable that we shall be able to come to terms."

"Splendid!"

Mr. Hawke and Mr. Roker had arrived at their destination. They were, in fact, seated in a beautifully equipped office, situated on Olive Street, Los Angeles. Outside, the big city was humming with life, and the sun shone brilliantly—as it nearly always does in California.

Mr. Earle Barclay was the gentleman who dealt with all the business concerning the oil property which was really owned by Mr. Roger Sterling, Nelson Lee's client.

Mr. Barclay was a well-known man in the town, and he was as keen as anybody else upon putting a good deal over. He

had been talking with his visitors for quite a while.

"You see, Mr. Barclay, I purchased these title deeds from Mr. Roger Sterling," continued Hawke. "At the time Mr. Sterling was rather pushed for money, and I accommodated him. You understand?"

"Sure," said the real estate man. "But I'm sure you'll pardon me, but I'm very much afraid we can't settle this business very quickly, Mr. Hawke. You realise I've got to make a number of inquiries."

"Inquiries?" said Hawke sharply.

"Why, surely," replied Mr. Barclay.

"But I have the title deeds here—and they speak for themselves."

"May be," said the real estate man. "Please don't imagine that I'm attempting to question your integrity. At the same time, Mr. Hawke, I had heard certain rumours. And in such a large deal as this, I must necessarily make inquiries that are needed. When I am fully satisfied, I will put this deal through, and the property will be entirely yours."

Mr. Hawke thought for a moment.

"I reckon these inquiries are—essential?" he asked.

"Very."

"You couldn't very well settle the thing now—to-day?"

"I'll say I couldn't," replied Mr. Barclay

firmly. "We don't do things like that here, Mr. Hawke. I've no doubt that everything you say is perfectly true, and that you are reliable. At the same time, I have my business to think of, and I cannot afford to take any chances."

Hawke bent forward.

"See here, Mr. Barclay, I'll be frank with you," he said quietly. "I want to settle this thing right now, so that the ground becomes the equal property of Mr. Roker and myself. It is quite possible that we shall have to fight hard in order to retain our ownership, and I want to be prepared as early as possible."

Mr. Barclay smiled.

"I think I understand," he said. "It's not quite—straight, eh?"

"Well—not quite," said Hawke bluntly. "What's your attitude, Mr. Barclay? I've been frank with you, and I want you to be frank with me. Are you open to go into this thing—and make a little pile?"

Mr. Barclay sat back in his chair.

"What do you call a little pile?" he asked.

"Well—a hundred thousand," replied Hawke.

"In dollars?"

"Yes."

"Couldn't be done, I'm afraid," said Mr. Barclay smoothly. "We're dealing with millions, Mr. Hawke, and a hundred thousand dollars strikes me as being paltry. Now if you had said pounds—your own English money—it might be different."

"You mean half-a-million dollars?"

"I sure do," said Barclay.

"If I arrange things so that you get that bunch of money, you'll fix the deal up right away?" asked Hawke tensely.

"Yes."

"It's settled!" said Hawke. "We'll shake on that, Mr. Barclay!"

He thrust his hand across the desk, and Mr. Barclay seized it heartily—being evidently a bird of the same plumage. But it is not always well to judge by appearances.

Mr. Hawke's wrist received a sharp pull, he was yanked over the table, and the next second there were two sharp clicks. He turned deathly pale as he saw, with goggling eyes, that his wrists were handcuffed.

"What the——" he began thickly.

"Sorry, Mr. Hawke, but that's the way we do things over here" said Mr. Barclay calmly. "It may interest you to know that I am not actually Mr. Barclay himself, but a substitute. I am Whitman, of the Los Angeles Detective Bureau."

Hawke swore violently.

And Mr. Roker, making a sudden dash for the door, hoped that he might be

able to escape. But in this hope he was doomed to disappointment. There was, in fact, nothing doing.

Before he could even get halfway across the room Nelson Lee appeared from an adjoining door, accompanied by two police officers attired in khaki uniform.

Roker was held in a flash.

Hawke stared at Lee as though the latter were a ghost.

"You!" he said thickly.

"A bit of a disappointment, Hawke, but these things happen in this life," said Nelson Lee pleasantly. "You thought I was safely held by your friends, the bandits, eh?"

"How did you escape?" snarled Hawke.

"It is rather a long story, and might prove tedious to you," replied Lee. "I will just say that I arrived on the second section of the California Limited, an hour or two late, may be, but I was in town a clear six hours ahead of you. And made certain preparations."

"You—you infernal hound!" panted Hawke maliciously.

"For one thing it was highly necessary that I should obtain concrete evidence of your swindling intentions," continued Lee. "I have that evidence now. You attempted to strike a rascally bargain with the gentleman you thought to be Mr. Barclay. Every word of your conversation was taken down in shorthand."

Roker had already collapsed, and now Mr. Hawke shrugged his shoulders, and looked round contemptuously. He had made a big bid for fortune, but had failed.

But he had failed only because of Nelson Lee.

And, in the meantime, another little scene was taking place elsewhere in Los Angeles.

The St. Frank's Remove had arrived.

They actually came in at the same time as Nelson Lee, and I think I'd better describe what happened.

We were scheduled to arrive at about three o'clock, or just before. Actually we pulled into Los Angeles station at just about four o'clock. Considering the delays on the trip, this was an excellent performance.

We were in California at last.

We had arrived in the famous city of Los Angeles—that wonderful Western town which has grown with such amazing rapidity—and which is growing at just the same speed even now.

The sun was shining with great heat, but not overpowering. And there was a pleasant cooling breeze which made the atmosphere quite delightful.

And weren't we glad to be out of the train!

When we had started on that long journey across the States, we had looked forward to it eagerly as a great adventure. But after the first day or two, one gets rather tired of it, and longs for the solid ground again.

On the station a well known figure was waiting.

Lord Dorrimore himself stood there—the same old Dorrie as of old, gracefully attired in white flannels and a panama hat. He looked very bronzed and healthy, and he wore his usual sunny smile.

Beside him, and towering enormously, stood no less a person than that old friend of ours, Umlosi, the inky black Kutana Chief. We knew that we should meet Dorrie, but he had said nothing about Umlosi being there.

"There he is!" went up a roar.

And dozens of fellows piled out of the train and dashed at Lord Dorrimore—a clear indication of his striking popularity in the Remove. His lordship was almost overwhelmed by the rush.

"By gad!" he gasped. "Steady, young 'uns—what have I done? An' how goes it? Hallo Nipper! So there you are, Montie, old lad! An' good old Handforth! Just as self-confident as ever!"

He shook hands all round, until his arm ached.

"And here's Umlosi!" I exclaimed with enthusiasm. "Good old coal box! We didn't expect to find you here! We thought you were killing cannibals in Central Africa!"

Umlosi revealed all his white teeth in a big smile.

"Wau! Thou art always ready with the jest, O, Manzie!" he exclaimed, using the nickname he had given me long before. "'Tis well! Methinks thou and I will soon be passing through wondrous adventures."

"That's good!" I said. "What's the programme?"

"'Tis not for me to say O, thou of the twinkling eye," replied Umlosi. "But N'Kose will doubtless explain. 'Tis a long story, and we have much voyaging ahead of us. Wau! But I am glad to see thee again, my young masters."

"And now we're altogether, it'll be a funny thing if we don't have some good times," I said heartily.

"Good times?" echoed Lord Dorrimore. "Young man, whatever adventures we've had in the past will be worth about two cents compared to what we shall have now! No—I won't explain now, but I can tell you candidly that it's the finest stunt I've ever set out upon."

"Then it's bound to be good!" I said. "And we can pretty well rely upon some excitement."

Lord Dorrimore refused to give us any definite information—he was going to reserve that for a bit. In the meantime, he had booked an entire floor at the Bainton Hotel, on Sixth Street, just opposite Westlake Park.

It was quite a large place, and one of the newest in the town, and situated in the nicest district. Before an hour had passed we were all comfortably settled in our new home.

And this, in itself, was a bit of a surprise.

We had half expected to be carried straight off to Lord Dorrimore's yacht. But it appeared that Dorrie was not quite ready for departure yet. And we were glad, because we should now have an opportunity of seeing the celebrated Los Angeles.

Handforth was inclined to be critical, as usual.

"Blessed if I can make it out," he declared, as he stood on the wide steps of the hotel. "I haven't seen Charlie Chaplin yet!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nor Mary Pickford nor Douglas Fairbanks," went on Handforth indignantly. "Where are they? I've always heard that they live in Los Angeles but I'm blessed if I've spotted them!"

"Hard lines, old man!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And there's William S. Hart, and Charles Ray, and Enid Bennett, and Thomas Meighan!" grinned Reggie Pitt. "We haven't seen any of the film stars. How awful! We shall have to make a complaint, Handy!"

Handforth snorted.

"I expect the whole place has been boomed up, and it doesn't deserve it!" he said sourly. "Anyway, I'm going to explore all round, and I'll tell you what I think of it."

"My dear chap, even if we go over to Hollywood—which is the film colony—it is very doubtful if we shall see any of the stars," I pointed out. "Still, we'll make a point of going to some of the studios—"

"Studios!" echoed Handforth. "We'll go into the pictures!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But there was a keen light in Handforth's eyes. And it turned out, soon afterwards that he had made up his mind to become a film star! What with the prospect of Lord Dorrimore's trip, and sightseeing in Los Angeles, it really seemed that we were booked for some highly interesting times.

And, as a matter of fact, we were!

THE END.

Editorial Announcement

MY DEAR READERS,

Los Angeles at last! What a thrill must have passed through the minds of the Juniors when the great Trans-Continental express slowed up at the station of Los Angeles. Hour after hour, through miles and miles of hot, burning sand relieved only by stunted clumps of cactus, had the giant engine laboured, for their route had been through the desert of Arizona. True the monotony of this part of the journey had been considerably lessened by the series of adventures, culminating with the hold-up by bandits, but this was something unusual and not likely to befall the ordinary traveller.

HANDFORTH AS A FILM ACTOR.

The Juniors could scarcely believe that they were in Filmland. Surely they must have seen some of the semi-tropical environs of this town in the great comedies of Charlie Chaplin on the pictures at home. Naturally they could think and talk of nothing else but picture plays and of their favourite stars. Handforth, of course, knew all there was to know about film acting. If he could only get the opportunity he would show the world what a wonderful film actor he could be if he liked to give his time to it. Much to the amusement of the other Juniors and everyone else, an opportunity comes Handforth's way sooner than he expects. It would be quite unnecessary for the leader of Study D to act in order to make a film. All he would have to do would be to behave in

his usual way to provide more than enough sensation for any film.

BEHIND THE SCENES IN FILMLAND.

Anyhow, it is not long before Edward Oswald is discovered and accepts an offer to act in a film, but with what success I must leave you to imagine, my chums, until you read all about it in next week's story, "St. FRANK'S IN FILMLAND; or, The Los Angeles Mystery!" In this great story the author will give you a wonderful insight as to how film plays are produced, for during his stay in Los Angeles he has visited several of the studios, and this alone should add considerable interest to the story.

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Remember that this is the last week in which coupons for the great Cricket Forecast Competition will be published, and that the last day for sending in is August 16th. Therefore, if you would like to win one of the handsome prizes, amounting in all to £300, fill in as many coupons as you can, and do not wait until the last moment before sending in. There is no limit to the number of attempts, and if you can form a good judgment as to the probable position of the various counties in the Championship you should win something. If your newsagent has exhausted his supply of "Nelson Lee's" you can obtain the same coupons from the "Union Jack Library" or "The Boys' Realm."

With very best wishes,

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

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IF you belong to a junior football club a unique opportunity awaits you in this week's issue of the tip-top story weekly, "Pluck"—a new league, run on novel lines, for junior football clubs. Silver Cups and Medals are offered as prizes for winners, and Bronze Medals, handsomely engraved to runners-up. Details of this great new scheme, together with complete rules and a special application form appears in

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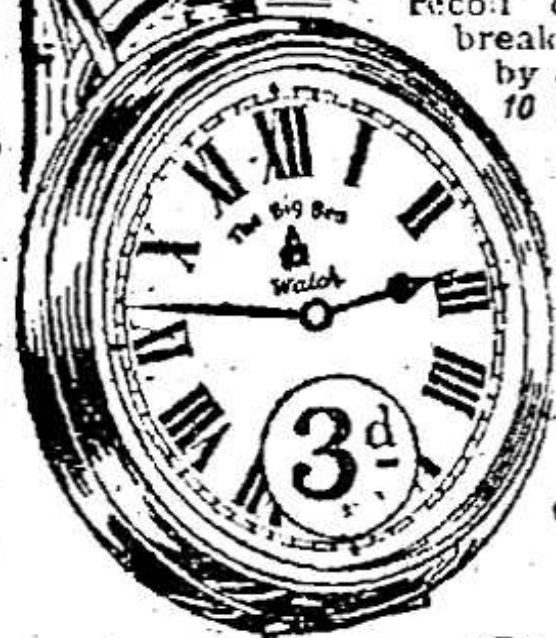
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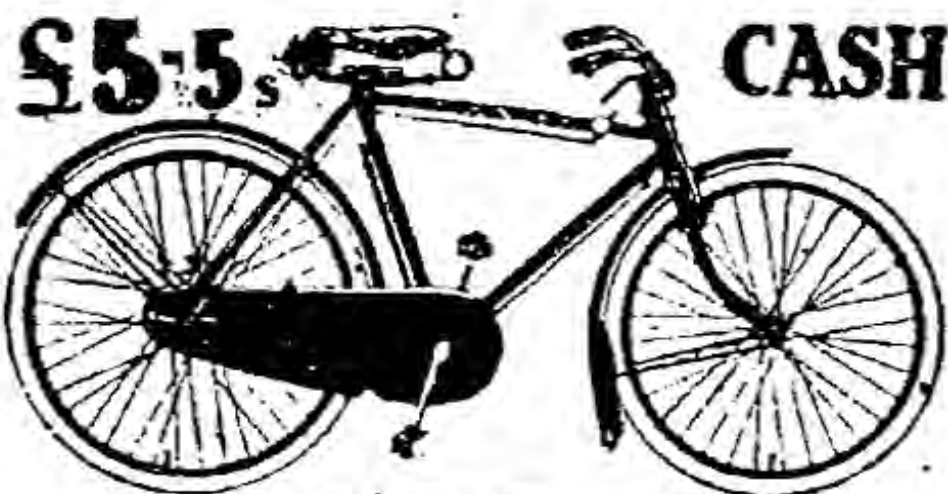
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