

WONDERFUL OFFER—FREE GIFTS FOR READERS (See Inside)

The NELSON LEE

2d



The
Trouble
Triplets

New Series No. 18.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

May 24th, 1930.

LAST WEEK: THE TROUBLE TWINS. THIS WEEK—

THE TROUBLE TRIPLETS!



POSH



SAM



NIPPY

Enter Nippy!

"**T**RAMP!" observed Joe, otherwise "Posh" Trouble, glancing along the road.

"Only a kid!" assented Sam, his twin brother. "Limping, too! Looks done to the wide!"

"Properly done!" agreed Posh, shaking his head. "Hard lines on a kid having to tramp it--no home, no nothing!"

"Like us!" added Sam, with a grin.

Posh nodded and also grinned. Apparently the fact that they were homeless did not trouble the cheery Trouble Twins one bit. They preferred tramping the roads to a wretched home life with Jake Grabb, their brutal stepfather. That was why they had taken to tramping the muddy highway in search of work, adventures, and fun--especially fun.

They had been tramping four hours now; dusk was beginning to fall when they took a rest by the wayside, and Posh untied the parcel of bread and cheese--all they had brought with them in the way of grub.

It was just as Posh was about to divide up the bread and cheese that they sighted the lonely, limping figure some distance along the road. He was young--about their own age--and he looked half-starved, footsore, and weary.

With his knife poised, Posh looked meaningfully at his brother; then, as Sam nodded, he called out to the limping youth as the latter came up.

"Happen to know the time, chum?" called Posh cheerfully.

He didn't care twopence what the time was, but it was one way of introducing themselves.

The boy halted, and Posh's cheery grin

faded a trifle when he saw the almost wolfish look in the tramp's eyes as he sighted the bread and cheese.

"I--I don't know the time," he answered huskily.

"Well, it ain't important," said Posh carelessly. "Take a pew--you look about done up. Shove up there, and make room for our new pal, Sam," he added severely.

The boy hesitated, and then he sat down slowly.

"Just in time for the giddy banquet, too!" went on Posh. "Save us chuckin' this grub away, kid!"

"Look here, I--I don't want to take your food!" stammered the boy. "You look hungry enough yourselves--"

"Us hungry!" exclaimed Sam, who, like Posh, had not tasted food since noon. "What an idea! After that bust-up tea we had at the last village, too. We were just wonderin' if it was worth

while carting this bread and cheese about with us!" he added untruthfully. "Pile in, old scout!"

The youth's pinched face brightened, though he eyed the twins somewhat uneasily as he started on the bread and cheese. He ate half, and then he suddenly stopped and refused to eat more, as if he had come

to the conclusion that the Good Samaritans were not so well fed as they made out.

"Oh, well," said Posh, "just as you like, chum! We'll scoff this as we don't like chuckin' good grub away!"

And he divided up the remainder, and the twins demolished it quickly, eyeing the stranger curiously as they did so. The twins were as alike as two peas, and both of them were struck by the fact that this youth was

STOP!



The copper said that to the Trouble Triplets, but it takes more than a copper to stop Posh & Co. And nothing will stop you reading this rollicking yarn once you've started it!

also remarkably like them both in size and looks, excepting that his hair was fair, while theirs was jet black. They were also struck by the fact that the boy seemed curiously ill at ease, and kept glancing back the way he had come, as if he feared pursuit.

"Somebody after you, chum?" ventured Posh gently at last.

The boy nodded.

"I—I think so," he said, after a hesitating pause. "You see, I've run away!"

"So've we!" grinned Sam. "Misunderstood at home, what?"

"Nunno! Got no home, no people, no nothing!" said the boy, with a faint grin. "Not even a name! But they call me Nippy at the show——"

"Show?"

"Yes. I've run away from a show—fed up with the boss' bullying! Professor Zinzegalla——"

"Who?"

"His real name's Jabez Binks," grinned Nippy. "The world-renowned hypnotist and illusionist, and the biggest bullying rotter out! I was his assistant, unpaid, exceptin' for kicks and blows, and—— Oh, lor'! Here he is!"

The twins had been aware for some moments of the approach of a curious thumping noise—a noise like a hammer being banged on a saucepan. Now, like Nippy, they saw that it proceeded from an ancient Ford car which had just rattled up, wheezing and banging. It stopped opposite to them, and a big, greasy-looking individual with a moustache like a broom-head jumped out, followed by a man who looked like a hefty butcher.

"The—the professor!" groaned Nippy. "And that other chap's Sambong, the strong man of the show. They've tracked me down, and now——"

He made a belated bid for liberty as Professor Zinzegalla rushed from the car to capture him. Sam thoughtfully interposed a foot, and the professor tumbled over it, trod on the frayed edge of his moth-eaten fur-lined coat, and nose-dived into the mud of the road.

Posh Does His Stuff!

"**H**E, he, he!" chortled Posh Trooble. "You—you young villain!" shrieked the professor, scrambling to his feet, and turning a muddy face towards the twins. "You deliberately——" He paused to shout suddenly at the beefy man in the car. "After Nippy, you fool! After him!"

But the strong man was already out of the car, chasing after the unfortunate runaway, and Posh decided it was time he took a hand in the proceedings. He gave the familiar gulp that preluded a ventriloquial effort, and then the professor's voice rang out again—or Sambong imagined it was the professor's voice.

"Come back, Sambong, you big stiff!

Never mind that kid—come back, you lump of useless fat! Come back, you ugly apology for a strong man!"

Sambong stopped as if thunderstruck, and the hapless Nippy was getting well away when a fat form in blue suddenly emerged from a side lane. The professor, who had been blinking dazedly about him in search of the mysterious voice, sighted the constable, and he gave a howl.

"Stop 'im! Stop that boy, constable! Eighteen-pence if you stop 'im!"

Such an extravagant offer was too good to miss, and the portly constable awoke from his day-dream, jumped in the fleeing Nippy's path, and his big arms swept round the boy.

"Blow!" gasped Posh. "Likewise, dash the luck!"

"Got 'im nicely, sir!" said the policeman, yanking Nippy back again. "Wot's he done—hangin' on behind?" he added, nodding to the antiquated car. "If you wants to charge 'im——"

"He was running away, officer!" said Professor Zinzegalla pompously. "I've brought him up like a father, and this is 'ow he pays me back! He wants to—to run away to sea——"

"To see what?" asked the constable. "Looks to me as if the kid wants to see some grub, if you arsk me——"

"He's hankering after the sea—S E A!" said the professor. "Being 'is lovin' father——"

"You ain't my father at all!" denied Nippy indignantly, wriggling in the officer's grasp. "You've no right to keep me against my will, and——"

"Hark to the young villain—disowning his own father!" said the professor, affecting a deep sob. "Ain't I 'is father, Sambong?"

The strong man scowled—he was a short-tempered gentleman, and he couldn't forget the professor's insults. Yet the professor was the boss of the whole show, from the roundabouts to the pea-nut stall, and not wanting to lose his job, Sambong nodded.

"'Course he is!" he grunted. "And a nice dance he's led us since he bolted larst night arter the show!"

"Ho! Run away, has he?" asked the officer sternly.

"Yes—but we've got him now!" said the professor thankfully, rattling some coins in his pocket significantly. "Shove him in the car, Sambong! Thanks, officer! I'll report your smartness to Scotland Yard!"

Professor Zinzegalla deftly slipped a shilling and a sixpence into the ready palm of the constable. The shilling was a bad one, but the professor hoped to be well away before the constable discovered that. As the officer saluted and ambled on his way, Sambong lifted Nippy and deposited him in the rear of the car like a sack of coke. Nippy looked appealingly back at the chums, as if he still hoped that they could save him.

Posh and Sam meant to try, anyway.

They liked Nippy, and strongly disliked the professor and Sambong. As Zinzegalla grasped the wheel, a piercing shriek seemed to come from the rusty bonnet of the Ford tourer.

"Help! Murder! Police! Don't start the engine, bottlenose!"

The professor jumped violently, and then with a startled gasp he leaped from the car and started to raise the bonnet. Seeing nothing, he stooped over, and as he did so Posh sent a whizzing turf that caught him neatly in the rear. At the same moment Sambong appeared to say:

"Take that, you bottle-nosed kid-stealer in a moth-eaten rabbit skin! Call me a lump of useless fat, would yer?"

"You—you threw that at me, Sambong!" shrieked the professor. "You're sacked, you good-for-nothing, lazy lifter of sham weights! Why, for two pins I'd mop up the road with you, you chunk of melted candle-fat!"

It was Posh who had added the last two sentences, but not knowing this, Sambong, naturally enraged more than ever now, leaped from the car, turning back his sleeves in a significant manner.

"Sacked, ham Hi?" he bawled, his beefy face red with rage. "Lazy lifter of sham weights, ham Hi? Chunk of melted candle—candle—" The strong man choked with emotion as he grasped the startled professor by the collar and shook him like a rat. "Well, if I'm sacked I'll give you sommut to remember me by afore I goes!"

"Leggo!" shrieked Professor Zinzegalla. "I didn't say that! I only said you were a red-nosed lifter of cardboard weights, that you were sacked, and that for two pins I'd smash your ugly features—"

It was again Posh, of course, who added those last words, and it proved too much for Sambong's patience. He was sacked, and he remembered many old insults in addition to the new, so he smote his employer on the nose, and then under the chin and on each ear.

The professor lost his temper then, and risked losing his life by hitting back. The next moment they were scrapping vigorously until they both rolled over and toppled into the ditch.

Splash!

Nippy Joins Up!

"**H**A, ha, ha!" roared Posh and Sam, while Nippy grinned, too entertained to run for it.

From the ditch came sundry splashes and ear-splitting yells telling that the battle was being continued there, and calling to Nippy to stay in the car, Posh and Sam swarmed aboard. Posh took the steering-wheel. He had never driven a car before, but he saw no reason why he shouldn't try now.

At the first attempt he nearly backed the contraption into the ditch, but he soon got

the hang of it. Giving the engine full speed ahead, the car shot away at a good six miles an hour, bumping and thumping and rattling as it zigzagged from one side of the road to the other.

The noise of the disappearing Ford was the signal for the battle to cease, and scrambling out of the ditch, looking shocking sights, the professor and Sambong went pelting after the car, yelling at the top of their voices.

"He, he, he!" giggled Posh, narrowly escaping a collision with a telegraph pole. "Wouldn't Segrave go green with envy if he saw us now! Hallo, there's the bobby!"

The constable obviously hadn't discovered the bad shilling yet, for as he sighted the Ford and grasped the position, he obeyed the professor's yells and jumped in front of the ancient car.

The road was narrow, and Posh lost his head in the sudden crisis until, remembering the brakes, he jammed them on. Thus the Police Force was not lessened by one man; but Posh nearly butted the constable in the waistcoat. Only nearly, for the bobby, with a wild shriek, leaped about two feet into the air—and landed right on top of the Ford's bonnet.

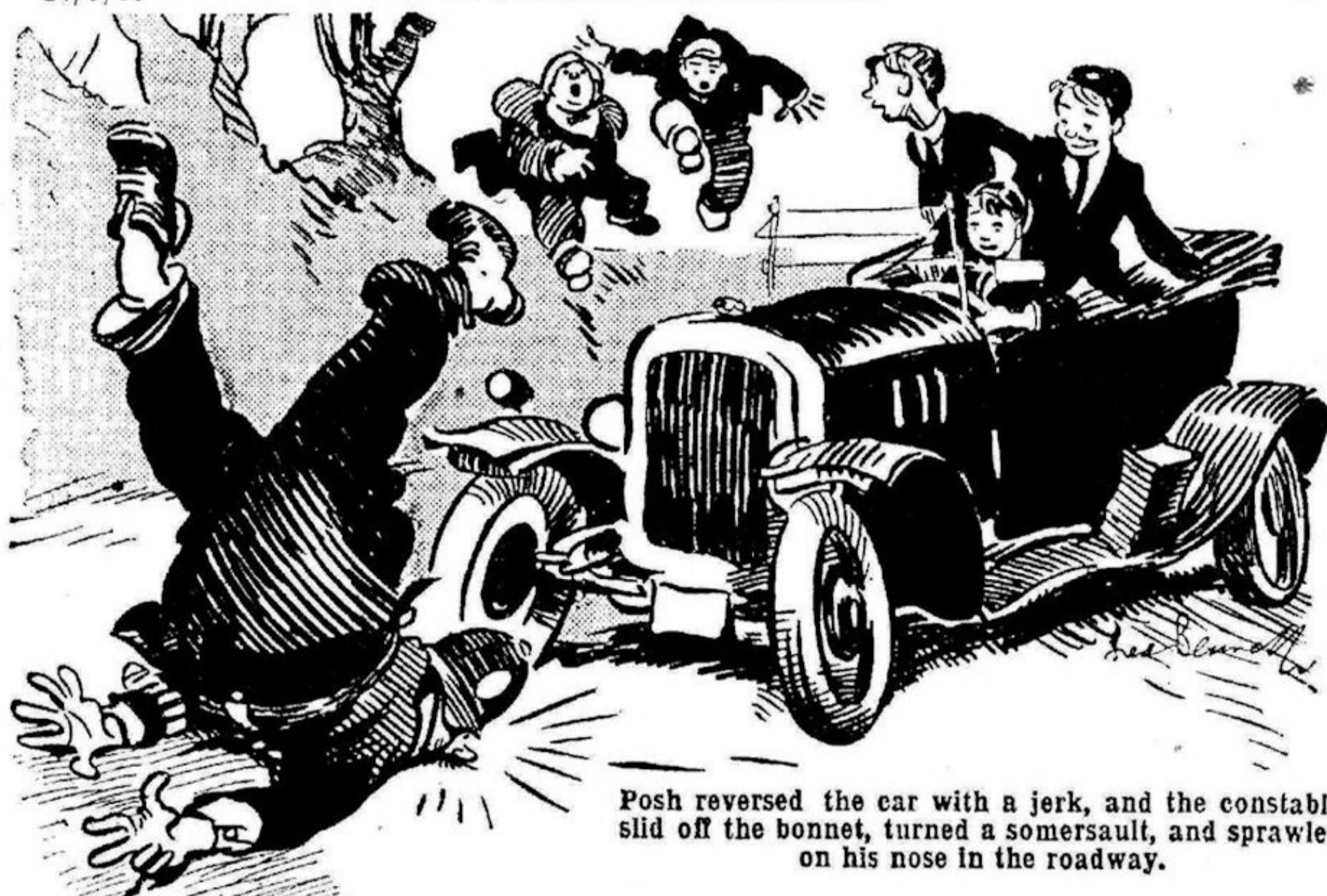
At that moment Posh released the brakes, and the ancient vehicle clanked along for a few yards, carrying the terrified constable, who did not seem to like his novel position in the world. Posh, still all of a flutter, pressed on the clutch pedal, and with a terrific jerk the vehicle stopped dead and then started going backwards. The constable slid off the bonnet, turned a somersault, and sprawled on his nose in the roadway.

At that moment the professor and Sambong came pelting up. Not desiring to run over the officer—which he would do if he sent the car forward again—Posh brought the Ford to a standstill, gave the word, and the three tumbled out of the car and made a bolt for the nearest hedge. They scrambled through, followed by the professor, Sambong, and then the policeman, who was hurt sufficiently to desire an interview on the subject with Posh.

Though tired, the twins and Nippy felt it necessary to forget their tiredness, and they travelled at a pace that would have put the professor's Ford to shame. Across two ploughed fields and through a spinney they dashed, and then Posh, who was leading, pulled up on the bank of a little murmuring brook, spanned by a single plank bridge.

A glance back showed no signs of their pursuers through the trees, but they could hear their angry yells as they crashed in pursuit. Working swiftly, the three managed to loosen the plank until it just rested on the edge of the bank, and then they awaited developments.

A moment later the hunters arrived, Sambong leading, followed by the professor, and the constable a few yards behind,



Posh reversed the car with a jerk, and the constable slid off the bonnet, turned a somersault, and sprawled on his nose in the roadway.

Sambong made a wild leap on to the plank. It held his weight for a second, and then it tipped up. The strong man, having no visible means of support left, dropped with a sickening splosh into the brook.

Unable to pull up in time, and still playing "follow-my-leader," the professor and the constable followed him in turn. With wild yells of alarm and terrific splashes, they joined their leader in the babbling brook.

For the first time the twins heard Nippy laugh.

"He, he, he!" he laughed. "First bath two of 'em have had since they were christened, I bet! As for the bobby——"

"It's rude to stare!" chided Posh severely. "Let's go away—while the going's good!"

The three returned hastily to the waiting Ford. They swarmed aboard, Posh took the wheel, and the car careered onwards at an exhilarating speed. Three miles had been covered—and then came disaster. By this time Posh thought he knew all there was to be known about driving cars, but Posh thought wrong. The Ford went over a big bump in the roadway, the steering-wheel twisted in Posh's hands, and before he knew where he was, the car had turned off the road and had started on a cross-country run. This wouldn't have been so bad—only it was heading straight for a large oak-tree. Posh did his best to avert disaster, but he was seconds late.

Crash!

The Ford biffed into the tree and crumpled up like a concertina. Sam, yelping in dismay, found himself soaring through air, to land on a tree branch, where he hung suspended by his coat. Nippy had the misfor-

tune to sail face first into a small pond. As for Posh—well, he soared towards the heavens, with the broken steering-wheel hanging round his neck, acting as a halo. Finally he came to earth in a hedge.

It took the three lads some minutes to sort themselves out. Uttering feeble groans and rubbing their anatomies tenderly, they eventually congregated around the wrecked Ford. Posh and Sam couldn't be miserable for long, however, and soon they were grinning hugely. Their cheeriness was infectious; Nipper was smiling now, too.

"I say, I rather like you, Nippy," said Sam. "What d'you say to joining us on our giddy wanderings? Joe's a bit of a ventriloquist——"

"I noticed that!" grinned Nippy. "A good one, too!"

"And I'm a bit of an acrobat and a juggler," resumed Sam modestly. "We intend to tramp on from village to village, giving shows, and you can go round with the hat!"

"I can do more than that!" smiled Nippy. He leisurely drew from Sam's left ear a live toad, followed by a young lizard, and dropped them into the pond. After which he drew an egg from Joe's pocket, appeared to swallow it, and finally retrieved it from the toe of his boot.

"A giddy conjurer!" breathed Posh. "Ripping! Henceforth we become the Trouble Triplets, and if we don't make things hum I'll eat my boots."

And, arm in arm, the Trouble Triplets started on their wanderings.

(Another rollicking yarn about the Trouble Triplets next Wednesday—and it's a perfect scream from the first line!)

GEE, BOYS! HERE ARE TWO NEW PALS WAITING TO MEET YOU!

The COWBOY KID & Co.



The first yarn of a thrilling new series, entitled:

"The WRECK OF THE LACOMA!"

Wrecked on storm-swept seas;

Marooned on a tropical island;

Attacked by hostile savages!

Thrills for the Cowboy Kid—and for you!

The Cowboy Kid Rides the Storm!

AS a muffled explosion, the third within twenty-four hours, shook the Lacoma to her last rivet, Loopy Lane, the Cowboy Kid, knew that the ship was doomed. When only half a day out from Honolulu, on her way to 'Frisco, she had bumped into a hurricane which had damaged her propeller and destroyed her wireless, and the next day the fire had started.

Battered by heavy seas, she had drifted helplessly, and the first explosion had torn the heart out of the ship and brought down the bridge, the captain and the chief engineer, who was with him, being killed. Most of the hands were dagos, only anxious to abandon the ship and sullenly mutinous. The navigating officer had had to shoot one down with his automatic and threaten the rest before he could make them go on pumping and fighting the fire.

Now the end had come. There was a screaming panic as the ship heeled over, and a rush for the boats. Loopy stared over the deck rail at a sea which slanted forty feet deep in the troughs. The wind was getting up again. A big black cloud had risen ominously on the sombre horizon. Sparks from the crater in the middle of the wounded ship floated in a long trail westward.

As the first of the loaded boats splashed overboard to the shriek of rusted tackle, Professor Lorenzo rushed up to Loopy.

"Come, Loopy boy!" he screamed as he pointed at the struggling seamen who were fighting desperately for places in another boat. "In a minute it will be too late."

Loopy shook his head.

"Look at that black cloud," he cried. "A storm's brewing and no boat will live when it breaks. Our only chance is to stay here."

"Bah! The Lacoma can't live another hour. The next explosion will sink her." The professor struggled frenziedly to fix his lifebelt. "I'm going in the boat, Loopy."

"What about your tigers?" Loopy jerked his arm free. "You'll starve if you can't stage your act."

Professor Lorenzo shrugged and smiled coldly.

"I can train another troupe," he cried.

Once more he grasped Loopy and dragged the boy to the rail, but the youngster pulled himself free and ran up the slanting deck. A boat was running down from the davits. With a shout of dismay the professor leapt to it, climbed in despite the blows that were rained on him, and the boat went down.

Loopy stared white-faced over the rail to which he had slid as screams and oaths echoed from the tumbling sea. The boat was just going under. She had hit the sea broadside on, having spilled her passengers and crew, who were striving desperately to get a hold on the ship's plates. Loopy saw Professor Lorenzo throw up his arms and sink. Many of the other bobbing heads had

disappeared, too, and he drew back, shuddering.

Then the grey sky blackened and rain beat upon the scorching deck of the ship like a waterfall. Loopy turned eyes big with fear on a wall of water which rose eighty feet above the ship's deck.

Flinging himself down, he clutched a ring-bolt with both hands as the sea thundered aboard. When the hurricane abated he lay exhausted against the shattered deck rail, battered, bruised, dazed, half-drowned. No sparks were drifting westward now. He could hear water gurgling in the logged hold as the ship rolled uneasily. He peered over the side to find the sea lapping at the port-holes.

Later, as he grew stronger and staggered up to look around, he found himself alone. He shouted and no one answered. He went round to the port side. Here a lifeboat had been reduced to splinters. All the rest had gone. Loopy sighed, for he had no doubt in his mind that the panic-stricken dagos who had got away in the boats had all shared the fate of the professor. He was alone on the burned and waterlogged shell of the *Lacoma*.

No sunlit ocean of radiant blue met his eyes, only a tossing murky sea which merged into a sky of dirty grey.

The Cowboy Kid, who stood not much higher than the deck rail, who should have been starring at the 'Frisco Palace next week in a cracker-jack turn, heaved a sigh and began to talk aloud.

"You'll never tickle up a vaudeville crowd with your team o' tigers any more, profess.; and seems to me Loopy Lane, the Cowboy Kid, will have to wait a long time before he raises another riot with his crack shootin', his lassoing, and his whip crackin'." He dropped his curly head upon the deck rail and watched the water lapping at the closed ports. "I'm a sprint swimmer," he mused, "and not a cross-Channel plugger. I won't float long after this old hulk settles down."

Loopy was not afraid. He had never been afraid, perhaps because he had been used to performing before an audience ever since he could remember, and though he was only fifteen, he had toured the world more than once. He looked calmly across the heaving sea.

"Does it matter?" he asked of the grey clouds. "There's no fun living in this old junk shop alone."

Then he gave a gasp, for a loud and frantic roar echoed from somewhere near. He ran along the deck, came to a shut door of a gangway and kicked it in. And as it swung back heavily on its hinges there bounded into view as fine a tiger as any jungle ever knew; a mighty beast with lashing tail and bared fangs which bounced Loopy down on the deck and pinned him there, to stand with its right forepaw upraised and foam dripping from its open mouth as it repeated its deafening cries.

And oddly Loopy seemed to understand.

"Roll over, Sheba," he cried. "Lie down, old girl. Now, let's have a look at the old paw."

Stuck deep in the pad of the tiger's paw was a jagged, nasty-looking splinter which the cat had bitten off flush without being able to remove it. Loopy took out a knife, opened out a blade, and whilst the tiger snarled and yelped with pain, lashing her tail wickedly, he dug out the splinter which he held up for Sheba to see.

"How's that?" he cried.

The magnificent beast rolled on to her four feet and crouched, then with a loud roar of delight she skipped away, ran round in a circle, rushed at him and, after leaping clean over him, flung him down on the deck with a push of her forepaws. Round and round she ran, and then, having had her gambol, came to him and rolled playfully at his side.

Loopy was not sorry, for had she struck at him with her exposed claws, he knew she could have driven them almost clean through him.

He stroked her lovely skin, and presently went down the treacherous stairs to search for food. All he could find there were some soaked biscuits and a small tin of bully beef. Loopy's face was grave as he opened the tin and offered the tiger some of the canned meat.

She ate it greedily. Loopy was satisfied with a bit of the biscuit; and he looked grave because he had seen the carcasses of the rest of Professor Lorenzo's team of performing tigers floating in the imprisoned waters of the ship's hold. Maybe Lorenzo had let them out, maybe the explosion had broken away the padlocks and freed the bolted door of the tigers' cage. At all events, all the others were dead and Sheba alone was alive.

"Old gal," said Loopy, with a grim smile, as he played with the great beast's ear, "there's just you and me left on this crazy old shell; and I hope we'll have a bit o' luck before you get so mad hungry that you'll have to eat me."

Out of the Frying Pan—!

DAWN found them still adrift, and after daybreak the wind rose to hurricane force again, lashing the waves until they poured over the broken ship like a waterfall.

Suddenly the water seemed to take the *Lacoma* up as if she were a cork, and on the very crest of the biggest wave Loopy had ever seen, she was born onward with irresistible force.

Lightning flashed and thunder rolled. The rain fell down in torrents. Loopy saw right ahead of him a forest of palm trees, above which peeped the top of a sugar-loaf mountain. The vivid lightning revealed a golden strand, and it seemed to Loopy that the wonderful panorama swung up right above

them. He blinked and looked again, expecting to find it gone; but no, it was there all right, closer now, he thought.

Flattening out, he gripped the ring bolt to which Sheba was tied—he had done this during the night to prevent her being washed overboard—and held on like grim death with both hands.

"I've got 'em, old gel," sighed Loopy. "It's a dream, or -else—"

And then he got a K.O. punch on the chin which might have been dealt to Jimmy Wilde by Carnera. Wallop! Crash! Curtain!

Loopy's light went out.

When it showed again the sun was shining. Loopy was no longer chilled to the marrow, but gloriously warm. He stared around him, shut his eyes, then looked again. And then he laughed.

He was on the deck of the *Lacoma*, true, but the ship was no longer on the heaving ocean, but had come to anchor, so to speak, in a glorious palm grove. All around him Loopy could see palm trees whose plumed heads waved gracefully in the breeze.

He looked up. A palm tree bobbed about overhead and, as he eyed it in wonder, a huge nut broke loose in its thick fibre shell and crashed down, glancing off Loopy's head. As it bumped the deck Loopy saw stars. When they cleared he felt the tear of claws. Sheba had clutched him, and the handsome beast was begging for food.

Mechanically, and still dazed, he released the tiger. The move was fatal, for with a roar Sheba cleared the deck rail, and when Loopy climbed to the side he saw her streaking over the velvet grass with great bounds.

He sighed. He couldn't blame her, but he reckoned he had lost her. She vanished among the palms.

The ship had been broken clean in half. What had become of the forepart of her, the boy did not know, but her stern was tossed up high and dry amidst a perfect paradise. Flattened out trees marked her course. When the sea had hurled her here she had dug her keel ten feet deep in the earth, from which her iron-plated side rose as high as a house.

Suddenly, as he sat wondering what he had better do, an odd scratching sound made him stiffen. Someone or something was climbing up the broken middle of the ship. And he hadn't any weapon.

Then a head appeared over the deck level, and Loopy let out a yell of delight. Sheba had come back, and the great tiger, which measured all of ten feet from her whiskers to the end of her tail, gripped a dead goat in her jaws.

"Clever puss!" said Loopy with a laugh. "So you went and fetched your own grub, did you?"

The tiger was ravenous. She devoured the goat, but left most of its skin and its hoofs, and as Loopy examined the skin he received a shock, for there was a slit in the side of it which had been made by a broad-

bladed knife, and the hoofs were tied together.

Crumbs! Then Sheba had not killed the goat!

Loopy rose and stared along the palm grove, and as he did so the distant beating of a drum echoed loudly. It was followed by shrill cries, the blowing of weird horns and the clamour of marching men.

Then the Cowboy Kid saw them. Through the glade they came, fifty, sixty, a hundred, perhaps even more. Each man's face was daubed hideously with white paint. Each man carried a spear and shield. The moment they caught sight of the ship they halted and pointed at it, shrieking wildly!

Sheba Shows Her Teeth!

LOOPY dived down the dangerous stairway and ran along the slanting corridor to his cabin. He managed to find his favourite lasso and to get back on deck by the time the warriors reached the wreck. He was not a moment too soon. A scrambling sound on the iron side of the broken ship told him that the savages were climbing up.

Even as Loopy ran across to Sheba's side, he saw a savage set his leg over the deck rail and swing his spear above his head. The boy had only just time to duck as the spear flashed by and stuck quivering in the side of the deck house.

The man rushed. Loopy whirled his lasso and threw, not at the man's head, but at his feet. The coil of the lasso slipped round the savage's ankle and, tightening it, the Cowboy Kid brought him down a regular purler. Then Sheba sprang at him.

With a yell of fright the savage bounded up and raced to the side, over which he vaulted in panic. Loopy set the leather rope round a ring bolt and held on. There was a jerk at the end as the savage was pulled up, dangling down from his imprisoned leg, and his head bumped the iron plates, knocking him senseless.

Other savages were clambering up the sides of the ship. They gathered in a group on the deck, chattering like a lot of monkeys, with their spears held ready to throw.

Loopy pointed.

"Any of you want to follow your pal?" he cried. "Or shall my she-cat eat you?"

They answered with a whooping war cry and bore down on him, their shields protecting their naked bodies and their spears pointed to kill.

Loopy gave Sheba a push.

"At 'em, old gel!" he cried.

Sheba hurled herself right amongst them, bearing down a giant savage with the weight and force of her mighty spring. She clawed another down by his waistcloth. She sprang upon the shoulders of a third, then bolted back to stand in front of Loopy with all her fangs bared.



Loopy whirled his lasso round the native's ankle, jerked the rope and the man crashed to the deck.

The savages halted in a panic. They began to shout. None of them had ever seen a tiger before. Some of them pointed down the glade, the way they had come, and began to scream. The wounded savages picked themselves up and scrambled over the side of the ship, tumbling headlong to the safety of the grass below. Then the others also fled, going over the broken deck rail like water over a weir.

Loopy picked up the abandoned spears and shields and piled them against the deck house. They were trophies worth the keeping. When next he looked along the palm glade it was empty.

He stroked Sheba's striped head fondly.

"Now ain't you a great big clever puss," he said.

Sheba answered with a joyous roar.

A moan followed it, and, looking over the side, the Cowboy Kid saw the savage he had lassoed hanging there by his ankle, twisting and turning as the breeze swayed his body.

Loopy curled the lasso round Sheba's mighty shoulders, gave the word, and as she moved away up came the savage like a fish on a line.

Loopy freed his leg. The native streaked to the side, bounded over, landed on the springy turf, scrambled up, and vanished with twinkling feet among the trees.

When evening fell Loopy thought it safe to walk that glade, with Sheba by his side. There were no signs of the savages who, obviously terrified of the Cowboy Kid and his pet tiger, had made themselves scarce, for the moment, at any rate.

They returned to the wrecked ship which was their home. The Cowboy Kid made a

bed for Sheba with some coils of rope, and as she settled down contentedly he rolled over by her side, using her striped body as a pillow.

The sun went down and night came as swiftly as if Loopy had switched off the electric light. Overhead the stars winked above the nodding palms. From a distance came the murmur of the lapping sea. Loopy closed his eyes, only to open them again as, from somewhere far away, came the dull drumming of tom-toms.

Boom. Boom. Boom. Bang. Bang. Boom!

The Cowboy Kid sat up and listened, wondering what the sound meant and whether the savages were marching to the attack again. He could hardly keep his eyes open. Those drums meant trouble he felt sure.

But after he had listened to them for an hour and they had come no nearer, he settled down again. Sheba could be trusted to wake him should danger threaten.

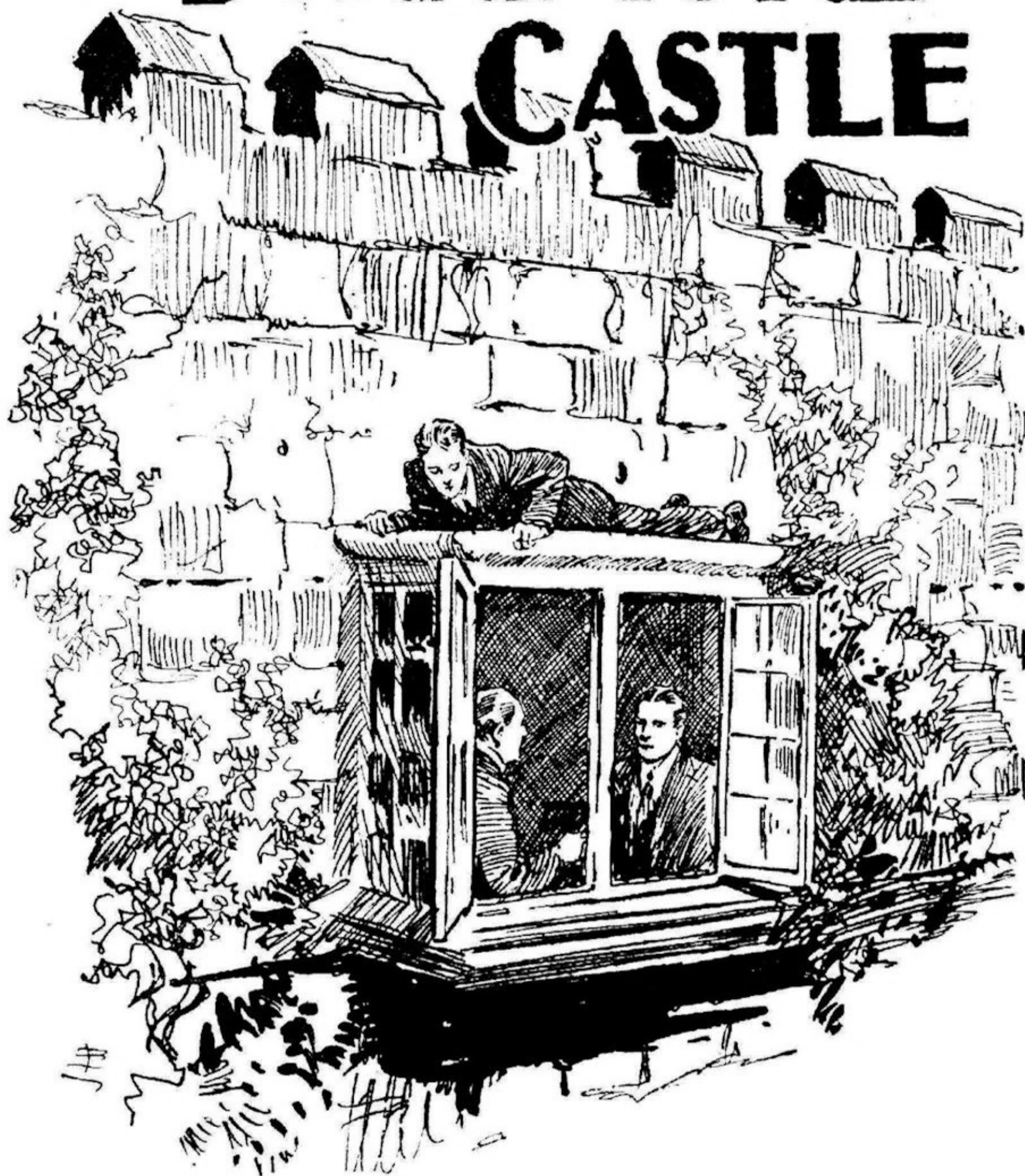
"Good night, Sheba!" mumbled the Cowboy Kid drowsily. "We'll be ready for those blackies in the morning."

Then he shut his eyes, and the next moment was floating on a hammock of silky clouds that mocked the finest mattress ever made.

(More thrilling adventures await the Cowboy Kid & Co. next week—look out for this corking yarn!)

A Corking Complete Yarn Featuring Your Favourite Detective!

The DORRIMORE CASTLE



CHAPTER 1.

The impostor!

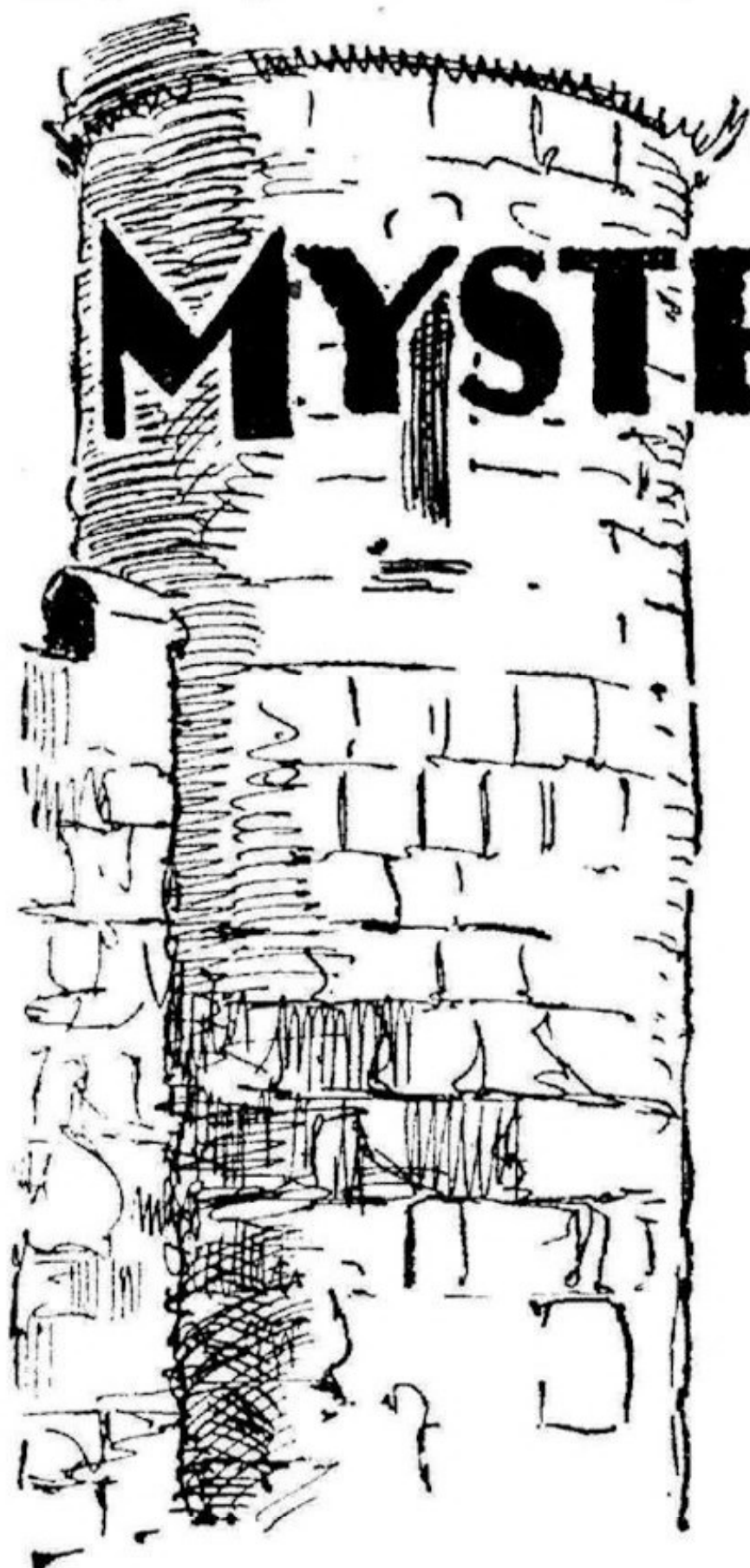
"A TASK well done, Brother Horace, gives us a wondrous feeling of well-being," remarked William Napoleon Browne genially. "I venture to suggest, without undue egotism, that we have covered ourselves with glory."

Horace Stevens grinned. He was sitting next to Browne in the latter's smart Morris-

Oxford saloon. These two "cubs" of Nelson Lee's Detective Academy were bowling along a sunlit road amid the picturesque scenery of Derbyshire.

"If you mean that we have got through that business in Matlock satisfactorily, I'll agree with you," said Stevens. "But, after all, the job was only a routine one, Browne, so you needn't brag about it. We only went there to verify those details about Whittaker. He was born and educated in Matlock."

Every Chapter A Sheer Joy—Start Reading It Now, Chums!



MYSTERY!

By
**ROBERT
W.
COMRADE**

In which Nelson Lee and his cub detectives gain fresh laurels by exposing a gigantic swindle, and bring to book an audacious crook who has baffled the world's police!

"A sordid business," commented Browne sadly. "However, I think we can be fairly certain that the Chief will secure Whittaker's acquittal. Our investigations and discoveries will certainly turn the tide."

Stevens grinned again. It was characteristic of Browne to talk in this way, although he knew well enough that the Whittaker case was one of Nelson Lee's minor affairs. This trip to Matlock had been merely—as Stevens had said—a routine job.

"Observe the rolling countryside," said Browne, taking his hand off the steering-wheel. "The Peak district is certainly picturesque; and on this sunny May day I can clearly hear its call. In other words, brother, I am disposed to linger here."

"Then you're an ass!" said Stevens. "If we get some speed on we can be in London by the late evening—"

"London holds no attractions for me," interrupted Browne, shaking his head. "Let us rather seek a quiet sanctuary amidst all this scenery, indulge in a sound night's rest, and spend to-morrow in bathing and fishing."

Surely the prospect appeals to you, Brother Horace?"

"It certainly sounds good," admitted Stevens.

"Splendid!" beamed Browne. "Then let me remind you that we are within five miles of Dorrimore Castle, the ancestral home of the one and only Dorrie. There is a superb lake, with fish in plenty."

"But, my dear ass, Dorrie isn't at home—he's gone off somewhere into the wilds of Africa—if there are any wilds left, which I doubt."

This was true. Lord Dorrimore, the millionaire sporting peer, had recently dodged off on one of his sudden trips. It was very seldom that he settled down to the quiet country life at Dorrimore Castle.

"I am well aware that Dorrie is hobnobbing with medicine-men and witch-doctors and such-like gentry," said Browne. "But we are well known at the castle; Mr. and Mrs. Bayley, the butler and housekeeper, will welcome us with open arms. What say you to the prospect?"

"Pretty good, but what about the Chief?"

"Leave the Chief to me," replied Browne firmly.

In the next village he stopped at the post-office, put a trunk call through to London, and was soon talking to Nelson Lee. He reported that he had despatched, by express post, a full statement of the discoveries that had been made in Matlock.

"Yes, Browne, I got the letter half an hour ago," replied Nelson Lee. "It was sensible of you to express it. You and Stevens have done well—you have obtained the vital information I needed."

"We were wondering if a little relaxation was not indicated, after this strenuous expenditure of energy," said Browne. "We are hard by Dorrimore Castle, Chief. There is much good fishing to be had. The weather is ideal. I realise, of course, that we can ill be spared——"

"Go ahead, Browne!" chuckled Nelson Lee. "You and Stevens had better take to-morrow off. I shall be satisfied if you turn up by lunch-time on Thursday. I hope you have a good day."

"O.K., Chief," said Browne contentedly. "Thanks muchly."

He joined Stevens in the car and leisurely climbed back into the driving seat.

"Well?" asked Stevens.

"Surely, brother, you cannot doubt the outcome?" asked Browne in an injured voice. "When I start a thing I finish it. So let us to Dorrimore Castle, where dull care may be thrown to the winds!"

THE great pile of Dorrimore Castle made a charming picture as the car glided round the bends of the road. It was one of England's most famous aristocratic homes, dating back for centuries.

The picturesque old walls stood up in stately magnificence against the sky-line. Within the castle was a veritable treasure-house of antiques—wonderful tapestries, old masters, and period furniture of rare quality.

For the greater part of the year the castle was locked up, only the butler and his wife remaining in charge. When Lord Dorrimore did open the castle, he did it thoroughly, and for weeks on end the great place would be filled with endless servants and countless guests.

"We shall drop in in nice time for tea, brother," said Browne genially. "My mouth is already watering for some of Mrs. Bayley's special muffins. I can only hope that she has been baking to-day."

The big gates were standing wide open, and although Browne and Stevens were slightly surprised at this, they did not think the circumstance strange at the time. Later they were to remember it.

When they pulled up in front of the great terrace they both felt, in a vague sort of way, that the Castle did not quite present the appearance of a closed country home. None of the blinds was down; indeed, many windows were wide open. The great main door stood open, too.

"Are you sure Dorrie isn't in residence?" asked Stevens curiously.

"One is never sure of Brother Dorrie," replied Browne. "For all we know, he may have flown home in the night. It wouldn't surprise me in the least to see him walk out of this doorway. However, we shall soon know."

They got out of the car, climbed the steps, and walked straight into the stately hall. It was cool and delightful in there after the warmth of the early summer air outside. There was a rare charm in the dark panels; and the trophies of the chase, which hung on

all the lofty walls, added a further touch of majesty to the whole picture.

At that moment a figure appeared. Browne and Stevens looked at him in surprise. The newcomer was a butler—he revealed it in every line—but he was certainly not old Bayley. He was a much younger man.

"Did you ring, young gentlemen?" asked the butler sharply.

"The door stood so invitingly open that we walked in," replied Browne. "I must confess that I am surprised to see a strange face here. I am aware that Lord Dorrimore is not at home——"

"I am sorry, but you can't stay here, sir," interrupted the butler, with such a note of alarm in his voice that Browne and Stevens stared. "His lordship is not disposed to receive visitors to-day."

"But, hang it, Dorrie's away!" protested Stevens.

The butler hesitated.

"I'm sorry, but you can't stay," he repeated, a grim note coming into his voice. "You'd better understand——"

"What is it, Jaikes?" interrupted another voice.

Browne and Stevens turned, attracted by the commanding note. They beheld a tall, refined-looking man in flannels. He was eyeing them coldly.

"I found these young gentlemen in the hall, my lord," said Jaikes.

Browne looked from one to the other.

"Pardon me if I appear inquisitive, sir, but may I inquire who you are?" he asked, addressing the man in flannels. "For my own part, I would mention——"

"I am Lord Dorrimore!" interrupted the stranger curtly. "I must tell you at once that you have taken an unwarrantable liberty in entering my house without permission. I am awaiting your explanation."

The two cubs hardly heard the latter part of the man's sentence. They were too staggered at his calm assertion that he was Lord Dorrimore. For they knew perfectly well, of course, that he wasn't Lord Dorrimore. Stevens was about to make some remark when Browne gently pinched his arm.

"Pardon our intrusion, sir," said Browne gracefully. "Being seekers after the picturesque, and observing this noble pile as we passed along our way, we conceived the idea of giving it the once-over. If you are opposed to such a scheme, we will retire in full order."

"Oh," said the stranger. "I see."

"The young gentlemen mentioned, my lord, that they were under the impression that you were away," put in Jaikes, with a significant note in his voice. "They also were familiar enough to refer to you as 'Dorrie.' I trust you will excuse me, my lord, but I thought I had better tell you this."

"Lord Dorrimore" gave him a sharp look.

"Quite right, Jaikes," he said. "It is evident that these young gentlemen are labouring under a misapprehension." He

turned to the pair. "Perhaps you will care to have a few words with me in private?" he added gravely.

"The scheme," said Browne, nodding, "is not at all bad."

The man in flannels turned on his heel and strode towards the library. He opened the door, and Browne and Stevens entered. Even as Browne was crossing the threshold he half-hesitated, some instinct warning him that he was making a mistake. But it was too late to turn back now.

"Now, my young friends, we'll hear more about this," said the impostor, his voice becoming hard. "I don't know who you are, but it is as obvious as daylight that you know that I am not Lord Dorrimore."

Without waiting for either of them to reply, he strode to the desk, pulled open a drawer, and produced a small automatic pistol.

"Hands up—both of you!" he snapped. "And keep them up!"

Stevens fairly yelped with surprise; but William Napoleon Browne did not move a hair.

"A somewhat scaly welcome," he said coolly. "And permit me to point out, brother, that this theatrical business is a mere waste of energy. You surely do not suppose that we carry guns, do you? That being so, why should we suffer the discomfort of raising our hands——"

"Don't argue!" broke in the man. "I'm not certain of you, and I'm taking no chances."

As he was speaking, the door opened, and three men appeared. Jaikes was one; another was dressed as a footman, and the third was obviously a gardener.

"You've got ropes?" asked the man with the automatic. "Good! Tie these youngsters up—and do the job thoroughly."

"Here, hang it——" began Stevens indignantly.

"Keep cool, Brother Horace," urged Browne. "You cannot do better than follow my example."

Crash!

He spun round like lightning, lowering his hands as he did so. His clenched fist caught Jaikes full on the point of the chin, and the butler, yelling with surprise and pain, toppled over backwards. Browne was not the sort of fellow to knuckle under tamely, and he did not care a rap about that automatic pistol. He guessed that the impostor was bluffing and would not dare to shoot.

Stevens took his cue from his lanky friend.

He went for the gardener like a whirlwind, and the man, who was getting some ropes ready, was momentarily taken off his guard. Stevens' right drove home with excellent effect.

"Splendid!" sang out Browne. "Keep it up, brother!"

They fought with tremendous vigour. Their minds were bewildered, but this did not affect their fighting qualities. They only

knew that the interior of Dorrimore Castle was unhealthy for them, and that the sooner they could get out, the better.

The fake Lord Dorrimore now took a hand in the game, however. Plucky though the two cub detectives were, the odds were all against them. Browne felt himself gripped from behind. A fist drove into his face, dazing him. He sagged, and the grip tightened. Stevens was dealt with equally effectively. Within a minute—after that first hectic scrap was over—the four men had their victims helpless.

"Young dogs!" panted the man in flannels. "Rope them up—then take them to the dungeons!"

CHAPTER 2.

Browne Gets to Work!

ROPING up the two intruders was a quick task; they were merely bound by the wrists, with their hands behind their backs. Then the men went through their pockets. Not that anything of significance was found. It was one of Nelson Lee's strict orders that none of his cubs should carry the slightest evidence in his pocket which would connect him with the Detective Academy.

"Huh! Nothing here!" grunted the man in flannels. "But there's no question that these boys are personal friends of Dorrimore. They're dangerous. We daren't let them go after what's happened."

"Confound their nerve!" said Jaikes, nursing his chin. "Just our luck that they should butt in now. It'll be risky, Garland, keeping them here."

"Risky be hanged!" retorted Garland—who was the man in flannels. "What else can we do, you fool? These youngsters might be missed, but there'll be no inquiries within twenty-four hours. We're safe enough."

There was no further talk. Browne and Stevens were hauled to their feet and ordered to march. They were taken down long corridors, and then through an arched stone doorway and down some worn steps. Garland led the way with an electric torch.

Soon they were in the great vaults beneath the castle, where the air was dank and chill. They went down more steps, and finally plunged into a low tunnel. Deeply set into the walls on either side were heavy, metal-studded doors.

One of these doors was slightly different from the rest. Two great modern bolts were fitted to it, black enamelled and glaringly new in comparison with the surroundings. Browne was slightly surprised. These audacious invaders had evidently prepared for some such emergency as this—for the dungeons, ages old, were not really secure. The ancient bolts had long since fallen off, and the locks were out of action.

"In with them!" said Garland curtly.

The bolts were shot back, and the two victims were pushed through. They heard the door thud into place, and the voices of the men became a mere subdued whisper. The bolts were shot into place.

But Browne and Stevens paid no attention. They were looking at the strange scene within the dungeon. A candle was flickering on a ledge of stone. Two old people were standing against the opposite wall, fear in their eyes. The dungeon was provided with two or three old boxes, a camp bedstead, and a ramshackle table. On the table stood some jugs, some loaves of bread, and a large hunk of cheese.

"Well, well," said Browne gently. "Have no fear, Mrs. Bayley, I beg of you. Brother Horace and myself are quite harmless."

The old couple were Mr. and Mrs. Bayley, Dorrie's faithful old retainers. Bayley had been butler at the castle for thirty-five years, and his wife had been housekeeper since her marriage.

"It's Master Browne!" ejaculated the old lady breathlessly. "Master Browne and Master Stevens. Oh, John! Help me!"

She ran forward and unfastened Browne's ropes. Her husband, trembling visibly, helped Stevens.

"A pity we could not come to you in a happier moment," said Browne. "The castle appears to be in the hands of the Philistines. The enemy is not only at the gates, but within the walls."

"Why did you come, Master Browne?" asked Bayley tremulously.

"We came primarily to have tea with you and your devoted spouse, Brother Bayley," replied Browne. "Knowing nothing of the circumstances, we unwittingly walked into the trap."

It only took them a few moment to explain the details.

"We know little more than you young gentlemen," said Bayley, shaking his old head. "Four men came up in a big car, and as soon as I opened the door they attacked me. When I shouted, Jane came running up, and she was seized, too. They brought us straight down here."

"And when was this?"

"Only about two hours ago, Master Browne."

"Then it appears that we arrived on the scene at a highly inopportune moment—for the crooks," said Browne. "Without question, they are crooks. I suspect they have designs upon the celebrated Dorrimore treasures. The castle is well stocked with old masters, priceless curios, and so forth. A poisonous business."

"But it isn't as bad as it might be, sir," said Bayley, his voice trembling with sudden excitement. "These wretched men think they've got us locked in, but maybe they haven't. I know of a secret way out of this dungeon."

Browne started.

"Say that again, brother," he ejaculated, clutching at the old man's arm. "A secret way out? Did I hear aright? Have these scaly scoundrels, in their ignorance of the castle, committed an unforgivable blunder? Is act one of this drama to end on a note of hope, after all?"

"Now that you've come, young gentlemen, perhaps we can do something," urged the butler, pointing. "It's that big stone over there. I could move it when I was a young 'un, but my strength ain't what it was. Besides, it hasn't been moved for forty years. I know these dungeons inside and out. Many's the day I've spent exploring——"

"Exactly—but let us investigate this highly interesting stone," interrupted Browne. "You say it moves? Kindly give us all directions, Brother Bayley. Where is the magic spot?"

The dungeon walls were composed of enormous stones—great blocks weighing three or four hundredweight each. Browne and Stevens half thought that the old butler was dreaming. Those great stones looked solid and immovable.

But, sure enough, when they heaved on the particular one which Bayley pointed out, it quivered. They heaved again, using all their strength. With a grinding of long accumulated grit, the huge stone gave way. It swivelled, revealing a narrow opening, with utter blackness beyond.

"Great Scott!" gasped Stevens, staring.

"It doesn't lead out anywhere, sir," explained Bayley.

"It doesn't lead out?" repeated Browne. "Is there a fly in the ointment, then? You grieve me, Brother Bayley."

"There's some steps through this opening, sir—so steep and narrow that you'll have some job in getting up," explained the butler. "They lead to the top of one of the turrets. There's a narrow window in the turret, and you might be able to get out on to the roof."

"A Browne never fails," said William Napoleon calmly. "Brother Horace, you remain here with these good people. When I return, I shall bring with me the entire police force of Derbyshire, with a detachment of military for effect."

BROWNE plunged through the opening and felt his way up the narrow steps. He had no electric torch, for this had been taken from him by the crooks. As Browne mounted higher and higher, his hopes rose proportionately. Far above, he could glimpse a flicker of daylight.

The staircase was circular, and so steep and narrow that even his slim form could only just squeeze up. Presently he came to a slit-like window, and found himself gazing out upon the sun-swept parklands. He could also see the rear of the castle, and he caught a glimpse of a man driving his Morris-Oxford car into a garage.

"Escaping might not be so easy," he murmured. "Perhaps it will be better to wait

The huge block of stone swivelled round, revealing a narrow, dark opening beyond.



until darkness descends. However, we'll see."

When he got to the top of the turret he found that there was a bigger window here. There was just sufficient room for him to squeeze through. His heart beat more rapidly as he looked. Just below him was a flat roof—quite an easy drop. Not a window of the castle overlooked this turret, and no human being was within sight in the grounds.

William Napoleon Browne took a chance. He wormed his way through the deep embrasure of the window, then dropped on to the roof. He crouched down at once, and ran towards the parapet. A quick investigation revealed that one wall was thickly covered with ancient ivy—and to a fellow

of Browne's agility this was just as good as a ladder.

But there were risks. He might be seen after he had reached the ground. Then he noticed that heavy clumps of evergreens grew right up to the castle wall; excellent cover. Browne took another chance.

Swinging his long legs over the parapet, he gripped the ivy and commenced descending. The coast was clear. With great care he dropped lower and lower. Then he suddenly halted. He could hear a murmur of voices.

He looked down, expecting to see some men on the gravel path below. Then he realised that the voices were coming from an open window just beneath him. With great care he lowered himself down the ivy until he was on a wide stone ledge above the window. He lay at full length, bending far over. As he had hoped, the voices became audible.

"—had to grab those infernal boys," were the first words he heard. "Too risky to let them go, Jaikes. There's not a chance in a thousand that there'll be any inquiries for them until to-morrow."

"But that old fool of an Ackroyd will still be here to-morrow," protested Jaikes.

"Yes, and he'll arrive this evening," retorted Garland's voice. "We daren't take the chance—we couldn't let those boys go. Ackroyd will be gone long before noon to-morrow, and so shall we. We're too close on the big stunt to risk anything. What about all those things for dinner?"

"Forman's busy on them now," replied Jaikes. "We're having the devil's own job to fix up the dining-room—can't find a thing."

"I'll come and help," said Garland impatiently. "You fellows make me tired. Can't do anything unless I'm on your tails!"

The voices receded, and Browne heard the sound of a closing door.

"Rummy!" murmured Browne. "Not to say squiffy in the extreme."

For the life of him he couldn't fathom this mystery—who these men were or why they were here. And who was Ackroyd?

Browne lowered himself over the edge of the ledge, and shinned down the rest of the wall in masterly style. Like a rabbit he dodged into the evergreens. Stealing from bush to bush, he gained a big shrubbery beyond the lawns.

Five minutes later he was outside the grounds, and legging it at the double, he made for the nearest village. Arriving there, he dashed into the little post office and general stores combined, and, in a very short time, he was talking to Nelson Lee.

CHAPTER 3.

Nelson Lee is Interested!

"**A**RE you quite serious, Browne?" came Nelson Lee's voice, after Browne had given the details with singular brevity—for him.

"Serious, Chief?" asked Browne, pained. "Of course I am!"

"Forgive me for mentioning it, but you are such a confirmed practical joker that I had to be sure," said Nelson Lee. "This story of yours is so extraordinary that I find it difficult to believe."

Browne, who was securely shut in the sound-proof telephone box, sighed. He was keeping one eye on the shop, ready to duck down in case any member of the enemy force should show up—which was not at all improbable.

"I will admit, Chief, that my propensity for practical joking is highly developed," said Browne. "But in this case, I am giving you the real dope. Before calling in the police and the military, I thought it advisable to give you a tinkle."

"Very sensible of you, Browne," said Lee approvingly. "I doubt if you could get any immediate action from the police, even if you went to them. And it is practically certain that these mysterious fellows would bolt long before the police could reach the castle; they are bound to be on their guard."

"That's what I thought—and that's why I rang up."

"The whole thing has the smack of a big plot, Browne," continued Lee. "I shall look into it—if only for Dorrie's sake. Do you think you can get back into that dungeon as secretly as you got out?"

"An entirely unnecessary question, Chief," reproved Browne.

"Then you had better get back as quickly as possible," advised Lee. "Even now it may be too late—for if those men discover your absence, they will take fright and bolt. It is far better to let them think that they are safe, and then we shall have a chance of catching them red-handed. So you go back, Browne, and leave the rest to me."

"O.K., Chief," said Browne briefly.

He left the box, purchased several tins of sardines, a pot of jam, and other delicacies, and hastened back. His training at the Detective Academy stood him in good stead. He crept from cover to cover, taking fresh observations continuously. Thus, by dint of extreme caution, he once more gained those evergreens. Unobserved, he climbed the ivy; he crossed the roof; he wormed his way through the turret window; he got back into the dungeon.

"Well?" asked Stevens breathlessly.

"One moment, brother," said Browne. "Has the enemy visited this murky prison? Are they aware that I have been absent?"

"No, sir," put in Bayley. "Nobody's been here."

"Then all is well," beamed Browne. "Lend me your ears, brothers—and you, too, sister—and great will be your joy."

NELSON LEE was intrigued by that remarkable story of Browne's. Nipper happened to be with him in his study, and the famous detective had briefly told Nipper the tale.

"If Browne hadn't given you his assurance, sir, I'd swear it was one of his practical jokes," said Nipper. "In the old days at St. Frank's Browne was an absolute terror. Who the dickens can these men be?"

"I'm not so much interested in those men as I am in the mysterious Ackroyd—who is due at the castle this evening," replied Nelson Lee thoughtfully. "Ackroyd—Ackroyd. Not a very uncommon name, it is true, yet it is vaguely familiar to me—in the sense that I have recently seen the

name in some prominent connection. Let me have the morning paper, Nipper."

He turned the pages over, glancing at the various headlines and paragraphs.

"I thought so!" he said suddenly. "Here it is. 'Mr. Otis T. Ackroyd, the multi-millionaire toy manufacturer of Indianapolis, arrived in England by the liner Berengaria yesterday. This is Mr. Ackroyd's first visit to England. He will be familiar as the originator of the famous Ackroyd Mechanical Toys. When our representative sought an interview at the Apollo Hotel—' And so it goes on, Nipper. Rather significant, eh? This is his first visit to England. A number of crooks, in possession of Dorrimore Castle, are expecting 'an old fool' named Ackroyd. Don't forget the 'old fool,' Nipper, because that's important. I certainly think it will be worth my while to run straight along to the Apollo Hotel and seek an interview with Mr. Ackroyd."

"Can I come, guv'nor?"

"My dear chap, there's no necessity," replied Lee. "I'd like you to get on with that Balham job. Take Tregellis-West and Watson with you, and report later. Don't worry about me; I may not be back until late this evening. In fact, I may be going down to Dorrimore Castle."

"O.K., Chief," said Nipper resignedly.

WHEN Nelson Lee arrived at the Apollo Hotel he found, to his annoyance, that he had missed Mr. Ackroyd by a bare minute.

"Why, he's only just gone, sir," said the reception clerk, who knew Lee well by sight. "He must have passed you in the doorway, I imagine."

"A pity," said Lee. "Do you know how long Mr. Ackroyd will be?"

"I'm afraid he won't be back till to-morrow, sir," replied the clerk. "He mentioned something about motoring to the Midlands, and staying overnight."

"He didn't give the address?"

"No, Mr. Lee."

"Well, it doesn't matter," said the detective, turning away.

He had little doubt that he would be able to overtake Mr. Otis T. Ackroyd's car on the road, for Lee had his own Rolls-Royce Special outside. The information the reception clerk had given him, scanty though it was, fitted like a glove. The American millionaire had gone to the Midlands, and expected to return on the morrow. The Ackroyd of Browne's story was due at Dorrimore Castle that evening, and would be gone by the following noon. This was no coincidence.

Lee was about to leave the hotel when events took an unexpected turn. He was aware of a commotion outside; men were carrying somebody into the big lounge—an elderly man, with blood streaming from his forehead.

"Accident?" asked somebody.

"This is Mr. Ackroyd, the millionaire," replied a man in chauffeur's livery. "Dodged across the road to his car, and was knocked down by a taxi. I expect he forgot that the traffic runs the opposite way in England—he only arrived from America yesterday."

Nelson Lee found it necessary to revise his plans completely. By a totally unforeseen chance Mr. Ackroyd was out of commission. The chauffeur, it turned out, was not Ackroyd's, but a man employed by another of the hotel guests. Ackroyd insisted on driving his own car. Lee waited for some time and then got into touch with the doctor who had been called to examine the injured man. The doctor, in fact, was an old acquaintance of Lee's, and they chatted in the lounge.

"Not much of an injury," said the medical man. "He's unconscious, of course—concussion—but there's no fracture. There's an ambulance coming round at once, and I'm having him transferred to my private nursing-home."

"I'm going to make a proposal to you, Dr. Hutchinson, which will surprise you," said Lee abruptly. "I have every reason to believe that Mr. Ackroyd has got mixed up—quite innocently—with some crooks. When do you expect your ambulance?"

"Practically at once."

"I want you to let me go with it," said Lee. "Furthermore, I want you to admit me into the sick-room and let me have my own way for about half an hour."

"What on earth are you suggesting?" asked the doctor in astonishment; but when Lee had explained he changed his tone. "Well, I don't see that it can do any harm," he said slowly. "Ackroyd might recover consciousness later on this evening—his injury is only slight—but I doubt if he'll want to move before to-morrow. It ought to be safe enough."

NELSON LEE had decided upon a daring plan—indeed, a risky plan. With Dr. Hutchinson's co-operation the first part of it was easily accomplished.

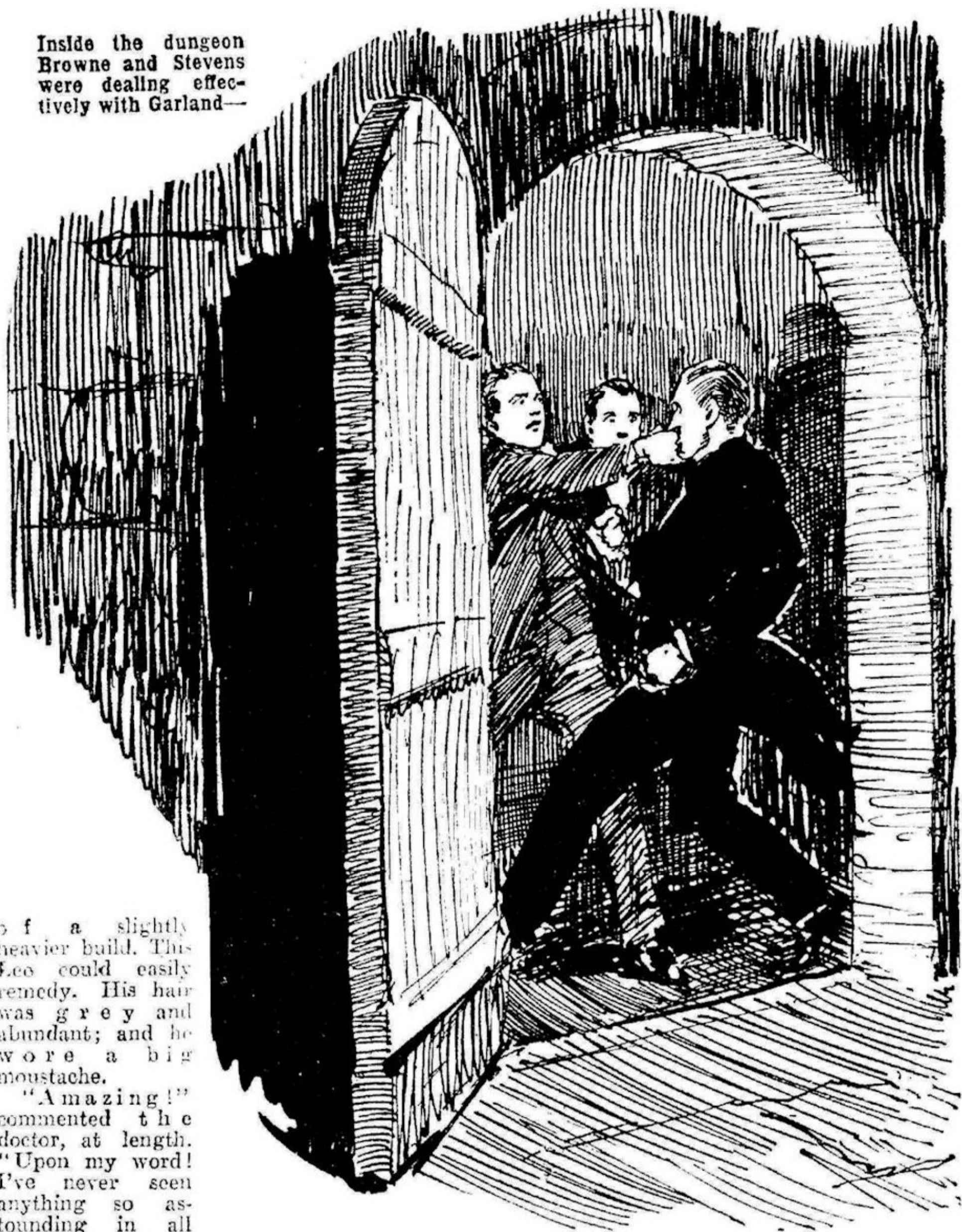
Lee rang up the Detective Academy, and five minutes after the ambulance had arrived at the nursing-home, Willy Handforth turned up with an attache-case. It was sent straight up to Nelson Lee, who was with the doctor in a private ward. Nobody else was present—except the millionaire himself, who was lying unconscious on the bed, his head bandaged.

"I'm going to watch this," said Dr. Hutchinson. "I've often wondered how you do these things, Lee. You don't mind?"

"On the contrary, I shall be glad of your opinion when I've finished," replied Lee.

He got to work at once. Carefully, skilfully, he transformed himself. His own personality faded away, and that of Mr. Otis T. Ackroyd took its place. The millionaire was an excellent subject for the impersonation. He was about the same height as Lee, but

Inside the dungeon Browne and Stevens were dealing effectively with Garland—



of a slightly heavier build. This Lee could easily remedy. His hair was grey and abundant; and he wore a big moustache.

"Amazing!" commented the doctor, at length. "Upon my word! I've never seen anything so astounding in all my life! It's a good thing Mr. Ackroyd is unconscious, or he'd have apoplexy."

"I am taking this step without Mr. Ackroyd's permission, but I am working on his behalf, all the same," replied Lee. "The one pitfall will be the voice. I have never heard him speak."

"That's awkward."

"Well, I shall have to take the chance," continued Lee. "Now, doctor, I want you to keep him here until you hear from me

again. Make any sort of excuse, but don't let him move out of this nursing-home. If he does, you can realise what the result will be, of course—I shall be landed in an awkward position."

"It's a tall order, but I'll do my best," promised the doctor.

Five minutes later Nelson Lee walked out of the nursing-home, climbed into Mr. Otis T. Ackroyd's big car, and coolly drove off for Dorrimore Castle.



Outside, Nelson Lee had his hands full as three men swarmed to the attack.

and towers. The whole picture was entrancing.

Lee could see a figure on the great steps, but he deliberately stopped the car some distance away, got out, and stood gazing at the castle. He acted as though he were fascinated by its beauty. He put his own personality completely aside; he was an American millionaire who had never visited England before—who had only been in England a bare thirty hours—and this was his first real glimpse of one of England's ancestral homes.

Reluctantly he got back into the car and drove up to the big terrace. A man in spotless evening-dress—this must be Garland, decided Lee—came down to welcome him.

"Like your first glimpse of the old place, Mr. Ackroyd?" he asked pleasantly.

Lee climbed out, and hardly gave the man a glance; he was staring at the splendid old pile.

"Wonderful!" he exclaimed breathlessly. "I have seen a few fine buildings in my time, Lord Dorrimore, but this beats the lot. I don't wonder you're proud of your home, sir."

Lee waited. Out of the corner of his eye he detected a faint frown on Garland's face, but it instantly cleared. It was only Garland's subconscious mind at work; something had jarred, but he did not know what.

"I thought, somehow, that you would be charmed, Mr. Ackroyd," he said. "But wait until you go inside. The castle is in a superb state of preservation. The old oak alone is the finest in the kingdom."

CHAPTER 4.

The Con. Men!

IT was as much in Lord Dorrimore's interests as in Mr. Ackroyd's that Nelson Lee undertook this self-imposed task. He had a keen "nose" for anything crooked, and long before he had reached his destination he had a pretty shrewd idea of what this game exactly was. However, it was just as well to be certain.

Dusk was gathering when Lee drove up the big drive at Dorrimore Castle, and the evening air was tranquil. The last rays of the setting sun were glinting on the turrets

"I'm figuring on taking a look round outside first," replied Nelson Lee. "You don't mind? I'm not keeping dinner waiting?"

"Dinner is unimportant," replied Garland. "You came down here to view the castle, Mr. Ackroyd, and you can do just as you please. Certainly we'll go for a stroll round the grounds if you prefer it."

"Nothing I'd like better," said Leo enthusiastically.

His whole object was to get a "line" on the game. He had passed the crucial test. In appearance his likeness to the genuine Mr. Ackroyd was so uncannily accurate that Garland was completely deceived. But his voice was different; it couldn't help being so.

Lee counted upon one factor, however. He pretended to be labouring under intense inward excitement, and this might account for any difference in the voice. Moreover, it was probable that this crook had only become acquainted with Mr. Ackroyd since

the latter's arrival in London. Such men work rapidly.

They walked round the wide terrace, "Mr. Ackroyd" pausing at every fresh angle to admire the view. Garland, for his part, pointed out everything of particular interest.

"You can see, Mr. Ackroyd, how easily the castle could be taken down and shipped to America," said Garland after a while. "It is built of great stone blocks, and is ideally suited for the purpose. The whole place could be transported to America and re-erected intact."

"It could," agreed Lee, nodding. "You're right, Lord Dorrimore. Bigger jobs have been undertaken with success. Imagine this castle standing in my own estate, back in Indianapolis! Gosh!"

He appeared to be lost in thought for a time, and Garland waited, lighting a cigarette. He was entirely pleased with the way things were going. But his visitor's thoughts were not what he supposed them to be. Lee, during the last few moments,



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had gained a full insight into the game; and he was dumbfounded at the audacity.

He had recognised Garland at the first glance. In Lee's records the man's name was Wilson. But that meant nothing. Lee had last run across him at Monte Carlo—pursuing exactly the same game as now.

This crook was a confidence man. He was known in every European capital as a man of great personal charm. He was brilliantly clever, and on scores of occasions he had easily baffled the police. Educated at Oxford, of good parentage, he was a man who lived by his wits. Gambling, swindling, even forging—all came alike to him.

This present "stunt" was assuredly Garland's most ambitious attempt to gain a fortune. The sheer audacity of it was breathless. It was so comparatively easy, too!

In the first place, Garland had fooled Ackroyd up to the hilt. It was possible that he had crossed the Atlantic on the same liner; he had passed himself off as Lord Dorrimore—knowing perfectly well that the sporting peer was out in Africa. Or, more likely, Garland and his gang had prepared their game in London, and had then awaited the arrival of a likely victim. Mr. Otis T. Ackroyd fitted the bill perfectly. Upon due thought, Lee came to the conclusion that they must have known that Ackroyd was coming to England for the purpose of buying an old castle.

They had laid their trap; as Lord Dorrimore, Garland had introduced himself to the millionaire. Now he was preparing to "sell" this ancestral pile to the toy manufacturer. There were heavy odds on its succeeding owing to its very "nerve"—and the fact that Ackroyd was a self-made American, utterly ignorant of English ways.

Lee decided that he must go warily. It would be difficult to prove any case against these men yet. He must give them rope.

I CAN assure you, Mr. Ackroyd, that I wouldn't sell this place unless I was compelled to," said Garland, as they strolled back towards the main door. "Rumour has it that I'm rich, but rumour is a liar. I'm infernally poor. I must raise money somehow—almost immediately—and that's why I'm prepared to let the castle go for such an absolutely ridiculous price."

"It's a big price, nevertheless," said Lee cautiously.

"Big? Do you call a hundred thousand pounds big?" retorted Garland. "Why, the pictures alone are worth that!"

"No doubt," agreed Lee. "Still, half a million dollars is a lot of money, Lord Dorrimore—even to me. That's the price I'm to pay for the castle as it stands. But don't forget it's going to be some little job to remove this pile to America. If I have a cent left out of a million dollars by the time it's re-erected, I shall be a lucky man."

"Well, let's have dinner—we'll discuss these details later," said Garland lightly.

"Half a million dollars, and your end of the thing is finished," went on Lee abstractedly. "But my end is only just beginning. That's what you mustn't forget, Lord Dorrimore. I'm a business man, and I'll admit I like the look of this place. I'm over in England to buy—at the right price. Supposing we say four hundred thousand dollars?"

"Not on your life!" replied Garland promptly. "A hundred thousand pounds—that's half a million in your money—and not a penny under. But, hang it, Mr. Ackroyd, we're not going to argue about it out here, are we?"

They went indoors, and Nelson Lee was freshly astonished at the completeness of the "spoofing" arrangements. Various windows opening and closing, lights appearing here and there, had earlier given him the impression that the castle was half-full of servants. Now he beheld a liveried footman and a dignified butler. There was nothing to indicate that the castle was really "closed up."

The dinner was excellent—and served perfectly. Later Lee and his host adjourned to the library for cigars.

"You're right, Lord Dorrimore," said Lee with a note of finality. "It's worth the money, and I'll pay it. I'm not going to haggle over the price."

"I thought you'd come to that decision in the end, Mr. Ackroyd," said Garland smoothly. "I needn't tell you that I'm pretty sad about the whole business, and the sooner it's over the better. You won't think I'm rushing things too much if I suggest a settlement to-morrow?"

There was a pause. Garland, for his part, was fraught with anxiety. Lee was astonished at this fresh audacity. But his reply, when it came, brought instant relief to his companion.

"The sooner the better," he said. "If your lawyers are instructed—"

"Everything's settled," interrupted Garland. "My lawyers have had this thing in hand for weeks. If we make an appointment for to-morrow, I'll hand you the title deeds to this property on the spot."

Lee smiled inwardly. How easy it would be to hoodwink the American millionaire with forged title deeds! The detective could easily picture the rest of the plot—the rapid cashing of Mr. Ackroyd's cheque or draught, and the just as rapid disappearing act. By the time the American realised that he had been victimised by confidence men, they would be on the other side of Europe. Then Ackroyd would rush to Scotland Yard, the poorer by a hundred thousand pounds, but much richer in experience.

In spite of himself, Lee could not help admiring the coolness of these polished crooks. The whole thing was a masterpiece of daring.

(Continued on page 24.)

The Dorrimore Castle Mystery!

(Continued from page 21.)

CHAPTER 5.

An Unforeseen Development!

MR. OTIS T. ACKROYD was a man of determination.

And, in spite of Nelson Lee's precautions before leaving London, Mr. Ackroyd now proceeded to throw a very heavy spanner into the works.

He recovered consciousness only an hour after Nelson Lee had gone. His injury was even less serious than Dr. Hutchinson had believed, and Mr. Ackroyd, who was a man who had been accustomed all his life to taking hard knocks as a matter of course, ridiculed the idea of staying in bed.

"I warn you, Mr. Ackroyd, that you mustn't disturb yourself in any way," said the doctor, remembering Lee's injunction. "You've had a nasty accident, and what you need is rest."

"I'm not feeling any too good, but I'm not a baby," retorted the millionaire. "Where are my clothes? I want to get up. I've an important business appointment this evening——"

Dr. Hutchinson became stern.

"You had better understand, Mr. Ackroyd, that I am ordering you not to leave that bed until to-morrow," he said curtly. "I'm your doctor, and I'm going to be obeyed! What would you say to me if I let you out, and then you collapsed? No! You're staying here!"

The millionaire crumpled up.

"But what about my business appointment?" he grumbled.

"It can wait."

"Well, I suppose it can," admitted Mr. Ackroyd reluctantly. "All right—you win. But I'm leaving this place to-morrow, don't forget!" he added threateningly. "I'm not one of your lie-a-beds!"

As a matter of fact, Mr. Ackroyd had just felt an excruciating spasm of agony through his head, and he lay back on the pillows in order to gain some relief. He wasn't feeling so "good" as he thought.

A tap sounded on the door, and an attractive-looking nurse appeared.

"Telephone, doctor," she said.

"I'll come at once," replied Dr. Hutchinson. "Oh, nurse! I want you to take good care of Mr. Ackroyd. He's inclined to be a restless patient, I'm afraid, and he'll need watching."

"You bet I shall!" growled Mr. Ackroyd.

Dr. Hutchinson answered his 'phone call, and was called away to Brighton on a very urgent case. This was rather a pity, for it would have been far better for Nelson Lee's plans if the doctor had remained on the spot.

IT was about an hour afterwards that Mr. Ackroyd changed his mind.

The pretty nurse was relieved by a colleague. This colleague was a conscientious soul, but she was thin, scraggy,

and at least fifty. Mr. Ackroyd suddenly felt extraordinarily better.

"Nurse," he said firmly, "I'm going to get up."

"You mustn't, sir," said the nurse. "The doctor gave orders——"

"I don't care if a hundred doctors gave a hundred orders!" interrupted Mr. Ackroyd in that characteristic way of his—a way which was known to every one of his ten thousand workpeople in Indianapolis. "When I say I'm going to do a thing, I do it. That's on the level!"

"I'm sure the doctor will be very angry when he comes back, sir."

"So he's away, is he? That's good hearing," said Mr. Ackroyd, whose head was now feeling vastly better. "I'm afraid of that doctor of yours—he's too much, even for me. First man who's got me to do something against my will for years."

"You mustn't get up! Really, sir——"

"Confound it, woman, I'm well!" roared Mr. Ackroyd, exasperated. "Do I look ill? Do I sound ill?"

"No, sir," gasped the startled nurse.

"Then why argue?" snorted the American. "Where's a telephone? The first thing I want is a telephone. Over in America we have telephones in every room. What's wrong with this country, anyway?"

He was in one of his most belligerent moods—sure proof that he had recovered. He sprang out of bed, wrapped a dressing-gown round himself, and stalked to the door.

"Where are you going, sir?" asked the nurse feebly.

"Going? To find a telephone, of course!" retorted the millionaire. "There is a telephone in the house, I suppose? I don't have to walk two blocks to find one, do I?"

"There's—there's one just outside, sir," said the scared woman.

GARLAND was feeling thoroughly at ease. None of the awkward points that he had feared had arisen. Mr. Otis T. Ackroyd was the perfect "sap." He had fallen for everything.

They had just finished their first cigars when a hasty tap sounded on the library door, and Jaikes, the imitation butler, came in.

"You're wanted, my lord—on the telephone," he said with dignity.

In spite of himself he could not restrain the note of alarm that his voice contained. Garland looked round quickly, but Lee pretended not to notice.

"You'll excuse me, Mr. Ackroyd?" said Garland, rising.

"Sure thing! Go ahead!" said Lee readily.

Garland went out, and the door was no sooner closed than Jaikes seized him tightly by the arm.

"There's something wrong!" he muttered hoarsely.

"Let go my arm, you fool!" snapped Garland. "Haven't you any sense? Must you talk outside that very door?"

They moved across the big hall, and Garland said nothing else until they were in a smaller reception-room, and the door was closed.

"There's a fellow on the 'phone who says he's Ackroyd," whispered Jaikes.

"What!" ejaculated the other.

He strode across, seized the telephone, and listened.

"Hallo!" he said sharply. "Who is it?"

"Ackroyd speaking," came the voice—the familiar voice. "Are you Lord Dorrimore?"

"Yes, but——"

"Infernally sorry to miss my appointment, Lord Dorrimore," came Ackroyd's voice. "Had a bit of an accident—taxi ran into me. They tried to keep me here in this confounded nursing-home, but I guess I'm leaving as soon as I can get my clothes."

Garland tried to sort out his disordered thoughts.

"It's all right," he managed to say. "If you're not feeling well, perhaps you'd better postpone——"

"Not on your life!" interrupted Ackroyd. "The man who postpones things is the man who loses things! I'm after that castle of yours, and I'm coming down straight away. I don't care if I don't get there till after midnight—if it's O.K. with you."

"Certainly," said Garland. "Anything you like, Mr. Ackroyd."

"Good enough," came the millionaire's decisive voice. "That's fixed."

Garland put the receiver up, and when he turned to Jaikes he was shaky and pale. Another man had entered by this time—the footman.

"Is anything wrong?" asked Jaikes tensely.

"Everything's wrong," snapped Garland. "That fellow in the library is a fake."

"You—you mean he's not Ackroyd?" gasped Jaikes.

"He's no more Ackroyd than I'm Dorrimore!" said Garland, biting his lip and drumming his fingers on the table. "I can't get this, boys! It's—it's ugly. We've been fooled—and didn't know it! Somebody's trying to double-cross us, and you can bet your life he's a 'tec!"

"But how do you know?" asked Forman, thoroughly scared.

"Ackroyd's just rung up," replied Garland. "I knew his voice in a flash. From the very first I knew there was something wrong with this fellow we've been entertaining, but he's Ackroyd in every inch of him, and I should never have known if I hadn't heard the real voice over the 'phone. Ackroyd's coming down here—and we've got to be ready."

"But—but supposing you're wrong?" asked Jaikes. "Supposing this man here is Ackroyd? He'll call off the whole thing if we manhandle him."

"Leave it to me," said Garland. "Be outside the library door—both of you. Directly you hear a yell from me, come in."

He strode back to the library, thoroughly unsettled by this fresh development. He was grimly determined to put the thing to the test without delay. His acting was superb when he carelessly entered the library and closed the door.

"That's the worst of having a telephone," he said ruefully. "You're never free from your creditors—not even in the evenings. Thank Heaven I shall be able to settle these fellows up when this deal's through."

He moved back towards his chair, but he appeared to trip clumsily as he was passing his guest. He flung his hand out, clutched, and "accidentally" grabbed at Lee's head.

"I'm really fearfully sorry——" he began.

And then his manner changed. That grey hair had shifted! In a flash he whipped out his automatic pistol and jammed it hard in the middle of Lee's back.

"Stick 'em up!" he snarled. "Look lively!"

Lee had been on the alert for trouble, but this attack had come upon him so unexpectedly that he had no chance. He raised his hands, half getting out of the chair; and at the same moment the door burst open and Jaikes and Forman ran in. They were now accompanied by the fourth man—Evans.

"This fellow's a fake!" shouted Garland. "Hold him, boys! We'll soon see who he is! We can drop pretence for a bit!"

Nelson Lee was at a disadvantage. There was something grimly suggestive in that pressure at his back. Two of the men seized him by the arms, and Garland wrenched hard at his wig. It came away.

"I knew it!" panted the man. "Where's some water? Here—this is better."

He swamped soda-water over Lee's face from the siphon. Then he kept the automatic at Lee's back while the other men vigorously rubbed off the make-up.

"You're remarkably uncouth in your methods, Wilson," said Lee coolly. "Or do you prefer to be called Garland nowadays?"

"Lee!" ejaculated Garland, with fear in his voice. Then, in a flash, his face was distorted with rage. "You're a clever blighter—but this time you've failed!" he said thickly. "Ackroyd's just rung up—and that gave you away! I'm ready to admit that you'd fooled me up till then. How did you get on to this?"

"Do you really expect me to answer that?" asked Lee dryly.

"Search him, boys!" ordered Garland. "He's bound to have a gun on him."

It was soon found, and then Lee was, indeed, helpless—particularly as his wrists were roped.

"It's no good, Garland," said Lee. "You've failed. You're not proposing to carry on with this bluff, are you?"

"I'm proposing to put you where you'll be useless," retorted Garland. "What I do after that is my own business—not yours."

He moved across to the door and flung it open. "Bring him along, boys!" he ordered. "He's going with those other pets of ours. And if he can get out of that, he'll be a clever man."

With Garland leading the way, Nelson Lee was forced down the corridors and stairs. He was inwardly disappointed, but he did not show it. Something had gone wrong at the other end, or Ackroyd could never have telephoned. It was a pity that everything should have been spoilt.

They reached the dungeons, and Garland shot back the bolts and pulled the door open. He was just in time to see Browne and Stevens pushing hard on a great stone block.

"Hey! What the——" Garland dashed into the dungeon, furious and excited. "What's this?" he shouted. "Where does this lead to?"

"If you are addressing me, brother, I must point out that I never reply to people who bawl at me in that uncouth fashion," said Browne smoothly.

"Get out of my way!" snarled Garland.

He heaved on the stone, and it swung to. Mr. and Mrs. Bayley and the two cubs watched, sick at heart. Here was another misfortune! Browne had merely nipped up to take observations from the turret, and Stevens, hearing the approach of the enemy, had shouted up an urgent warning. Only

by a second or two had they missed closing that secret exit.

"So this is how Lee got to know, is it?" said Garland savagely. "By heaven, these youngsters must be two of his cubs! Well, we've got them all together now. Luck's with us, after all."

"Yes, the game is yours, Garland," said Lee reluctantly.

As he spoke he brought his right fist round with devastating force and delivered a terrific blow on the side of Jaikes' head. The man, taken by surprise, rolled over.

"Look out, young 'uns!" shouted Lee. "Do your best!"

"O.K., Chief!" yelled Browne enthusiastically.

Garland's companions were dumbfounded. To their knowledge, Nelson Lee had had his wrists bound behind his back, and his attack had therefore come as an overwhelming surprise. What they didn't know was that Lee had learned many a trick in the course of his long experience with regard to ropes and handcuffs. It needed a very clever man to rope Lee up securely.

Browne and Stevens confined their attentions to Garland, who was actually in the dungeon. And they were more than his match. Never once did he get the chance of pulling out his gun; he was kept too busy defending himself.

In the corridor Lee was at a much greater disadvantage. Jaikes was out of commission,



Jokes from readers wanted for this feature! If you know of a good rib tickler send it along now—and win a prize! A handsome watch will be awarded each week to the sender of the best joke; all other readers whose efforts are published will receive a pocket wallet or a penknife. Address your jokes to "Smilers," Nelson Lee Library, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4.

TOO TRUE!

The motorist had had an accident with his light car. He limped painfully to the telephone box and called up the nearest garage.

"Hallo!" he said. "I've turned turtle. Can you do anything for me?"

"I'm afraid not," came the reply. "You've got the wrong number. What you want is the Zoo!"

(H. R. Channing, 79, Finch Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, has been awarded a handsome watch.)

HEARD IN COURT!

Magistrate: "Prisoner at the Bar, before evidence is heard, do you wish to challenge the jury?"

Prisoner: "Well, I ain't exactly in what you'd call 'ard training, me lord, but I don't mind 'aving a round or two with the fat bloke in the corner!"

(T. Knowler, 11, Neuchatel Road, Catford, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

THE MYSTERY EXPLAINED!

1st Workman: "Hallo, Bill, I haven't seen you for three months. What have you been doing?"

2nd Workman: "Twelve weeks."

(P. A. Treadaway, Beaufort House, 1, Beauchamp Avenue, Leamington Spa, has been awarded a penknife.)

OBLIGING!

A lady called at her greengrocer to make a complaint.

"You know," she said, "I ordered a dozen oranges, and you only sent me eleven. How do you account for that?"

"Well, madam," replied the greengrocer, "one of your oranges was bad, so I took the liberty of throwing it away for you!"

(A. Gibson, 50, Madison Street, Gorton, Manchester, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

QUITE LIKELY!

Vicar: "They tell me, Mrs. Smith, that your son is a good footballer."

Mrs. Smith: "Yes, sir."

Vicar: "Do you know in what position he plays?"

but Forman and Evans were not. They fought desperately, and they were not particular as to their methods. Lee was a first-class boxer, and the way he dodged the savage blows of his assailants was worth watching. In spite of their superior numbers the crooks were not having things all their own way.

There was every chance that the battle would have gone in favour of Lee and the boys but for the fact that Jaikes recovered. Lee was getting the better of his men, and Browne and Stevens were giving Garland far more than he gave them. At this crucial point Jaikes staggered to his feet, swayed drunkenly for a moment, and pulled out his electric torch. He brought the head of it down with crashing force on the back of Lee's head.

The blow in itself would not have been sufficient to provide a knock-out, but the detective staggered, and before he could recover he received a brutal kick in the shins from Evans. He lurched, an elbow dug itself into the pit of his stomach, and he doubled up. A knee, driven with great force, caught him on the side of the head.

Against such methods as these Lee was beaten. Dazed and agonized, he rolled over. Forman leapt into the dungeon, caught up one of the boxes, and flung it at Stevens. Stevens dodged, but tripped over another box, and the back of his head thudded against the wall.

It was the end of the fight—and the crooks had won!

CHAPTER 6.

The Dupe!

MR. SAMUEL GARLAND was taking no more chances. Before any of the victims could show further fight he bound them up. Even Mr. and Mrs. Bayley were secured; although the poor old lady was in a half-fainting condition, and her husband was far too aged to do any damage.

Another dungeon was quickly prepared. As Garland said, there wasn't a chance in a thousand that there would be a secret exit from two of the dungeons. The bolts were removed from the first door, and placed on the door of the fresh prison. And now Nelson Lee was added to the total "bag."

"It's no good talking, Garland, we'd better quit," said Jaikes nervously, when they had all gathered in the library. "This game's too hot."

"Quit yourself," retorted Garland. "I'm staying."

He and his confederates were badly shaken and they were all looking much the worse for wear.

"We shall have to clean up," went on Garland. "There's none too much time—"

Mrs. Smith: "I'm not sure, sir, but I think he's one of the drawbacks!"

(L. Wenman, 8, Council Cottages, Bletchworth, Surrey, has been awarded a penknife.)

THE MOTORIST'S MISTAKE!

Garage attendant (as car drives up): "Juico?"

Motorist: "Vell, vat if we are—don't ve get no petrol?"

(J. Shaw, 15, Freehold Street, Primrose Hill, Huddersfield, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

"MUSIC HATH CHARMS!"

"We will now play 'Poet and Peasant,'" announced the leader of the local village band.

"Gosh!" exclaimed the cornet player. "I've just played that."

(A. W. Darby, 51, Esmeralda Road, Bermondsey, has been awarded a penknife.)

"JAMMY" FOR TOMMY!

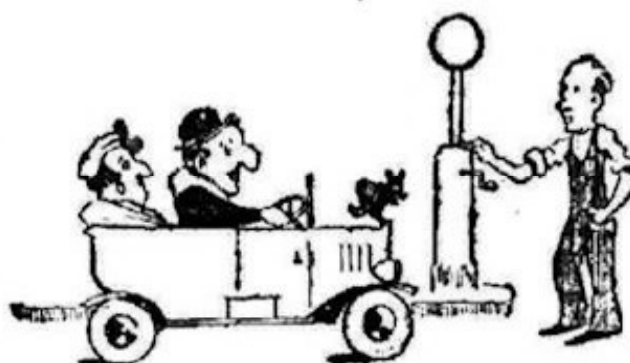
Teacher: "Why were you away from school this morning, Tommy?"

Tommy: "Please, sir, mother was making jam."

Teacher: "That is no reason why you should be absent."

Tommy: "Please, sir, I had to fetch the jars from the cemetery."

(O. Parker, 37, Hillfield Road, Sparkhill, Birmingham, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)



TACTLESS!

Guest (angry at being kept waiting at station): "So you couldn't find me, eh? Didn't your master describe me?"

Chauffeur: "Yes, sir, but there were several bald-headed old buffers!"

(E. Carlton, 80, Oaks Lane, Fairweather Green, Bradford, has been awarded a penknife.)

WHY HE ASKED!

"I'd be ashamed," said the lady of the house, severely eyeing the hefty tramp who had just called, "to be a great, strong man like you and ask for money."

"So I am, ma'am," said the tramp, "but I once got twelve months for taking it without asking."

(E. Steele, Fisherton, Lincoln, has been awarded a penknife.)

SIMPLE!

Visitor (very perplexedly): "Your church clock is all wrong. How ever do you know the time?"

Villager: "Well, it's like this. When the hands point to ten minutes to five, and the clock strikes seven, we all knows in these parts that it's two o'clock."

(Muriel Briggs, 17, Faraday Street, East Park, Hull, has been awarded a penknife.)

Ackroyd's bound to get a fast car. He might even come by train. We've got to be ready."

"It's madness," muttered Evans. "Lee's on the case——"

"He was. He's not now!"

"How do we know he didn't talk before coming down here in that disguise?" went on Evans. "For all we know, Ackroyd will bring half of Scotland Yard with him! The only thing we can do is to give the whole game up and bolt."

Garland breathed hard.

"Give it up?" he said, between his teeth. "A hundred thousand! I promised you boys five thousand each if you helped me to put this thing over. It doesn't mean so much for you, perhaps, but it's the biggest thing I've ever attempted. And don't forget that I'm the big noise; without me you couldn't have done a thing. I thought this game out. There's Farrington, too. He'll want his five thou."

"Twenty thousand for us four, and eighty thousand for you!" growled Jaikes.

"It's a fair proportion," snapped Garland. "This is a job of brains—and I've supplied the brains. But if you're thinking of quitting, I'll raise the figure. Ten thousand each if we put it over. That's double! Well?"

"I don't like Lee being in it," said Evans shakily.

"We'll make ourselves safe," promised Garland. "One of you had better keep watch at the main gates. If Ackroyd arrives alone, we shall know that everything's O.K. If he's got a crowd with him, we shall know the opposite. You'd better keep watch, Evans."

"And supposing there's a crowd?"

"Take the silencer off your gun and fire it. We'll be listening," replied Garland. "Forman can have the car ready with the engine running in the back lane. You'll know where to run, and you'll make it. It'll give us all a chance. If we hear nothing, we shall know that the old sap has come here alone."

IT was some little time before midnight when a big car drove up to the terrace at Dorrimore Castle. Jaikes, as butler, was ready. No revolver shot had sounded; all was well. He flung the great door open just as Mr. Otis T. Ackroyd was climbing the steps. Then Garland came out, immaculate once more.

"This is really brave of you, Mr. Ackroyd," he said heartily. "You should have left your visit until to-morrow——"

"No, sir; not on your life!" interrupted Ackroyd as they shook hands. "A date is a date. I've never missed one in my life! One of my maxims of success. My apologies are due to you, Lord Dorrimore, for turning up at this unearthly hour."

"Not at all," laughed Garland. "By the way, did you drive down yourself?"

"No. I hired this car, including the chauffeur," replied Mr. Ackroyd. "Thought I'd

better not chance it as it was dark. Besides, somebody seems to have borrowed my own car. Couldn't locate it anywhere."

Garland could have told him where it was, but he didn't.

"You don't mind if the chauffeur puts up in the village, do you? There's quite an excellent inn there, and I'll 'phone through to make the arrangements. The Red Lion. He can't miss it. The castle, as you know, is more or less closed, and I'm not prepared for extra guests—even chauffeurs."

In no circumstances could Garland allow the driver to spend the night in the castle. Ackroyd could be easily fooled, but any stranger in the servants' quarters would find plenty to wonder at. The American was agreeable, and the car drove off. The chauffeur's private thoughts regarding Lord Dorrimore were decidedly unkind.

"Well, I've got here, anyway," said Mr. Ackroyd as he sank into an easy chair in the library. "Gosh! This is some room, my lord! This period furniture attracts my eye, too. Goes with the property, eh?"

"Every stick," said Garland. "But you'll be able to appreciate the castle better in the morning. My butler will bring you some supper——"

"I never eat when I'm working," interrupted the millionaire. "And believe me, this is work! There's no time like the present, Lord Dorrimore, and if you've no objection I'd like to have a look round some of these fine old rooms right now."

"Certainly," said Garland. "Anything you like."

Mr. Ackroyd had no suspicion of the truth. To him everything seemed as it should be—genial host, dignified butler, stiff footman, and a magnificent country castle such as he had often dreamed of. Before he went to bed, at close upon 2 a.m., he was as excited as a child with a new toy.

"Boys, we've got him!" gloated Garland later. "Didn't I tell you he was a sap? Hard as nails at his own business, but a baby in arms on a job like this. That money's ours. And you wanted to quit!"

"You were right, Sam," said Jaikes. "You're always right!"

IN the dungeon, Nelson Lee and the other prisoners had made little headway. True, Lee had got free of his bonds, and he had released the others. But there was no secret exit here. These dungeon walls were as solid as a breakwater, and the door, of massive oak, could never be conquered from within. For once in his life, Nelson Lee was stumped.

"There's nothing we can do," he said reluctantly. "They've emptied our pockets; we haven't even a penknife on us."

"It's rough luck, Chief," said Browne sadly. "And those scaly scoundrels in the castle are deftly putting it across the good old toy merchant. But I shall be frightfully surprised if something doesn't turn up before it's too late."

The police poured out of the van and surrounded the saloon car in a body.



Browne's optimism, as it happened, was justified. For the crooks had overlooked the fact that Nelson Lee had a very astute assistant—named Nipper!

NIPPER thought nothing when Nelson Lee failed to return at night. But when the morning came and still Lee was absent, the youngster began to wonder. In fact, he worried. He knew that Nelson Lee had gone off in response to William Napoleon Browne's telephone call, and he knew, of course, that Browne and Stevens were prisoners. Lee had almost certainly gone down to Dorrimore Castle. What had happened?

"I hope everything's all right," said Nipper as he discussed the matter with Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West. "The dickens of it

is we can't ring up Dorrimore Castle, because, according to Browne, those crooks are in possession."

"Well, why not ring up the Apollo Hotel?" suggested Tommy Watson. "That's where Mr. Lee went, isn't it? They could at least tell you if he saw Mr. Ackroyd yesterday."

"I'll try it," said Nipper. "I suppose we're asses, but I'm uneasy."

From the Apollo under-manager he learned that Mr. Ackroyd had met with an accident the previous evening, and had been transferred to Dr. Hutchinson's nursing-home. This was unexpected, to begin with. Nipper

rang up Dr. Hutchinson, and this time he received a shock.

"I'm glad you've called me up, young man," said the doctor. "To tell you the truth, I'm confoundedly worried. I'm not sure that I ought to tell you this over the telephone, either. You'd better come and see me."

Agog, Nipper dashed off, taking Tommy Watson and Sir Montie Tregellis-West with him.

"I knew something was wrong," said Nipper as they sped along in a taxi. "I could feel it in my bones."

Dr. Hutchinson gave them the details.

"That's all I know," he concluded. "Mr. Lee went off to this castle impersonating Ackroyd—and I understand that he was hopeful of catching some criminals. What upset the whole apple-cart was Ackroyd's insistence upon getting up. If I had been here, he wouldn't have left that bed!"

"And Mr. Ackroyd went down to Dorrimore Castle two or three hours after Mr. Lee, sir?"

"Exactly. And I'm beginning to fear that there might have been a mix-up—and I'm sort of responsible," said Dr. Hutchinson worriedly. "Oh, yes, and I forgot to tell you. Ackroyd telephoned to the castle before leaving."

"He telephoned?" gasped Nipper.

"Yes. But you needn't get so excited——"

"But don't you see, sir?" shouted Nipper. "By 'phoning Mr. Ackroyd must have warned those crooks that the man who was there was the wrong man! They must have jumped on the guv'nor while he was off his guard!"

"Upon my word," said the doctor, startled, "I hadn't thought of that! I'd better telephone to the police."

"That's no good, sir," interrupted Nipper quickly. "Come on, you chaps! We've got to get down to Dorrimore Castle like greased lightning. Thanks, doctor. I'll tell you what happens later."

There was a scurry of feet, a slamming door, and the three cubs had gone!

CHAPTER 7.

Cornering the Crooks!

BY driving at full speed, Nipper and his two chums arrived at Euston just as an express was leaving. They got out of the train at Matlock, and here they hired a car. It was just about noon when they arrived at Dorrimore Castle.

Nipper little guessed it, but a car, with Mr. Otis T. Ackroyd and Mr. Samuel Garland inside, had taken the London road only half an hour earlier. Garland had wanted to leave sooner than this, but he had found great difficulty in dragging the millionaire away.

"Now, we've got to go easy, you chaps," said Nipper as they approached. "There might be all sorts of trouble, and we must be ready for it."

They had left their car half a mile away, telling the driver to go back. Nipper, in fact, had paid him off. Now they were going up the drive in the welcome shade from the stately trees.

"Look out!" warned Sir Montie suddenly. "Bead! Something coming!"

They dodged behind some handy bushes. A car came down the drive. It contained three men, and Nipper in the one glance saw that they were all strangers. To his trained eye they bore the unmistakable stamp of crooks. They paused at the great gates to close and padlock them.

"That's funny," said Nipper, frowning, after they had gone.

"I hope the Chief wasn't a prisoner in that car," said Watson.

"Not a chance," replied Nipper. "They wouldn't be rash enough for that. All the same, it's worrying. Those fellows have left, and by padlocking those gates it seems that they've finished their job here. Come on! We'd better chuck caution to the winds and go openly."

Dorrimore Castle had a deserted look as they drew near. All the windows were closed. There was no indication of life. Not a curl of smoke came from any chimney. Nipper boldly rang the huge bell. There was no response.

They went round to the rear, and the result was equally negative. Then it occurred to Nipper to have a look at the outbuildings. These were locked, but Nipper was getting desperate. They found some heavy iron bars and forced the doors open. At the first attempt they came upon two cars—Browne's Morris Oxford and a big American sedan.

"Browne's and Mr. Ackroyd's!" ejaculated Nipper. "This is the one the guv'nor used! By Jove! This is getting worse than ever."

He was reckless. Taking an iron bar, he deliberately smashed in a window at the back of the castle. A minute later the three cubs were inside, running up and down the great corridors, in and out of the rooms, upstairs into the various wings. Their search was a failure. Dorrimore Castle was empty.

"Not even Mr. and Mrs. Bayley are here," said Nipper, panting. "What the dickens can we do next?"

"Go to the police," said Watson bluntly.

"Hold on," said Nipper. "What about the dungeons? Do you remember when we were here one Christmas? We explored the dungeons then. There's just a chance——"

He broke off, and ran. Plunging down the stone steps into the vaults, he took out his torch, and Watson and Tregellis-West were just behind.

"Guv'nor!" yelled Nipper, at the top of his voice.

They stood listening, holding their breath.

"They can't be here——" began Watson.

"Listen!" hissed Nipper. "I thought I heard a thudding. Yes! There it is! My only hat!"

They stood like statues. Faintly they could hear the dull, eerie knocks. They broke into a run, paused again, and the knocks were louder. Then they came upon the great dungeon door, with its massive modern bolts.

"We've found 'em!" yelled Nipper.

They shot the bolts back and swung the door open. Nipper's light revealed five eager faces.

"All serene, gov'nor," said Nipper, as calm as ice now that the tension was over. "Here's a nice mess to get yourself into, I must say!"

"I deserve your censure, young 'un," agreed Nelson Lee. "Good lad! I can see that you've been doing some smart work."

"Brother Nipper is deserving of all praise," declared Browne gracefully. "I wonder if there is any chance of a bath, followed by hot coffee and eggs and bacon?"

Browne's wish was not realised. For after they had all got up into the castle Lee insisted upon an immediate departure.

"You'll be quite safe now, Bayley," he said to the old butler. "Those men have gone for good. There's not a thousand to one chance that you'll ever be disturbed again. However, I shall advise Lord Dorrimore to maintain a larger household in future."

"I'm glad it's turned out so well, sir," said Bayley. "I'm afraid the missus won't be herself for some weeks——"

"You've both got to go away, and you can leave me to see to everything," promised Lee. "You'll hear from me again later in the day."

Nelson Lee drove the big American car, and Nipper and Tregellis-West and Watson went with him. Browne took the wheel of his own Morris Oxford, and since it was impossible for him to keep pace, he philosophically gave it up, and he and Stevens stopped in Matlock for the desired eggs and bacon and hot coffee.

Nelson Lee drove hard. He felt that telegrams would be useless—at least, to prevent the fake sale. He was doubtful if Garland would hurry things unduly, and Lee was becoming confident that he would be in time to avert the fraud. He did send one or two telegrams from Matlock, however, and after that he settled down to a fast drive to town.

It would be worse than useless to attempt to locate the fake lawyer's office. It might be anywhere in the City. Better to concentrate at once upon Mr. Ackroyd's bankers. So when London was reached, Lee's first visit was to the Apollo Hotel.

"No, sir, Mr. Ackroyd hasn't returned yet," said the reception clerk, looking at Lee's dusty figure with polite interest. "You remember, he met with an accident yesterday——"

"Yes, of course," interrupted Lee. "Perhaps you can tell me Mr. Ackroyd's bankers? I might add that this is exceptionally important."

The clerk retired, and the manager took his place.

"Mr. Ackroyd's bankers are the City & Counties Bank, who are agents for several big American banking concerns," said the manager. "I know for a fact that Mr. Ackroyd has an account at the Regent Street branch."

"Thank you," said Lee crisply. "I'd like to 'phone."

He was busy with the telephone for five minutes, and his calls not only put the manager of the Regent Street branch on his guard, but it caused the Flying Squad to get extremely busy!

MR. SAMUEL GARLAND was radiant.

He and four other men were sitting in a big car, and it was gliding down Regent Street. In Mr. Garland's pocket reposed a special draft for one hundred thousand pounds.

"It's all fixed," he said contentedly. "Ackroyd made special arrangements with his bankers, and we get cash. There's not a chance in the world that there'll be a hitch now. By to-morrow we'll be in Vienna."

Farrington, the fake lawyer—known to the police as "Lawyer" Harry—was the last man in the world one would suspect of being a crook. He was tall, austere and grave. He had a learned, domed forehead, and respectability seemed to ooze out of him. Mr. Ackroyd had been very impressed. The sale had been transacted with great legal precision.

"You boys had better wait out here in the car," said Garland, as the saloon pulled up. "I'll give you your cash as soon as I come out."

"Good luck, Sam—hope nothing goes wrong," said Farrington.

"Not a chance," grinned the triumphant Mr. Garland.

He entered the bank, and no sooner was he inside than a disreputable van stopped dead alongside the saloon, and police seemed to pour out of it like a flood. They surrounded the saloon in a body.

"Better take it easy, boys," said Detective-Sergeant Morrison, of the Yard, as he grinned at the startled confidence men. "If you start any funny business it'll be your trouble and not ours."

Farrington cursed volubly, and in a very unlawful manner.

"And Sam told us it was a cert!" he said disgustedly. "Shove that gun away, Jaikes, you fool! Don't you know a fair cop when you see it?"

WITHIN the bank, Garland was as confident as ever as he went up to the counter. The clerk took the draft, glanced at it, and nodded.

"This appears to be quite in order," he said. "Mr. Ackroyd has given us full instructions. But as the sum is so large the

(Concluded on page 44.)

Archie Glenthorne Returns To St. Frank's And Falls Into The Hands Of—

THE JAZZ JADERS!



CHAPTER 1.

The Advance Guard!

"WE'LL have three guesses," said Kirby Keeble Parkington, of the Remove, as he lounged on the steps of the Ancient House at St. Frank's. "Personally, I think he's a bishop."

"Rats!" said Harvey Deeks. "He's a new master."

"You're both wrong," declared Clement Goffin. "The man's a lawyer."

The Red-Hot Trio continued to look at the tall, staid, dignified figure which had just emerged from a taxicab. Afternoon lessons were over, and the Triangle was crowded with fellows on this sunny May day.

"By George!" ejaculated Edward Oswald Handforth, the burly Remove captain, as he came out with Church and McClure. "I'm jiggered if old Phipps hasn't turned up!"

"Phipps?" repeated K. K. Parkington politely.

Handforth gave him a cold look; he and these new fellows from

Carlton College—there were twelve of them, known as the "Carlton Gang" were deadly rivals. K. K. and his followers had been doing their best to "run" the Remove since their arrival.

"Yes; Phipps," replied Handforth. "Archie Glenthorne's valet."

"Oh!" said the Red-Hot Trio, in one voice.

They seemed strangely subdued, and Handforth & Co. passed on.

"That was a nasty one," murmured K. K., with a grin. "Bishop—new master—lawyer! We're all rotten guessers. The man's only a valet! By the way, this Glenthorne chap used to belong to the Remove, didn't he?"

"Never seen him, but I've heard so," replied Deeks. "I wonder what this valet fellow is doing down here?"

Bright colours are one of Archie Glenthorne's failings. So the Carlton Gang brighten up his life in general, and his study in particular! Described by

EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

in this screamingly funny school yarn.

Phipps was having some little difficulty in maintaining his celebrated dignity. Handforth was slapping him on the back, and working his arm up and down like a pump-handle. Harry Gresham, Alf Brent, Jimmy Potts and others were welcoming Phipps in a similar way.

"I am sure this is very kind of you, young

gentlemen," said Phipps, a little breathless. "And I can assure you that I am glad to be back again."

"Back again?" said Gresham. "Have you come for good?"

"I imagine so, Master Gresham."

"The Head will be pleased, I'll bet!" said Brent. "You used to divide your time between butling for him and valeting for old Archie. I suppose you've come along to act as the Head's butler only this time?"

"No, Master Brent," said Phipps. "The former arrangement will stand."

"What!" shouted Brent excitedly. "Do you mean to say that old Archie is coming back to us?"

"Precisely, Master Brent."

"When?" went up a general chorus.

"To-morrow, young gentlemen," replied Phipps. "If I may put it this way, I am the advance guard. I have come to superintend the disposal of new furniture in the young master's study. The old furniture, as you are aware, was destroyed in the big fire. Master Archibald, I may add, is feeling the necessity for prolonged relaxation."

"Lazy beggar!" commented Handforth. "So he's leaving the Detective Academy, is he? Too much work for him! The giddy slacker!"

"What price your leaving the academy?" asked Gore-Pearce.

"Me? Why, you fathead," roared Handforth, "I'm staying on at St. Frank's so that I can keep these Carlton duffers in their places! If I wasn't here they'd run the Remove!"

Phipps coughed.

"If you will excuse me, young gentlemen, I will be getting along to Study E," he said gently. "The furniture van will be here presently, and there may be one or two advance trifles to attend to."

"You'll find three trifles to start with," said Harry Gresham, with a grin. "K. K. and his two pals have bagged Study E! It's the headquarters of the Carlton Gang. I may be wrong, but I fancy there's going to be a spot of bother."

K. K. himself lounged up.

"Not at all," he said genially. "What is this I hear, sweethearts? If we are occupying a study which does not rightly belong to us we'll quit and find other quarters. I mean, right is right."

Handforth gave him a suspicious look.

"If you're trying to be funny, Parkinson—" he began.

"I leave that sort of thing to you, old man," interrupted K. K. coolly. "Is it a fact that Glenthorne had Study E in the old days?"

"It is, young gentleman," said Phipps. "It would be possible, of course, for me to prepare another study for the young master, but I believe he has a certain fondness for the old quarters, and if it would not be putting you out—"

"It would be, but not in the sense you mean," interrupted K. K. cheerfully.

"We'll seek fresh pastures with pleasure. Study E is yours, old bean. When do you want us to quit?"

"I'm afraid that any delay would be awkward," replied Phipps. "The young master's furniture is due this afternoon. Strictly speaking, I suppose I should have made inquiries on this point in advance, but it never occurred to me that Study E might be occupied by other young gentlemen."

"In that you were right," said Handforth. "It's occupied by three fatheads—"

"Cheese it, Handy!" protested Church. "K. K.'s a sportsman. It's jolly decent of him to give up Study E like this. How was he to know that Archie would be coming back?"

K. K. and his friends hurried indoors to attend to the removal job. There wasn't a great deal to shift, and before half an hour had elapsed they were settled down again in Study C—which had once been the headquarters of Nipper and Tregellis-West and Watson. These three still remained at the Detective Academy, and were likely to remain.

"I always like being obliging," said Parkinson, as he looked at his chums with his left eyelid flickering. "If Study E is Archie's domain, let him have it. Why kick up a fuss?"

"Why, indeed?" murmured the others.

LATER on in the afternoon an interested crowd watched Phipps as he superintended the disposal of Archie Glenthorne's new furniture.

As everybody had expected, the stuff was luxurious. A delightful Turkey carpet, a gleaming mahogany desk, lounge-chairs, and a perfectly dream-like chesterfield. Bookcases and other luxuries followed. Everything was placed "just so," in accordance with the aristocratic Archie's liking.

Having finished his task, Phipps saw that the window was carefully secured, and then he locked the door. Phipps did not believe in taking any chances. He knew the Removites too well.

But, as yet, he certainly did not know the Carlton Gang!

CHAPTER 2.

Jazzing Things Up!

MIDNIGHT was striking when three dim figures crept down the Remove passage in the Ancient House. The light from an electric torch gleamed upon the keyhole of Study E. Several keys were tried, one after the other. At the fifth attempt the door swung silently open. The three figures entered, and one of them went across to the window and closed the heavy plush curtains.

"All right now!" he murmured. "Lights!"

The electric light blazed on, and the three figures were revealed as K. K. Parkinson and his two Red-Hot chums.

All three of them were dressed in their oldest, grubbiest togs. A tap sounded on the door, and K. K. opened it. Nine other juniors tiptoed in. The Carlton Gang was complete.

"A bit risky, isn't it?" asked Langley dubiously.

"We shall have the whole job done within a couple of hours, and nobody will be the wiser," said K. K. "My dear old chaps, this is a chance in a thousand! Archie Glenthorne is one of the Old-Timers—and we're the sworn enemies of the Old-Timers. A jape against him is a jape against the whole crowd."

"That's right enough," admitted Baines.

"We heard a lot about Archie in the Common-room last night," continued K. K. "He's a dandy—a chap who actually has a valet, and sports furniture of this kind. I've heard it whispered, too, that he's got a secret passion for colour; only Phipps has always restrained him."

"This study looks pretty tasteful, anyhow," remarked Goffin.

"Exactly—but Phipps is the real boss of the show," replied Parkington. "I think we ought to do Archie a good turn. We may be rivals, but why should we be enemies? We'll let him have his own way for once—we'll give him plenty of colour."

There were many chuckles.

"Colour is everything in this world," continued K. K. enthusiastically. "I'm going across to the new buildings, and Deeks and Goffin are going with me. If we don't find plenty of colour there, you can call me a Dutchman. In the meantime, you chaps had better get busy on this furniture."

"Oughtn't we to toss for it?" suggested Baines.

"No fear! I've bagged the chesterfield, to begin with," retorted K. K. "You can distribute the easy-chairs and bookcases and things among yourselves. And for goodness' sake don't make any noise! The whole game will be ruined if we're dropped on."

The Carlton Gang got busy.

Every scrap of Archie Glenthorne's luxurious furniture was confiscated. K. K. regarded all the stuff as "fair game." Tuckhampters could be bagged, so why not furniture? It was a logical conclusion.

The chesterfield and the carpet were removed to Study C. Baines and Langley and Haddock collared the desk; Letts and Mayhew and Jepson selected an easy-chair and a bookcase; and Kersey and Bonner and Fiske had everything that was left.

By this time Archie's study was utterly empty; the floor and the walls were bare. It was ready for the real work of the night!

THE Red-Hot Trio were moving like shadows amid the scaffolding of the half-completed East Wing. There was a watchman on duty over here, but he was comfortably dozing in his little box, in front of a big coke fire. He heard nothing of the marauders.

K. K. Parkington was a fellow of method. He had casually walked through the new building by daylight the previous evening, after all the workmen had gone, and he had had no difficulty in locating the paint-shop.

One room was literally filled with drums and pots of paint of every conceivable colour. The painters hadn't really got busy yet, but their supplies were ready. Very thoughtfully, K. K. had set aside some pots of green, yellow, red and blue paint—the most glaring shades he could find.

So it was now only necessary to select these particular pots, and to pick out a few useful brushes. Then the japers stole back across the Triangle, and they were soon back in Study E.

"What about the steps?" asked K. K. "Didn't I tell one of you chaps to bring the steps along? We've got to start with the ceiling."

"My only hat!" grinned Baines. "You're not going to do anything to the ceiling, are you?"

"Wait until you see it," replied Parkington cheerily.

They didn't have to wait long. A tall pair of steps had been handily placed in the passage cupboard overnight. Perched on the top of these, Kirby Keeble Parkington got busy with the paints.

Rapid work was easy, since there was absolutely no need to take any particular care. The more uneven the painting, the better. K. K. started by painting a huge red circle in the middle of the ceiling. Then he radiated green, blue and yellow stripes from this circle to the walls. The fact that these stripes were uneven in size, and drunken in direction, made the effect all the jazzier.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a subdued cackle from the other members of the Gang—who had not been particularly idle during their leader's efforts. They had now paused to survey K. K.'s work.

"Gorgeous!" grinned Deeks. "I'm colour-blind already! If I looked at that ceiling for five minutes on end I should feel drunk!"

These new fellows were whole-hearted in their efforts; they did not spare themselves on a jape. They had nearly as much paint on their hands and faces as they had put on the rooms. But they didn't care. The jape was worth it.

The walls were too appalling for words when they had finished. They were painted in a novel way—great glaring streaks running down at disorderly angles; jagged lines of red, green, yellow, and blue, these colours sometimes merging with an even more startling effect.

It was nearly 2 a.m. by the time the job was finished and all the paint-pots and brushes had been cleared away. Furniture was provided—for K. K. was not unkind enough to leave Archie barren in this respect. The furniture wasn't much, it must be admitted—merely a kitchen chair with

only three legs, a soap-box, and a decrepit table—but it was something.

"We can't appreciate the real beauty of this room," said K. K., as they took a last look with blinking eyes. "You want to come upon it suddenly to realise its full value!"

Chuckling gleefully, they made the final touches, locked the door, and went to bed with the comfortable feeling—like the celebrated blacksmith—that they had earned a night's repose.

CHAPTER 3.

The Arrival of Archie!

"**H**ERE he is!" sang out Alf Brent eagerly.

Breakfast was over, and the morning was hot and brilliant. A huge luxury limousine had just glided into

"Good gad! Don't be so dashed pleased to see me, old cheese!" gasped Archie. "I mean, have a heart!"

His protests were in vain. A crowd of juniors surged round him. He found himself pulled this way and pushed that way. Somebody took hold of his leg and shook that by way of a greeting. Then he was introduced to K. K. Parkington and the other members of the Carlton Gang—K. K. himself undertaking this task—and by the time it was all over Archie was a bewildered, battered wreck.

To add to his confusion, the Carlton Gang entirely monopolised him. They surrounded him, and even hustled him into the Ancient House. Handforth, Brent, and the others were unable to get near.

"Come inside, old man," invited Parkington. "We had your study until yesterday, but when Phipps came along and told us how things stood we gave it up."



The juniors surged round boisterously—and the immaculate Archie became a battered wreck!

the Triangle; and the juniors recognised it at once as Colonel Glenthorne's. Alf Brent was particularly keen, because he was Archie's old study-mate.

"Welcome back, Archie!" went up a yell.

The limousine drew up at the Ancient House steps, and Archibald Winston Derek Glenthorne, immaculate from tip to toe, stepped out.

"What-ho!" he observed genially. "Back at the good old spot, what? Odds thrills and sensations! This is one of the great moments of my life, laddies!"

"Jolly glad to see you, Archie!" said Handforth enthusiastically.

He proceeded to thump Archie on the back, and Archie's topper rolled off his head and fluttered to the ground.

"Really? I mean, that was frightfully sporting of you."

"We couldn't have been comfortable," declared K. K. "You always had Study E, Glenthorne, and it's yours. Come on! We'll escort you."

Handforth & Co., on the outskirts, were deeply suspicious. The way in which the Carlton fellows had interested themselves in Archie was too palpable. There was something "on" here.

"Back up, Old-Timers!" yelled Handforth. "These fatheaded Red-Hots are trying to work something! Grab Archie away from them."

"Hear, hear!"

"On the ball, you chaps!"

The Old-Timers surged through the lobby, excited and noisy. They were more than ever convinced that unless they rescued Archie at once he would find himself the victim of a Carlton jape. But by now the Gang were in the Remove passage; they were outside the door of Study E. K.K. had even produced his own key—the one that fitted the Study E lock. This thing had to be done quickly—or not at all.

UNFORTUNATELY, Mr. Horace Pycraft thought fit to barge in at the crucial moment. The Red-Hots had guarded against their rivals, the Old-Timers, but they hadn't figured on Mr. Pycraft. It was just like the "nosey" master of the Remove to turn up when he was not wanted.

"Upon my word!" he exclaimed, as he pushed his way past the crowds of juniors. "Silence! How dare you? What is the meaning of all this din?"

Parkington made the best of a bad job.

"It's all right, sir—only showing Glenthorne to his study," he said, with disarming innocence. "Sorry if we've made so much noise—but we've been giving Glenthorne a welcome. Cheese it, you chaps!" he added severely. "Tone it down a bit!"

Mr. Pycraft was mollified.

"I was going to give you fifty lines for creating this disturbance, but in the circumstances I will overlook the offence," he said tartly. "Glenthorne, I am now your Form-master."

"Good gad!" said Archie bleakly.

"What did you say, Glenthorne?"

"Eh? Oh, rather!" said Archie, pulling himself together. "My Form-master, what? How frightfully ghastly! I—I mean to say, I thought you presided over the Fourth, sir."

"I did—but I am now in charge of the Remove," replied Mr. Pycraft. "And I have purposely sought you out at once, Glenthorne, because I have heard some extraordinary stories concerning your study."

"Stories, old thing? My study?" asked Archie vaguely.

"I understand that Phipps was here yesterday," continued Mr. Pycraft. "Let me say, in passing, that I strongly disapprove of a junior schoolboy—and a boy of my Form—requiring the services of a valet."

"Oh, I say, sir! I couldn't exist without Phipps!" said Archie in alarm. "Good gad! What a thought! Phipps is absolutely a part of my life."

"Ridiculous nonsense!" snapped Mr. Pycraft. "However, we will deal with that later. For the moment I will deal only with your study. I have heard that furniture of an absurdly luxurious nature was put into this study yesterday. I intend to see for myself."

K.K. made a curious noise in his throat.

"Just a minute, sir," he urged. "I don't think you'd better go into Study E just yet! We—we thought— Well, we rather wanted to give Glenthorne a surprise, and

without any offence, sir, we'd rather be alone."

"I am sorry, Parkington, but I am determined to look at this preposterous furniture," said the Form-master. "I obtained the key from Phipps for that very purpose. Stand aside!"

"But really, sir—" gasped K.K.

"Did you hear me, young man?" shouted Mr. Pycraft.

K.K. sighed, stood back, and Mr. Pycraft thrust the key into the lock. He turned the handle, opened the door, and strode in. The first glance that he obtained caused him to start like a frightened stag; but before he could utter any sound something happened.

There was a clatter from above, and a huge enamel basin overturned, depositing a vile, ghastly mass of sticky, black stuff over Mr. Pycraft's head and shoulders!

CHAPTER 4.

A Shock for K.K. & Co.

"GLUB-GLUB-GLUB!"

Weird, oily sounds came from the mass of greasy blackness which had once been Mr. Pycraft. Considering that he was half buried under a mass of motor oil and soot, the oiliness of the sounds was not surprising.

To add to Mr. Pycraft's discomfiture, the edge of the basin, in falling, had caught him a sharp crack on the side of the head. It wasn't much of a hurt, but he was certainly a bit dazed. He stood just within the room, clawing at the frightful stuff which enveloped his head.

"Odds nightmares and visions!" breathed Archie faintly.

He wasn't looking at Mr. Pycraft; he was staring fascinatedly at his study. He shuddered as he shrank back. The walls and the ceiling seemed to come out and hit him. They almost yelled at him. Archie liked colour, but he was unable to appreciate the "beauties" of the scene before him.

"Help!" he said feebly. "Assist me, laddies! The good old knees are absolutely jellified! Lead me away from it!"

"I knew it!" muttered Handforth to the Old-Timers. "It was a jape! Those Carlton fatheads prepared this booby-trap for Archie!"

"And old Pieface got it!" gurgled McClure. "I say, we'd better scoot!"

"Silence!" came a ferocious command from Mr. Pycraft. "Every boy here will keep his place."

Every boy kept it.

"I have been grossly assaulted—glub-glub—and those responsible shall be punished!" thundered Mr. Pycraft. "Parkington! You are responsible—glub-glub—for this! You and your friends from Carlton! You unmitigated young—glub-glub—rascals! How dare you?"

K.K. fought for his breath.

"We—we didn't mean it for you, sir!" he panted. "It was only a jape against Archie."

"Good gad!" shuddered Archie, as he gazed fascinatedly at the sooty oil.

K.K. was staggered—firstly by the complete misfiring of the jape, and secondly by the fact that Mr. Pycraft apparently knew exactly who the guilty parties were. Mr. Pycraft himself was no less staggered than Parkington; for, amazingly enough, he was quite sure that he hadn't uttered a word! Yet he could hear his own voice. He wasn't capable of uttering a word. The oil and the soot had got into his mouth, and speech was impossible.

"You twelve boys shall be suitably punished!" came from Mr. Pycraft's lips, amidst more splutters. "You will miss morning lessons, and you will make this room—glub-glub—exactly as it was."

"Oh, my only sainted aunt!" groaned K.K.

Mr. Pycraft uttered a wild, sticky cry.

"Remove all this paint!" came the stern order. "Restore the furniture as it was. You shall have no rest—glub-glub—and no food until you have finished. Get to work at once!"

The unhappy Form-master, his head still singing, came to the conclusion that he was seriously hurt. He was ready to swear that he wasn't speaking—and yet he kept hearing his own voice. He hadn't the faintest idea what he had been saying, because he was too bewildered to pay any attention. But to hear his own voice in this fashion was too much for him.

Uttering another frantic cry, he reeled out into the corridor, and the juniors skipped out of his way and scattered in all directions. Mr. Pycraft staggered upstairs—first to bath and then to rest.

"SERVES you jolly well right!" said Handforth sternly. "You rotters! So you prepared all this for Archie, did you? I knew there was something fishy about the way you—"



Mr. Pycraft stalked into the room, and a basin containing a mass of sticky black stuff crashed down over his head.

"Cheese it!" growled K.K. "It was only a jape. Rats to old Pycraft for butting in! We've caught a proper cold this time!"

"No rest for you—and no food—until you've put this study to rights," said Handforth, nodding. "I'm blessed if I can understand it! I never thought old Picfaco was so sporty! He couldn't have thought of a better punishment."

The Old-Timers took another look at the jazzed-up study, they grinned cheerfully at the Carlton Gang, and drifted away. And Kirby Keeble Parkington, Limited, gazed at one another and groaned.

"Can't get out of it, you chaps," said K.K. sadly. "In fact, we're lucky. If we don't obey Pycraft's orders, we shall be lugged before the Head for a flogging. We'd better roll our sleeves up and get busy."

In the Common-room, the Old-Timers were consoling Archie and grinning over the discomfiture of their rivals. It became noticeable, after a few minutes, that Nicodemus Trotwood was particularly bucked.

"I must be better than I thought," he grinned. "I was hoping to spoof those

Carlton fatheads, but I never expected to spoof you chaps."

A silence fell, and everybody looked at him.

"Spoof us?" repeated Handforth. "How?"

"My dear ass, you don't think Pycraft would order those Red-Hots to clean up the study, do you?" retorted Trotwood. "He wasn't capable of giving any orders at all—he was too full of that oily mixture."

"But he *did* speak!" said Church. "We heard him!"

"You ass! We all heard him," added Handforth. "What are you getting at, Trotty?"

"Pieface was so busy with that oil and soot that I thought it rather a good opportunity to get one back at the red-headed Carltonian and his Gang," said Trotwood coolly. "Up till now nobody's told them of my masterly powers—and you chaps seem to have forgotten them, too."

Harry Gresham suddenly jumped.

"You're a ventriloquist!" he yelled, light dawning on him.

"So I've been told," murmured Trotwood modestly.

"You—you mean that you, and not old Pieface, was speaking?" shouted Handforth, grabbing him. "Come to my arms, Trotty! You're a genius! You're a marvel! You even spoofed *me*!"

"Then I must be a genius," said Trotwood, grinning.

CHAPTER 5.

One Up to the Old-Timers!

THE news soon spread throughout the ranks of the Old-Timers. Nicodemus Trotwood, the schoolboy ventriloquist, had done the trick! On the spur of the moment, he had more than turned the tables on the Carlton Gang.

The thing wasn't merely a joke—it was a scream. The Removites hugged themselves with abandoned glee. This was a morning of mornings. While they took things easily in the Form-room, the Carlton Gang was working like mad in Study E—and working, not by Mr. Pycraft's orders, but by Trotwood's!

The Old-Timers had an added reason to congratulate themselves because Mr. Pycraft kept to his room, and Biggleswade, of the Sixth presided in the Remove Form-room in his place. "Biggy" was notoriously easy-going. He even roared with laughter when he was confidentially informed of the jape.

"You're not supposed to know anything about it, though, Biggy," said Handforth warningly.

The prefect pulled himself together.

"You'd better get some work done, you young sweeps," he said sternly. "A fine



THE TEST MATCH HOPE!

BY JOHN BREARLEY



Smiling Bill Murray they call him, and rightly so, for Bill's radiant smile shines through all Dame Fortune's unkind kicks.

And what a cricketer! What a rod in pickle for the Aussies!

You'll want to chuck your cap in the air as you see Bill disposing of Don Bradman, Woodfull, and the rest of 'em.

You'll want to kick, too, the unpleasant individual who is trying to put paid to Bill's successful cricketing career.

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thing, japing old Pieface—I mean, Mr. Pycraft—like that! If I knew anything about it—which, of course, I don't—I'd tan the whole crowd of you."

"Good old Biggy," grinned the Remove.

They worked conscientiously; for Biggleswade was such a thundering good sort that it would not have been sporty to take advantage of him. There was more work done that morning by the Removites than usual. Mr. Pycraft could never get them to attend to their lessons so cheerfully.

When "break" came a stream of juniors dashed for the Ancient House. Some gathered round the doorway of Study E, and some collected round the window. Within, the Carlton Gang was in the thick of it. They were busy with pails and mops and brushes. Collarless, and in their shirt-sleeves, they were working like slaves. And gradually the walls and the ceiling were losing their jazzy hues.

"What about that patch over the fireplace, K.K.?" pointed out Handforth critically. "You'd better buck up, or——"

"Chuck a mop at him!" interrupted one of the victims.

"I'll do worse than that," growled K.K. "I suppose you chaps think it's funny?" he went on ferociously.

"Funny isn't the word!" yelled Handforth. "It's a scream."

"We'll take it out of Pieface for this!" went on Parkington darkly. "His sense of humour is warped!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Boys—boys!" came Mr. Pycraft's sharp voice down the corridor. "How dare you interfere with these hard-working lads? Come away at once!"

"Yes, sir," said Handforth, with a start.

"These boys from Carlton are having their lesson, and I hope they will take it to heart," continued Mr. Pycraft's voice—which really emanated from Nick Trotwood, and which sounded, to K.K. & Co., right outside the door. "We all know that Parkington is a dull, stupid boy. His companions are equally dull and stupid. They are unfit for anything else but manual labour—and I doubt if they can even undertake that successfully."

"The old blighter!" gasped K.K. under his breath.

"However, I am giving them a chance," came the voice. "If they do not clean this room to my satisfaction, I shall probably feel disposed to report them to the headmaster for a flogging. Now! Come away, all of you!"

"Break" was over, so the juniors were ready enough to leave—Trotty having spoofed the Carlton Gang once again. They went back to the Form-room holding their aching sides. They hadn't laughed so much for weeks.

And K.K. & Co. continued to labour.

UNEXPECTEDLY, Mr. Pycraft turned up in the Form-room during the last lap of morning lessons. He had discovered that his hurt was nothing much. A bath, a change, and a rest had restored him.

"Thank you, Biggleswade, you can go now," said the Form-master, as he took over.

"You all right, sir?" asked Biggleswade.

"I am quite all right," replied Mr. Pycraft coldly. "With regard to that disgraceful affair this morning, I am considering what steps I shall take."

Biggleswade left, and Mr. Pycraft looked round the Form-room; he noted the empty seats.

"Where are the other boys?" he demanded sharply. "Where is Parkington? Where is Baines? Good gracious! There must be over a dozen boys missing."

"Those Carlton chaps, sir?" asked Handforth blandly. "They're working in Archie's study."

"What!" barked Mr. Pycraft, with a jump.

"Clearing up the mess, sir," explained McClure. "They've been busy all the morning."

"Have they, indeed?" barked Mr. Pycraft. "The unheard-of impudence!"

He dashed out without another word, and when he arrived at Study E in the Ancient House he was breathless. He found the Carlton Gang well-nigh exhausted, but triumphant. Archie's study was so washed and cleaned that it seemed a pity to walk into it.

"What is the meaning of this?" demanded Mr. Pycraft hotly. "How dare you boys waste your morning in this fashion?"

Parkington's jaw dropped.

"W-waste our morning, sir?" he repeated. "But—but you told us to clean up this room."

"I told you nothing of the sort!" rapped out Mr. Pycraft. "You're talking nonsense! Every boy here will write me five hundred lines for missing morning lessons. Furthermore, you will all attend extra lesson this evening."

And Mr. Pycraft strode out. On the whole, he felt that he had better make no fuss about that earlier catastrophe, or he might become the laughing stock of the school.

As for Kirby Keeble Parkington and his Red-Hot Gang, their collapse was complete when they realised the full truth. They never knew exactly how it had been done, but they certainly did know that the Old-Timers had spoofed them into undoing their own jape.

It was many a day before they heard the last of it!

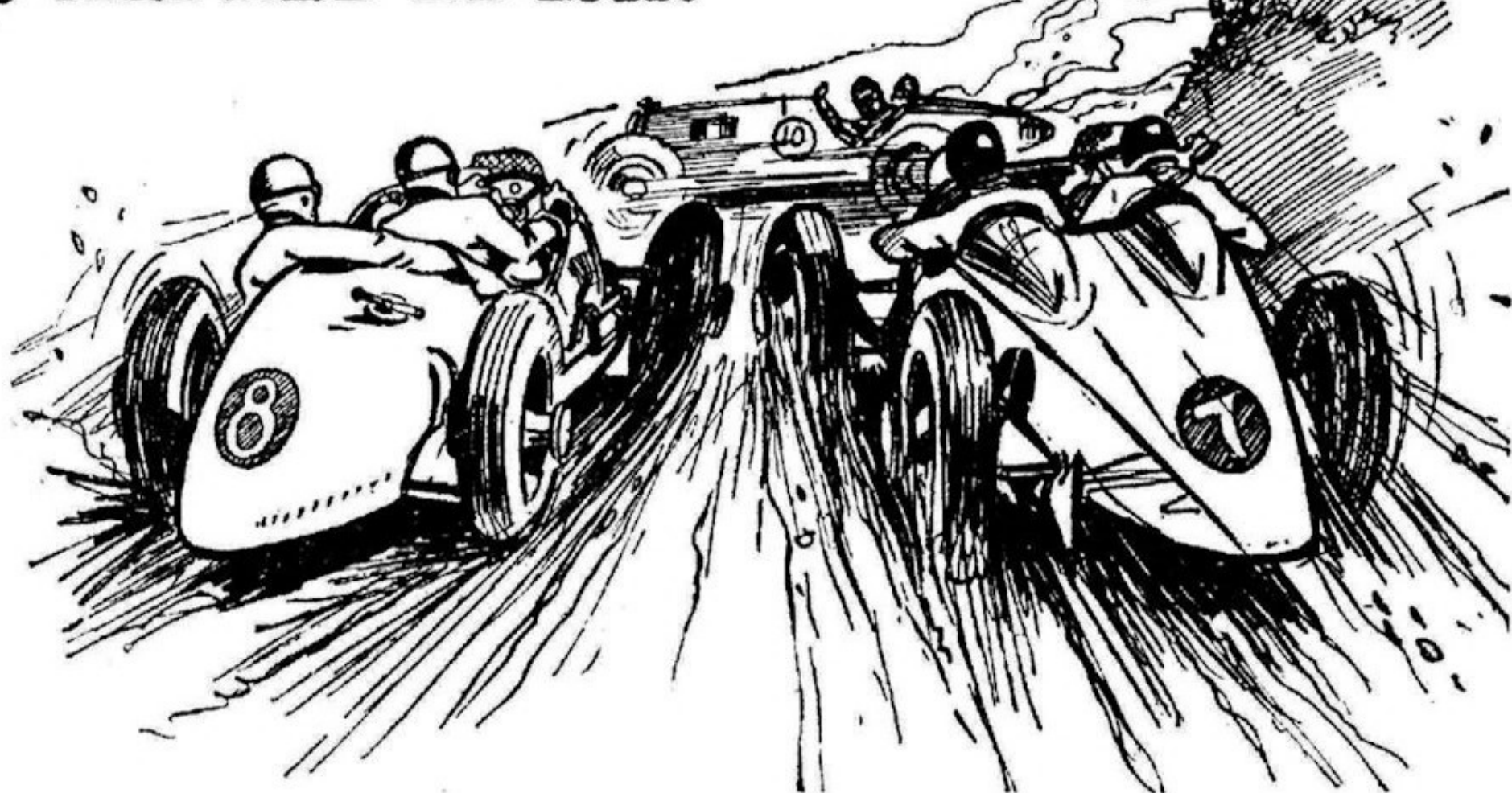
THE END.

(K. K. Parkington won't take this defeat lying down, you can bet. In next week's corking yarn, entitled "Handyman Handy!" he gets his revenge. This story will make you laugh tears!)

All The Thrills Of Motor-Racing In This Week's Stirring Instalment Of—

THE IRON SPEEDMAN!

By ALFRED EDGAR



The Record Breaker!

"I'M not afraid of you, Ross—get that!" Stargie's face worked for a moment. "You're dead—you died on the Sarles Circuit! I saw you under the car and—and—" His voice faded out, and he stepped back while the amazed boys stared blankly at him.

Stargie gulped, rubbed his hand across his eyes, then suddenly turned and strode to his car, with the boys gazing after him.

"He's potty! He looked as though he was scared stiff of you!" remarked Joe.

"What was he blathering about?" Jim asked. "He said: 'You're dead—you died on the Sarles Circuit!'" Jim looked at his chum, then went on slowly: "Why, that was where my father died—and Stargie crashed him there!"

"He's potty! He thinks you're your own dad—or he did for the moment!" Joe exclaimed.

They knew that Lon Stargie was a queer fellow, and they knew that he hated Jim. But this was the first time he had shown definitely that he feared him as well. Jim was aware that his presence always affected Stargie in a strange way, but never so strangely as now.

They saw the man get back into his car, just as the officials sent the first machine off

on practice. The boys eased themselves into the cockpit of their racer, and presently they saw Stargie go off at the drop of the flag.

He went away with his machine roaring in gear as he fairly flung it down the road. He was out of sight, and dust was faintly cloying the surface of the course, when the flag dropped again and sent the Ross-Ryan off for its first run over the Irish Grand Prix Circuit.

The crowds, standing about the half-built stands and in the enclosures, were watching him. The newspapers had told them of this grim-looking car which had been built in an English village; they had told how young Jim was proving himself a worthy son of his famous father.

And these Irishmen, always ready to back the fellow who was fighting against odds, sent the Ross-Ryan Eight and its youthful crew off with a cheer.

The car shot away from the line, its rear wheels kicking the surface of the road and its wide-open exhaust bellowing.

Whoo-oom—rah—rah—rah! it roared, like an exultant echo of the crowd's cheering.

* * *

Steve and Mr. Ryan had told Jim that, on this first practice bout, he was to go steadily, and not attempt real speed.

Hurting round hair-pin bends; careering along at terrific speed. The Irish Grand Prix is on, and Jim and Stargie are fighting a desperate race for victory!

Joe had told him, also, that the lap record for the circuit was seventy-two miles an hour. Jim wanted to see if the car would break that record but, at the same time, he didn't want to upset his brother.

"Joe!" He bent over to his chum and yelled. "We'll do a couple of slow laps to get the feel of the corners—then I'll step on it!"

He judged that would satisfy both his brother and himself, and some fifteen minutes later—when he had been twice around the circuit—something, which sounded like a tornado and looked like a thunderbolt, came down the straight and passed the stands.

It was Jim, with his foot hard down on the throttle-pedal, proceeding to make the fast lap he had promised himself.

The straight road slid towards him. A red Italian car which was in front appeared to glide back to meet them, then fell away behind with the astounded Italian wondering what had happened to make his own car so apparently slow.

The hedge at the roadside blurred to a mass of sliding green. The buildings which marked the corner at the end of the straight appeared to rise up and fling towards them. There came the scream of brakes, the roar of the engine as Jim changed gear for the corner, then the car was around and away before the crowd had a chance to get its number.

From this corner there was a hill, with foot-bridges over the road. Other cars were on the hill when the Ross-Ryan reached the foot of it, and those other racing machines were still boring their way upwards when Jim reached the top, left the hill behind and started down the long, snaking slope which led to the deadly hairpin at the bottom.

The machine's whirling wheels seemed hardly to touch the road-surface as the Ross-Ryan hurtled downwards. Joe jammed himself in his seat and looked ahead with one apprehensive eye cocked over the edge of the scuttle in front.

The machine heeled and swayed for the bends, then seemed to gather itself up for one last, reckless leap towards the hairpin at the bottom. Joe saw the corner as a big, sand-bagged wall, with buildings behind it; he sighted grand-stands, banked-up faces, coloured advertisements and track officials pressing hurriedly for shelter.

It looked as though the car was going to make a hole in the wall and finish a battered

wreck amidst the buildings beyond. It seemed impossible for the racer to stop, and when it appeared as though nothing on earth could check it, Jim reached for the hand and foot-brakes, slamming them on.

The grinding squeal of the brake-shoes rose. The car's tail wagged as it lurched from one side of the road to the other in a series of skids which almost tore the tortured tyres from their rims, to end up in one last, tearing slide, with the engine roaring again as Jim changed down.

While the crowd was still catching its breath, while women were yet hiding their eyes from the seemingly inevitable smash, the Ross-Ryan was bolting around the corner on its way once more.

The rest of the lap was covered in the same hectic way. When Jim finished it, the record for the course had been completely shattered, but he did not know his figures until he finally pulled into the racing camp, when all practising was over.

Steve and Mr. Ryan were waiting with the mechanics at the marquee although, during practice, they had been down at the pits. The men took over the car when the boys got out, then Mr. Ryan came up.

"You did one fast lap, Jim," he said, and he was not smiling. "I thought we told you to take it easily?"

"We simply had to do a quick one!" Joe grinned. "And Jim didn't half make her travel. Very nigh scared me, he did!"

"You scared us—and you've scared every other racing team in the Grand Prix!" Steve told them grimly, and his tone made the boys stare.

"D'you know what happens when one car breaks the lap record during practice?" Mr. Ryan asked. "Especially if it breaks it by a good margin."

"Well, I suppose all the others have a shot at the new figures," Jim said cheerfully.

"They don't," Mr. Ryan answered. "The old record was 72 m.p.h.—you did a lap at 78 m.p.h.—six miles an hour faster than anybody's ever gone over this course before!"

"Gosh, I thought it was fast!" Joe grinned. "Good old Jim!"

Jim did not answer. He could see that something was wrong. Mr. Ryan went on:

"That was a darned silly thing to do, Jim! You've told Stargie and all the others just how fast you can go—and how fast they've got to ride to beat you! Every team will work day and night, now, to get more speed out of

HOW THE STORY STARTED.

JIM ROSS, iron-nerved, daring, is a born racing driver. His brother, **STEVE ROSS**, has just completed building a special racing car known as the *Ross Eight*, and they take it down to Brooklands for a big race. They are accompanied by **JOE COOPER**, Jim's chum, who acts as mechanic. Jim realises that his most dangerous rival is **LON STARGIE**, the crack speedman of *Ace Motors*. Stargie is unscrupulous, too—as Jim discovers to his cost during the race. Jim is winning, and then the *Ace* speedman deliberately makes him crash. After the race Jim vows he will get his own back against Stargie in the *Irish Grand Prix*. The *Ross Eight* having been wrecked, Mr. Ryan, owner of the *Ryan Engineering Company*, builds another car for the brothers. They take it across to Ireland, and just as Jim is preparing to drive it round the course in a practice spin, Stargie comes up to him. There is fear in his eyes as he says to the boy: "I'll have no mercy on you now. It's you or me, this race!"

(Now read on.)

their cars. They won't worry about practising so much.

"Each team will tune up one car to travel as fast as it can go. They'll try and make you ride your limit, in the hope that they can crack you up—and they don't care if these pace-making cars go phut, either. Once you're out of the race, the slower machines will come into the lead.

"My boy, we could have won this race hands down, on the form you've just shown. But now all the rest will make themselves as fast. Instead of having what might have been an easy win, you'll find yourself in the middle of a bunch of machines as speedy as your own—going like metal demons. It'll be the most desperate race any circuit has ever seen, now!"

Joe whistled.

Jim smiled.

"That's all right," he said easily. "I drive better when I'm going—really—fast!"

The Death Race!

THE cars were lined up for the Irish Grand Prix. The grand-stands were decked with flags and awnings; every seat was occupied. The enclosures were sweltering under hot sunshine, crowds packed in them.

All around the course smaller grand-stands carried their loads of spectators. About the seven miles of roadway people sat. Where highways normally crossed the circuit, great barriers had been erected to stop chance traffic.

Crews of mechanics stood by the replenishment depots; tools and spare parts shone on the planks. The men were gazing to where the twenty cars entered in the Irish Grand Prix were lined up in four rows.

Drivers and mechanics were in the cockpits, crash-helmets catching the sunlight and the lenses of their goggles flashing as they watched the huge red-and-white semaphore arm raised as a starting-signal at one side of the road. The air was filled with the stammering crackle of exhausts, engines roared, smoke belched from the quiescent machines.

Jim Ryan sat behind the wheel of the Ross-Ryan Eight with nerves quivering faintly, his foot on the clutch pedal, and his right toe poising above the accelerator. He was in the second row of the cars. In front of him, dead ahead, was Stargie's Ace. Next to him was a gleaming red Alfa-Romeo, then a blue Delage, and then a murderous-looking yellow car, which had come over from Belgium.

These four cars, Jim had been told, had been selected as pacemakers by the rival teams. They were to go as hard as they possibly could, striving to make one another fail under the speed strain, and, above all, to make the Ross-Ryan Eight crack up.

All around, the crowd was dumb. They knew that the opening laps of this race would be terrible. They knew that those five cars were matched for speed, and that the winner would be the one which could best stand the strain. They knew, too, that one or two—

maybe all of them—would go off the road; that the first minutes of the race would bring news of disaster. It was inevitable. Each car was capable of lapping as fast as the record that Jim had put up.

Joe sucked in his breath as he watched the semaphore and crouched at Jim's side. He had rigged special grips for himself, so that he could claw at them when the car bumped madly on the road. Specially-made elastic sleeves had been fitted to the lads' forearms and legs, so that their muscles might be supported when the battering inside the machine had robbed them of their strength.

The semaphore arm twitched.

Every engine roared. Twenty speed-irons-throated defiance, and through that sound the bellowing of the Ross-Ryan Eight and its four rivals came stridently.

The red and white arm slid down in a coloured arc—the starting signal.

The Ace, the Alfa-Romeo, the Belgian, and the French cars fairly pitched themselves ahead. The Ross-Ryan dug at the road with its rear tyres, found grip, and then hurtled in one mad leap at the tails of the other machines.

In a bunch, howling devilishly, they shot away, gathering speed. The sun flashed on their coloured bodies; the ruddy streak of exhaust flame spouted from blackened orifices.

Dust slashed out; stones and grit spumed from the road surface. Fragments hammered the radiator guard of the Ross-Ryan, and bits of flint skimmed off her engine cover.

Jim pulled out, trying to pass, using all the mad acceleration that Mr. Ryan had built into his engine. But he could not get by. The four cars ahead held the road, so he tucked back to the centre and travelled with his streamlined dumb-irons a bare foot from the jerking tail of Stargie's Ace.

Down the course they went, changing gear, gaining speed, with the stunned crowd awed by the roadside. Spinning wheel-hubs were almost touching. So close were the cars that they might have been parked, standing still in a garage; but their speed was rising. Seventy miles an hour—eight—eighty-five!

Then came the first corner.

Jim saw it through the smoke and dust, and he edged his machine over. He'd slip through them. He wouldn't brake until after they had all slowed, and he'd get around that corner in a skid and gain the lead.

But they did not touch their brakes! They held to their speed until long past the point where they would normally have begun to slow. Then, when the crowd was starting to quail and draw back, when the startled officials were beginning to yell scared warnings—only then did the brakes go on, and each driver used his at the same moment as the rest.

Jim crashed his foot-pedal almost to the floor-boards. He saw the yellow Belgian skidding at him, and Jim swerved to give the other room. He saw the Ace shoot in front, turn half round, and straighten.

In a moment the corner was full of skidding cars, with the Belgian sliding sideways into the palisade. Jim saw him hit! He saw woodwork spray out and sand fly from the bank built at the foot.

He had a glimpse of the car bouncing high, and then the Ross-Ryan was hurtling through the turn, with only three cars in front of it, and the hill rising ahead.

Jim was in gear again now, and so were the others. He had the throttle wide open, he had the supercharger packing gas into the cylinders; the Ross-Ryan was travelling at its limit, but he did not gain on the others!

They zoomed up the hill, still in a bunch. They were half-way up it before the slower cars behind them came through the turn, passing the smoking wreckage of the yellow machine, over which eager mechanics had spent so much time and thought, only to have it all wasted in the first minute of the race.

The four leaders leaped from the crest of the hill, with the Italian car skidding. Jim saw the machine's tail slash towards him; he thought it would foul his wheel. Then the driver skidded his red car the other way.

The Italian knew that, in leaving Jim's track clear, he was sealing his own fate. His rear wheels fouled the edge of the road. A tyre burst—then he was left behind.

The last Jim saw was the driver craning over his wheel, fighting for control, with the car slewing madly round. He thought he heard a crash as he put his own racer to the slope beyond.

Two cars out of the race inside the first two miles!

No wonder the crowd at the start had been dumb with apprehension! They'd have hidden their faces could they have seen the way the Ace and the Delage and the Ross-Ryan took the sinuous road down to the hairpin.

Jim was still a shade behind the two other cars, his radiator between their kicking tails. The machines were bouncing and jerking from the surface. A two-inch bump was enough to buck them high at that speed.

They took the curves close in, wheels skimming the road edge, kicking the dirt and grit backwards in solid streams. They gathered speed with every yard they travelled. They went down like frenzied things bent on destruction amid stone walls at the dangerous corner.

Jim's hands were clamped about his twitching wheel. The peak of his crash-helmet shrouded eyes glittering behind close-fitting goggles. His jaw was set, his muscles were tensed.

Joe was clinging in his seat, watching the dials on the instrument board. His battered body was never still for an instant under the bouncing of the car. He was hammered and crashed at every bump, but he hung on.

The hairpin turn rushed at them. The crowd yelled as it sighted them, then the shouting died. Some had seen Jim Ryan come round on his famous record lap, but this bunch of three cars was travelling faster!

To Jim it seemed as though everything was rushing towards him. He knew the point when, leaving everything to the last possible moment, he should have used his brakes—and he passed that point before he touched them!

He saw the other two leap together as both braked savagely. Then, in the moment when it seemed that they must crash into each other, they leaped apart again, showing a clear space between which the Ross-Ryan shot. Its wheels were locked by the brakes, the scowling tyres were tearing at the road.

All three skidded, with the Frenchman's nose turning round. He struggled to right the car, to hurl it about the turn, but he could not master it. Slowly the nose came round, until he was pointing back the way he had come.

Then suddenly he slid full across the track—full into the path of the other two!

(Will Jim crash? You'll know when you read next Wednesday's enthralling instalment of this exciting serial!)

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED

Norman H. Radmore, 57, Summerwell Street, St. Sidwells, **Exeter**, wants to contribute to amateur magazines.

J. Bishop, Silvertown, Lower Beach Road, **Shoreham-by-Sea**, Sussex, desires correspondents interested in films, television, and ships.

P. C. Jansen, Beeklaan 536, The Hague, **Holland**, wants to hear from readers keen on microscopy.

Miss Gwendoline Baxter, Ellerslie, Traverse Street, Wagin, **Western Australia**, would like girl correspondents in Italy, Spain, Isle of Man, East Indies, etc.

Eric Rand, 74, Alexandra Road, **Windsor**, wants correspondents in the British Empire.

Mervyn Stephens, 14, Lansdown Place, Clifton, **Bristol**, wants a French correspondent, also to hear from readers keen on the piano.

J. E. Williams, Summer Fields, near **Oxford**, wants a correspondent in Florida interested in cricket and photography.

Miss Hilda Ellis, 173, Waverley Road, Edge Hill, **Liverpool**, desires to hear from H. Ranger, of Sydney.

H. V. Hill, 76, City Road, **Cardiff**, wants to start a Help Club.

Wm. Humphrey, 82, Uphall Road, **Ilford**, Essex, desires correspondents in Australia, India, and Canada.

R. H. Sheard, 23, Henley Street, **Oxford**, would like to exchange stamps with readers.

P. Murphy, 146, Prince of Wales Road, Kentish Town, **London, N.W.5**, wants correspondents.

Cyril J. W. Miller, 15, Belle Ombre Road, Cape Town, **South Africa**, wants members for his correspondence and cinema club.

H. Crout, 20, Langridge Street, Fairfield, Melbourne, **Australia**, desires correspondents interested in photography.

Doug. G. McDiarmid, 27, Belmont Avenue, Glen Iris, S.E.6, Victoria, **Australia**, wants correspondents anywhere (ages 16-17), who are keen on photography and sport.

R. W. Edwards, 4, Lawton Street, **Crews**, Cheshire, would like to hear from readers who are interested in the old series of the NELSON LIB.

The DORRIMORE CASTLE MYSTERY!

(Continued from page 31.)

manager would like you to step into his office."

"Of course," said Garland, smiling.

He stepped in. A hand dropped on his right shoulder, and at the same moment his gun was whipped out of his hip-pocket. Another hand came down on his left shoulder—a heavier hand.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Garland," said Nelson Lee cheerfully.

The confidence man turned deathly pale; the shock was terrific.

"You here!" he gasped. "But—but it's impossible!"

"Haven't seen you for quite a few months, Sam," said Chief-Detective-Inspector Leonard, who was on the other side, as he snapped on the handcuffs.

He marched his prisoner out, and Nelson Lee smiled as Mr. Otis T. Ackroyd came bursting into the bank. Through the police, he had just learned the truth.

"Were you in time?" he asked frantically.

"Plenty of time, Mr. Ackroyd," said the bank manager. "Thanks to Mr. Lee, this fraud was nipped in the bud."

Mr. Ackroyd mopped his brow.

"I'm darned if I can understand it!" he ejaculated. "I'd swear that Lord Dorrimore was square——"

He was gently told the truth by Nelson Lee.

"And I came to England thinking that I was a smart man!" said Mr. Ackroyd at length. "I must say that your crooks are live wires! They didn't let much grass grow under their feet after I blew in! By Heaven! I guess they saw me coming when I was a thousand miles off!"

He suddenly gripped Lee's hand.

"And you, sir," he added. "You've saved me a whole pile of money. You'll let me pay your fee, won't you?"

"Being a business man, I shall most certainly accept it," replied Nelson Lee, smiling. "And if you are still in England when Lord Dorrimore comes home, I shall be very pleased to introduce you to him. You'll find him better than the fake."

"Do you think he'll be willing to sell that castle of his?"

"For a hundred thousand?" laughed Nelson Lee. "My dear Mr. Ackroyd, you couldn't buy it if you offered a million—in pounds."

"Darn it! I always thought there was a catch in it somewhere!" growled Mr. Ackroyd.

THE END.

("The Room of Death!" is the title of next week's long complete detective mystery and adventure yarn featuring Nelson Lee and Nipper. Thrilling exciting—and weird! Don't miss it!)

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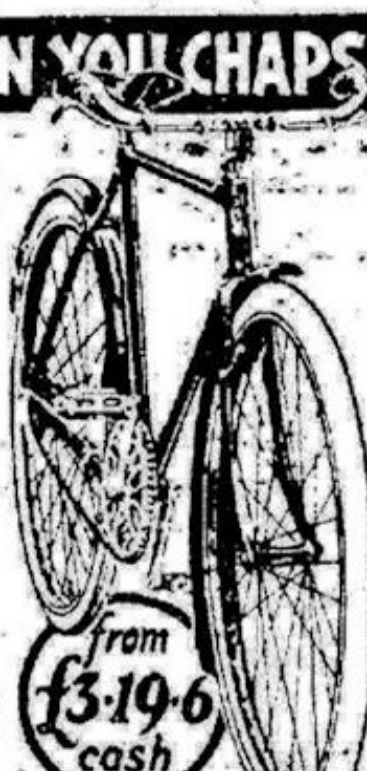
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