

NELSON LEE

2d



ANOTHER
"NIGHT HAWK"
THRILLER!

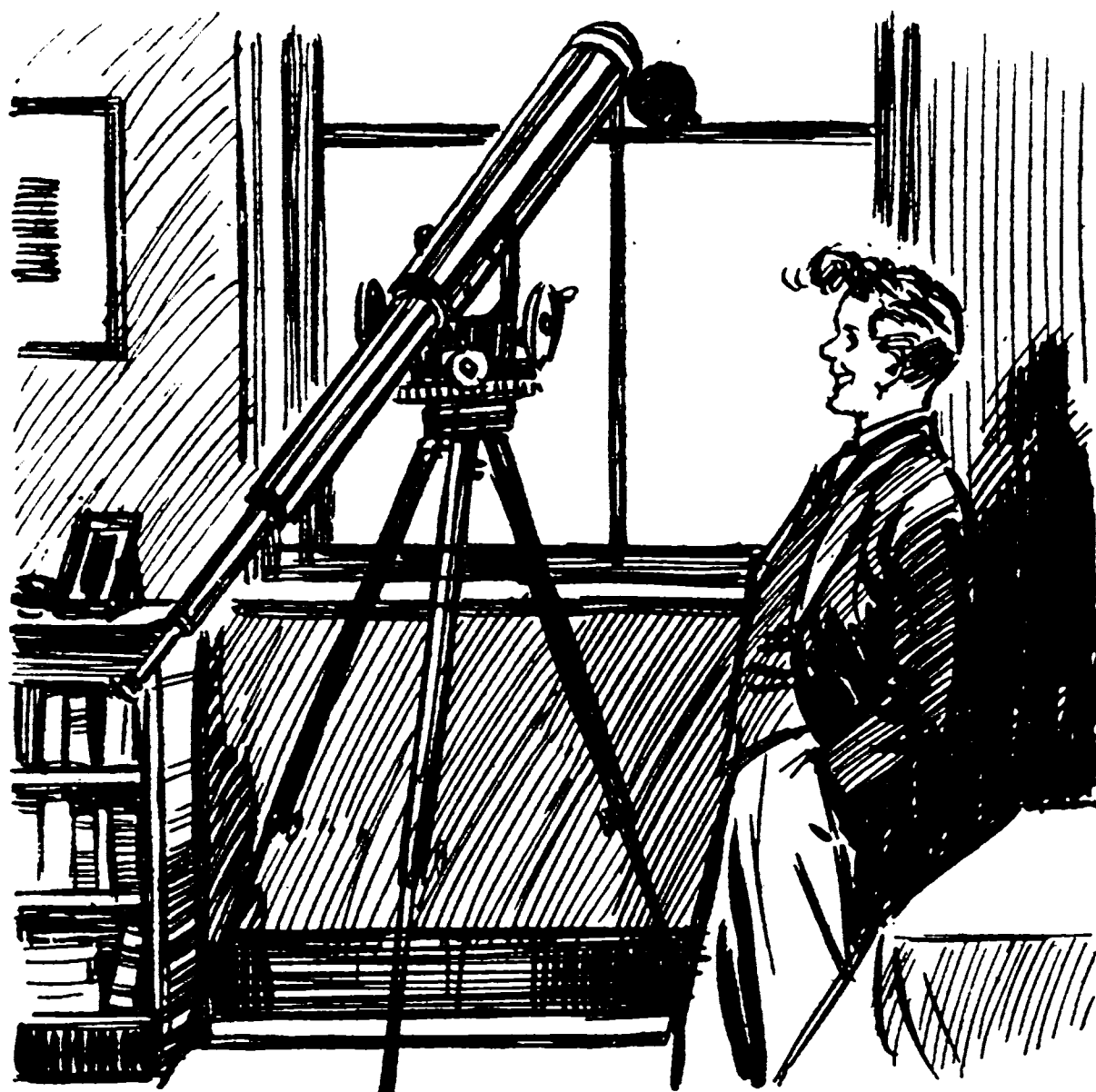
A powerful complete story of Nelson Lee and the Night Hawk versus the arch-criminal, the Master of the World!

New Series No. 36.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

September 27th, 1930.

ONE LONG HEARTY LAUGH is this *Lively Complete Story of St. Frank's*



Handforth gloated over his marvellous first prize the juniors had derided. He would have the laugh when they saw it!

Complete
Story by
**EDWY
SEARLES
BROOKS.**

CHAPTER 1.

The Prize-Winner!

"**S**ORRY, Handy, old man, but there's nothing doing," said Nipper, the Junior sports skipper of St. Frank's. "With your leg in its present condition, you can't possibly play this afternoon."

Edward Oswald Handforth snorted.

"You seem to forget that we're playing Bannington Grammar School," he said dryly. "They're a joke this season. They haven't won a game yet, and they don't look like getting one. We shall probably wipe them up by about ten goals to nil. So you won't be missing much, Handy."

This was certainly a consolation. Not that Handforth was consoled. As the official goalie of the Junior XI he hated missing any

HANDY'S FIRST

"My leg's all right," he declared warmly. "Why take any notice of Wally Freeman? It's only a strained muscle—and a small muscle at that! It doesn't make any difference to my walking, and——"

"Mr. Freeman happens to be our coach, and as an ex-pro his advice is valuable," interrupted Nipper firmly. "A strained leg muscle will quickly recover if you give it rest, Handy. Walking won't hurt it—but goalkeeping demands a tremendous lot of energy, and I don't want you laid up for the rest of the season. So K. K. takes your place for this afternoon's game."

"Well, it's all rot!" grumbled the burly leader of Study D. "Parkington's a good man, but you're not pretending that he can keep goal as well as I can, I suppose? And why deliberately throw the game away?"

Nipper grinned.

game. He was about to make further protest when Church and McClure, his faithful chums, came dashing through the lobby—for Handforth and Nipper were standing on the Ancient House steps.

"Seen this, Handy?" asked Church breathlessly.

"Seen what?" demanded Handforth. "Don't bother me now——"

He broke off as Church brandished a blue-covered weekly periodical, and his eyes opened wider.

"'Weekly Snips'—just in this morning!" said Church. "You remember that picture competition you went in for? Well, your name is down here as the winner of the first prize!"

"What!" yelled Handforth excitedly.

He fairly tore the paper out of Church's hands and examined it. Perhaps he had an

idea that he was being spoofed. He was always going in for competitions, but it was very seldom indeed that he won anything. But there was his name in black and white.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" he ejaculated. "It's true, then?"

"First prize, a handsome telescope," grinned Nipper, looking over Handforth's shoulder. "Is that a picture of it?"

"Rather!" said Handforth enthusiastically.

"Looks about as big as the main telescope at Greenwich Observatory," chuckled Kirby Keeble Parkington, who had strolled up with a few others. "But I don't suppose you can take much notice of the picture, Handy."

"Rats! It's a marvellous telescope!" declared Handforth. "I knew all the time that I should get that prize. By George! Now I shall be able to put it across old Tucker! With a telescope like this, I'll make him green with envy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth was an optimist—in fact, a super-optimist. Otherwise he would not have taken much notice of that illustration. The telescope certainly did look imposing in the picture; but its exact size unfortunately was not given. And to talk of making Professor Sylvester Tucker envious was ridiculous.

The St. Frank's science master was an amateur astronomer of note, and what he didn't know about the stars and the heavens in general was scarcely worth learning. He wasn't likely to be jealous of Handforth's first prize. Incidentally, Handy would never have won that first prize if he had been left to his own devices. It really belonged to Church and McClure, for it was they who had corrected his solutions.

"It ought to turn up this afternoon, I suppose?" said Handforth eagerly.

"Almost certain to," remarked Vivian Travers, with an expression of gravity on

his face. "I expect they'll send it down in a big lorry."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hardly a lorry," demurred Handforth. "They might deliver it by a special van, but——"

Yells of laughter interrupted him.

"You silly ass!" said McClure. "That giddy telescope will probably come by letter post—tucked away in the bottom of an envelope with a three-halfpenny stamp on it! Don't get such big ideas!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's only a small, choap competition," went on Mac impatiently. "If it wasn't, you wouldn't have got the first prize."

But Handforth refused to believe that his precious telescope would be anything short of gigantic. He went about the school carrying that paper in front of him, admiring the picture. And he had ceased to be worried about his exclusion from the football match. That didn't matter now. He was keeping his eye on the gates—waiting for the telescope to arrive.

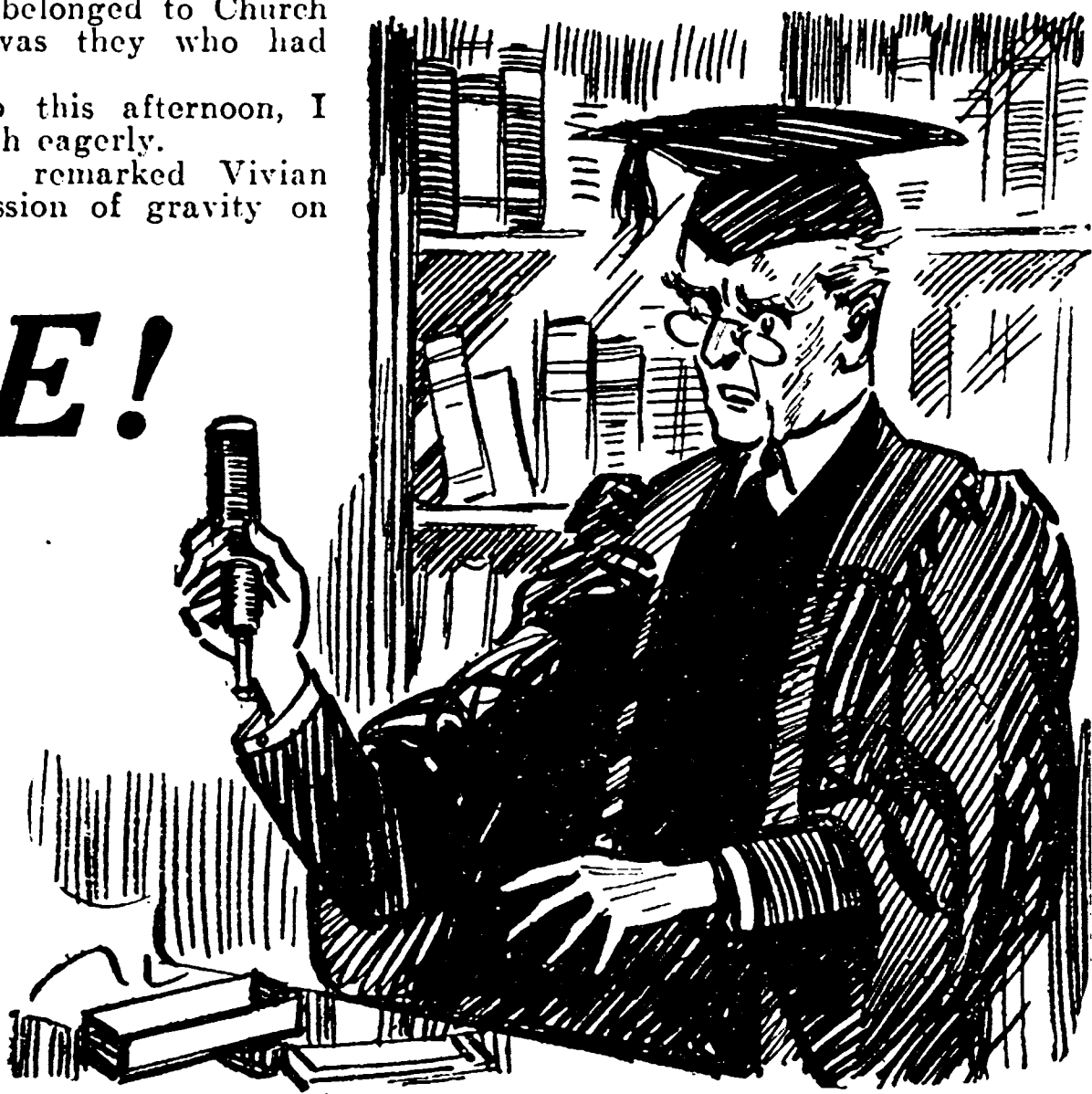
"For goodness' sake, Ted, don't be such a chump!" said Willy Handforth impatiently, as he came across his elder brother in the Triangle. "You're only making the chaps laugh at you. That giddy telescope is only a toy!"

Handforth regarded his minor coldly.

"You can mind your own business, my son," he said. "Here's the picture of the instrument, and seeing is believing!"

PRIZE!

When Professor Tucker opened the parcel he found himself staring at a child's toy telescope. "Good heavens!" he gurgled.



"I don't suppose you'll believe until you do see," retorted Willy. "But if that telescope is any different from the kind that you buy for three-and-sixpence, I shall be surprised."

"But look at it!" urged Handforth, thrusting the paper before his minor's eyes.

"I'll look at the telescope—when it comes," replied the Third-Former. "That picture's no guide. The best thing you can do, Ted, is to forget the toy altogether, and go to Bannington and see the match."

"Toy!" roared Handforth, turning red. "You silly young donkey! It distinctly says here that the telescope is a scientific instrument of the most modern type! And as for going to Bannington—not likely! I'm staying here to unload the telescope as soon as it arrives."

"Oh, you're hopeless!" said Willy helplessly.

CHAPTER 2.

A Question of Labels!

AFTER dinner the footballers went off, and practically the entire Remove and Fourth went off, too. The Bannington Grammar School match was always an attraction for the Junior School, and this afternoon a win for the Saints was as much a certainty as anything could be.

Church and McClure had wanted to go with the team, although neither of them was playing. Nipper was giving two of the Red-Hots a chance, this game being looked upon as a walk-over. But Handforth's chums felt called upon to stay behind to look after their leader. There was no telling what he would get up to if he was left to himself.

Willy & Co. had business of their own. Three of them went off to the station soon after the footballers had gone. They were Willy Handforth, Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon—the leading lights of the Third.

"Well, we tried to get rid of your major, but he wasn't taking any," said Chubby, as they walked down. "It's a pity he's staying behind Willy. He's bound to spot us as we come in."

"Not necessarily," replied Willy. "We only need to use a bit of precaution."

Willy, in point of fact, was expecting a hamper from home, and as the September afternoon was quite summerlike, he and his chums had decided to go for a little picnic. But if Edward Oswald saw that hamper he would either bag it altogether or claim half its contents. It was rather awkward that he should be left behind, for the fags had been counting upon his absence.

"We'll wangle it somehow," said Willy confidently. "But we shall have to go easy, my sons. Luckily he doesn't know anything about this hamper."

"It's like his nerve," grumbled Juicy Lemon. "Why should he claim some of it, anyhow? Didn't your mater write and say that she's sending it to you?"

"That doesn't make any difference to Ted," replied Willy. "Besides, we've got to be fair. The last time a hamper came for him we went along and boned half of it. And I even made him believe that I had a right to a half."

"But as long as he doesn't know anything about this hamper we're safe," said Chubby Heath contentedly. "Did your mater say what she's sending?"

Willy made his chums' mouths water by a recital of the hamper's contents, and they were all eager when they arrived at Bellton Station. Their eagerness was dampened, however, when the booking clerk shook his head.

"Hamper?" he repeated, in answer to the inquiry. "No, there's not one here."

"But there must be!" said Willy in dismay. "It was sent off by passenger train yesterday, and——"

"I can't help that," interrupted the clerk, who was busy with some figures. "There's no hamper of any kind—for anybody."

"Well, it's a rotten service," said Willy bluntly.

"And some of the things in the hamper will be rotten by the time it arrives," added Chubby Heath, with disdain. "What's the good of trusting things to a railway company like this?"

"You youngsters had better clear off," said the clerk, frowning.

"As you're so jolly busy, perhaps you'll let us come in and look round?" suggested Willy, as he leaned over the half-door. "It isn't impossible, I suppose, that you've made a mistake? There are plenty of parcels and things——"

"Do you kids want me to come out and throw you off the premises?" interrupted the clerk wrathfully. "I tell you there's no hamper."

"It's addressed to 'W. Handforth,' and it might not actually be a hamper," said Willy.

"'Hamper' is a broad term. It might be square, or oblong, or even a fish-basket."

The clerk grunted.

"Handforth?" he repeated, with obvious reluctance. "Why didn't you say so before? I believe there is a parcel here addressed to—— Hi, wait a minute!"

The fags poured over the half-door like a flood, and they fairly seized upon the small oblong wooden box which the clerk had picked out. One glance was enough for Willy. He uttered an exclamation of disgust.

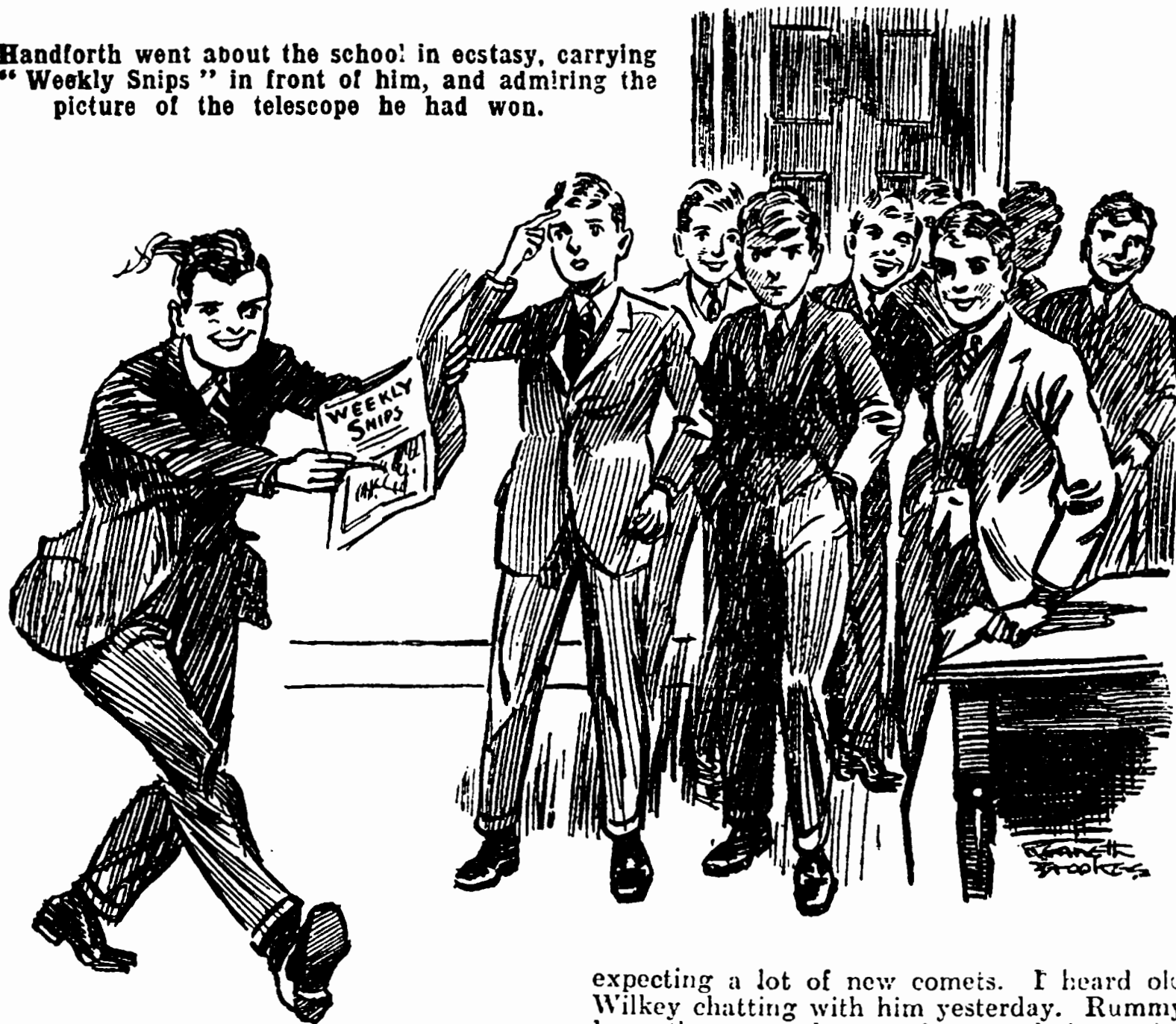
"It's for Ted!" he said tartly. "His giddy telescope!"

"I thought it was coming down by lorry?" asked Chubby, in mock surprise.

"Well, this is the telescope right enough—it's a 'Weekly Snips' label," said Willy. "Well, we'll leave it here. He can fetch it himself. Besides, it's better that he should keep at the school, on the look-out for that lorry!"

They went off with resentful feelings against the railway company. As an afterthought, Willy wandered along to the goods

Handforth went about the school in ecstasy, carrying "Weekly Snips" in front of him, and admiring the picture of the telescope he had won.



station. There was just a chance—a bare possibility—that the hamper had been sent by "goods." It wasn't much of a hope, for the hamper was hardly likely to be that size.

The goods station was apparently deserted, and the fags went from box to box, and from bale to bale without being challenged. There was no sign of the hamper. But there was something else—something which caused Willy to open his eyes wide.

Standing on the edge of the platform, at the spot where lorries backed up to receive goods, was a huge packing-case. Ordinarily, Willy wouldn't have given this packing-case a second glance. But he could not help being attracted by the bold words which were stencilled right across the side: "Telescope—With Care."

"Funny!" he said thoughtfully. "I mean, funny that there should be a real telescope at the station at the same time as Ted's toy. Look at the size of it, too. Must be for some observatory."

He examined the label, and the mystery was solved.

"Why, it's for Professor Tucker!" he went on. "My only hat! The old boy's doing the thing properly this time!"

"He's dotty on the stars, anyhow," growled Chubby Heath. "And just now he's

expecting a lot of new comets. I heard old Wilkey chatting with him yesterday. Rummy how these people get interested in a lot of silly old comets!"

A lorry backed up to the platform, and Willy watched it with a mischievous gleam in his eye.

"Anybody about here, youngsters?" asked the lorry-driver, as he stopped his engine.

"The place seems to be deserted," replied Willy.

"Always away when they're wanted," grumbled the driver. "Well, they've got the box ready—and that's one thing. But I shall need some help."

He went off and Willy turned to his chums.

"Our luck's in!" he said tensely. "My sons, this is a chance in a thousand! What a lark on Ted! My only Sunday topper! It'll be the scream of the term!"

"But—but what the dickens——"

Chubby Heath broke off as he saw that Willy was deftly removing the label from the packing-case. He did not pause to give any explanation. Running hard, he went back to the passenger office.

"You're wanted!" he said urgently, as the clerk looked up. "There's a carriage off the line at the other end of the station. Be quick, for goodness' sake!"

"Carriage off the line?" gasped the clerk.

He ran out helter-skelter, and it only took Willy about thirty seconds to remove the

"Weekly Snips" label from Handforth's parcel, and to substitute the other. By the time the clerk got back, hot and breathless, the fags were innocently examining an excursion bill.

"You—you young monkeys!" said the clerk exasperatedly. "I might have known you were fooling me! What's your game, confound you?"

"Fooling you?" said Willy, preparing to dodge. "But there is a carriage off the line. It's one of those old ones—and it's used as a store-hut. You don't mean to tell me that you've never seen it!"

The clerk rushed at him, but he might as well have expected to catch an oiled eel. Willy had gone like a flash—Chubby and Juicy having thoughtfully retired earlier.

"Goods station!" panted Willy, as they raced.

When they arrived they still had the place to themselves—and the business of affixing the "Weekly Snips" label was accomplished without a hitch.

CHAPTER 3.

Something Like a First Prize!

CHURCH and McClure were fed-up. The afternoon was over, and nothing had happened. Nothing was likely to happen, either. Never had St. Frank's seemed so desolate and deserted.

It so happened that the seniors were playing a big away match, too, and those fellows who weren't following the teams had taken advantage of the fine weather to go off rambling or boating. There was scarcely a soul to be seen in the Triangle or in the Squares. St. Frank's dozed in the sunshine.

"We seemed to be the only chaps about," remarked Church wearily, as they wandered towards the gates for the twentieth time. "There's not a Removite or a Fourth-Former within miles—except us."

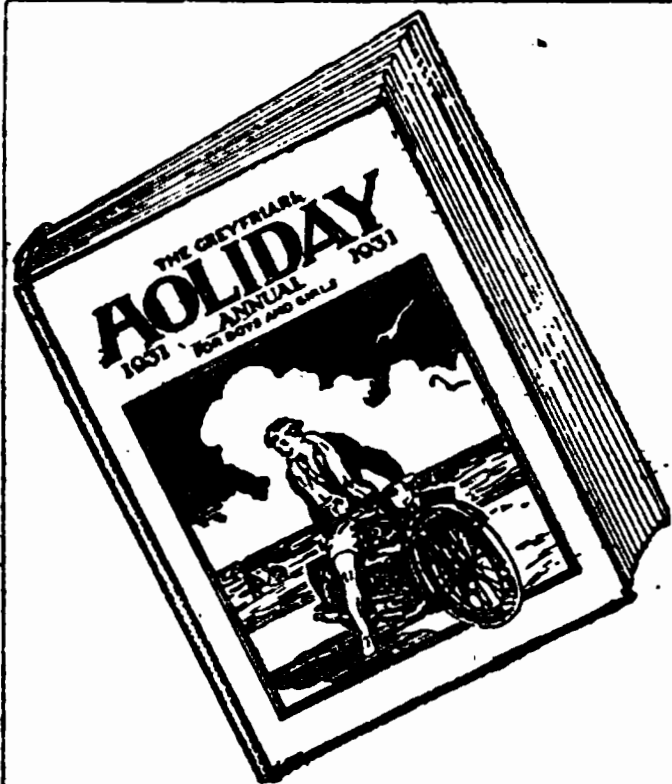
"Never knew the place to be so dead," said McClure sadly. "Why not chuck it up, Handy? Let's go on the river. Let's do something, anyhow."

"Rats!" retorted Handforth. "That telescope might come along at any minute. It's too risky to go away."

"Risky be blowed!" snorted Church. "Supposing it does come? We shall find it here when we get back, shan't we? Besides, it's a perfectly senseless thing to expect it to-day. We shan't see it until to-morrow morning's post."

"Idiot!" snapped Handforth. "It won't come by post! A scientific instrument of that sort—Hullo! There's a van coming up the lane now! By George! And there's a wacking great packing-case on it, too!"

"Oh, my hat!" groaned McClure. "Somebody's having a new piano, and Handy mis-



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takes it for his kid's telescope! I wish we'd never seen 'Weekly Snips'!"

The lorry came lumbering up the rise, and even Handforth, optimist though he was, had no real hope that it carried his prize. What he was actually expecting was a light van of some kind.

But suddenly he jumped. The lorry was an open one, and the big case was in full view. And there, plainly stencilled on the white woodwork, were the words: "Telescope—With Care." Edward Oswald could hardly believe the evidence of his eyes.

"Look!" he gasped, pointing. "It is my telescope!"

"You're mad!" said Church impatiently. "I've never known such an idiot——"

He broke off with a gulp; for he had caught sight of those words, too. It was certainly astounding.

The vehicle lumbered into the Triangle, and Handforth fairly shook with excitement. For the moment he had half-expected the lorry to go straight past. But no—it came in.

"Hi!" yelled Handforth, running alongside. "That's mine!"

"None of your larks, young gent!" said the driver, grinning.

He stopped the lorry, and Handforth leapt on to it. He stared at the label triumphantly. His sensations of astonishment were gone. Here was the actual proof that he had been justified in his hopes.

"Look here, Churchy—you, too, Mac!" he yelled. "Here's the 'Weekly Snips' label—with my name on it! Now what about it?"

Church and McClure had seen it, and they were dizzy.

"Wake me up, somebody!" muttered Church, in a stupefied voice.

The lorry-driver had joined Handforth, and he was looking at the label.

"Are you this 'E. O. Handforth, Esq.'?" he asked suspiciously.

"Of course I am!" replied Handforth. "This is my telescope—I was expecting it. First prize in the 'Weekly Snips' competition, you know!"

"Well, I'm blowed!" said the driver, duly impressed. "'Weekly Snips,' eh? I shall have to get that paper!"

Willy and Chubby and Juicy came strolling up, suitably interested.

"What's all this about?" asked Willy innocently.

It wasn't often he overdid it. But Church and McClure, who were filled with suspicion, gave him a quick look. His presence at such a moment was significant, and the wink he gave them even more so.

"Great Scott!" gurgled Church. "You—you mean——"

"So your telescope has arrived, Ted?" asked Willy loudly. "Well, I'm blessed! It seems that you were right, after all. I never expected it to be as big as this!"

"Neither did I, to tell you the truth," said Handforth frankly. "I was expecting some-

thing pretty hefty, of course; but this is a bit better than I hoped for. You all thought I was dotty, didn't you? By George! Wait till the chaps come back!"

"Yes, there'll be a big laugh," agreed Willy, nodding.

Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon had all their work cut out to keep their faces straight, for they knew where the laugh would come in.

"By George! And the laugh will be on them!" said Handforth gaily. "This is where I score! Now, then, you chaps, make yourself useful. Between the lot of us we ought to be able to get this packing-case into Study D."

The driver looked a bit doubtful.

"Haven't you got any porters about here?" he asked. "Besides, I want to see somebody responsible. My book's got to be signed, and there's five shillings to pay."

Handforth made no trouble about the five shillings. Church and McClure and Willy & Co. helped nobly. Between them all, they soon had the packing-case in Study D, and the lorry-driver was got rid of.

Then commenced the business of opening the case, and removing the big instrument. Willy was much in evidence here, for he felt responsible for the safety of Professor Tucker's property. Church and McClure received the surprise of their young lives. They had taken it for granted that this was a jape of Willy's, and that the packing-case would contain nothing but scrap-iron, or some such valueless junk best calculated to give Handforth a shock.

But lo and behold, a marvellous superb telescope appeared—a super affair, complete with a great stand, endless fittings, gadgets, and so forth.

"But—but I thought it was a jape!" whispered Church, when he had the chance of dragging Willy aside. "What the dickens have you done, you young ass? This isn't your major's first prize!"

"I hope it'll be his last!" grinned Willy.

"Don't worry—you'll know all about it before long. We've got to take good care that he doesn't do any damage."

"Then it is a spoof?" asked Church breathlessly.

"Use your head!" retorted Willy, with scorn. "And if you see Professor Tucker wandering about looking for a lost telescope, head him off!"

And Handforth's chums understood perfectly.

CHAPTER 4.

A Shock for the Professor!

PROFESSOR SYLVESTER TUCKER, as it happened, was much in evidence that afternoon. He was very absent-minded, but astronomy was his hobby—his passion. And having received intimation from the railway company that his new telescope had arrived, he was well on the war-path.

Various astronomical authorities had reported that comets were to be expected at this particular period of the year in the northern sky. The occasion was such a momentous one that a new telescope was essential. But that telescope should have arrived a week earlier, and for days the professor lived in anxiety.

Reaching the station, the professor burst into the booking-office.

"My telescope!" he panted. "Where's my telescope?"

"I beg your pardon, sir?" said the clerk, staring.

"You've got a box for me here—a case!" declared the professor excitedly. "I've been expecting for days."

"What name, sir?"

"Name? Oh, you mean my name? Tucker—Sylvester Tucker."

"Professor Tucker?" said the clerk, with a start. "That's right, there is a box addressed to you, sir, but I'm puzzled about it. There's no record of it in my book, or on my consignment notes, and I can swear that that same box was addressed to somebody altogether different. Perhaps you'd better have a look at it, sir."

"Certainly! Let me see it at once!" cried Professor Tucker. "That telescope should have been here days ago—"

"Telescope, sir?" ejaculated the clerk. "H'm! I must have been wrong, after all. There is a telescope in the box. Anyhow, it's from a big firm of telescope makers, so it looks like it."

"Let me see it!" said the professor.

The clerk handed over the parcel to the professor.

"What—what is this?" demanded the irate science master, as the parcel was thrust into his hands. "Nonsense! Rubbish! This isn't my telescope! An absurd little parcel like this!"

"If your name's Professor Tucker, this is yours," insisted the clerk.

"Enough!" shouted the professor. "This certainly is for me. The fools! The dolts! This must be merely a lense, or some trifling accessory. It'll be weeks before I get that telescope—weeks! And by then it'll be too late!"

He raved out of the station, carrying the box with him; and such was his exasperation that he made no attempt to open the package until he was getting near the school. By then his temper had simmered down into a settled melancholy. He felt that he might as well see what part of the instrument had actually arrived.

Then he got a shock.

For when he opened the parcel he found himself staring blankly at an absurd child's telescope, all lacquered brass and red paint—worth about half a crown or three-and-six in any toyshop.

"Good heavens!" gurgled the professor. "What blundering idiocy is this?"

He sat down limply on a heap of stones,

and it was here that Willy Handforth found him—looking very dejected. And as Willy thought it unsatisfactory for Professor Tucker to sit there, in full view, with that telescope in his lap, he kindly took charge of it. Willie felt a certain amount of responsibility in this.

And from that minute Professor Tucker's troubles were over.

CHAPTER 5.

Spoofed!

HANDFORTH was looking flushed and hot as the junior footballers streamed back from their victorious game at Bannington. Having gloated for some time over his first prize, he now wanted to show it to the juniors who had derided it.

"Well, we won, Handy," said Nipper cheerily as he came up.

"Won?" repeated Handforth. "What did you win? You haven't been going in for competitions, too, have you? Just wait until you see—"

"You've got competitions on the brain, dear old fellow," interrupted Travers gently.

"Our worthy skipper thought you'd be interested to know that we put it across the Grammar School to the comfortable extent of four goals to nil."

"Leave Handy alone," said Kirby Keeble Parkington. "The poor chap is too worried about his telescope. 'Didums letems down den? Hasn't it turned up, sweetheart?'"

"It has—idiot!" retorted Handforth.

"Oh, it has?" asked Nipper interestedly. "So your famous telescope has arrived? Good man! Take it out and let's have a look at it."

"What do you mean—take it out?"

"Haven't you got it in your waistcoat pocket?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Handforth. "This is where I get the laugh over you, you funny fatheads! In my waistcoat-pocket, eh? Come along to Study D, and I'll give you the surprise of your lives! Seeing is believing."

"Might as well humour him," said Nipper, with a chuckle. "Let's go along and see his glorious first prize."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on—let's all go!"

They crowded in, and Handforth was delighted. The more the merrier. This was his moment of victory.

The passage was crowded, and Handforth put the key into the door, turned it, and flung the door wide open. He was positively bubbling with triumph.

"Now!" he thundered. "Look!"

The juniors looked. In that first second they hardly knew what to expect, for Handforth's manner was so assured. Then they blinked, gasped, and looked again.

"Ye gods and little fishes!" breathed K. K. "Is that it?"

"Yes, it is!" yelled Handforth. "Now

what have you got to say? What did I tell you?"

"My hat, the fellow must be off his rocker!" ejaculated Travers. "Handy, have you seen this telescope of yours?"

"Seen it?" laughed Handforth. "You ass, I fitted it up—and it took five or six other chaps to help me. Even then we had to struggle and——"

His words trailed away, and in the meantime fellows were crowding into the doorway, yelling with laughter. Out of the corner of his eye, Handforth had caught sight of the

wildly. "Something's happened! This isn't my telescope at all!"

Willy thrust himself forward.

"Speaking of telescopes," he said casually, "it's a funny thing that two should have arrived at St. Frank's on the same day."

"Two!" went up a shout.

"Professor Tucker is pleased as a cat with two tails," nodded Willy. "His whacking great telescope arrived this afternoon, and he's now fitting it up in his observatory. By the way, Ted—five bob!"

"Wha-a-at?" gurgled Handforth feebly.



interior of the study, and his eyes goggled and he jumped when he saw that the telescope was no longer there.

"What—what's happened?" he gasped faintly.

The table was back in its normal position. And there, standing in the middle of it, mounted on a flimsy tripod, made out of three bits of stick, was that brass and red toy telescope. It looked utterly ridiculous in the middle of that bare table—and infinitely more ridiculous after what Handforth had been saying.

"Poor chump!" sighed Travers. "He brought us here to see this! And by his tone I thought that there was something——"

"But it's all wrong!" babbled Handforth

Like a bolt from the blue, the truth dawned upon him. Willy & Co. had been on the spot when that big telescope had arrived! It hadn't been his telescope at all—but Professor Tucker's! He had been japed!

"Why, you—you——" he began thickly.

But his voice was drowned in the yells of laughter which went up and down the passage.

And it was a long time after that before the juniors would let Handforth forget his First Prize!

THE END.

(Corking extra-long yarn of St. Frank's next week, chums. "GLUTTON AND GOALKEEPER!" is a story you'll be sure to enjoy. Order your copy early.)

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UNMASKED!



CHAPTER 1.

Death Upon the Waters!

THROUGH the red-grey mists of an angry dawn, a giant battleship, steel-clad from water-line to fighting-top, smashed her way haughtily up-Channel towards Cherbourg.

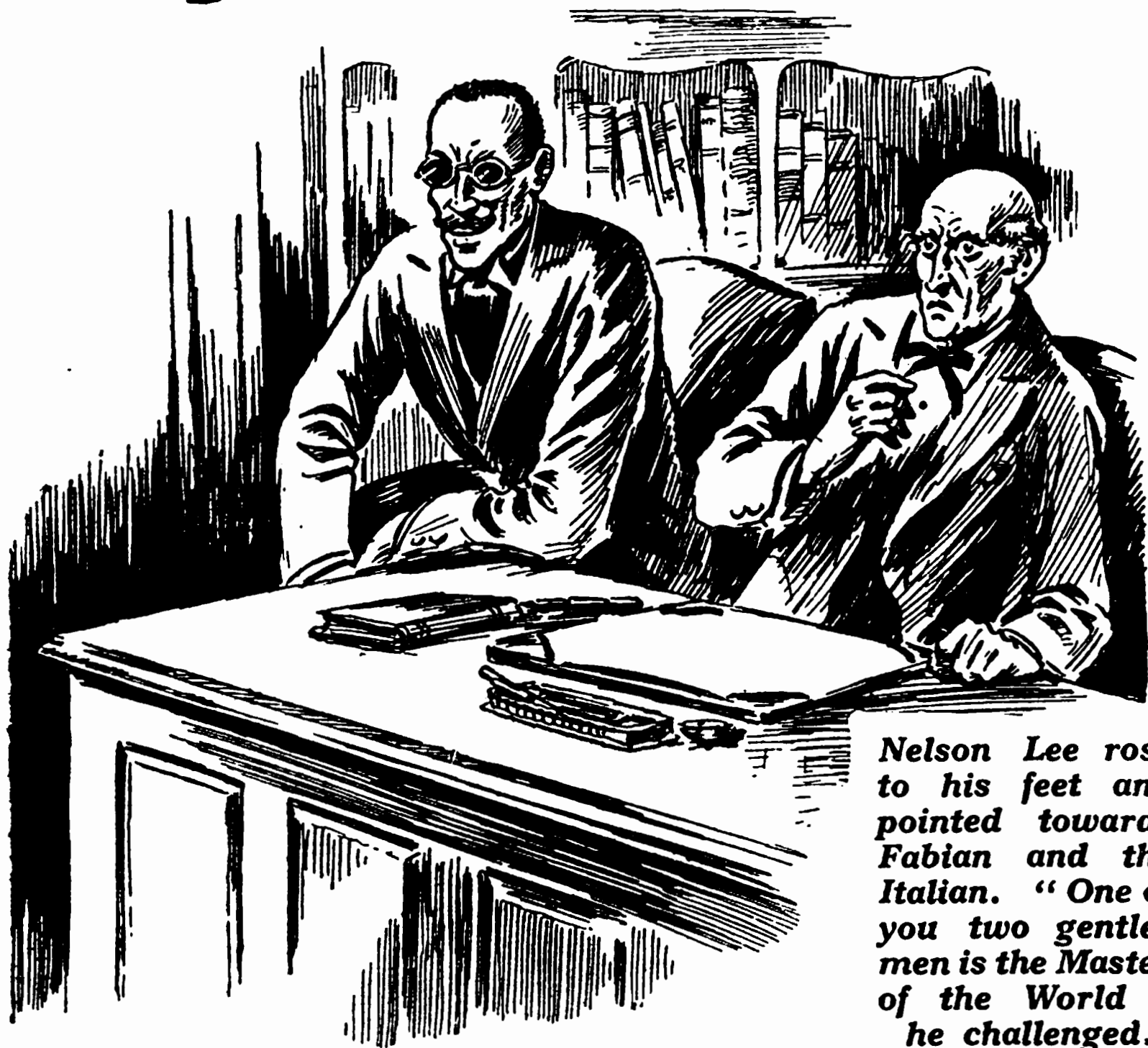
From the east a thin gleam of early light sparkled on the tips of her polished mast-heads. For the rest, the darkness of the

still-sleeping west shrouded her decks, distorting her majestic shape and the lean menace of her guns. The white waves hissing beneath her bow were like the fangs of a huge leviathan.

At her stern, short-masted, floated the tri-colour of France, while high up at the truck an admiral's pennant snapped in the breeze. For the bristling ship was L'Empereur—19,000 tons of destruction, the flagship and pride of the French Atlantic Fleet,

Only England still defies the demands of the Master of the World—and England is given two days in which to pay the forfeit, or London will be destroyed: Forty-eight hours have Nelson Lee and the Night Hawk in which to save London from the power of a ruthless master-criminal!

By John Brearley



Nelson Lee rose to his feet and pointed towards Fabian and the Italian. "One of you two gentlemen is the Master of the World he challenged."

Lieutenant D'Arblay, keeper of the morning watch, stopped his mechanical promenade up and down the quarter-deck, and, with hands clasped behind him, stood staring across the stiff Channel waves to where Cherbourg lay dimly in the shelter of her great breakwater. In another hour L'Empereur would be at anchor, and a few hours later, he, the lieutenant, would be on his way to Paris for ten days' leave.

He drew a deep breath. Dieu! but he had had enough of the grey Atlantic and the grinding routine of work. It would be good to see the lights of the gay capital again—theatres—Longchamps—a glorious time, in faith! He gazed at the tumbling wastes of waters and the coastline of France with a little impatient smile that presently gave way to a puzzled frown.

Strange! Out of the tossing seas ahead a brilliant green light had suddenly appeared; already the high, plunging bow of the warship was buried in a luminous glow. Still frowning perplexedly, the lieutenant called a member of the watch and sent him forward to find out what was happening.

With every second the green light increased until, in a short while, the fo'c'sle of the ship was blotted out entirely. It rolled along the steel decks like a fog; and what happened next sent the lieutenant racing for the bridge like a madman.

He saw his messenger reach the oncoming glare, saw him halt for a moment in alarm. Then the man turned with a hoarse cry and began to run desperately, his face puckered in awful terror. Before he had gone two steps the creeping light had caught him, and

the officer stiffened with horror as the sailor screamed, staggered, pulled up dead and fell forward on his face, rigid as stone.

Bare feet pattered swiftly as the other members of the morning watch came stampeding from their stations forward, casting scared looks over their shoulders. One by one the green light lapped them up, and they, too, pitched into quiet heaps on the deck.

Lieutenant D'Arblay snapped out of his trance. His orders crackled fiercely. High and shrill blared the brazen alarm-call, waking the sleeping men below-decks. A man hurled himself down the companion-way to the captain's cabin, others sprang to the boat-davits in readiness. Whistles shrilled piercingly; and the whole of the mighty battleship keeled over as she swung in a half-turn seawards.

But still the uncanny menace came on, surging through gun-turrets and wireless house, mowing down the sailors at the boats silently and terribly. It rolled down the hatches, seeped through the open scuttles, saturating every corner of the towering monster. Most of the crew never reached the deck, but collapsed as they ran through lighted alleys or across hammock-strewn flats; others struggled to the top, only to be siezed, body and mind, in an icy-green grasp that brought them toppling to the deck.

Through glassy eyes the lieutenant watched the grim scene. His captain burst on deck and started for the bridge ladder, but half-way across he tripped and plunged foolishly against the rail. Gradually the sounds of running feet died away, the harsh, choked voices were hushed. The green light clawed hungrily at the bridge.

White-faced but firm of lip, Lieutenant D'Arblay, of the French Navy, squared his trim shoulders, and with a steady hand pulled the telegraph-handle swiftly over to "Dead stop." He smiled bleakly as the signal was obeyed.

It had been touch and go, however. Even as the shuddering engines ceased, the Ice Ray flooded the engine-room and left disaster in its wake.

But the lieutenant did not know that. For by that time the green glare had swept the bridge also, and he, too, lay very quiet and still beside the wheel.

Slowly and thoroughly the Ice Ray searched the ship from stem to stern, passed over the fluttering tri-colour and—disappeared. And the proud warship, useless and impotent now for all its mighty guns and shell-proof armour, wallowed sluggishly athwart the waves within a mile of the coast of France!

In exactly five minutes, without warning, Science had paralyzed a marvellous fighting unit!

The Master of the World had struck once more.

The attack was not finished yet, however. Scarcely had the green Ice Ray vanished

than the grey Channel waters parted as a sleek submarine rose quietly to the surface a hundred yards away, and commenced to circle the battleship as a lean wolf prowls around a wounded bull. The moment she was clear, her conning tower opened and a masked man appeared on the tiny deck, bracing himself against the rail to meet the choppy motion of the waves.

Close to his body he hugged a small, box-like instrument that presently emitted pale sparks and a dry, vibrant buzz under the lightning play of his hand. For some seconds the signals flashed into the ether; and when they ceased, the man leant over the rail with a cold sneer at the colossal hulk before him.

On the Empereur's water-line, amidships, another light had burst sharply into view—a sickly yellow ring that began to crawl slowly up the battleship's side as fresh signals sparkled from the the range-finder aboard the submarine.

Soon the light was squarely in position among the tiered gun-turrets and the four squat funnels. There came a last message from the masked man. Instantly the yellow circle turned to a blazing orange glare, terrifying in its evil intensity.

And now, above the beat of the submarine's engines and the swish of the sullen sea, came the virulent hiss of burning steel. As though caught by a giant blowpipe, the armoured plates of the turrets melted, burst asunder, fell in. One by one the funnels disappeared; a great tear slashed the bulwark apart; the bridge collapsed. Crash upon crash woke the echoes, as solid steel structures buried themselves in the yielding deck.

Switching to the enormous foremast, the Fire Ray cut through its chilled heart like a knife, bringing fighting-top, guns, wireless, all the massive and complicated superstructure smashing into the sea. The huge warship groaned and bellowed like a tortured giant; her decks ripped from end to end with one nerve-shattering roar. And the Fire Ray hissed over all, burning, destroying, shaving her down to the water's edge.

As last came the final disaster. As a rapier-thrust darts through a weakened guard, so the ray cut its way into the very heart of the ship.

The grinning fiend aboard the submarine saw it go and dived below for safety, clanging the conning-tower door behind him. Came a shriek of escaping steam from the dying warship, a hideous gurgle; and then the heavens were split by the deafening, steel-rending howl of an explosion!

The Channel waters ran blood-red; the submarine shivered dizzily. But when the cloud of steam had melted slowly into the day sky, L'Empereur sighed, reeled wearily over on her gaping side, and with a horrible swirl, slid for ever beneath the greedy waves.

The submarine, her deadly work accomplished, sank quietly and slipped away from the scene, heading towards England.

CHAPTER 2.

The Secret Conference!

"BY Heaven, Lee, it is terrible! Terrible! I am at my wit's end! We can do nothing!"

The Right Hon. Philip Graham, Home Secretary of Great Britain, pushed back his chair and began to pace his office with long strides. His sensitive hands fidgeted nervously with the lapels of his coat, and a nervous quiver grated in his usually calm voice.

"We are helpless! We are at the mercy of this Master of the World!" he burst out again. "Defenceless! Abject! I confess that his Majesty's Cabinet can do nothing! And our Army, Navy, and Police force—" He shrugged his shoulders hopelessly and relapsed into silence.

Sir Hugh Fletcher, the Chief Commissioner of Scotland Yard, haggled his grey moustache and glared at the minister sullenly.

"The police are working day and night!" he growled. "But what is there to go on? Nothing. The cars and men who raided the Bank a fortnight back have vanished into thin air; that infernal green light wiped out all pursuit just as it wiped out our defence in front of the Bank. There are no clues; we can't even find from which point of the compass the rays are projected. We're trying our hardest but—it's futile. Ask Lee!"

Nelson Lee, quick to sense hostility, did not answer, but smoked his cigar in sympathetic silence. From the attitude of the two men, it was obvious that "words" had passed before his arrival. Certainly there was every excuse for their agitation, for not since the Great War had responsible officials faced such an emergency as gripped Great Britain to-day.

He leaned back in his chair, staring thoughtfully through the high windows. Outwardly, the famous detective looked as cool and debonair as ever, but in the full daylight tiny lines showed about his mouth and eyes, lines that told of constant strain and worry.

Life for Nelson Lee just now was far from easy; for both he and Nipper were hunted men. Day in and day out, the Master of the World was hounding them without cease. He had the range of the house in Gray's Inn Road, and because the silent, deadly attack of the Ice or Fire Ray, at any hour of the day, was something no man could guard against yet, Nelson Lee had been forced to give up his headquarters for the time being.

Removing his papers and files to a safe hiding-place, he and Nipper had retired to a modest hotel in a quieter London district—prepared to shift again at any minute. That fact, in itself, made him seethe with determination to smash his unknown enemy as speedily as possible, apart from the world-damage and panic the Master was causing daily.

Unfortunately, speedy action was impossible. He knew the hideous means by which the Master had covered his tracks after the

futile but daring raid on the Bank of England, but the knowledge was of little use. He had yet to discover the identity and the lair of the scientific criminal who held the whole of Europe in a grip of terror.

All he could do was to wait, bide his time and pray that it would come soon. At least he had one weapon in his armoury of which the Master knew nothing—his strange alliance with that mystic personality, the Night Hawk. And he took comfort from that.

The voice of the Home Secretary, breaking in on his thoughts, recalled him to the business in hand. The minister had pulled himself together with an effort, and now laid a hand lightly on Sir Hugh's burly shoulder.

"I am sorry, Fletcher!" he said quietly. "I fear the strain is telling on us all. We must keep our heads at all costs!"

He turned to Nelson Lee as the disgruntled police chief muttered something.

"Lee, I have asked you here this morning for a serious purpose. It's quite plain, I think, that we are up against a scientist who can smash our ordinary defences with contemptuous ease. Men and guns are utterly useless against his weapons. And because of that, we ourselves, must call in the aid of science!"

He paused, and re-seated himself wearily.

"Two days ago I sent special messages to the three most eminent scientists in England, requesting them to attend a secret conference here this morning."

Nelson Lee's eyes narrowed softly, and he placed his finger-tips together with careful precision.

"I see. May I ask their names?" he said suavely.

"One was Thurston Kyle!" snapped Sir Hugh Fletcher tartly before the Home Secretary could reply. "The man you said would help us!"

"Ah! And he replied?" Nelson Lee's voice was smooth as he put the question.

"That he could not come!" answered Philip Graham shortly. "In fact, his reply was curt to the point of rudeness. Apparently Britain's impending danger fails to interest him!"

Nelson Lee smiled inwardly. At this moment, he knew Thurston Kyle would be seated before his wonderful radio receiver in his laboratory at Hampstead, listening intently to every word of this "secret" conference; very interested indeed in anything pertaining to the Master of the World. But Lee did not tell the minister that!

Instead, he merely shrugged and went on:

"And the others?"

"The second was the famous German scientist who has lived in England since the War—Dr. Weinbach. But he—he will not be present, either!" finished the Home Secretary lamely; and Nelson Lee saw him flash an uneasy glance at the police commissioner.

"The third is——"

At that moment, a polite secretary opened the door quickly and looked in.

"Professor Fabian, sir—by appointment!"

CHAPTER 3.

A Scientist Disappears!

NELSON LEE rose to his feet with the others as the secretary stepped aside and threw the door wide open.

The detective was not in the least surprised to find that the third expert invited to the conference was no less than the celebrated Professor Fabian. It would have been absurd had he been overlooked; for the little man who now limped modestly into the room bore a name that was revered in every country of the world.

For the last thirty years, his work and discoveries in all branches of science had earned him every honour and decoration it was possible to obtain. He was president of the Royal Society, Fellow of Cambridge, Havard, and Heidelberg Universities, a member of the French Legion d'Honneur; the most famous scientist of his day, and the most venerable.

Rumour had it that, with advancing years, some of his great powers were declining; but as he stood in the big doorway, bowing with quaint, old-world courtesy, he did look very old and fragile. Nelson Lee noted at once that the blue eyes sparkling beneath the high, domed forehead were full of force and intelligence still, and that the slender hands were as steady as his own.

"Good-morning, gentlemen. I trust I am not late!"

The Home Secretary hurried forward, hand outstretched.

"By no means, professor. I thank you for coming. Let me introduce you. Sir Hugh Fletcher, the chief commissioner, and Mr. Nelson Lee!"

The old scientist beamed at Lee.

"I have heard of you, Mr. Lee!" he said simply. "I am delighted to meet you!"

He took the chair the minister offered and gazed about him with a gentle smile.

"The last time I was at the Home Office was—before you were born, Mr. Lee!" he chuckled. "And now, Mr. Graham, how may I assist you? I received your letter, referring to the 'Master of the World,' and describing the disastrous effects of two unknown rays. These I will discuss later. In the meantime, as I never read newspapers, who is this person and why does he use such an extraordinary title?"

"Because he is—the Master of the World!" snorted Sir Hugh unhappily.

The professor blinked at him.

"Toll me, please!" he murmured.

The Home Secretary rose to his feet, shuffling some papers before him with uneasy fingers. His audience watched him expectantly.

"Sir Hugh is right, professor!" he blurted at last. "This man, whoever he is, holds the world in a merciless clutch. His campaign started a fortnight ago—thirteen days, to be precise—when, by the aid of his Fire Ray, which I described to you, he smashed the largest foundry-stack in London. Two days later, he raided the Bank of England, after due warning, stupefied the police cordon by a green ray that paralysed their nerve-centres, and escaped with three million pounds in gold!"

"Fortunately, some hitch occurred in his otherwise perfect plans, and the gold was recovered. Since then he has made up for the loss—drastically!"

The professor inclined his head in silence.

"Three days later he broadcasted an ultimatum to every country in Europe. He demanded from each a huge sum of money—in gold—in exchange for which he promised them immunity from attack for six months. After that, the same payment would fall due again for a further six months!"

"Of all the countries in Europe, only two continue to ignore the demand: Britain and France. For some reason the Master of the World has spared us—up till now. He has merely doubled our fine and given us two more days in which to pay. But France——"

His voice failed and a deep silence followed. It was broken at last by the professor's gentle voice:

"Yes—and France?"

"At sunrise yesterday, within a mile of Cherbourg forts, her greatest battleship, L'Empereur, was burnt to the water-line and sunk with all hands!" said the minister evenly. "At ten o'clock this morning France surrendered to the Master of the World!"

"And so Great Britain is the last survivor. We have two days left. And we are helpless—helpless!"

The Home Secretary closed his eyes drearily, and suddenly collapsed into his chair, a strong man overtired and overburdened. Nelson Lee and the chief commissioner turned their eyes away at once, but from the other side of the table the little old professor regarded him sadly.

"A shocking situation!" he murmured at last, almost to himself. "Shocking! Mr. Graham, whatever help I can give, I will with all my heart!"

The minister raised his haggard face.

"Thank you!" he muttered thickly. "When—when I wrote to you, I believe I gave you full details of the appearance and effects of these rays. We—I—hoped that perhaps you could—identify them and tell us some way in which to fight this—menace!"

Very slowly Professor Fabian shook his white head, and hope faded at once from three pairs of eyes.

"I cannot!" he whispered distressfully. "I am sorry, gentlemen, but with the limited time and data at my disposal, I have been

The Fire Ray hissed over the French warship, burning, destroying, until she was a complete wreck.



unable to discover anything likely to assist the world in this disastrous emergency.

"Whoever this Master of the World is, he is, without doubt, a magnificent genius. You may be aware that scientists, as yet, know very little of the full powers of light. We know the infra-red or heat rays, for instance, and we know the actinic rays, such as ultra-violet and X-ray. But, gentlemen, there are many, many more! Most of us have been able to guess at these; yet the Master has outstripped us all. He has actually converted two unknown rays into terrible weapons. It is magnificent, marvelous—"

His voice shook with a strong note of admiration, but under the surprised stares of the Home Secretary and Sir Hugh he recovered and bit his lip hastily.

"But, of course, it is devilish. Forgive me, gentlemen; I fear an old scientist's enthusiasm carried me away. This Master of

the World is a criminal, and his fiendish invention must be destroyed—even at the cost of knowledge!" he concluded gravely.

Sir Hugh stirred restlessly.

"Yes—but how?" he exploded.

The blunt demand startled the professor painfully.

"Why, I—I do not know yet!" he quavered. "I will immediately get in touch with my colleagues, and perhaps—"

"Meanwhile, we have only two days left!" cried the commissioner harshly, leaping to his feet. "By gad, I—"

He turned swiftly and stared at the professor beneath bushy eyebrows.

"You mentioned the word 'colleagues' just now, sir!" he snapped unexpectedly. "Tell me—what do you know of the German scientist who is living here now—Dr. Weinbach?"

To everyone's surprise, Professor Fabian fell back in his chair and blinked with amaze-

ment. Presently a little smile curved his lips.

"Why, you must have read my thoughts!" he cried eagerly. "Dr. Weinbach is the very first man I shall approach. He is, without doubt, the greatest authority on light in the world! He——"

Once again Sir Hugh cut in impatiently.

"Yes, yes; we know his reputation and his achievements perfectly, professor! But what is he like himself, personally, socially?"

The professor plucked at his underlip.

"He—he is a marvellous man; a genius in many ways! Yet——"

"Ambitious?" asked Sir Hugh softly, leaning on the table.

"Oh, undoubtedly!" answered the professor promptly. "He has often told me that one day all the world will know his name! Jokingly, of course!" he added with a smile.

"Oh, of course!" echoed Sir Hugh; but his eyes glittered. "What is Dr. Weinbach like to work with, professor—supposing we needed his aid, for instance. Cool? Level-headed? Sane, would you say? I ask in confidence, naturally!"

"We-ell——" hesitated the savant. "He would be invaluable, decidedly. "And yet—sometimes I have found him rather head-strong. Hardly ill-tempered, but—well, domineering! Most geniuses are apt to be——"

A thought seemed to strike him suddenly; and as it did so, his fine old face hardened sternly and he rose to his full height with splendid dignity.

"May I ask your reason for these questions, Sir Hugh?" he cried hotly. "You cannot suspect—surely my thoughtless words, given in fullest confidence, have not brought suspicion on one of my most respected colleagues; a man who is without equal in his own department. Study Dr. Weinbach for yourself, sir—if you wish to consult him!"

For all his hardihood, Sir Hugh quailed a little before the fire in the professor's angry eyes.

"We must make full inquiries!" he answered gruffly. "Dr. Weinbach was asked to attend this conference with you this morning!"

"Well, sir, what of it? Perhaps he is too busy. He hates interruptions in his work; that I know!"

The chief commissioner's eyes met those of the Home Secretary in another peculiar glance, but Nelson Lee was watching the old professor closely. There was a tense feeling in the air.

With deliberate slowness Sir Hugh placed both hands on the table and bent towards Professor Fabian.

"Dr. Weinbach left his house at Guildford two nights ago, carrying a small handbag!" he said distinctly. "A man answering to his description crossed by the midnight boat to France. He has not been heard of since!"

CHAPTER 4.

Professor Fabian's Invitation!

"WEINBACH!"

The word was gasped from Professor Fabian's lips after a long and painful silence. The venerable savant seemed dazed; he appeared to be trying desperately to get something clear in his mind. His eyes looked very old and dim when he faced the two intent officials once more.

"Perhaps he has been—kidnapped?" he suggested; but the hopeless note in his voice was only too apparent. Sir Hugh made an impatient gesture.

"No, sir. There were no signs of violence, and the facts are clear. According to his servant, the Home Office messenger delivered Mr. Graham's invitation—just as was done in your case, professor. Dr. Weinbach seemed a little—perturbed, and refused to give a definite answer at the time. That night, however, he packed his bag and told his servant he was going away for a few days—to London. It is almost certain that he crossed to France instead!"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"So you see, we must make the fullest inquiries!" he concluded.

"But not from me, sir!"

Nelson Lee looked up sharply as the professor's voice rang out, surprisingly strong for such a veteran. The old man's fist thumped on the table; his face bore a queer expression of mingled grief and anger.

"I have been treated outrageously—in-famously!" he cried loudly. "At your request I have travelled up from Kent to discuss ways and means of defeating a monster who is debasing the noble name of science. Instead, I—I have been questioned—'pumped' is the word, I believe—like a common informer regarding one of my most respected friends. And that friend you have the audacity, the unparalleled effrontery, to suspect of being the Master of the World! Your every word and look confirms that suspicion!"

"But, professor——" pleaded the harassed Home Secretary hastily.

"Silence, sir!" thundered the professor. "Even though Dr. Weinbach is the one man capable—but, no; I will not listen! I wish you good-day, gentlemen!"

"Oh, look here, professor——" began Sir Hugh.

"Good-day, sir!"

With a face of thunder the scientist wheeled on Nelson Lee.

"Mr. Lee, you are the only one who has shown courtesy to an old man. May I ask the favour of your arm as far as my car?"

Nelson Lee rose with an inquiring glance at the Home Secretary, which was met with a resigned look of dismissal. He bowed.

"I shall be delighted, professor!" he said courteously; and, shaking hands with Sir Hugh and the minister, offered his arm to the fuming savant.

The "secret" conference may have been a failure on one point; but the Home Secretary and the chief commissioner, at least, were quite satisfied that the Master of the World was none other than the famous German philosopher, Dr. Weinbach!

What Nelson Lee thought about it all no one knew. His face was like a mask.

Holding the professor firmly by the arm, the detective escorted him slowly into Whitehall, where a magnificent Daimler waited by the kerb, with a liveried chauffeur in attendance.

During the short walk the old man had apparently recovered his temper, but as he reached the car and turned to say good-bye, his mouth was drawn and a troubled frown clouded his lined face. He laid a hand timidly on the detective's sleeve.

"I know you are a busy man, Mr. Lee," he said earnestly. "But I wonder if you would honour an old fossil by coming to my house to-morrow? I live in Kent; here is my card. Perhaps you could motor down to lunch?"

He hesitated for a moment, and then, as if encouraged by Nelson Lee's smile, went on rapidly:

"I have something to tell you—scientific information that I think will be useful against this Master of the World. I—I would have told Sir Hugh Fletcher, but after his disgraceful behaviour—no matter! Also——"

Looking up, he met Lee's interested gaze squarely.

"An attempt was made yesterday—to kill me! I cannot tell you about it now. The news of my—my friend has upset me terribly. But will you see me to-morrow?"

Nelson Lee's eyes searched the worried face before him for a long minute.

"I shall be at your house to-morrow at two," he answered gravely.

Then, as Professor Fabian beamed suddenly with relief, he stepped back and closed the door. The Daimler slid into its stride.

The moment the professor's car vanished in the whirl of Whitehall's traffic, Nelson Lee moved briskly. The news he had just received, and the significance of Dr. Weinbach's disappearance, called for a council of war with his ally, the Night Hawk. And that without delay.

Despite the fact that speed was necessary, however, he was careful to take no chances of being shadowed to Thurston Kyle's house. For all he knew, a dozen of the Master's men might be loafing among the crowds in the busy thoroughfare, waiting to trail him; and he proceeded to lose himself in the maze of London with a slickness that would have baffled the best watcher.

An hour later, in old clothes and floppy hat, and an easel and paint-box under his arm, he slouched across Hampstead Heath into the picturesque wildness of the Spaniards, and came up presently beneath the high wall of Thurston Kyle's secluded home. Passing the main gate, he walked down the lane until he came to a small

wicket, which he opened with a Yale key, and passed into the grounds.

At the back of the house, screened by a laurel clump, was a narrow door, which opened noiselessly the moment he put his foot on a small grating before the step. Walking into the dark passage, he stepped into a small cupboard in the wall, and pressed an electric button. Instantly he was whirled to the top of the house.

As he went, he could not resist a smile at the memory of his first visit to this strange house. Then he had had a very narrow escape from death. Now he was free to use this secret entrance as an honoured guest.

The small lift rushed him without a sound straight into Thurston Kyle's great laboratory, where his new friend, in hideous goggles and rubber gloves, came from a maze of dazzling cathodes and electric batteries to greet him. Young Snub Hawkins, the scientist's assistant, was busy at the radio receiver, as usual, but looked up with a cheery grin. Nelson Lee wondered what certain high officials in important Government offices would say if they knew their every secret was overheard by this freckled boy, who reported them faithfully to his master—the mysterious Night Hawk.

Thurston Kyle's dark, handsome face wore a grave smile as he gripped the detective's hand cordially.

"I expected you sooner!" he cried in his deep voice. "I heard you leave the Home Office with Professor Fabian. I trust our honoured veteran did not delay you."

"Hardly!" laughed Lee; and Thurston Kyle nodded calm approval when he explained the precautions he had taken.

"It is well to be careful. There is much to talk about now you are here, Lee. A cigar?"

"Thank you. I take it, of course, that you heard every word of the conference this morning?" asked Lee.

Thurston Kyle smiled sardonically.

"Every word. It is too bad the Home Secretary is annoyed with me. I am sorry, too, that the one distinguished expert who did attend was unable to help much."

"He did his best," replied Nelson Lee gently.

"Doubtless!" snapped the Night Hawk, with sarcasm. "But what did that amount to? That the Master has discovered two new rays—which any fool knows—and that all other scientists are helpless! Bah!"

Nelson Lee saw his ally's deep eyes blaze as they turned instinctively towards the huge electric cathodes and curious metal light-screens on the work-bench. He knew enough of their uses to guess that his host was secretly tackling the problem of the Ice and Fire Rays with feverish energy, and that Professor Fabian's innocent remarks had stung.

However, he was wise enough to say nothing; and suddenly Thurston Kyle burst forth impatiently:

"And in addition, with his muddling speeches and futile indignation, he has sent

Sir Hugh Fletcher storming off on a wild-goose chase."

Nelson Lee sat up with a jerk, his eyes hard and keen.

"Meaning?" he flashed.

"Dr. Weinbach!"

"Ah!" breathed Lee. "This is why I came. Now, what do you know about Dr. Weinbach, Kyle?"

"Only this—that, thanks to Professor Fabian's techiness and his own disappearance, both Sir Hugh and the Home Secretary are convinced that Weinbach is the Master of the World!"

"Yes. I rather gathered that myself," replied Lee softly. Then: "And he is not?" he jerked.

"He is not! The Master killed him at his own gate two nights ago!"

CHAPTER 5.

The Room of Death!

AS the meaning of the cold, crisp words dawned upon Nelson Lee, the cigar dropped unheeded from his limp fingers and he stared incredulously at the sombre face before him.

"Good heavens! When did you know that?" he gasped.

"Two nights ago. I saw him killed. He was murdered by the Fire Ray—wiped out without a trace, as quickly and cleanly as the French warship was yesterday morning. I was too late even to warn him!"

Nelson Lee groped for his cigar dazedly. His mind was in a whirl; new possibilities crowded on him at every breath.

"You—you saw it?" he repeated dully.

"Yes. I will tell you. You will remember at our first interview I said there were only two or three men to my knowledge capable of producing these devilish rays?"

"Yes!"

"Well, Fabian was one and Weinbach another. The first I ruled out, because even if he were capable of turning the rays to such fiendish purposes, I cannot imagine him organising such a vast enterprise!"

"Ah!"

"But Weinbach was different. He was brilliantly clever, a born organiser, like all Germans, and as hard and ambitious as any man living. Everyone who has met him knows that, which is why Fabian, as soon as he realised he was being 'pumped,' beat a hasty and indignant retreat this morning!"

"I gathered that, too!" nodded Lee. "Go on!"

"Well, I decided to keep Weinbach under



Over the secret lair of the Master of the World the Night Hawk hovered, bomb in hand, listening to the conversation of the gangsters.

observation—in my own way, Lee. I flew down one night and wired his roof so that Snub could listen-in. We learnt nothing from that beyond the fact that he bullied his servants and spent most of the day in his laboratory. So I took to patrolling the neighbourhood occasionally!"

Nelson Lee smiled grimly. He could well imagine the Night Hawk gliding adventurously through the dark sky, patient and silent on his great outstretched wings.

"Yes?"

"Two nights ago, I saw Weinbach leave his house, carrying a bag. He lives, as perhaps you know, near a private wood a full mile beyond Guildford. Three yards outside his own gate, the Fire Ray hit him accurately, deepened at once and in ten seconds, Johann Weinbach, bag, everything, was blotted out of existence without a sound!"

"Immediately afterwards, I saw a man break cover from the garden and dart into the woods. I swooped, but the thick trees saved him!"

"But Weinbach was seen leaving for the Continent that night!" said Lee quietly.

The Night Hawk frowned impatiently.

"Weinbach is dead. Whoever crossed the France was not he. It is either a case of mistaken identity, or else someone was impersonating him to put the police off the scent. The latter probably. It is a trick worthy of the Master of the World!"

Long silent minutes passed while Nelson Lee turned the new facts over in his brain; clouds of cigar smoke spiralled into the air. At last he looked up.

"And Fabian's life was also attempted yesterday," he said shortly.

"What! How?"

"I don't know—yet! But I can guess!" Briefly he repeated his conversation with the old scientist outside the Home Office, then he stared at his companion keenly.

"What do you make of it, Kyle?"

A low chuckle was the Night Hawk's reply.

"That the Master, as well as myself, has picked out the men who are likely to prove

dangerous—from a scientific point of view! And he is killing them off quickly."

He leaned back in his chair, and his strange eyes gleamed with peculiar mirth.

"It was my turn last night!" he smiled.

"Yours?"

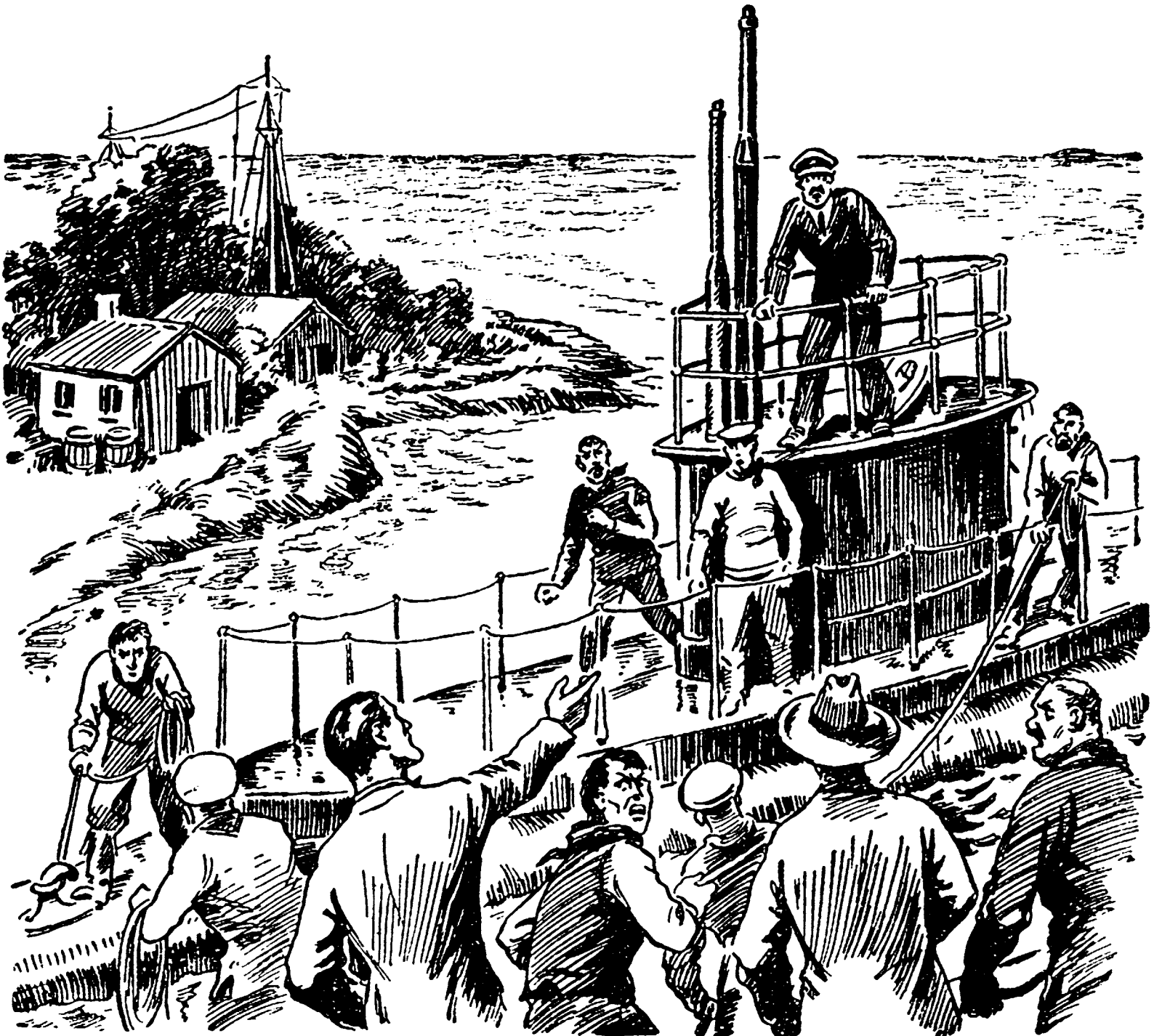
"Yes. I will show you. Follow me, Lee!"

Rising, the Night Hawk strode through the door, down the passage, and into a small quiet room. It was dark and magnificently furnished with exotic pieces; silk curtains and heavy brocades covered the windows and walls, and the air was heavy with the fumes of incense. It was Thurston Kyle's own private sanctum.

None of these things Lee noticed, however, for as the shaded lights were switched on, his quick eyes fastened immediately on something that lay on a great Turkish divan, something entirely covered by a rich tapestry cloth. His lips pursed in a silent whistle.

He had seen too many such sights to have any doubts as to what the tapestry hid. A man lay on the divan, and that man was dead.

With a careless hand the Night Hawk flicked back the covering and exposed a



still white face that stared glassily at the gloomy ceiling. Nelson Lee studied it without a word. The man was a complete stranger to him.

"This fellow broke in last night!" said Thurston Kyle indifferently. "Unfortunately for him, he was unaware that to enter my grounds by night and by stealth is—suicide! I had him before he had gone ten yards!"

In spite of himself, Nelson Lee's hands clenched tightly. The Night Hawk, he knew, had his own methods of dealing with enemies; but they were terribly drastic. He was the most amazing man Lee had ever encountered.

"But—who is he?" he asked.

For answer, Thurston Kyle bent and picked up a small flat box, which Lee recognised instantly. Stooping swiftly, he placed his hand across the upper half of the dead man's face, and the rigid features became familiar at once. It was Karl who lay there, the masked man who had led the raid on the Bank of England.

"I see you know him now," drawled the Night Hawk's level voice. "He is the Master's range-finder. I found this portable transmitter by his side. Evidently I was intended to go the same road as Weinbach—by the Fire Ray!"

Nelson Lee nodded, his thoughts busy. The necessity for sending a range-finder on ahead was the one weak spot in the Master's overwhelming attack. Apparently he could employ the Ice Ray blindly, in the form of a fog spread over a great space, like a cloud of poison gas, whereas the Fire Ray had to be aimed accurately first, and then concentrated in order to produce the terrific force necessary to smash through steel and stone.

"Do you reckon the Master knows of our—alliance?" he asked at last.

The Night Hawk shook his head.

"No; I think it is as I say; that he intends wiping out all the scientists he fears might be dangerous if enlisted by the police: Weinbach, Fabian, and myself!"

"I see."

The Night Hawk flicked his fingers towards the divan.

"After what happened to Weinbach two nights ago," he continued. "I suspected something of the same treatment might be meted out to me. Therefore, instead of my usual night flights I patrolled my own grounds carefully. I saw this scum crawl over the wall—in fact, I allowed him to do so—and then, at the first sparkle of his instrument, I disabled him!"

He pulled the cover back still more, and Nelson Lee saw a rusty brown stain above Karl's right breast.

"Unfortunately, in the tricky light, I shot him through the chest instead of winging him!" went on the Night Hawk calmly. "So that when I picked him up, I saw he was dying. I brought him here immediately. And before he died, I persuaded him to talk!"

There was a deadly quality in his voice that made Nelson Lee glance at him strangely.

"You 'persuaded' him?" he echoed, with queer emphasis.

The Night Hawk caught the inflection, and his eyes flashed.

"I did. Don't waste sympathy on such dogs as this, Lee!" he cried harshly. "I fight criminals my own way. As I say, he talked! And very richly he deserved his fate, for this is the man who destroyed the French battleship and sent hundreds of innocent men to their doom. He was the Master's chief scout!"

"Did he tell you who the Master was?" asked Lee swiftly.

Thurston Kyle's face hardened.

"No; I failed there. He swore he did not know; that he had never seen the Master or his chief lieutenant. To every member of the gang, apparently, the Master is just a 'voice in the darkness'—as he was to you!"

Nelson Lee nodded understandingly. Only too well in a previous adventure he remembered his own interview with the Master in the inky blackness of the house near the Thameside foundry.

"He had no idea who the Master could be," continued Thurston Kyle. "Nor in what part of England he had his headquarters. Oh, believe me, I tore out every shred of truth before he went. Orders came to him from time to time, in mysterious ways and through different sources. And either he obeyed them or he died! It is the same for all the gang. Such is the Master's organisation!"

Nelson Lee's brow clouded with disappointment. Next instant, however, the Night Hawk's hand on his shoulder revived his hopes. The stern eyes were gleaming with excitement.

"But," he cried exultantly, "he told me other news—wonderful news, Lee! To-morrow, at sunrise, at a point just north of the Straits of Dover, another boat is to go the same way—the Laurel, an American pleasure liner, full of wealthy holiday-makers cruising in European waters. Having tamed the countries of Europe, the Master's next victim is to be America. And the destruction of the Laurel will be his first attack!"

Nelson Lee whistled.

"What else?" he snapped; for he could tell there was more to come.

"This: that in two days' time, unless Great Britain pays the forty million pounds the Master demands, he intends to smash London completely!"

"Ah!"

"The attack is to commence at 11 a.m. This man was to have been on duty outside St. Paul's; and when that fell, he was to signal from the Houses of Parliament! It is a terrible position, Lee, for even at this moment London is full of the Master's scouts, each with their orders and ready to act when the onslaught commences!"

"My heavens! Did—did Karl know the orders?"

"No; only his own!"

In the silence of the shadowy room, oppressive with the fumes of incense and the presence of Death, the two men eyed each other long and earnestly. The faces of both were white and set; each was wondering how many other scouts, armed with wireless transmitters, were waiting in the great metropolis to guide the deadly Fire Ray—and where.

The Night Hawk was the first to break the spell.

"Lee, we are up against it this time. But—there is a ray of hope. From what we know of the Master, he is not likely to change his plans because one man disappears. We must hope not, anyway. Now this is what I propose: to-morrow, at dawn, when the Laurel is attacked, I shall be there!"

His resolute mouth twitched; whereupon Nelson Lee chuckled in delight.

"And I shall go to Professor Fabian's house in Kent!" he cried, with a peculiar ring in his voice. "I have an idea somehow that the professor will tell me—a lot!"

And his jaw set grimly.

CHAPTER 6.

The Attack on the Laurel!

HIGH up among the breaking clouds of night, higher even than the harsh-screaming gulls that wheeled to and fro, Thurston Kyle, the Night Hawk, glided on tilted wings, covering the sea in wide circles.

Dawn was breaking slowly; the air was still and humid, quivering at the threat of an approaching storm. The first rays of the sun, escaping through chinks in a great wall of ugly clouds, shone greasily on the oily waves.

Under his spreading, steel-feathered wings, the Night Hawk made an ominous, fantastic figure as he weaved silently through the sky. In place of his usual black garb he wore his day suit of watered silk treated with fluorescin and other chemicals to absorb the light, so that he was invisible against the changing background of mist. Even had there been hostile eyes on the watch for him they would have missed the lurking flyer, so easily did he melt into the sullen clouds.

But no one searched; no one suspected his presence. He was the one factor in the game of which the Master was unaware. The thought made him chuckle softly.

From his lofty post, searching the sleeping world through the glasses in his helmet, he could see for miles over land and sea. Far below him, to the right, the rich fields of Kent stretched away into distance. Across the Straits of Dover, Calais and the coast of France loomed lazily through the mists;

while farther east, low and indistinct, he faintly made out the sand-dunes of Belgium.

All else was open sea; the lazy, heaving North Sea, the rapid Straits and the brisk, choppy Channel. And where the three flowed together, just off the corner of England, a huge liner shouldered her way north towards the mouth of the Thames.

For the last thirty minutes Thurston Kyle had been watching her; her snowy decks, her white paint and brasswork glistening already, even in the faintness of the dawn-light. A beautiful ship, luxurious in every way, her cabins full of passengers recruited from the wealthiest American classes.

Thurston Kyle had made inquiries concerning her. She belonged to a line that specialised in these "millionaires' cruises," as they were called, and her route was a leisurely one from New York to all the ports of Europe up to the Baltic coast.

On she came, proudly gliding across the lonely sea. There were no other boats in sight; only, far away on the horizon, the smoke of a returning fishing fleet smudged the gloomy sky. She was sailing placidly, all unconscious of the trap that was waiting—somewhere. The Night Hawk's face darkened.

And then, out of nowhere, shimmering lightly on the wave-crests, the Ice Ray appeared. It spread like a cloud right across the path of the graceful ship; he saw her sharp bow plunge into it helplessly. Swiftly the glare began to widen, foaming over the decks as the Laurel ploughed through.

A hoarse shout drifted up to him, the deep clang of a telegraph-bell. Sailors had been busy on the decks, swabbing down and cleaning; but now, with one accord, they stood stock still, watching the advancing light in amazement and alarm.

Suddenly a few began to run; others followed—too late! The ray gripped them softly, dropped them in their tracks and passed on towards the bridge.

Thurston Kyle clenched his hands till the knuckles showed white, and his lips writhed in silent fury. His impotence maddened him; he could do nothing to stop the Ice Ray that struck with such weird accuracy, with nothing to show whence it came. His only comfort was that it did not kill, and that presently, when the Master's submarine appeared to complete the work, his time would come!

As the ray swept over the ship, pandemonium broke out. Alarm bells rang; orders snapped and sailors ran madly to lower the boats. Half-wakened passengers burst on deck like demented sheep, only to receive their baptism from the creeping light and go down heavily. The thud of the engines ceased; a last frantic turn of the wheel swung her head to the sea. But the Ice Ray stole onwards!

In a few minutes it was over. The great ship rocked idly in the swell and began to drift slowly astern, her gleaming decks littered with the unconscious forms of men

and women—victims of the Master of the World!

A brooding silence fell upon the sea.

"Ah!"

A whisper, sharp and furious, escaped from the Night Hawk's tight-pressed lips. With hands that trembled ever so slightly he pulled down his flying vizor and unconsciously braced his long, powerful muscles. For the second attack on the Laurel was about to commence!

Out of the smooth waves to leeward a grey submarine broke water; slim and sleek, with only the faint rhythm of her engines to disturb the stillness of the morning. Her conning tower opened and a man climbed out swiftly, holding a flat transmitter in his hands. It was typical of the Master's arrogance that Karl's mysterious disappearance had apparently made no difference to his plans. Another range-finder had been sent in his place.

Leaning against the rail, the man glanced leisurely round the dim seascape; and at the sight of his smug complacency and the thought of his ghastly errand, the Night Hawk's iron restraint burst all bonds.

"No; not the Fire Ray, too, my friend!" he gritted savagely.

His great wings hissed as he slashed into action, his hand flying to his hip. As a swallow dives he hurtled downward, straight for the submarine, his gun flaming spitefully. Two bullets crashed into the scout's instrument, smashing it from his nerveless hands. A third, through his shoulder, knocked him backwards, screaming.

He glared frenziedly around for this new, invisible foe, panic-stricken by the unexpected attack. Recovering, he slammed his boot-heel twice on the clanging steel deck beneath him.

It was his last movement. In a flash the Night Hawk gripped him. He screeched once more as he had a second's glimpse of the fierce face a few yards above him, then Kyle whirled him out over the sea, dropped him—and shot him as he fell.

In a dazzling circle the Night Hawk banked and wheeled, guns to the fore. He was just

in time to see the submarine disappear speedily. The crew may or may not have seen what had happened; but evidently two kicks on the deck were a recognised signal in case of emergency, and, like all the

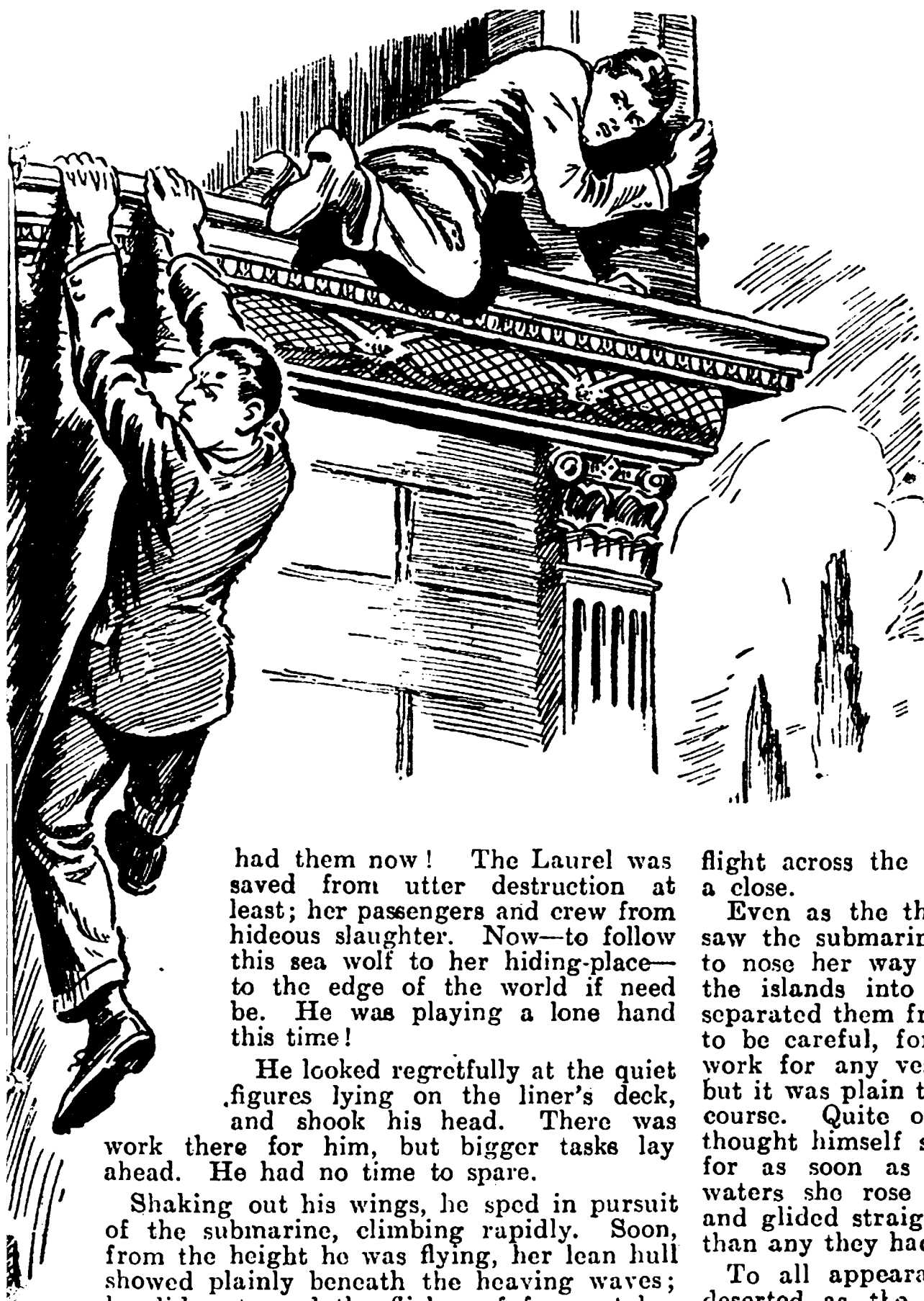
Quickly Nelson Lee gripped the stone ledge and drew himself from the window-sill. He was only just in time, for the gorilla's paw flashed out and missed him by inches.



Master's men, they had not worried about their exposed comrade.

Something unforeseen had occurred to spoil their coup; therefore, escape was their only thought. Their orders were to escape the slightest risk of detection at all costs.

The Night Hawk laughed cynically. It was just what he wanted. Poor fools; he



had them now! The *Laurel* was saved from utter destruction at least; her passengers and crew from hideous slaughter. Now—to follow this sea wolf to her hiding-place—to the edge of the world if need be. He was playing a lone hand this time!

He looked regretfully at the quiet figures lying on the liner's deck, and shook his head. There was work there for him, but bigger tasks lay ahead. He had no time to spare.

Shaking out his wings, he sped in pursuit of the submarine, climbing rapidly. Soon, from the height he was flying, her lean hull showed plainly beneath the heaving waves; he did not need the flicker of foam at her periscope. His eyes shone with mockery.

Straight for the open North Sea the slender craft headed, leaving dancing bubbles in her wake. She was fast, and her navigator knew his course, to which he held on steadily during the hours that followed, diving when steamships came into view, but never halting. And always on her track flew the threatening pursuer, swift and unseen, with only the shadow of his wings flickering on the waters like a dark stain.

In a short time the long-promised storm broke over Kyle in a howl of wind and solid sheets of driving rain that checked his speed but not his grim determination. Buffeted and drenched, he still had eyes for one thing only—the long, grey-green shark slipping smoothly through the water.

For an hour the storm continued; then it ceased and the sun came out, clear and brilliant at last. Somewhere ahead he could see a long, dim coastline, with crowds of shipping close to the shore, and soon the submarine saw it, too, for she ducked her periscope under and cruised blindly until the sea traffic was left behind.

Two more hours went by—a third. Still the journey over the grey sea continued. The long coastline grew more distinct and very lonely; the low, flat marshes of Dutch Friesland, and presently groups of small islands appeared. For the most part they were mere reefs of mud and sand, but here and there a larger one appeared, shielded by a natural sea wall and even bearing clumps of bedraggled trees. Somehow he felt that at long last his hard

flight across the North Sea was drawing to a close.

Even as the thought crossed his mind he saw the submarine slacken speed and begin to nose her way cautiously between two of the islands into the narrow channel that separated them from the mainland. She had to be careful, for sailing there was ticklish work for any vessel bigger than a dinghy, but it was plain to see she was on a familiar course. Quite obviously, too, her captain thought himself safe from spying eyes now, for as soon as the boat reached smooth waters she rose confidently to the surface and glided straight for an island far larger than any they had yet passed.

To all appearances it was as drear and deserted as the others. Centuries of tides had thrown up a mud wall all round it, and over this straggled coarse grass and whin-bushes. A tiny headland jutted out to sea.

But the Night Hawk's piercing eyes had picked out something that presently made him laugh soft and triumphantly. Beneath a clump of trees, huddling inside the sea-wall, he caught the dull, cold gleam of corrugated iron roofs, and farther back the slender rigging of a wireless mast. In another moment, too, he spotted the submarine's base, two square-built sheds at the edge of the headland, screened by stones and dense bushes.

He could not resist a feeling of admiration for the cleverness of the Master of the World. Wild and useless, shunned by big vessels and visited only by occasional fishermen, these mud islands yet commanded the

whole North Sea, and made a wonderful base from which the lean craft could steal forth on its murderous errands.

But how much longer? He smiled determinedly.

On the deck of the approaching submarine men appeared briskly and cheerfully. A whistle shrilled, and instantly other men showed themselves on the island wall.

The two parties waved a brief welcome to each other. As far as Thurston Kyle could see, they were a mixed crowd on the island—stolid Dutch and Germans from the adjacent mainland, a tough, scowling Briton, and a hard-eyed, lantern-jawed American in charge.

Amid a sputter of foam the submarine backed her engines and sidled towards the sheds, the island garrison slouching down to the water's edge to meet her. Seeing them bunched together so invitingly, the Night Hawk's lips curled pitilessly. And his hand stole behind his back to the belt of hand-grenades he carried there.

Silent as his own shadow, he dropped from the sky until he reached the limit of his "invisibility"—a bare fifty feet above the heads of the busy men. One grenade for the submarine, one for the island scum, and the rest on the sheds and wireless house, he thought.

Then, at the very last moment, he heard a conversation that changed his plans abruptly. Voices carry well over water, and these came up to him, harsh and distinct.

"Howdy, Sam!" It was the American, calling to the submarine skipper as the vessel worked inshore. "All O.K.?"

"Far from it!" came the seaman's answering growl. "Frenchy's gone west!"

"Gee!" The American grew alert. "Spill the beans, Sam!"

"Why, we stopped the Laurel all right, and the 'Green 'un' cleaned up. But it must ha' missed someone, somehow. Anyway, when Frenchy went up to bring on the 'Cooker,' we heard shots. He went over the side pretty quick, but managed to give us the high-sign—so we cleared. Tough, ain't it?"

"You said it. What ye aimin' to do?"

The submarine skipper scowled gloomily. "Tell Schmidt to tune-in the set," he growled. "Reckon I'll have to wireless the Master immediate, Joe."

The American shook his head slowly. "Yeah?" he drawled with a saturnine grin. "Waal, say, big boy, you don't hafta do thet a-tall. 'Cos the Master'll be right over himself in a few hours now."

If the hovering listener above them had suddenly thrown one of his bombs, the skipper and crew of the submarine could not have received a bigger shock. They froze where they stood, and for some seconds could only look at each other with scared, furtive eyes. The prospect of that dreaded visit plainly appalled them.

"The Master!" gasped the skipper at last. "Here?"

"Thet's the low-down!" nodded Joe coolly. "Word's jest come through for us to make

ready. Reckon England's got too hot fer him at last. He aims to have a final show-down with thet Nelson Lee guy he hates so much, clean up, and trail right here."

He laughed shortly.

"This li'l ole island's to be H.Q. from now on, Sam. Laugh thet off!"

Very quietly the Night Hawk slid the hand-grenade back into its clip. He had discovered something now with a vengeance. The destruction of this hidden base must wait.

A "show-down" with Nelson Lee. And Lee would soon be on his way to see old Fabian. He glanced at his watch.

With a last baleful glare at the cluster of crooks by the sheds he wheeled noiselessly on knife-edged wings and shot upwards in a long slant. Straightening out, he pulled down his vizor, and, cleaving the air with mighty strokes, he started out on his lonely journey back across the North Sea to England.

By fast flying he might yet reach Nelson Lee before the "show-down."

CHAPTER 7.

Footprints in the Dust!

"THE MASTER OF THE WORLD!" murmured Nelson Lee, lost in thought. "I know he's a scientist, I know he keeps a pet ape or gorilla, and either he or his secretary has a badly-scarred left thumb. Also, I'm sure he's half-mad."

He drew a long, deep breath, and glanced at Nipper ruefully.

"And that's about all I do know, young 'un," he sighed. "Not very hopeful, what? With all London to be smashed up in two days' time!"

Nipper, busy at the wheel of his master's big, grey touring car, grinned without taking his eyes off the white Kentish road. Professor Fabian's house, so Lee had been informed, stood just beyond a small village on the coast between Deal and Dover, and as it was nearly two and they still had some miles to cover, Nipper was driving fast.

"Rats, guv'nor!" he cried cheerfully. "Something's going to happen—I feel it in my bones. Maybe this Professor Fabian's news or whatever it is he's making such a mystery about, will help. And there's Mr. Kyle."

Nelson Lee nodded. The news of the attack on the Laurel at dawn had been in the midday papers before he left town.

A patrolling destroyer had discovered the stately derelict's plight and wirelessly ashore for aid just in time to prevent the liner foundering on the Goodwins.

The moment the story had become known, a black cloud of despair had descended on England. The Master was steadily shattering the pluck and morale of the whole world; his stranglehold was growing tighter every day. Yet Nelson Lee, at least, found a gleam of hope.

From the fact that only the Ice Ray had attacked the Laurel he guessed that Thurston Kyle had partly succeeded in his lone mission. He must have scared off the submarine somehow and prevented the use of the Fire Ray. But had he carried out the rest of his task and followed the Master's men to their quarters? Lee wished from the bottom of his heart that he knew.

Suddenly, as they drew nearer their destination, the detective threw off his worried frown. He could trust the Night Hawk not to fail. Meanwhile, he had his own task to perform. And, like Nipper, he felt something was going to happen.

Through the cobbled street of a little fishing village zipped the car. A few minutes later Professor Fabian's house loomed up, and Nipper swung in through the lofty stone gates by the wayside.

Leaning forward, Nelson Lee studied the place with eyes that, for some reason, were strangely alert. A vision of smooth lawns and smiling flowerbeds met his gaze, backed by tall pines and oak trees. In their shadow nestled a gracious old house, built in Italian style, with ornamental front and wide, flat roof. A steady breeze straight off the North Sea made the trees rustle peacefully.

Evidently Professor Fabian had been keeping a sharp look-out for the moment the car halted on the drive, their host limped eagerly down the steps, beaming a welcome.

"My dear Mr. Lee," he cried. "Punctual to the minute! And you have brought your assistant, too? Good, good. Pray come in at once!"

He led the way into a cool but gloomy hall. He plunged straightaway into a flood of rambling talk, kindly and humorous;

yet, for all that, Nelson Lee detected a queer little undercurrent of nervousness in his manner; something almost furtive and ill at ease. However, as soon as a footman had relieved them of their hats, he waved a hospitable hand towards the great central staircase.

"I have ordered lunch for two-thirty, Mr. Lee!" he explained in his gentle precise way. "I thought we would get our business over in the study first; then we shall have the afternoon free!"

"Splendid!" cried Lee heartily; whereupon the professor smiled, and still chatting volubly, limped away up the stairs.

His study, a lofty, oak-panelled room, lay at the top of the house, looking over the tree-tops to the open sea beyond. It was obviously the sanctum of a man whose whole life was bound up in science. On all sides, shelves of technical works covered the walls, and even lay scattered on the extremely dusty floor. The only furniture was a big desk at the farther end, bearing a portable typewriter; a sideboard, some chairs, and a rack of curious native weapons, picked up probably on some foreign tour.

As the visitors entered, a man rose from the desk and came forward slowly. He was tall and spare, with a high forehead and bristly hair cut very short. His striking

appearance was heightened by the fact that he wore thick blue glasses, and that his sallow face was marked by deep lines suggestive of constant pain.

The professor introduced him timidly.

"Mr. Nelson Lee—Mr. Nipper. My good friend and helper, Signor Letti of Milan. Terribly wounded in the war!" he added in a hasty whisper.

Signor Letti drew himself up and made

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a stiff bow. To Nelson Lee's pleasant greeting in Italian he made no reply, but only stared with a curious dead blankness through his dark glasses. Then abruptly he turned and began to place chairs in front of the desk.

"Eccentric and—and slightly deaf!" murmured the little professor apologetically, and then, muttering something about refreshments, limped across to the sideboard.

For a moment the backs of both men were turned. It was an opportunity Nelson Lee had been hoping for. In that brief moment, his practised eyes took in every detail with a single, leisurely glance. His eyebrows flickered.

At the foot of one of the bookcases something attracted his attention. He studied it for a second, then with a swift glance at his hosts, he sauntered over calmly and began to examine the titles of the books.

The Italian finished placing the chairs, nodded curtly to Nipper, and sat down himself beside the desk. From the sideboard

came the voice of Professor Fabian, smiling and urbane:

"Will you have a cocktail, Mr. Lee? A martini—or perhaps a glass of old sherry? Mr. Nipper—"

But Nelson Lee was not listening. Instead, he was making the effort of a lifetime to keep himself under control.

For, there at his feet, clearly defined in the dust of the oaken floor, were the splayed footprints of a great gorilla!

By sheer will power he forced himself to turn casually away from those sinister marks, and strolled towards his chair. Looking up he found the professor's eyes and Signor Letti's dark glasses full upon him, and in that single instant he felt a subtle change creep into the air.

But the man who could read anything from Nelson Lee's "poker face" had not been born yet. His smile was serene and his manner easy as he sank into his chair. The tiny pause was ended by the professor

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repeating his question, in tones that sounded the least bit overstrained.

"Oh, sherry, please!" replied Lee lightly, crossing his legs. "Thank you. Your health, gentlemen!"

He took the slightest sip of the liquor and leant forward to place the glass on the desk. Next instant, Nipper, watching him quietly, received a lightning signal that took him by surprise.

It was a sign he had seen before on many occasions, but he had not expected it on such an occasion as this; here in a lovely old English mansion in the company of a world-famous and elderly scientist, and a half-blind foreigner. Yet he knew quite well the gov'nor had not flicked his thumb for fun—he was in deadly earnest!

The signal meant that somehow their lives were in deadliest danger, and that swift action would be necessary at any second. And, although his thoughts were in a whirl, Nipper's fingers bumped gently against his jacket pocket.

"And now!" cried the professor, seating himself at the desk. "To business, Mr. Lee!"

Nelson Lee inclined his head.

"To business, as you say, professor!" he smiled. "You told me yesterday that your life had been attempted. Will you explain?"

"Yes, yes," answered the scientist hurriedly. He shot a nervous glance at the grim-faced Italian beside him. "I—yes; quite. The facts are, Mr. Lee, that as Signor Letti and myself were—were walking in the grounds on—er—Monday evening, a bullet whistled past my head!"

"A bullet?" echoed Nelson Lee blandly. He was watching the growing scowl on Signor Letti's brow.

"Yes!" The professor's trepidation was increasing at every word, and he made a big effort to steady his voice. "But we will talk of that later, Mr. Lee. It—it is not important."

"Not important?" cried Lee in quiet astonishment.

"No—yes. That is, not the most important thing. You see, my friend and I, Mr. Lee, have been working on the—the danger that is overhanging the world from this so-called Master. We have much to—tell you, sir!"

There fell an electric silence. Nelson Lee's eyes were smiling.

"I think you have told me—already, professor!" he said quietly.

The Italian raised his head sharply as the professor quavered:

"How—what—"

Nelson Lee rose and raised his hand.

"Profession Fabian!" he challenged. "When I met you at the Home Office yesterday I thought you one of the finest bluffers I had ever met. But now I think you have lost your nerve!"

"Wha—what d'you mean, sir?"

"What do I mean?" Nelson Lee's voice came short and sharp. "I mean that

one of you two gentlemen is—the Master of the World!"

And with the words, he hurled himself on the scowling Italian like a tiger. A piercing yell—a crackle of English oaths—and then Nelson Lee had the man's left wrist in a vice-like grip, steadily forcing the hand palm uppermost.

Across the ball of the thumb was a deep white scar!

CHAPTER 8.

The Master!

CRASH!

With all his strength, Nelson Lee flung the cursing man backwards.

His gun came out quickly.

"Make one wrong move—and I shoot!" he whispered.

His steely glance stabbed from one to the other; Professor Fabian, white and crumpled in his chair, Signor Letti scrambling up, his face distorted with hate.

"So—so you suspected, eh, Nelson Lee?" he grated, speaking for the first time and without a trace of foreign accent.

The detective's tight lips twitched with satisfaction. It was all he wanted to know. In a flash, he recognised the "voice in the darkness," that cultured voice with the tremor of madness beneath it.

He bowed ironically.

"Partly—your Majesty!"

"Why?"

"That is my business!"

The Master lurched to the table, flung the old savant aside brutally, and stared deep into Nelson Lee's calm eyes.

"Yes!" he said at last, in a thoughtful whisper. "You are clever, Lee. Was it you who beat me last time? I believe it was. And I confess I cannot understand how you escaped from the Thames-side chimney!"

"Nevertheless, I did," smiled Lee.

"You did. But now I propose to destroy you finally. You will not hinder me again in the future!"

The arrogance and nerve of the speech, with Nelson Lee's gun within two feet of his heart, took Nipper's breath away; and even Lee raised his eyebrows.

"Perhaps there will be no future," he suggested quietly.

The Master sneered viciously.

"You fool! You think they've caught me, hey? Why, when I sent this—this doddering old weakling up to bluff the police, he had instructions to lure you down here. And he has! And you're a dead man, Lee!"

Swiftly Nelson Lee slid his gun against the man's ribs.

"No, I think not, your Majesty!"

With writhing lips the Master laughed in his face.

"You fool, you haven't a hope! You think that I, the Master of the World, can be taken by such as you!"

He thrust his heavy head forward, and his voice cracked suddenly in a mad, triumphant scream:

"You're dead, Lee—you're dead! Watch!"

What followed next was bewildering in its deadly swiftness. Although Nelson Lee was tense and determined to shoot, the Master just beat him. There was a click of a hidden spring beneath the desk, and instantly the whole room disappeared in a hissing, tearing sheet of dazzling light—a nerve-shattering, blinding glare that sent Lee and Nipper reeling back, gasping with the pain of tortured eyeballs.

Through the screen of light the detective felt a hand dart out and seize his gun, then a fist crashed on his jaw. Dazed though he was, he plunged desperately forward, only to smash heavily into something that stopped him dead. His hands flew up, beating at the obstacle without success. It was hard, smooth and unyielding.

He heard a thud close at hand—Nipper throwing his weight about gallantly.

"Chuck it, young 'un!" he cried, and, recoiling, began to nurse his eyes.

Gradually, painfully, the luminous mist before them faded away. He stared round cautiously. Right before them, fitting flush with the walls and floor, a curtain of blank grey steel reached to the ceiling.

He spun round to the door. Another curtain blotted that out also. They were trapped in a steel cage.

Only the nearest window remained unguarded. But even as the detective staggered towards it a tiny panel in the steel curtain slid back, and the Master's voice jeered at him.

"Don't bother, Lee; the window is locked. I shall kill you long before you can open it!"

Somehow Lee knew it was the brutal truth. He stopped. Unarmed and helpless though he was, he turned and laughed contemptuously.

"Carry on, then—your Majesty!"

"In a moment, Lee, in a moment. How do you like my little device? Neat, eh? Partial blindness and good thick glasses have their uses after all in matters of light, my friend!"

The madman chuckled long and loud.

"You will be interested to hear, Lee, that I am leaving England soon—within the hour. By to-morrow London will be a heap of smoking ruins. After that Manchester, and then Liverpool, and so on until this stiff-necked country, curse it, learns obedience! She must have a taste of what future wars will be like, Lee! But you will not be here, I fear!"

The sneering voice died away in a snarl. And now, Nelson Lee heard another sound—a low, insistent hum that struck on his ears like a death-knell. He had heard it once before—that night when the Master had first trapped him and the Twin Rays had crept silently out of the darkness.

A thin, yellow light shot into the room.

Then it was that Nipper, swift and lithe as a panther, took a hand in the game.

All this time, ignored by the Master of the World as a mere boy, he had remained quietly in the background, one hand near his pocket, the other knuckling his sore eyes. But now, the very instant he saw the yellow light shining, his gun leapt forth, and jumping straight at the curtain, he thrust the muzzle into the small aperture and fired.

Even as he did so, the yellow light changed to orange. He worked the trigger madly; the stunning reports filled the room. And the Fire Ray—vanished!

A cry of pain rang out, followed by the tinkle of falling glass and steel. Instantly a maniacal shriek, high-pitched and quivering in its unspeakable fury, drowned every other sound.

Nipper fell back, nursing his slightly scorched hand.

"That's one he didn't think of, guv'nor!" he grinned shakily.

"Well done, boy—well done! I believe you've—"

The Master's voice, choking with satanic malevolence, howled through the panel.

"You dogs! You scum! You've smashed it—oh, curse you, curse you!"

A tattoo of furious blows and kicks rained on the steel curtain. The prisoners heard Professor Fabian's voice vainly trying to soothe the demented Master, heard him thrown down. Muffled words and entreaties followed, orders, the retreat of many feet. Nelson Lee guessed at a secret entrance in the panels of the study.

After a while a whisper came to them, more deadly than ever:

"Listen, you hounds! You would have had a quick and easy death by my rays. But you—you have destroyed them. Now death will not be so easy!"

The aperture snapped to. In puzzled silence Nelson Lee and Nipper stared at each other. Silence, too, reigned on the other side of the steel wall. Then the boy's face whitened.

"Look, guv'nor! Behind you—oh!"

Nelson Lee whipped round. Death was approaching through the wall.

CHAPTER 9.

Gorilla versus the Night Hawk!

BY the side of the bookcase a long, hairy arm reached through an oak panel, wriggling snakily. A huge, black shoulder appeared next, then a mighty chest, and finally a devil with deep, sunken eyes and bared, yellow fangs snarled at them throatily.

Quick as lightning Nipper raised his gun and fired. The hammer clicked harmlessly; he had poured all his shots recklessly into the Fire Ray apparatus. Sobbing with fury, the lad hurled his useless weapon and missed.

The gorilla came further through the sliding door.

Then Nelson Lee, cool as ice, saw a desperate chance. His eyes fell on the group of savage weapons by the wall, and he jumped for them headlong. His grip closed on the haft of a Zulu stabbing spear. He wrenched it out, and just as the gorilla squeezed the last of his massive bulk free the detective leapt at him, whirled the glittering blade aloft, and rammed it with all his strength into the beast's shoulder.

The keen steel shot through bone and muscle like so much butter, and pinned the astonished brute firmly to the oak wall. A thundering howl of rage and pain filled the room.

"Now the window, Nipper! We'll try the roof!" panted Nelson Lee, his brain working swiftly as he remembered the shape of this mansion of terror.

He whirled up a chair. Two crashing blows, then a third smashed window, glass, frame and everything to atoms. He fairly threw Nipper out on to the sill.

Looking back, he saw the gibbering, snarling gorilla wrenching at the spear that held him. The weapon came away and the devil staggered free. Nelson Lee jumped.

Reaching the sill, he gulped with relief to see Nipper clinging to the ornate moulding on the house front, and climbing fast. The roof was but a few yards up. He swung out, gripping the stonework as a great paw flashed through the window, just missing him. With all the strength of shoulders and legs he pulled himself after Nipper.

But as the fugitives scrambled over the roof-coping, he saw the wounded, slobbering gorilla following at uncanny speed.

They ran across the flat roof to the other side. Immediately a derisive hail greeted them, and looking down, he saw the Master of the World, surrounded by five or six men, two of whom bore the limp figure of Professor Fabian.

"Good-bye, Nelson Lee! If Hector doesn't attend to you within five minutes, I still have something else that will. Ha, ha, ha!"

The wild burst of laughter as the Master turned and ran down the path, followed by his men, found echo in the gorilla's terrible strident roar. The beast had gained the roof by now, and stood on its crooked powerful legs, eyeing his victims through little, bloodshot eyes.

Slowly it began to advance, beating its massive chest with a noise like a deep war-drum; the battle-sound of a fighting-mad gorilla.

Nelson Lee gazed round desperately. The position was hopeless—a dead-drop behind and a man-killer in front. And at that moment, from the depths of the house below, came the sullen boom of an explosion.

He swung a leg over the coping.

"I'm for the high dive, young 'un!" he cried; and Nipper answered with a last gallant grin.

Then a voice out of the blue sky, high and imperative, cried:

"Stop!"

From a point above their heads, red jets of flame shot into the sunshine; they heard the dull thud of bullets striking a hairy form.

Howls, long-drawn and shuddering, tore the quivering air. The gorilla was looking dully around for his new foe. More bullets; the beast suddenly collapsed and began to crawl forward, snarling with hate and pain. And Thurston Kyle swept into view with a slash of his great wings.

Two strong arms whisked Nipper off the roof; Lee saw the Night Hawk deposit the lad on the lawn. The gorilla was almost within reach now, grunting hoarsely but unbeaten.

And then, blessed relief, he felt his winged ally shoot above him, lift him off his legs and, next moment, he, too, was being whirled into safety.

The Night Hawk's voice hissed in his ear.

"Hurry away, Lee. The house has been fired!"

It was true. One last glance over his shoulder told the detective that the Master was burning his old headquarters—hence the muffled explosion.

Throwing his arm round Nipper, he staggered from that dread spot. The last thing he saw as they ran down the drive was a great tongue of flame leaping from the wrecked study window and licking hungrily at the roof. While, head down across he coping, hung the black form of an enormous gorilla, beaten at last.

High above all, the Night Hawk stared longingly out to sea where, in a smother of foam, a powerful launch raced away from England.

He did not follow. The craft had a long start, and his own flying-power was nearly exhausted.

Besides, what need? He knew whither the Master of the World was flying. And at the thought, he threw back his head and laughed loud and zestfully.

In the peace and seclusion of Thurston Kyle's old house at Hampstead, Nelson Lee drew deeply at his pipe.

"Yes!" he mused pensively. "I think old Fabian may have invented the rays; but the Master is undoubtedly the head and brains of the whole ghastly enterprise. He's no more Italian than I am. I wonder who he really is! In any case, everyone, Fabian included, is right under his thumb and scared to death of him!"

He sent a cloud of smoke lazily into the air.

"Up to a point, it was a brilliant move to cause Weinbach's 'disappearance,' and then send a man like Fabian to a Home Office conference to make capital out of it. But Fabian overdid the part!"

(Continued on page 44.)

Gripping Complete Story of Adventure in the Air!

THE INVISIBLE WORLD!

Grief on Lebanu!

THERE was wild rejoicing in Xemos, the ancient city of the Invisible World. For two days our pygmy subjects, the Lebanunes, had kept up a constant succession of festivals in the old, ruined temple; picturesque ceremonies of thanksgiving, in which splendid but faded robes and battered ornaments, dug up from secret hiding-places in the jungle, played a brave part.

And the cause of the little folks' joy was the safe return of their gods—Mark Whitaker and I—from the terrible battle with the Burning Mountains; bringing with us, too, Prince Sigur and his seafaring followers, the descendants of those lost Lebanunes whom the Fire People had dragged into captivity over a hundred years ago.

Very stately had been the meeting between old King Onada and the prince when we had ushered our passengers out of the Meteor into the city square, where Xemos

waited to greet them, and there followed great rejoicing. The Lebanu nation was united once more.

Meanwhile, although we had said nothing as yet, the time had come for us to leave the Invisible World. I was sorry in a way, for we had had thrilling adventures and performed a great work. Yet my own thoughts were always back on our own Earth, five days' journey through leagues of space.

Mark, too, was just as anxious to get away. He had spent most of his time since our return inspecting his beloved ship. The ghastly battle amid the Valley of Flame had undoubtedly strained her wonderful light-engines; our gun was

useless and the hull badly battered. In addition, we ourselves were tired, and burnt from head to toe.

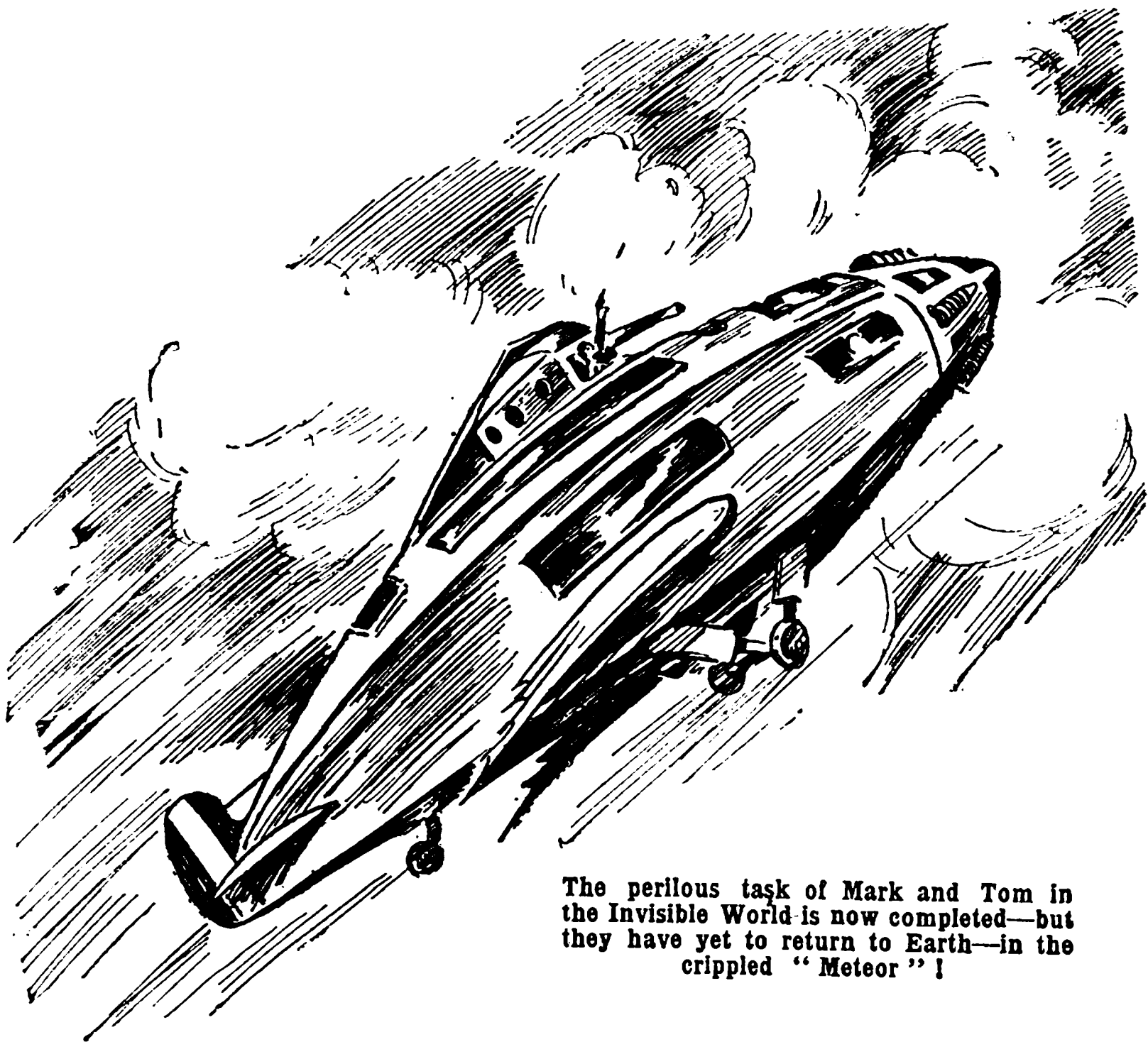
"Tom, we're going to have the time of our lives getting back to Earth!" was all Mark said when the examination was finished; and I could see he was badly worried. So was I. Neither of us hardly liked to contemplate what would happen if the Meteor failed us.

We allowed the Lebanunes to carry out their celebrations to a finish without disturbing them by the news. But, at the end of

The Final Adventure:

HOMEWARD BOUND!





The perilous task of Mark and Tom in the Invisible World is now completed—but they have yet to return to Earth—in the crippled "Meteor"!

the second day, when all was peace within the city and only the light Lebanun breeze rustled through the red trees, Mark sprang the bombshell.

Coming out of the Meteor together, we strode into the city square and waited impassively until the rites of worship which were due, were over. Then Mark spoke, soft and clearly:

"People of Lebanu, I bear tidings that will make your hearts heavy; yet ye must bear them like men. The time has come for us, your gods, to depart to our own land above the skies. Our task is finished here. We have won back your kingdom, destroyed your enemies. Lebanu is yours once more."

He paused and lifted his voice.

"By the rising of another sun we shall be gone. See to it that our work here has not been in vain, and that all of ye work together to restore the old-time glories of your race!"

"Some speech!" I grinned beneath my breath.

That was all. Before the Lebanunes could come out of their stupor, we turned and strode back to the ship—slightly faster this time, because from every point of the square rose such a wail of poignant grief as we had never heard before. Our hearts turned over as the cry swelled to the heavens. Unable to bear

it, we leapt into the cabin and closed the sliding door, shutting out the sounds completely.

But we had certainly dealt the pygmies a bitter blow. Most of them lay face downwards, men and women alike, too stunned to move. Their rejoicing had been changed to grief at a stroke. Yet we could not help it.

At last, shoulder to shoulder, and without a single guard or follower, came King Onada and Sigur, heads bent. They walked through the weeping people to the foot of the Meteor's ladder, laying timid hands on the steel rungs and lifting imploring faces to the window. It was more than we could stand.

"Let 'em in!" snapped Mark; and I opened the door and lifted them up together.

As soon as they were in the cabin, they fell on their knees before us. They made a quaint picture. Onada with his long beard and frail, worn-out body, Sigur lithe and upright. For all their littleness, they had royal blood in every inch of them, and were doing their duty to their people.

King Onada was the first to speak, in a shaky voice.

"We have dared to come, Great Lords, to pray that ye will soften your hearts and not turn away from your subjects. What matters

it that the mountains are no more; that the awful jungle and the fiends that hunted us daily are destroyed. If ye depart, our hearts will be torn with grief. Better had it been had ye not come, but left us in our old state, wretched and miserable though we were!"

I gulped. The poor old lad looked so awful that for a moment my resolution was shaken. A little more and I would almost have taken a chance on living for ever on Lebanu, for all its wild loneliness. But Mark was adamant.

"What women's words are these, Onada?" he cried sternly. "Is all our work to be in vain? Our mission is finished—we must go!"

Seeing that their distress was growing, his voice took a gentler note.

"We are sad to leave, Onada, and ye must never forget us. But the Kingdom of Lebanu calls for your work. Do not permit your people to waste time in vain sorrow, but send your strongest men and their families to dwell out on the plain, that they may sow and reap and bring back the cultivated fields once more. Set your craftsmen to work, building up the ruins of Xemos again, and in time other cities; and roads, too, will cover Lebanu as of old!"

He turned to Sigur.

"And you, prince, be as a right hand to your king. Set your seamen to build more ships and teach the people to love the sea, so that in future years, Lebanunes may sail away to build colonies in rich and distant lands!"

"If they can find 'em!" I grunted, remembering that we had seen none. But he took no notice.

His statesmanlike words went home. Both Onada and Sigur bowed to the ground in silence, realising they had failed. At last the prince rose to his feet, throwing back his head and shoulders manfully, thrusting a strong arm beneath his king's.

"We hear and obey, great lords!" he cried. "Perhaps, some day, you will come again. Grant us one last request!"

Mark nodded gravely.

"Speak!"

"Leave with us the mighty weapon whereby the God of Strength has smitten our enemies, that we may worship it in the Temple of Lebanu for ever!"

And after a moment's pause of astonishment, we looked at each other and agreed.

So they took my glittering axe, and Lebanu was happy once more. It took ten strong men to carry it in state to the temple, followed by the whole nation in solemn procession. Darkness fell and with it, peace.

We began to make ready for our journey home.

Into Space Again!

"FAREWELL, Gods of Lebanu! Farewell!"

A shrill wail, accompanied by a flutter of little arms, rang through the forest. Only Onada and Sigur stood on the temple steps, mute and unmoving. We were leaving at last.

As the violet dawn broke through the sky, scattering the deep gloom, I thrust my Colt through the gun-turret, and fired into the clouds. The thundering echoes of that farewell salute had barely died away when Mark pulled the engine lever into its first notch and the Meteor rose quietly. We had a last glimpse of the Lebanunes casting themselves frantically to the ground, then city and people were lost in the strip of jungle. I looked away hurriedly.

Gathering speed, we shot upwards, straight into the dim skies. The blackened plain reeled out of sight into the mists. Our last memory of the Invisible World was the sight of our colossal enemies, the Burning Mountains, glowering at us sullenly as we rose above them; defeated, dead.

Upwards we climbed, our eyes on the altimeter, the engine-whine increasing. The deck sloped acutely, but our speed was smooth. It was easier to pull clear of Lebanu than from Earth, and within half an hour a streak of glorious orange slashed the sky ahead of us.

It was a sign. We were approaching the maelstrom of vivid ether-bands that screened the Invisible World and blocked out the normal sun-rays, letting through only the violet light to which we had grown accustomed.

The violet mists suddenly vanished, torn asunder by huge masses of green, purple and crimson light, which in turn gave way to azure floods, pierced by amethyst and scalding lilac. Once again we saw the sulphur dragon's teeth rip across our path, like flames from a mighty cauldron; again the forked fires of brightest red scattered them. We felt the Meteor struggling against the last pull of Lebanu, felt our engines gather themselves for a last fierce drive—and then we were out in space once more, flying through emptiness with that same terrifying headlong speed we had experienced before.

This time, however, Mark was ready. Instead of fainting at the controls as he had done when we fought free of the Earth, he shut off the engines to dead-stop, and for the next two hours we raced through a world of blinding light by sheer impetus. There was no resistance against us, nothing; we flew alone between the stars.

For the first time for two months we tore off the heavy rock-crystal goggles we had worn on Lebanu, and donned the yellow lenses that would protect our eyes from the dazzling-white glare of space. Far away, millions of miles above us, the sun glowed gloriously through brilliant mists. But though I searched for a long time with glasses, I could see no signs of Lebanu. The Invisible World had sunk from human sight again behind its gorgeous veil.

Nor could we see Earth, for as yet we were too far off and the sunshine was too bright. There was nothing for it but to settle down to the routine of voyaging, leaving Mark to pick his way across space.

By the end of the first day we had become used to the speed. I bedded down placidly enough, but a glance at Mark from time to time told me that he was on thorns—although, as usual, he said nothing. It was plain that the good old Meteor was not the ship she was—the tremendous strain and punishment she had endured was beginning to tell a lot. Mark took to nursing the

ward voyage. An avalanche of them swept down on us from out of the void, tearing our nerves to shreds with the greasy sound of their mouths sucking at the windows; while the Meteor lurched and shivered beneath their weight, as they fought and clambered in their thousands around us. This time we took care there were no openings of any size through which their filthy transparent bodies could penetrate, but it was a



"I was awakened by being slung across the deck, fetching up against the wall with a jar that nearly stunned me."
"We've broken down!" Mark cried.

engines with painful care, refusing to leave the control platform even for meals. Several times during the journey he collapsed in a heap at the helm, and I had to pack him to bed, taking charge myself. Those were terrible hours, up there in the silence on my own, while he lay in bed, and I listened with straining ears for any fault in the intricate mechanism beneath the glass covers.

On the third day out we were attacked by Nebuli again, the foul beings who live out in space, and whose nauseating appearance had frightened us so much on the out-

ward voyage. A long, harrowing struggle before we could shake them off.

On the first trip we had fought free by the glorious pace of our ship, but now it was different. Although she was still faster by far than any vessel known on Earth, she lacked just the little bit in hand. And the Nebuli clung to us savagely.

Mark could stand it no longer.

"Curse you!" he snarled, shaking his fist at the awful staring eyes peering in through every window. "I'll make you travel, you fiends!"

"How?" I mumbled; but he was busy with the electric-fire apparatus. Click! He pulled the battery switch. I looked out hastily, expecting to see us surrounded by blazing beams, but, to my horror, I could see none. And then I remembered that up here, in the naked blaze of the sun, no colours could be visible.

But the "fire" was working. On all sides I could see the Nebuli leaping and writhing in bestial agony as the vibrant electric current tore through their bodies, bursting them and dissolving them into nothing before my eyes. The uncouth faces pressed to the windows began to thin out, the pressure on our hull grew less and less. For five long minutes the struggle raged, at the end of which, with a long-drawn quiver that shook her from end to end, the Meteor suddenly darted forward and settled to her old smooth glide. Mark switched off and stumbled to his bunk.

The next day we sighted Earth.

Disaster!

I WAS standing by the starboard window, staring out moodily, when I first saw a woolly ball of mist floating in a sea of light a long way off. Thereafter as we drew nearer, day by day, the ball grew larger until the time arrived when it loomed right before us like an immense cloud, half in shadow, half in light.

Our spirits rose tremendously. Somewhere behind those clouds was home. For

the first time for a long while smiles broke out on Mark's worried face.

By calculating our speed and drift, he found we should enter the earth's atmosphere in twenty hours' time, at about the same hour as we had left it, which meant that England would be wrapped in midnight gloom. That suited us all right, for we wanted no theatricals or welcoming scenes. Time enough for that when the official account and the charts of our amazing flight should be published.

And still the Meteor's engines laboured.

The nearness of earth had driven our troubles from our thoughts for a little while, and at the end of my spell I turned in for a few hours rest, chuckling contentedly. We were then four hours off.

I was awakened by the simple process of being slung neck and crop across the deck, fetching up against the other wall with a jar that nearly stunned me. Struggling to my feet, I found the floor sloping at an acute angle, and Mark, white of face, staring at the engines with eyes of horror. The Meteor was doing everything but roll over, sitting on her stern, plunging giddily, and swapping ends like a buckjumper.

"What the dickens——" I yelled in the confusion.

Mark lifted a haggard face.

"We've broken down!" he cried. "Two of the transform——"

He got no further; the Meteor lurched and threw us down in a tangle. Outside, the



Jokes from our 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.

BY INSTALMENTS.

For the tenth time that day the little man boarded the 'bus, dumped a huge parcel near the stairs, and seated himself inside.

"Look here," said the 'bus conductor. "How many more times are you going to litter the 'bus with your parcels?"

"Only twice more," returned the little man. "There's only the 'armonium and the mangle, then we've moved!"

(H. Webster, 4, Tyre Road, Ilford, Essex, has been awarded a handsome watch.)

A CURIOUS CURIO!

An old lady who was very short sighted entered a dark and dusty curiosity shop. After

searching for several minutes for antiques she said:

"I can't see anything really antique—but wait! How much is that hideous old idol over there? It must be worth a lot."

"Yes, ma'am, it is," replied the assistant. "That's the boss."

(H. Oakes, 3, Tufton Road, South Chingford, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

RATHER WOODY.

A recruit complained to the sergeant that he'd got a splinter in his finger.

"You should have more sense," said the sergeant, "than to scratch your head!"

(P. Taylor, 41 Ward St. Mary's Hospital, Portsmouth, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

REALITY!

Actor: "Why can't I have real wine in the banqueting scene?"

Manager: "And would you like real poison in the death scene?"

(W. Cox, 29, Gospel End, Sedgley, near Dudley, has been awarded a penknife.)

NO JOKE!

"Why are you crying, my little man?" asked the kind old gentleman.

"Boo-hoo!" sobbed the little boy. "Father

universe presented a crazy sight. Through the port window we could still see the sun, low down and not so bright, while in front of it bulged a round black shoulder—the curve of the earth. On the other side everything was dark.

"We're nearly there!" gasped Mark dizzily, as the ship swung round again. "A few more minutes we should have been in upper clouds. And we've—broken down!"

I could see he was on the verge of a breakdown himself, and I shook him roughly to rally his spirits.

"Well, come on!" I snapped. "Let's do something. Can't you—"

"Can't I rats!" he cried wildly. "Don't you realise what'll happen when we do drift into the atmosphere? The pull of gravity will start us falling downwards as though we were a lump of stone. I might control the flight with our wings, but we're due to hit the sea or land fifty miles below with a smash that'll smear us out of existence!"

Thinking quickly, I set my jaw hard.

"Then try it, for goodness' sake!" I yelled. "Anything's better than swinging about out here like a blessed compass needle!"

Spurred by my words, he picked himself up and crawled to the platform. He was just in time. No sooner had his hand closed on the elevator and rudder controls than a huge cloud of darkness rushed

towards us and engulfed us on all quarters. We had entered the earth's dark clouds.

A Terrible Plight!

THE next few moments were pure terror. Tilting her stern madly the Meteor swooped earthwards at such a dizzy slant I wondered vaguely why she didn't turn turtle. Everything loose in the cabin slid down the deck, and the roar and rattle was fearful.

Down we went like a thunderbolt, Mark clinging to his post in a desperate effort to right the ship. I managed to claw my way to the platform at length, and, by our united strength, we got the elevators to take hold a little and steady the sickening plunge. We hung there waiting for the crash—and death.

Behind us the floor rose almost vertically; we could scarcely keep our feet. But we hung on to the elevator bar doggedly, fighting to flatten the Meteor out, to give her a chance of gliding. Her nose came up gradually in little grudging jerks, but, meanwhile, we were eating up the appallingly few miles to earth, and, in addition, we could hardly breathe.

No time for thoughts, fear, hopes. Through the bow window I could see a dark world whirling past, now a few stars, now raggy, inky clouds. Suddenly my heart stood still.

Lights—the lights of a small town! They were far beneath us at first, twinkling

was knocking a nail into the wall and—boo-hoo!—he hit his thumb!"

"Very sad," said the old gentleman. "But, after all, it wasn't your thumb. There was no need for you to start crying."

"I d-d-din't," was the miserable reply. "I—I laughed!"

(*W. J. Webb, 37, Westway, Neasden, N.W.10, has been awarded a pocket wallet.*)

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON.

Teacher: "I asked your boy yesterday who wrote 'Macbeth,' and he told me he didn't."

Proud Father: "Jack's a truthful boy; if he says he didn't, he didn't!"

(*R. W. Hunt, 49, Mills Street, Hampton, S.7, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, has been awarded a penknife.*)

CHANGE AND REST.

Briggs: "I went away to the seaside for change and rest."

Boggs: "Well, did you get them?"

Briggs: "No; the doctor got the change and the landlady got the rest!"

(*Colin Horne, 147, High Street, Brentwood, Essex, has been awarded a penknife.*)

SPEED.

Slow Waiter: "Have you ordered anything, sir?"

Disgusted Diner: "Well, I asked for a pancake, but it was so long ago you'd better bring me a Christmas pudding!"

(*A Brindley, 546, Hempshaw Lane, Offerton, Stockport, has been awarded a pocket wallet.*)

MORE SCOTCH.

Wife (to Scots farmer who has fallen down a well): "Ye're no' hurt, Jock? I'll run and fetch the lads to help ye oot."

Voice from depths: "Na, na: dinna tak' them off their work, lass. I'll bide here till their dinner hour!"

(*J. Harris, 8, East Down Park, Lewisham, S.E., has been awarded a penknife.*)

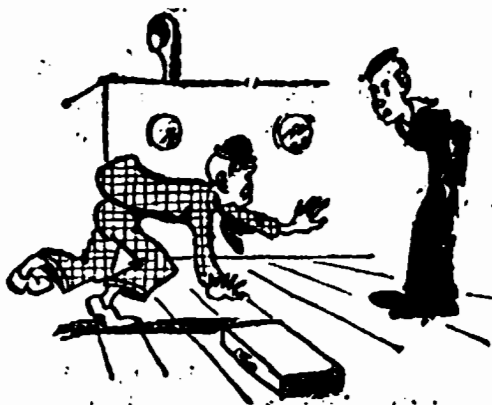
TOO SOON.

The steamer was only a few feet from the quay when a man came dashing forward. Without pausing, he threw his bag on board, and then leaped on to the deck, landing with a crash.

"Good!" he gasped. "Another few minutes and I should have missed it!"

"Missed it!" exclaimed a shiphand. "Why, this boat is just coming in!"

(*B. H. Mumford, St. Edmund's School, Canterbury, Kent, has been awarded a pocket wallet.*)



vaguely, but with every second they grew clearer, until they seemed to my horrified eyes to fill the world. "Town lights—solid land; town lights—solid land." The words danced in my brain to a maddening rhythm, and faster and faster the Meteor dived to her doom.

A feeling of frantic fury swept over me abruptly, flushing my muscles with waves of energy. With all my weight and every ounce of my burly strength, I forced the elevator control up—up, and wrenched at the rudder.

It worked. The miracle happened. The Meteor curved dizzily off her course, lifting her nose just the few precious inches that enabled her wings to grip the air firmly. This straightened her out, braking the speed, checking the hurtling death-plunge. What mattered that the rudder control snapped like a stick in my grasp? I chucked the pieces across the cabin and laughed uproariously. The lights below had disappeared—that was all I knew.

Mark peered through the window.

"Water below!" he whispered. "The sea!"

Faintly through the darkness we could see a great rolling, heaving plain beneath us, with little patches of dull foam glimmering in the starshine. I tried the elevators again, but although they lifted the ship, it was plain their usefulness was over. We might glide for a little while, but sooner or later we must hit something. The rudder, of course, was past hope.

In silence we watched the shrouded sea rising to swallow us; there was nothing to do but wait. As in a dream I saw Mark stumble to the table and commence stuffing his precious journal and charts into the bosom of his shirt. He held out his hand, and I gripped it hard. The brawling waves were less than a hundred yards off now, and mechanically I lifted the Meteor for the last time.

She struck—on a flat keel. There was a crackle of water and buckling metal; a terrific blow underfoot as from a mighty fist. The impact threw us sprawling, and as we went the Meteor bounced and skidded over the wave crests and went staggering on.

Again and again the billows rose and hit her, tossing her from one to the other like a toy in the hands of giants. Bruised, sick and nearly all in, Mark and I were flung about the cabin by the succession of punches. I saw him for a second clinging to his bunk-rail, his legs dangling above my head, then a bigger wave flicked the Meteor into the air for a last fall.

Over she went, spinning wildly, Mark thudding into me while we milled in feeble confusion. The ship's impetus stopped with a sickening jar as she fetched up against some obstacle, and almost at once her nose crumpled like a concertina.

A stark gash opened in the roof: cold, distant stars winked at us disdainfully, and were blotted out in a flood of dark water that triumphed over our dying ship and boiled into the cabin. Yet amid all the confusion a

wild hope came to me. I could hear the grinding jar of rocks against our hull; we were no longer moving.

We were aground—somewhere!

Before another wave could burst in I had Mark in my arms, fighting towards the turret. A cascade of water caught us when we were half-way up the ladder, but somehow we held on; and as soon as we could breathe thrust our way through the bolted trap-door.

A desolate scene met our eyes. Out of the darkness came great combers, curling towards us from three points of the compass, hitting a ridge of outer rocks, and raging around us in a seething mass of white. The force of the wind made us gasp and cower down; flying scud flayed our hands and faces cruelly.

We could see land there, dim and vague, over forty yards away. Yet there was just a chance—perhaps one in a thousand. The rock we were on was high and jagged and broad, forming a breakwater; and although the sea between us and the shore was extremely rough, it was clear of snags as far as I could see.

Anyway, it was our last hope. Had I hesitated I might have funked and gone down with the Meteor, but as it was, I picked Mark up and slung him clean into the deep water, following at the jump just in time to grab his frantic arms as they came above the surface. Vagueness came to us both after that.

The waves beat down on my head till I forgot I was in the sea, and fancied dimly that I was taking a hammering in the ring. Then I remembered again, and struck out. We were ducked, torn under, thrown up, taken almost ashore and viciously snatched back again. At some time or other I seem to see lights in the darkness and heard wild shouts; once a hand gripped me but fell away again. A pain like a knife stab darted through my right arm, but I still clutched Mark with the other and fought on.

Then somehow—sometime—we were on land. Lanterns were waving all around us, and seamed, anxious faces bent over Mark, who lay white and still on the sand. A kindly Cornish voice bellowed in my ear:

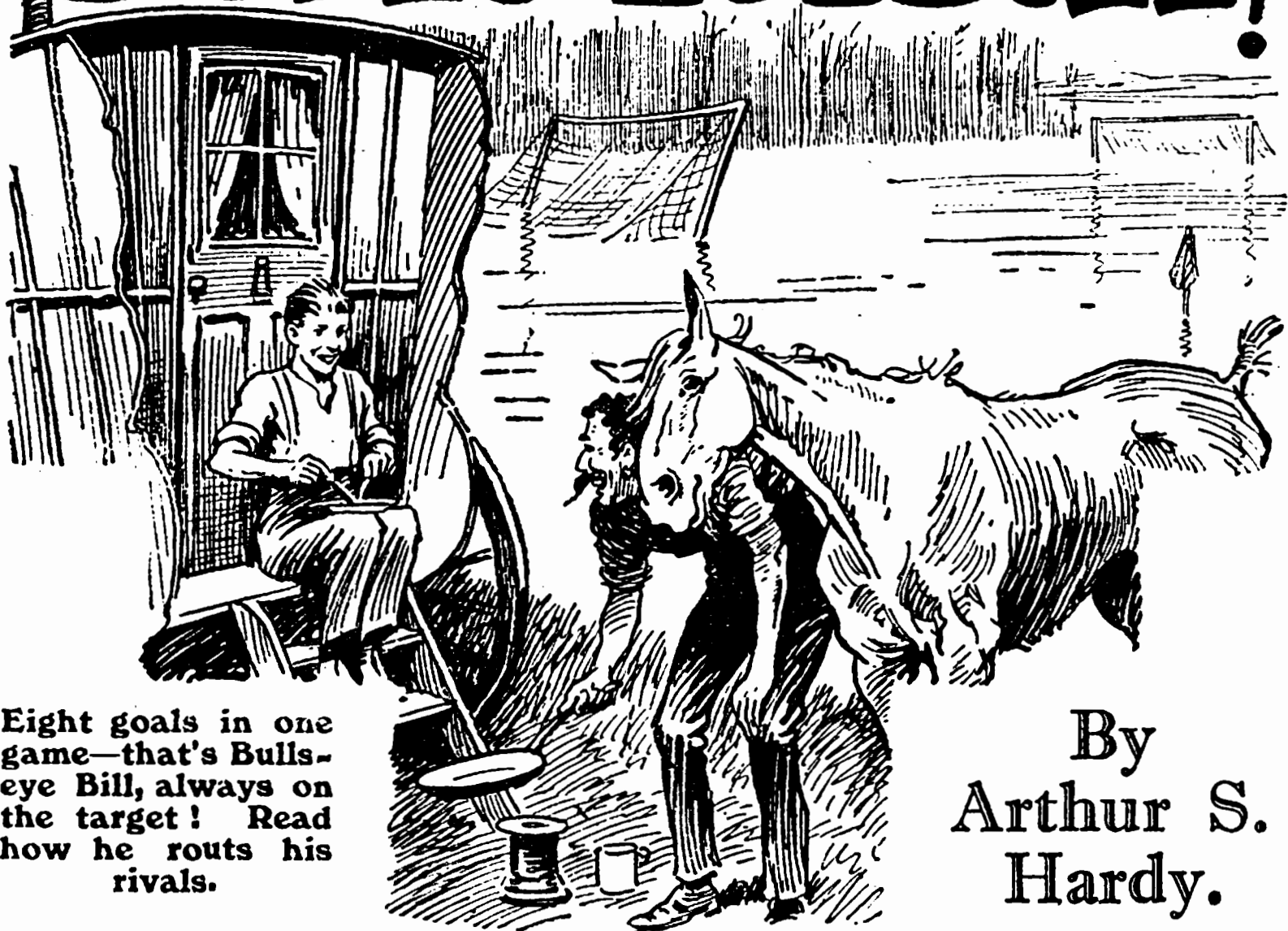
"Yeou'm all right neow, my dear!" And after that the biggest wave of all rushed over me and I went down and down into the depths.

We stood on the Penryllyn beach, Mark and I, staring out at the Wolf Fang Rocks. Three days had gone by since the fisherfolk had hauled us out of the deadly undertow and taken us to the nearest cottage, where my broken arm was set, and Mark's bruised head bandaged.

This was the first time we had been alone. My swim across that fearsome stretch of water had apparently set the neighbourhood by the ears, and people crowded round me so that I was forced to stick indoors to keep clear. Also, although we resolutely refused

(Continued on page 40).

BULL'S-EYEBILL!



Eight goals in one game—that's Bulls-eye Bill, always on the target! Read how he routs his rivals.

By
Arthur S.
Hardy.

Buttercup Takes a Dip!

WHEN Bullseye Bill heard rain thundering on the roof of the caravan, saw blinding flashes of lightning dance against the windows, he covered his head up with the blankets to deaden the noise.

His muscles and bones ached so much after his gruelling game of football against the Wasps that he didn't care. The rain-water spouted off the roof of the caravan like a waterfall, and when Bullseye pulled aside the curtain of the little window during a lull in the storm, he saw the football pitch awash and the Flats under water. Gipsy Dick had stuck a screen up between the two bunks before he went to sleep last night, but he must have heard Bullseye stirring, for he called out:

"Kid, go to sleep till the rain stops, then I'll cook breakfast. It'll be over in half an hour."

Sure enough, in half an hour the sun shone, and Gipsy Dick rose from his bunk, folded up the screen, pulled on his waistcoat, his coat and boots, combed his lank hair, and hiked a bluebird stove out on to the steps.

He lit a second stove inside the van and set a kettle on the flame. And while Bulls-

eye watched hungrily, he cooked eggs and bacon like a chef, brewed some strong tea, opened up a can of milk, and served the lot on a table he rigged up in a trice.

That was the finest breakfast Bullseye had ever eaten in all his life, and Gipsy Dick grinned as he watched Bullseye lay into it.

"Have some more?" he said, when Bullseye had finished.

"No, thanks; I'm blown out. I say, Dick, why are you so good to me?"

Gipsy Dick pulled at one of his long moustaches and winked.

"Well, I wonder why," he said. "Perhaps it's because your stepfather, One-Punch Pete, kicked you out of home—p'r'aps it's because I like you. P'r'aps it's because you're the dandiest little footballer I've ever seen. Anyway, you share my van, kid, and you can stop as long as you like."

"I think I'd like to stay for ever, Dick."

Gipsy Dick did not answer that, but extended a strong, horny and capable hand which nearly crushed Bullseye Bill's. Then, as he looked over the waterlogged Flats which made one vast lake, Bullseye Bill suddenly thought of something.

"Dick," he yelled, "where's your horse?" Bullseye remembered Gipsy Dick letting the yellow horse loose to graze before they

turned in last night, and it was nowhere to be seen.

"Don't you worry," said Gipsy Dick. "Buttercup's all right. That hoss is as clever as a cageful of monkeys. He's sheltering. I'll whistle him."

Setting two of his fingers in his mouth, Gipsy Dick let forth a shrill whistle which might have been heard a mile away, and it was instantly answered, but not quite in the way Bullseye or Gipsy Dick expected. The Flats were bounded by a high embankment, and on the other side of the embankment ran the canal. As Gipsy Dick whistled, fountains of water were thrown up in the canal as if a great paddle-wheel were going round. And when Bullseye Bill stretched himself on the top of the steps to get a better view, he saw the head of Gipsy Dick's yellow horse making for the bank, and the whiskered hoofs of the animal beating the water frantically.

"My!" exclaimed Gipsy Dick admiringly. "He's having his morning swim!"

Bullseye Bill gasped as the horse set its forefeet on the bank and somehow managed to edge itself up. Then having shaken most of the surplus water out of its shaggy coat, it plunged down the embankment and splashed across the Flats where the derelict goalposts and nets could be seen standing up above the flood. Right up to the caravan the yellow horse came, and sat there on its hind legs, neighing till Gipsy Dick gave it a handful of sugar.

At that moment a shrill whistle sounded, followed by a cheerio call from Bullseye Bill's best pal. Looking round, Bullseye saw his chum, Chip Rogers, wading across the Flats in a pair of rubber boots.

The Challenge!

"HALLO, Bullseye! Hallo, Dick! How's things?" asked Chip as he came up.

"Fine! And you, Chip?" asked Bullseye.

"Crumbs, I thought you'd all be washed away! I had to come and see how you were, Bullseye. And I've gotter lot o' news!"

Gipsy Dick threw a bag of sweets at Chip. "Have some toffee?" he said. "I make it."

Chip's face when he sampled that toffee was a study. He had eaten all kinds of toffee, but never anything that came within a mile of this.

"Did you say you make this toffee, Gipsy?"

"And sell it," grinned Gipsy Dick.

"You oughter make your fortune." Chip Rogers ate four pieces of that toffee before he could stop, and then he started on the news. "Bullseye," he said, "you've no idea. Old Crab, the fishmonger, is sore because you've left him. And it took your stepfather, One-Punch Pete, hours to get over that crack on the jaw Gipsy Dick gave him. He's sore and is out for trouble. I thought I'd warn you and Gipsy Dick. Dick had better take his caravan out of here."

But Gipsy Dick grinned.

"I'm not moving on till it pleases me," he said.

"All right, only I've told yer. And there's another thing, Bullseye. We're not satisfied over that licking the Wasps gave us. I went round with some of the boys to Ginger Hackem's house last night, and issued a challenge to play 'em again on the same pitch. And they leapt at it. And Ginger, who's always wanted to kick the Spiders out and have our pitch, says that they'll play us for it. The Wasps reckon, now that you've lost your knack of shootin' goals, that they'll eat us; but I don't, and so the match is on. We're gonner play it on Saturday. The flood will be gone by then."

Bullseye listened to the news with mixed feelings. Nobody knew better than he that the Wasps ought never to have beaten the Spiders yesterday, that they could never have beaten them if he had been able to shoot any goals. But for the first time since he could remember he had played in a football match without scoring, and he knew better than anybody that it wasn't because Ginger Hackem had crooked him, either. In yesterday's match he had been left with an open goal several times, but he had sent the ball anywhere but into the net, and his cheeks blanched now as he wondered whether he had lost his nerve.

Bullseye Bill, always on the target!

That's what his pals had always called him. And it had been true. The countless goals he had scored for them had made the Spiders. But they had lost yesterday's vital game because he had forgotten how to shoot, and the Wasps had won the championship of the Flats. And if they were to replay the game, what was to prevent the Wasps from winning again—if he once more found it impossible to score? In which case the Wasps would turn the Spiders out of the best pitch on the Flats, and there would never be an end to their crowing.

As Chip Rogers studied Bullseye's troubled face he grew anxious.

"Bullseye," he cried, catching his little pal by the arm, "you're not funk'ing it, are you? You've not lost your nerve?"

"I dunno," answered Bullseye, with a mournful shake of the head. "I've forgotten how to shoot."

Then Gipsy Dick chimed in.

"Don't you worry, Chip," he said. "You go and fix the match. Bullseye hasn't lost his nerve. And if he can't shoot any goals, I'll soon show him how. Likely to have a big crowd down here for the game on Saturday?"

"I'd smile," grinned Chip.

"An' Ginger Hackem will come along full of sauce!"

"You bet, the swanker! He's gotter 'nough side for two whole teams."

"One-Punch Pete Doyle, Bullseye's stepfather, likely to happen along?"

"If he learns Bullseye's still here, you can bank on it."

The news seemed to please the gipsy.

"All right, you fix it, Chip. I'll make some toffee to sell on Saturday, and I'll make a pair of football boots."

Chip Rogers stared.

"Clever sorter chap, ain't you, Gipsy?" he asked.

Gipsy Dick grinned.

"In the lonely sorter life I have to lead," he answered, "you've gotter learn to be handy."

With a cheery good-bye to Bullseye Bill, Chip Rogers splashed away in his waders.

Bullseye on the Target!

BY the time Saturday arrived the flood water had all gone, and a hot sun had dried up every vestige of mud on the Spiders' playing pitch. Between whiles Gipsy Dick had taken a portable kitchen out into the open, and screening the flames and the ingredients from the wind and the dust, he had made some toffee which he had poured into long, big moulds and broken into squares when cool. The piece of

was that Gipsy Dick had dyed them red, blue and white in sections, the colours of the national flag.

When Bullseye took them off Gipsy Dick hung them up just inside the door of the caravan.

"But I don't want you to wear 'em in Saturday's match unless you're obliged to," he said. "You wear the boots you're used to, and say to yourself when you go out to play that you're the best goal-shooter in the world. And if it so happens that you find you can't score any goals, being still off form, why, then I'll tell you what ter do, see?"

"Yes, Gipsy," answered Bullseye.

And so Saturday afternoon came, and



With arms outflung One-Punch Pete took a wild leap into the canal to escape Buttercup.

toffee were wrapped up in oiled paper, and apportioned into bags which were to be sold at one penny, twopence, threepence, and sixpence a bag. He also made some toffee which he put in blue paper bags. When Bullseye asked him what this was, he told him that it was "extra special."

Gipsy Dick had then embarked upon another job.

He borrowed Bullseye's football boots, and after making some very careful measurements, rigged up an iron last and set to work to build up a pair of football boots with some leather he bought in the town, and fashioned and beat into shape. When they were finished, complete with studs and ankle protectors, he told Bullseye Bill to fit them on. And Bullseye marvelled, for they were the most comfortable pair of football boots he had ever worn in his life.

When he went for a run across the Flats in them he felt as if he were on springs. And another thing about those football boots

such a rush to the Spiders' pitch to see the game as the Flats had never known.

Supporters of the Spiders, wearing black-and-white rosettes, turned up in hundreds, and more than as many followers of the Wasps, wearing red-and-white rosettes, a noisy lot of roughs.

Gipsy Dick had rigged a lot of flags all over his caravan, had hitched his horse Buttercup up to the van for safety's sake, and had built up a counter round the steps, from which he sold his bags of toffee as fast as he could hand them out. All the toffee, except that in the blue bags, was sold out, and Dick had made a handsome profit, by the time Ginger Hackem and the Wasps' team arrived.

"Haw!" said Ginger, stalking up to Gipsy Dick and jeering at him. "Let's have some of that toffee you've got, and be quick about it! And I don't pay, either, for I'm the captain of the Wasps' team, see?"

With a grin Gipsy Dick dived below the

counter and came up with a blue bag in his hand. He gave it to Ginger Hackem.

"With my compliments," he said. "This is extra special. I've been keeping it for you."

"Haw!" grinned Ginger Hackem, snatching at the bag. He pulled out of it a piece of toffee wrapped in red paper. He tossed the paper away and pushed the lump of toffee into his mouth. And the taste of it was so fine that his eyes bulged.

But a second later he began to grunt, then he worked his jaws, rolled his eyes, ducked and squirmed and writhed. He tried to open his mouth but he couldn't, for his jaws were stuck together. He began to kick and stamp, and all the time Gipsy Dick grinned at him over the counter.

"Bullseye," he cried, "that toffee's warranted to stick. He'll never get rid of it. It will last for hours."

And Ginger Hackem was still struggling to remove the toffee when one of his pals came running to him to tell him frantically that it was time to change.

And in the game he got into such a paddy over that toffee that he didn't time his fouling rushes right. Bullseye Bill's gamey leg had healed, and he was able to slip him time and time again.

In the exchanges the Spiders had far and away the better of it. With Bullseye in his best form, darting here, there, and everywhere, the Spiders broke through time after time, and might have scored a dozen goals if Bullseye Bill hadn't muffed every chance he got. His pals, particularly Chip Rogers, fed him with some great passes, but Bullseye banged the ball anywhere and everywhere but into the net.

And Gipsy Dick, looking for a cause, saw One-Punch Pete Doyle standing in the crowd and shouting.

"That's my son Bullseye Bill, that is," One-Punch Pete roared, "and if he shoots a goal I'm going to smash him."

Bullseye didn't shoot a goal, but the Wasps did, in a breakaway just before half-time, and the Spiders retired, looking fed-up, one goal down.

It was then that Gipsy Dick told Bullseye to slip into the red, white and blue boots.

"And don't you worry, kid," he said. "Every time you shoot in them you'll score a goal."

Bullseye, of course, didn't believe him, but when he ran on to the field for the second half he felt again that he was treading on air. And the very first time he got through the Wasps' defence and shot, he saw the ball roll up the netting of the Wasps' goal as if it had been pulled there by a magnet. The second time he shot he scored another goal. The third time he put on number three.

The rattled Wasps could do nothing against him.

Four, five, six, seven, eight goals he scored, and the Wasps supporters began to jeer.

Ginger Hackem, whose jaws were still stuck tight, was so fed-up that he ran off the field, dressed, and cleared before the final whistle blew.

The Wasps' supporters melted away in disgust. But the Spiders' hero-worshippers remained to cheer and cheer, as Bullseye Bill was lifted shoulder-high and carried off. Bullseye Bill, always on the target! It was the best goal-shooting he had ever done!

But there was one man who hated Bullseye for it.

With a roar of anger One-Punch Pete made for him.

But Gipsy Dick had his eye on him, and letting Buttercup off the lead, he said to his yellow horse:

"Fetch him, Buttercup! Run that tough guy into the canal!"

The yellow horse seemed to understand. Neighing shrilly it rushed at One-Punch Pete, who turned and fled.

When his arms upflung ywhoory ij morhm

When, with arms upflung, he took a wild leap into the canal, Buttercup was only half a length behind!

THE END.

(Another lively complete story of Bullseye Bill next week. Don't miss reading it, chums.)

THE INVISIBLE WORLD!

(Continued from page 36.)

to talk, all England was excited over our adventure. We learnt that we had been given up for dead, that we had sailed for the Moon—all sorts of things. And our wild shipwreck made an added sensation. But Mark had clung to his journal throughout that struggle in the sea, and he bided his time.

Out among the Wolf Fangs, with the waves hiding her for ever, lay our splendid ship, the Meteor. Salvage was impossible; she was wedged in a merciless grip. Her cruising was over.

Where the Valley of Flame, the Fire People and the Nebuli had failed, the rocks and waves of the Cornish coast had succeeded. Only one portion of her hull was visible as we looked out sadly—the remains of our turret gun, which had spat defiantly amid the Burning Mountains, and which now

lifted its muzzle in contempt above the turbulent sea-wrack.

Mark broke the silence.

"She was a great ship, Tom!"

"She was!" I chortled suddenly, throwing my sound arm round his shoulder. "Cheer up, old socks—she put up a great scrap. One day we'll build the Meteor II, and perhaps we'll voyage to Lebanu again!"

Mark smiled and stared into the sunny, blue heaven.

"The Invisible World!" he said softly. "I'm glad we went, Tom!"

And after that we, the "Gods of Lebanu," turned and strolled away arm in arm.

THE END.

(Whatever you do, don't miss reading the first enthralling story in "THE VENGEANCE TRAIL!" By JOHN BREARLEY—a powerful new series of adventure abroad.)

Fascinating Romance in the Days of Old!

Knights of the Road!

**By DAVID
GOODWIN**

(For opening
chapters see
page 43.)



To take Dick Forrester by surprise; to arrest him, is the object of the sheriff's men, but they reckon without young Ralph!

The Men With the Sheriff's Warrant!

RALPH sat up in bed and stared at the men. One was a large, heavy-jowled man in stout fustian clothes, and the other was scarcely less bulky. They wore long, heavily-greased riding-boots. He did not like the look of them.

"Who are you?" he said sharply. "Who bade you come thrusting into a private room?"

"We need no bidding," said the lesser of the two, peering at Ralph with little black, twinkling eyes. "Your name is Harry Burton, bain't it?"

"What of it?" said Ralph.

Inwardly he was vaguely alarmed. The men, by their speech, were not of Yorkshire.

"You speak a little softer, my lad," said the other man menacingly, "or you'll find yourself in trouble! Where's this here companion o' yours—hey?"

"What is that to you?"

"Now see here," said the man, "you're mighty near the wrong end of a rope, my boy, so you'd better set yourself straight. O' course, you know who this friend o' yours is that you came here with? Answer up smart an' give us all the help you can, an' perhaps you'll keep yourself out o' trouble. If you refuse, you'll find yourself in the

same box as him. You know who he is—hey?"

Ralph saw how the land lay. He had no small store of wit; he resolved to assure himself exactly who these men were, and why they were here. His heart beat fast.

"Know who he is?" repeated Ralph innocently. "I see not how it concerns you; but he is a very worthy gentleman from the south. Do you want anything of him?"

"Do we? Well, I rather think we do, my young innocent!" said the man. "He's the highwayman, Richard Forrester, partner o' the black rogue Turpin, as word has reached Ulchester to-day. I hold a sheriff's warrant for his arrest!"

He held a red-sealed paper before Ralph's eyes.

"An' I hold what'll put a stopper on 'im," said the bigger man, tapping the butt of a pistol that struck out of his pocket. "an' my mate's got the steel bracelets. We're goin' to nobble him in this here room, and you've got to see he comes here unawares, my young cockerel!"

Ralph was horrified, though he strove not to show it.

"You've dropped into dangerous company, young fellow, an' nothin' but a sharp turn

round'll save you. Give a jot of help to this rogue, an' you'll swing on the same gibbet! We're about to capture him for the peace o' the King."

"An a hundred guineas, Ben," put in his companion.

"An' a hundred guineas," agreed Ben. "Don't forget the shiners. Now, my lad, I'll trouble you to ring the bell, an' without lettin' anyone in, tell 'em to let Mr. Richard Forrester know you want to see 'im."

Ralph thought for a minute rapidly, his temples throbbing and his brain on fire. Then, reaching for the bell-rope, he tugged it. A jangle answered below, and very soon the voice of the landlord himself was heard at the door.

"Did you ring, sir?"

"Yes. Is Mr. Forrester in the house?"

"Just come in, sir,"

"Ask him to come and see me."

"Now mind," said the bigger man in a savage whisper to Ralph, as the landlord went away on his errand, "one word to warn him, an' I'll put a bullet through you! No tricks, young shaver! D'ye hear?"

Ralph nodded.

"We'd better make ready," said Ben. "I hear his step on the stairs. Crouch against the wall on each side of the door."

"Ay," said the smaller man, pulling the wrist-irons from his pocket, and gripping a heavy bludgeon in his right hand as he crouched. "Wing the beggar in the leg, Ben; he'll be easier to handle!"

The door was made to open outwards, as the men knew, and Ralph was aware of it, too. The fellow with the pistol stopped to peer through the keyhole and the other applied his eye to the chink.

"It's him!" whispered Ben. "Here's our bird!"

Dick's cheery whistle was heard, and the door handle turned briskly. The men grasped their weapons.

As the two watchers turned their faces to the door, Ralph rolled over quietly and reached out an arm to the drawer beside him.

Ralph had been playing for that moment from the first, and when the chance came he did not waste it. He opened the drawer swiftly and quietly, and took from it the double pistol.

Outside Dick paused a moment before opening, and, not wishing to startle the convalescent, knocked.

"Come in, Dick!" called Ralph, in a clear voice, and, at the same moment he cocked both barrels of his weapon.

At the ominous double click behind them both men turned hastily, and an oath of alarm broke from the man with the pistol as he saw the long weapon in Ralph's hand levelled at his head.

"Drop that pistol!" ordered Ralph sharply. "Drop it, or you are a dead man! Quick, or I fire! You other fellow there, fling down that bludgeon!"

Ben, seeing he was covered, hesitated not a moment, and his pistol clattered to the floor, exploding with a loud bang as it struck the carpet. The black-eyed knave jumped in his shoes, and hastily dropped his cudgel.

"What now!" exclaimed Dick, as he threw the door open, and in a moment his pistol leaped from its pocket. "Who comes here firing barkers in a sick room?"

"Dick, old boy," said Ralph. "These are two worthy guests of mine, who are anxious to meet you. This is Mr. Ben. The other gentleman, whose honoured name I do not know, has a paper in his pocket which he wants to show you. Some merry jest of his, no doubt!"

"Don't shoot, sir—don't shoot!" gasped the strangers. "We—we only come to pass you a warning, sir!"

"A warning, eh?" said Dick, who had taken in the state of affairs at a glance. "Come, that's mighty kind of you. Ralph, I like the look of your visitors—two rare good fellows! Now, sir, what is it I am to be warned about?"

"Well, sir," whined the black-eyed man, "you are, take it from me, in very grave danger. I was sent here on an untasty errand, with a warrant for your arrest. It would grieve me sadly to see an open-handed gentleman of the road laid by the heels, so let me pray you to fly while there is time; and as to the warrant, I thought you might be glad to have it surrendered to you—at a small price! I will gladly give it to you for ten guineas, sir—a bargain—a rare bargain!"

Dick smiled blandly, and tapped his pistol.

"I have here," he said, "a warrant far stronger than yours; and, as the higher trump takes the lower. I'll trouble you for that paper in your breast-pocket!"

"What, for nothin', sir?" whined the fellow, shuffling his feet. "Make it five guineas —"

"Have done, you knave!" said Dick sharply. "Do you think I am simple enough not to know that you came here seeking the price of my head? Hand me that warrant!"

"The merry fellow behind you," said Ralph, still keeping his pistol levelled, "has the better wit of the two. His notion was to break your thigh with a bullet, remarking, very wisely, that it would save him trouble."

"A very neat plan," said Dick. "But before we set a trap we must consider the size of the game that is to fall into it. The warrant! Thank you. And now, since 'tis poor hospitality to send a guest away hungry. I will see you are both fed. Believe me, there is nothing more savoury and nourishing than a sheriff's warrant!"

Off to St. Anstell!

DICK took the warrant, and laying his pistol down, tore the sealed paper contemptuously across and across, crumpled it into two small balls, and

crammed one of them into Ben's mouth, effectually stopping his whines of protest. He treated the other in the same way. Neither of the burly ruffians dared resist, and a merry spectacle they were, each with his mouth stuffed full of paper.

"A warrant makes as good a gag as the next thing," said Dick. "Tell your sheriff that if he signs another I will come and cram it down his own throat. Now we will tie the hands of these gentlemen, for I would have them remain quiet for half an hour."

He plucked the neckcloths from the throats of the pair, and with these he rapidly bound their wrists together behind them. Then, making them kick off their boots, he marched them into a deep cupboard in the wall.

"I pray you, gentlemen, be as quiet as mice," he said, as he locked them in, and cast the key out of the window, "or I shall fire a few shots through the panels to see which is the luckier of you. Now, Ralph, old boy, are you fit to rise? For we must get away from this house quickly, if I have to carry you in my arms!"

"No need to carry me," said Ralph, who had already half-dressed himself. "I'm as fit as you are, Dick, and ready to run or ride!"

"I owe you my life, Ralph. You've the pluck of twenty. Had those rascals caught me off my guard, they'd have had me safe in the cells by now."

"Then we're quits," said Ralph, pulling on his boots, and throwing a riding cloak about him. "Were those rogues sent by Uncle Vane, think you?"

"It is likely that Vane started the game, and is not far off."

As they left the bed-room they ran into the host, who came hurrying up, with an anxious face.

"Sir, sir!" he said under his breath to Dick. "I have but now learned of the trick to trap you. I would not for worlds have it happen that any companion of a mutual friend of ours on the roads—you know who I mean—should come to harm under my roof!"

"All's well, landlord. I know 'twas no fault of yours," said Dick. "I have dealt with the affair. There are two gentlemen whom I should prefer not to be at liberty again for half an hour, or perhaps an hour,

lest they talk too much or raise a hue-and-cry. And now, Ralph, we'll have the saddles on our horses without delay, for there will be worse enemies close on the trail, and this strikes me as a fine place to be leaving." Three minutes later the two brothers, having settled with their friendly host, were outside the town, breathing their horses in a hard canter over the healthy downs to the westward.

"Where now, Dick?" said Ralph, as the breeze whistled in their ears while they galloped along.

"To St. Anstell's College, where Galloping Dick's brother will take his place at the seat of learning," grinned Dick. "Egad, what a hero you'd be in the dormitories Ralph, if you told how you bottled those two knaves who came to drag me to the gallows! But I warn you, keep your lips tight shut!"

"So will I, indeed!" said Ralph. "I'll never forget that your life hangs on a word. But do you think the Head of St. Anstell's will ever take the brother of a highwayman into his school?"

"We will find a way to get over that difficulty," said Dick. "The Head of St. Anstell's is Dr. Trelawney, of Cornwall, and a very just, though a stern man, and of great learning. He was a good friend of our father."

"That should help."

"Nay, he is of such stern mind that I think he would deliver his own son to justice if he transgressed from the narrow path. He is so just that he would not allow harm to come to you through your being my brother if you yourself were innocent, nor would he allow Vane to decoy you away from him. Remember, while Vane lives, neither of our lives is safe, innocent or guilty. I trust we have thrown off the scent for the time, but the King's Riders may track us. We are in less danger from them here in the North since they know us less well. Keep that nag of yours going, Ralph, for it is two days' ride to St. Anstell's, and on the third night, when you are safe at the school, I foregather with Turpin at the Offord cross-roads."

(How will Ralph fare at St. Anstell's College? Dramatic developments occur in next Wednesday's absorbing instalment. Make sure of your copy.)

HOW THE STORY STARTED.

DICK FORRESTER learns upon the death of his father that all the vast estates and fortune, with the exception of a hundred guineas, have passed into the hands of his rascally uncle.

VANE FORRESTER. The latter refuses to give the boy his money, and, appointing himself guardian, states his intention of sending Dick and his brother,

RALPH FORRESTER, to Duncansby School—a notorious place in the north of England. Travelling by coach, Vane and the two boys are held up by

DICK TURPIN, the famous highwayman. Dick joins forces with Turpin, and, after bidding Ralph to be of stout heart and promising to fetch him soon, the two ride away. They have many stirring adventures together until Dick leaves his companion and rides north to see how his brother is faring. In the meantime, Ralph has reached Duncansby School, a dreary, desolate place on the wild moorlands. Unknown to him, Vane has arranged with the headmaster that the boy shall "not live long." Ralph escapes, but is recaptured, and is being flogged, when Dick, his brother, comes to his rescue. He takes Ralph away from the school, and the brothers travel south to St. Anstell's College. They put up at an inn en route. Being ill, Ralph is lying in bed, when two strangers enter his room.

(Now read on.)

UNMASKED !

(Continued from page 29.)

"He was too anxious to give information regarding his 'dear friend,' Weinbach, and every single word he uttered so innocently only piled up further suspicion, which struck me as very strange. Then when he could see Sir Hugh had thoroughly swallowed the bait—which he was nibbling at already, anyway—he bounced out in indignation, and as you said at the time, Kyle, sent the chief commissioner stamping off on a wild goose chase. And finally, he nearly swooned with relief when I promised to visit him!"

From the depths of his armchair Thurston Kyle nodded slowly. The two youngsters, Nipper and Snub, sat solemn and still, listening to every word. Nelson Lee went on:

"I cannot honestly say that I really suspected him then, but I made up my mind to watch points closely this afternoon!"

He smiled.

"The sight of that gorilla track, the moment we reached the study, nearly floored me. I suppose the brute went in and out there like a pet dog. I think Fabian must have seen me spot the footprints, for he lost his nerve at once and began a lot of rambling nonsense about his attempted assassination—by a bullet! Anyway, he got hopelessly flurried, and I could see the Italian scowling like a thundercloud!"

The next step was the scarred thumb—you remember the thumb-print on the Mas-

ter's letters? I'd already looked at Fabian's quietly—nothing there. So I tried the Italian, and——" He shrugged. "The rest you know!"

Thurston Kyle smiled gravely.

"Well done, Lee!" he cried, his eyes glowing. "We are on the road to victory now. We have found the Master and exposed Fabian. And, my friends, we know where the Master is!"

"But—to-morrow he attacks London!" put in Lee quietly.

"I think not. I said we must spar for time—and I fancy we have done so!" The Night Hawk clapped Nipper warmly on the shoulder. "Thanks to your pluck and good shooting, dear lad, I think the attack on London to-morrow will not take place! We can be sure the Master will work day and night to repair his deadly apparatus. But, in the meantime——"

"We'll tear his bally island up by the roots!" grinned Snub Hawkins cheerily.

Nelson Lee extended his hand.

"The next move is with us, Thurston Kyle!"

The Night Hawk laughed ominously.

"Yes, Lee. And very soon!"

THE END.

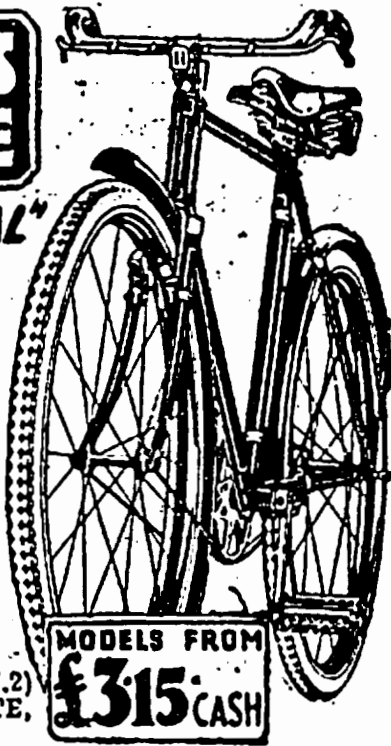
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