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NELSON LEE

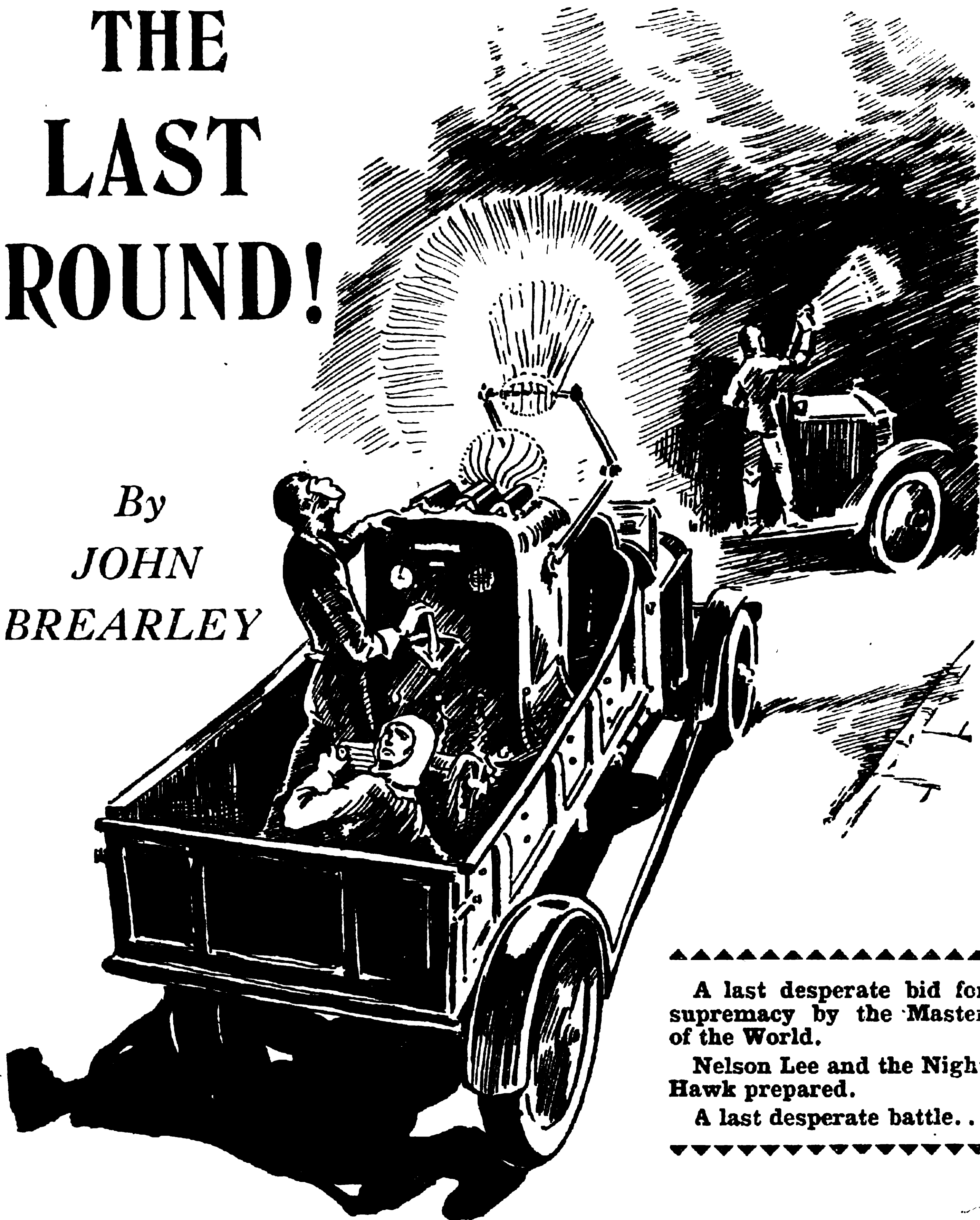
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Latest amazing adventure featuring the Night Hawk—the world's super-man!
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THE LAST ROUND!

By
**JOHN
BREARLEY**



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A last desperate bid for
supremacy by the Master
of the World.

Nelson Lee and the Night
Hawk prepared.

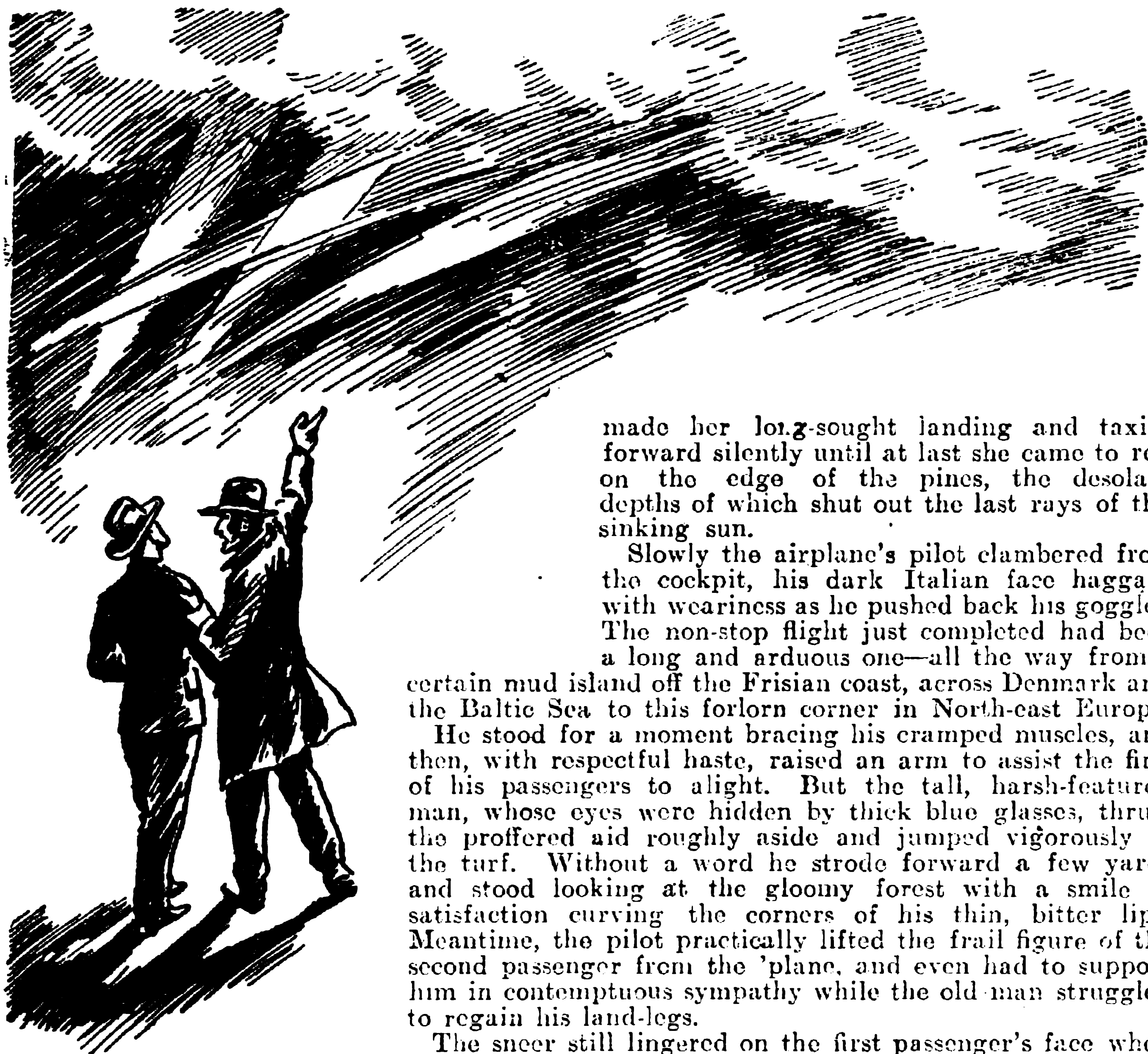
A last desperate battle. . .
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CHAPTER 1.

Fugitives!

GREY waves beating on a sullen shore, a white sea-mist slowly enveloping the barren landscape; and an airplane, like a weary bird, dropping from the gloomy skies to rest.

In slow, doubtful spirals, as though uncertain of a perch among the rugged, pincled cliffs below her, she glided down until suddenly her keen-eyed pilot noted a smooth patch of turf tucked amid the frowning heights. He pushed the joy-stick over, trod gently on the rudder bar: the landscape rose to meet the 'plane. With a bump and a lurch she



made her long-sought landing and taxied forward silently until at last she came to rest on the edge of the pines, the desolate depths of which shut out the last rays of the sinking sun.

Slowly the airplane's pilot clambered from the cockpit, his dark Italian face haggard with weariness as he pushed back his goggles. The non-stop flight just completed had been a long and arduous one—all the way from a certain mud island off the Frisian coast, across Denmark and the Baltic Sea to this forlorn corner in North-east Europe.

He stood for a moment bracing his cramped muscles, and then, with respectful haste, raised an arm to assist the first of his passengers to alight. But the tall, harsh-featured man, whose eyes were hidden by thick blue glasses, thrust the proffered aid roughly aside and jumped vigorously to the turf. Without a word he strode forward a few yards and stood looking at the gloomy forest with a smile of satisfaction curving the corners of his thin, bitter lips. Meantime, the pilot practically lifted the frail figure of the second passenger from the 'plane, and even had to support him in contemptuous sympathy while the old man struggled to regain his land-legs.

The sneer still lingered on the first passenger's face when he turned eventually to witness his companion's plight.

"Well, Fabian!" he mocked. "Welcome to our new home!"

Professor Fabian, one-time President of the British Royal Society, the most famous, as he was the oldest, scientist of his day, winced at the familiar tone. Fame, honour, even liberty itself he had given up to throw in his lot with this man who jeered at him constantly now: this strange maniac-criminal who called himself the Master of the World, who had, in fact, dominated the world for the past month, crushing and destroying all opposition with the marvellous Ice and Fire Rays that he, Professor Fabian, had invented.

Long ago the professor had repented that mad moment of ambition—such as only a scientist knows—that had led him to join forces with the Master in a project that would place the Earth and its peoples at their feet. At first they were to have been partners in the most gigantic criminal organisation ever known. But gradually the Master's stronger personality, his terrifying bouts of madness, had forced the older man into the mire of submission, until now, as Fabian admitted bitterly to himself, he was just another cog in the Master's machine—a tool, no more nor less.

The thought galled him sometimes into spasmodic rebellion. But he was too old, too dazed by the forces his brain had let loose, to struggle for long. The Master was—the Master. And Professor Fabian knew it.

Half-dazed with fatigue, he looked around him now, shuddered, and ventured a timid remark.

"A wild place, my dear fellow. May I ask where we are?"

The Master of the World laughed shortly.

"In the one spot left to us in this hemisphere where the inhabitants will not tear us to pieces if they discover who we are!" he said with grim emphasis.

Professor Fabian shivered again. It was true. They were fugitives not only from

justice, but from the violent wrath of a suffering world. Yet the position might have been so different.

Only sixteen hours before—years it seemed already—they had been safe within the underground island stronghold the Master had built; the marvellous creation of steel rooms and concrete passages defended by the Twin Death Rays, from which the Master had hoped to rule his dominions. And then came Nelson Lee, the famous detective.

Professor Fabian's tired brain reeled when he remembered the terrifying explosions of the bombs with which Lee, in a powerful hydroplane, had smashed the island fortress into a chaos of mud and shattered steelwork, littered with the torn bodies of its garrison. By a fantastic stroke of luck it had been possible for the Master and the professor to escape by 'plane under cover of a cloud of poison gas, the last of the island's defences. Even so they had been pursued into the North Sea, and a mysterious Thing on mighty steel wings had harried them almost to destruction, until a lucky shot with an ammonia bomb had seemingly sent it hurtling to death amid the hungry waves beneath. After that the skilful flying of their Italian pilot had taken them into safety, and at the Master's commands they had headed for this wasteland of sea and forest at the back o' beyond.

Almost unconsciously Professor Fabian put his miserable thoughts into words, not realising he had done so until a fierce grip on his shoulder and a vicious snarl stopped him. The Master towered above him, his lips writhing in tigerish rage as he strove to speak.

"Fabian," he whispered hoarsely at last, "never refer to last night again as long as you live! If you do, by heaven, I'll shoot you like a dog!" The man stepped back, little specks of foam staining the corners of his mouth. "My island! My kingdom!" he muttered brokenly. "Fabian—pray! Pray that one day we shall hold Nelson Lee in our clutches once more! He shall never escape us again! And I promise you he will be a—long—time—dying!"

His voice trailed away softly. Something approaching calmness came back to his livid features at the thought.

"And we shall get him!" he muttered raptly. "I shall rise again, Fabian—here among my own people. This should have been our Base from the beginning, but"—he shrugged—"I shall still be Master of the World. It is not too late yet!"

Seeing him more composed, Fabian made haste to soothe him by humble flattery.

"Of course not, Master. We—you, I mean—will yet realise your ambition. My Ice Ray apparatus is still intact; I will endeavour to repair the Fire Ray as quickly as possible. In a little while, with your wonderful powers of organisation, my dear Master, we shall recover from our—our setback. All will be well again!"

A contemptuous glance cut him short. During the brief pause, the Master's mood

had changed with the abruptness that is typical of unbalanced minds. He was his usual self again, arrogant and compelling, needing neither advice nor encouragement. Besides, he had work to do swiftly. Dusk was closing in, and the little grass plateau on which they stood was growing gloomier every minute.

Turning, he stared long and silently at the dark pine-trees, tall and rigid like sentinels guarding a secret shrine. He seemed, to the slightly-awed men who watched him, to grow perceptibly taller. His wide shoulders had stiffened, and his leonine head was thrown back. Slowly his hands rose and made a trumpet for his voice. Then, clear and ringing, a long call like a hunting-cry went echoing into the depths of the trees.

"Ohe-ee! Ohe-ee!"

Again and again the call swelled out, haunting, mysterious. Professor Fabian watched the forest wonderingly. The Italian pilot crossed himself in secret, for there was something uncanny about this strange madman, who stood erect, calling, calling—to what?

"Ohe-ee! Ohe-ee!"

Patiently the Master continued his eerie summons. A sudden gasp from the Italian made Fabian look round nervously, to recoil a few steps as his dim eyes caught a movement on the fringe of the timber. The Master's calling ceased. His invocation to the forest had been answered.

Out of the black shadows, where previously only stillness had reigned, prowled a score of bearded, savage men.

CHAPTER 2.

In a Russian Forest!

WITH beating hearts, Professor Fabian and the Italian instinctively shrank closer to each other, filled with a sudden vague dread that struck them speechless. Only the Master seemed unconcerned.

In twos and threes the mysterious strangers halted on the edge of the lonely clearing, peering furtively through the gloom at the impressive figure who had called them, and at the airplane, obviously a novel sight to them. They were a strange, ugly brood, clad in coarse woollen and leather garments, their hands hovering uncertainly round the hilts of the forester's knives in their belts.

Both parties watched each other.

Suddenly the Master strode forward, beckoning the men sternly, calling them in a queer, rippling tongue that wiped the sullen distrust from their faces as though by magic. One after another they sprang to their full height, listening. Their looks changed to a strange mixture of bewilderment, superstition and—Professor Fabian started when he saw it—great and simple joy. Another second and, as the Master's tone turned to harsh

impatience, the whole band came rushing towards him like hounds to a huntsman, seizing his hands, kissing them, bowing before him and even grovelling on the turf in uncouth delight.

To the English man of science the sight of those rough, bearded men fawning on his companion, seen in the half-light against a background of wild cliffs and wilder trees, made a picture that held him spellbound.

For some minutes the Master allowed them to pay him abject homage, as a king receives his subjects; after which he rebuffed them haughtily, snapping them into statues with a few curt words. He himself sprang into action. First he climbed back into the airplane and returned with the precious and complicated Fire and Ice Ray cylinders, which he deposited carefully into Fabian's eager arms, then he flung an order to the Italian to complete the rest of the unloading.

Gripping Fabian by the arm when this had been done, he half-dragged, half-led the bemused savant through the bowing foresters, jerking a sharp series of commands to them over his shoulder as he went. The last Fabian saw before he was taken into the forest were the weird men, chuckling and laughing between themselves, pushing the airplane farther across the grassy clearing to where a great wall of rock rose as a shelter from the sea. Then the Master drew him into the pines, and utter darkness descended on him like a pall.

Professor Fabian could restrain himself no longer. Huddling closer to his companion in the gloom, he burst out querulously:

"Master, who are these men? And where are we? I—I have a right to know!"

The Master's voice answered him, arrogant and mocking as ever.

"Have you a right, Professor Fabian?" He laughed. "But, anyway, I will tell you. You are now in Russia!"

Fabian caught his breath.

"In Russia! But——"

"Ay, in Russia!" repeated the sneering voice. "But not the Russia that is ruled by the Soviet. We are in the old Russia that still survives in the great, grand forests stretching to the wilds of Siberia. The Russia that is unconquerable. Eternal. The Bolsheviki have attempted to tame us. They have failed. That is all!"

The professor hunched his shoulders nervously as he recognised the little quiver of madness that always shook the Master's speech in moments of excitement.

"And—and these men?" he hinted. "They seemed almost to—worship you."

"They and their forefathers have worshipped my family for nearly eight hundred years!" was the shattering reply. "You have, I suspect, often wondered as to my nationality, eh, my friend? Know then

that I am a Russian of the Russias; the last member of the House of Youdinoff that once ruled this forest for over three hundred miles around. We are safe here, I promise you; safe to recover ourselves and lay our plans afresh. Not so much as a whisper of our presence will go beyond the forest!"

His harsh laughter sent queer echoes through the blackness of the pine-trees.

"You are back in medieval days now, Fabian. As it is in the mountains of Kurdistan and the Persian deserts, so it is here. To these dwellers of the forest the outside world means nothing. All they know is that I, the last of their princes, have returned to summon them with the old hunting-cry. They will obey my lightest word, protect us to the last man. A few of them are intelligent also, and these I shall train for our service and use. The others—I shall use them, too, one day!"

"And——" began Fabian, but a fierce grip shook him to silence.

"That is enough!" snapped the Master. "I have told you all that is necessary. You will be sheltered here and made comfortable. I shall procure the materials necessary for you to repair the Fire Ray. You will have plenty of time, for it will take me some weeks to reorganise—thanks to that dog Nelson Lee!—Now be silent!"

Blind and helpless in the intense darkness, the professor staggered along the rough, invisible track, hugging his Ray cylinders tightly. He did not dare to think of the future; but at last he had learnt something of the history of the strange man stalking by his side. Fabian had known, of course, that the man was neither English nor Italian, although he spoke the former language perfectly, and for some fantastic reason had used an Italian alias in England. But the explanation of his arrogance, his colossal overwhelming ambition and hatred of the world, was simple now.

The Master was a Russian aristocrat—a member of that ancient and haughty class that had ruled their great, mysterious land with feudal might until the Bolshevik upheaval had torn them from their estates and sent them scattering into Europe and America.

To a man of Professor Fabian's intelligence it was, as the Master said, "enough." He plodded wonderingly in the other's wake.

At a sharp turn in the forest path glowing lanterns bobbed suddenly among the trees, gruff voices sounded, and two men darted out, to kneel reverently before the Master. By the rays of their lamps Professor Fabian saw that the likeness between the two was uncanny. They were obviously twins—sturdy, hard-bitten men with keener, more intelligent faces than the motley horde back yonder, and deep-set eyes of a startling topaz

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hue that burned with fanatical devotion when the Master spoke to them before passing on.

As if in answer to an order, the men sprang up and followed, one on each side of Professor Fabian, their curious eyes studying him with strange, sidelong glances that added one more pang to his dire misgivings. Then came the crowning horror of that homecoming.

A distant shout, followed instantly by a baneful crimson flash that lit up the darkness and glared redly through the trees behind them, made the little party halt for a while. On the heels of the fire, terrible in its horror and pain, came the long-drawn shriek of a man in the agony of sudden death. The professor shrank back, his lips quivering helplessly.

"Master, what was that?"

"Our 'plane. I gave orders that it was to be burnt," replied the Master coolly. "We may have been seen as we crossed the Baltic and headed this way. I always cover my tracks. Also, the 'plane was of no further use, since its description will soon be broadcast throughout Europe."

"But the scream? I heard a cry."

"Possibly our late pilot," was the Master's indifferent reply. "He was of no further use either."

Professor Fabian thought his heart had stopped beating. A suffocating hand clutched his throat. The death-shriek of the Italian,

whose skill and coolness had brought them safely from the grip of Nelson Lee in that island inferno, rang in his brain again and again. With a little moan of terror he collapsed in a heap.

The Death Rays clattered to the ground. Cursing, the Master picked them up hurriedly and snapped an order to one of the twins, who scooped the professor over his broad shoulders as easily as picking up a feather.

In silence the procession moved on. The depths of the great Russian forest swallowed them from sight.

And in a few days all the world gave the Master up for dead and rejoiced accordingly. All the world, that is, with the exception of two men and two boys living in England, who worked quietly and patiently on preparations for another battle they knew must come sooner or later.

CHAPTER 3.

The Master Strikes Once More!

THE Danish town of Nordens, washed by the waves of the Kattegat, was en fête. All around the huge flying field, a mile outside the town, packing the outskirts to the limit and even overflowing on to the beach, a vast concourse of enthusiastic and patriotic Danes waited patiently, their

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cager eyes glued to the enormous aircraft-hangar that blocked one end of the ground. From time to time the deep-voiced cheers and songs of Denmark swelled to the skies, military bands played, and gay flags and bunting fluttered in the sea breeze. Officials in brilliant uniforms, mingled with foreign attachés from all the countries of Europe, chatted and laughed with subdued excitement in the centre of the square.

It was a great day for Nordens and for Denmark, too, for in a few minutes now the mighty doors of the hangar would open and the Frederica, the glorious airship that was the pride of the country, would move into the open to commence her flight across the Atlantic and back—the flight that was to place Denmark on an equal footing with such air nations as Britain, Germany and the United States. Her trials had been completed, everything was ready for the farewell ceremony. Small wonder that from every part of the country the Danish people had assembled for a fervent send-off.

Promptly to the second the doors of the hangar slid back, an army of men rushed forward. There was a moment's expectant hush, and a maroon thundered into the air. Then, to the tune of the National Anthem, out of the shed glided the airship's smooth, sleek bow. Slowly but efficiently the colossal craft was drawn into the field to her mooring-mast, the sun glittering on her vast, shimmering bulk. Equipped with every navigating device and cruising comfort known to air science, from bow to stern she spelt the last word in aircraft speed and construction. And eighty thousand people roared their delight as her crew, with the captain at their head, followed her in parade order.

Another maroon bellowed its signal; the cheering stopped. A great Danish personage stepped impressively from his bodyguard to address the crew. The atmosphere was charged with the tension of an historic occasion.

And at that moment the Master of the World struck with his dreaded Ice Ray.

There was nothing new in his scheme of attack. It was the same method he had used to swamp the Bank of England in London and the Dutch aerodrome at Veerden. But to the people of Denmark—and the whole world, too—who had believed him dead, the blow fell with brain-shattering force.

Out of the sea crept the soft, green mist, small at first, but swelling rapidly to a wide-spread fog. A startled, incredulous yell of horror from the people on the landward side of the field sounded the first note of alarm as they saw the crowd on the other side begin to fall like corn before the reaper. In another moment the beach was blotted out, the screams had grown shriller. And the Ice Ray came on swiftly.

In a second the Frederica was forgotten. The splendid ceremony changed to a maelstrom of death. Pandemonium broke out at Nordens flying-field. A thousand

voices, cracked with terror, raised the cry at once:

"The Green Fog! The Ice Ray! Run!"

"It is the Master again! The Master!"

To the awful shout of "Each for himself," the maddened throng on the seaward side burst the ropes in a desperate effort to flee before that fast-approaching mist, which caught them up with uncanny persistency, froze their limbs, dropped them in their tracks and passed on. The people on the other side scattered in all directions, trampling, fighting each other to get clear. All restraint broke loose; soldiers and officials were swept aside. Personal bravery counted for nothing. It was one of those terrible moments when human beings, threatened by something as inevitable as death, snap the ties of civilisation and fall back into primitive violence.

Within thirty seconds of the Ice Ray's appearance, the flying-field was a wild mass of stampeding, fear-crazed humanity, writhing frantically to escape until—the green fog caught them. The shrieks and cries changed to strangled sobs, followed by the thud of falling bodies; whole squads went down together, numbed as to stone, living but seeming dead. Only the crew of the giant aircraft kept their heads, racing for the gondolas in a heroic but futile effort to get their vessel clear. A sudden gush of the green mist overtook them and strewn them in heaps before they had gone six yards.

Gradually the disaster ended—the Ice Ray drifted on, sweeping the ground. The great crowd, so joyously happy only a few brief minutes before, lay in silent masses on the turf, paralysed by the deadliest weapon science had yet invented. Their brains still functioned. They were conscious of everything that happened, yet, helpless, they could only lie there and wait for the arrival of the Master's men.

The raiders came swiftly in two cars from the back of the town. Most of them had been in Nordens for some time, drifting in as sailors, workmen or travellers. As usual, the Master's organisation worked perfectly.

Heedless of the awe-inspiring sights around them, they trotted towards the airship, led by a fair-haired Russian giant whose orders snapped out briskly. No secrecy had been maintained regarding the workings of the Frederica, and it was evident to the agonised Danes that these villains knew their jobs. A party disappeared at once into each great gondola, another squad throw off the ropes, raised her to the mooring-mast and clambered aboard.

Long minutes slipped by. Suddenly the ghastly silence was shattered by the roar of first one Heiberg engine, then the others in rapid succession. Air-tight doors slid home; the gigantic craft began to sway uneasily as its lifting-gear took hold.

Slowly and ponderously it roused itself like a huge beast, moved forward, nosing its way out to sea. Up and up it climbed, followed by thousands of despairing eyes until it was

nothing but a slim silver torpedo growing ever fainter as it neared the high clouds. And so, at long last, it vanished.

The Ice Ray that had been guarding all approaches to Nordens disappeared, too. On the flying-field the bright flags waving in the wind were the only things that moved.

The Master of the World had returned to the attack once more after a month of silence. From the midst of eighty thousand people he had calmly snatched the finest and latest aircraft in Europe. Within an hour every country on earth knew that the devil was off the chain again.

Terror reigned!

CHAPTER 4.

Allies in Council!

“**B**Y jingo, guv'nor, but it's good to be in London again!”

Nipper, his alert eyes shining, leaned back in the car and stared his fill at the lights, the crowds and bustle in Piccadilly Circus. His cheery face was bright.

“St Frank's is a clinkin' good school, but, gosh, it's grand to be out on the warpath together again, eh, sir?”

Nelson Lee smiled, without taking his eyes off the traffic ahead. Nipper had voiced his own thoughts exactly; it was good to be on the warpath again.

The news from Denmark that afternoon that the Master of the World had come to life again with such crushing suddenness, had swept through Britain like a devouring flame. Even now London was full of anxious crowds. As soon as Nelson Lee had heard by 'phone from Scotland Yard, he had applied for leave from St. Frank's, and hastened to town with Nipper the moment he had been able to get away.

There was work ahead; a fresh duel to be fought, with the safety of the world as the stakes. Sir Hugh Fletcher, the chief of police, had anxiously begged Lee to attend an official conference at Scotland Yard without delay, but the detective had other views. With his special knowledge of the Master of the World, he knew that nothing Sir Hugh could do would help. Not all the combined police forces in Europe could stop the Fire and Ice Rays, and a visit to the Yard first would only waste time. Lee was on his way to the one man he knew who could help in this new crisis.

And that man, as no one else in the world knew—not even the Master—was Thurston Kyle, scientist and—the Night Hawk; that strange ally Lee had discovered when war had been first declared. A baffling personality, inexorable in his dealings with crime and criminals, he alone was capable of matching the Master in ruthlessness and outwitting Professor Fabian's genius.

Throughout the long campaign it had been due chiefly to him that the madman's attacks had been foiled. Kyle had thrown all his

wonderful scientific brain and the amazing wings he had invented on to the side of law, and humanity—lawless though he was himself in his own affairs. Nelson Lee and Nipper were the only persons living who knew that he and the swift-flying, deadly Night Hawk were one. Others who had learnt his identity had died too swiftly to tell.

A little fierce light glowed fleetingly in Nelson Lee's grey eyes. It was good to be in partnership with such a man at a time like this.

Through Regent Street the Rolls-Royce purred, gliding northwards through Camden Town and Hampstead, where Lee turned into a quiet road behind the Spaniards. The tall iron gates of Thurston Kyle's tree-sheltered house were open, he found—sure sign that the Night Hawk was expecting him—and when he brought the car to a halt on the drive a gleeful voice hailed him from the little balcony very near the roof.

“Hallo, Mr. Lee! Cheerio, Nipper!”

They waved their hands to Snub Hawkins, Kyle's youthful assistant, and passed in through the automatic door at the back of the house. In the scientist's laboratory, bewildering as ever with its fantastic array of instruments and apparatus, a disappointment awaited them, however. Thurston Kyle was absent.

Snub jerked his head skywards with a smile.

“He'll be back pretty soon, Mr. Lee,” he explained; and had barely finished when a flash of enormous wings at the window and a deep voice made the visitors swing round.

“Welcome, Lee! Welcome, my boy! So war is declared once more, my friends!”

Hand outstretched, dark, handsome face alight with pleasure, the Night Hawk strode forward, a superb figure in his silken flying-suit. He had been for one of his mysterious cruises over London, flying silent and unseen through the gathering dusk high above the lighted City. On his back were the great wings, their tips just touching the floor.

Nelson Lee smiled at the eager ring in his voice.

“I believe you are as excited as Nipper!” he chaffed. “He has been babbling ever since we left St. Frank's!”

It was nearly a month since Lee had last seen the Night Hawk, but his keen glance still detected faint marks on Kyle's face where the Master's ammonia bomb had disabled him that night in the North Sea, turning victory into defeat. Catching his look, Kyle threw back his head and flexed his splendid muscles.

“Yes, I still bear the scars, Lee!” he cried. “And I am excited. Why not? You and I knew that the Master was still alive, that one day he would return to the attack. I have been looking forward to the last round ever since we—lost him.”

The detective raised his eyebrows.



From out of the dark forest came a number of bearded, uncouth-looking men who grovelled before the Master of the World.

"The last round?" he echoed. "I wonder!"

Signalling to Snub to unstrap his wings, the Night Hawk laughed harshly.

"Lee, this is the final battle. I shall see to that!" He gripped the detective's shoulder, his expression grim and fierce. "Do not think me boastful, old friend!" he cried. "For the past month I have been working day and night perfecting the one weapon that can shield us from the Death Rays. More than that, I shall destroy the Master when the battle does come. There will be no escape this time! It will be a war of science—and I believe we shall win!"

Nelson Lee's face lit up. The triumphant confidence of the strange man before him was like a tonic. Waiting until Kyle had donned the gorgeous smock he always wore when indoors, the detective produced his cigar-case and settled himself in a comfortable chair. The Night Hawk leaned slowly forward.

"Lee, why do you think the Master snatched that Danish airship to-day?"

"Air-raids!" snapped Lee promptly. "In a vessel like the *Frederica* he will have a mobile base for his operations. He can remain aloft for days and burn all Europe from the skies."

Kyle inclined his head.

"Precisely! We may take it, too, that Fabian has repaired the Fire Ray by now. It may easily be possible for him to increase the power of the Ice Ray also, so that instead of paralysing—it kills!"

For a long moment both men smoked in silence, each realising the full horror of the cloud that overhung the world once more. Then Thurston Kyle laughed suddenly with a chill softness that startled his hearers.

"But with luck the Master is doomed!" Raising his finger, he pointed across the laboratory. "That will beat him!" he added simply. "My latest invention—the field-gun of the future!"

NELSON LEE turned eagerly. In a corner of the room, mounted on a rubber-tired trolley, stood a tall steel canister, obviously a battery-container, fitted with control-switches and gleaming dials. In appearance it reminded him of the control-boxes used in driving trams, save that it was crowned with three sleek, step-up transformers. A slim platinum funnel, the throat of which was choked by a copper disc, was fitted to the sides of the canister by slender, jointed arms.

Behind it, also on the trolley, stood a powerful Houston dynamo, enclosed in heavily-insulated steel and connected to the battery by complicated wires. The whole machine, as it stood, looked nothing like a field-gun, but it was plainly a power-battery of a type Lee had never seen before, and its sturdy square design alone seemed to radiate untold force.

The detective turned to meet the Night Hawk's eager look.

"Explain, please!" he smiled quietly; and Thurston Kyle did so.

"That is the model of the 'gun'!" he cried. "For its size, it is without doubt the most powerful electro-magnetic battery in the world. The actual guns we shall use in action are four times that size and by the greater multiplication of their transformers, they will have ten times the voltage. By means of one of them I can spread a mile-wide net of electro-magnetic waves over any distance. Those waves, meeting the Ice and Fire Rays, will act as an impenetrable wall. Do you understand what it means, Lee? We shall see the green and orange lights rolled back and back—until we come to their sources. And there we shall find the Master!"

Steel points flickered in his strange deep eyes.

"It was a question of developing electric waves that would be stronger than Light itself, and I have done so. I have fifteen such guns ready and mounted for action with their trained crews, Lee!"

Tense with excitement, the detective could only stare while his ally went on quickly:

"Some years ago I became interested in one of the smallest but finest electrical works in Britain. To-day I am their consulting expert whenever they want me. And whenever I want intricate work turned out secretly, I go to them. Lee, for the last three weeks that factory has dropped all other work, and its cleverest experts have been working at top speed to reproduce my invention. Every three days now will see the completion of two more of my guns!"

"Good heavens!" Lee found words at last. "This is magnificent, Kyle. You are ready for the Master at any time! My dear chap—"

For the first time a faint cloud dimmed the confidence in Thurston Kyle's face.

"Yes, I am ready!" he answered slowly.

"But I must confess that by capturing the Danish airship to-day, the Master has made

the position more difficult. I was planning to surround London with the guns, mounted on fast cars, so that an attack from any fixed land base or from any part of the seas around Britain could be dealt with immediately. But if the Master attacks by airship, capable of moving at a hundred miles an hour at a tremendous height, the gun crews may be taken unawares. It will be necessary to adjust the apparatus so that the electric-wave screen is thrown directly over London. That can be done quickly, it is true; but with the Master changing position so rapidly, his devilish rays could do fearful damage even in those few lost seconds.

"It is not as though we know where he is, as we did before. No one knows for certain in which direction the captured airship vanished; we cannot tell from which point of the compass he will attack when he does. If I knew that, or if I had but a brief warning, I could be ready. In any case, my guns will beat him, Lee. But now—there is a risk!"

Chin in hand, Nelson Lee sat thinking deeply, his keen mind reviewing the position from every angle, while the Night Hawk watched him with reflective eyes. At last, the detective nodded to himself and looked up. His face was hard with determination.

"This is where I step in, Kyle!" he said quietly. "When I leave here, I am going to Scotland Yard. With your permission I shall tell the authorities of your invention and of the plans you have ready. From then onwards, I shall demand that you and I are given fullest powers over all the defences in Britain. Every inch of the coast must be patrolled; the arterial roads around London and throughout the country must be swept clear at a moment's notice for your gun-cars. We will have the Royal Air Force mobilised for war, and every airplane pressed into patrol duty to watch for the Frederica. All wireless stations and sea-going ships must be warned for instant action. In fact, the whole nation must be organised as in the days of the Great War!"

Thurston Kyle sprang to his feet, ablaze with enthusiasm.

"Splendid, my dear fellow. You have grasped the position exactly—Britain must realise she is at war again. From now on I, too, will spend most of my time aloft. But—" He paused. "Will the Government act? Can you force them to such drastic measures? Governments are sometimes slow to act!"

Lee shrugged.

"They'll need very little forcing!" he answered soberly. "It is organised defence or complete annihilation this time. The Master will be out for the most horrible revenge known to history!"

A sudden thought occurred to him, and he looked up at his ally keenly.

"You realise, I suppose, Kyle, that from now on you must step into the open. You cannot fight any longer under cover once your battery of guns are mustered. You will have the officials of the police, the Air

Force, all the services in the country to deal with!"

Into the scientist's eyes crept a curiously smouldering light as he stared at Nelson Lee.

"So long as my identity as the Night Hawk is kept hidden, I do not care!" he said slowly and distinctly. "But that secret must and always will be guarded, I trust. If it is ever discovered by some inquiring official, then I fear Britain will have an enemy to deal with far worse even than the Master of the World!"

Nelson Lee held out his hand steadily.

"Which is exactly why I intend taking charge of Britain's defences myself!" he declared.

CHAPTER 5.

Nelson Lee's Discovery!

DARKNESS had fallen when Nelson Lee and Nipper left the lonely house on Hampstead Heath. The evening had reached that stagnant period between the end of the working day and the theatre rush, so that Grays Inn Road, when they drew up at Lee's house for a minute before going on to Scotland Yard, was almost deserted. A few late City workers hurried along the pavements, and on either side dark business houses and shuttered shops made long patches of gloom, lighted only by the street lamps or an occasional tram.

But both Nelson Lee and his assistant were far too preoccupied to spare even a glance at the familiar street. The famous detective in particular had a whole host of affairs to straighten out in his mind. There was a busy time ahead of him now for many hours to come, during which he must contrive interviews with the highest officials in the land and persuade—or even force—them to give him the power he wanted.

He realised that the task he had undertaken—one of the biggest of his career—was beset with difficulties, not the least being Thurston Kyle himself. If once that masterful and intolerant personality found himself hampered by officialdom or saw any risk of his Night Hawk identity being discovered, then, as Lee well knew, a grave situation would arise. Tact and swift, cool brainwork on his part were required now to prevent such a crisis.

Leaving Nipper at the wheel of the Rolls, he slipped out on to the pavement.

"I'll just have a look inside, young 'un!" he said, and turned towards the house. He had taken barely two strides from the car, however, when he stopped abruptly. A tall figure had detached itself from the dark doorway of the house and was standing squarely before him.

"Mr. Nelson Lee, I reckon?"

Lee frowned. The man spoke with a strong American accent, and as far as the detective could see in the dim light, he was a stranger.

"That's my name. Who are you, please?"

"Guess maybe you'll reckonise my mug, mister!" drawled the tall fellow, and turned so that the nearest street lamp showed up his lean saturnine features. Nelson Lee, who never forgot a face once seen, took a quick glance and nodded in surprise.

"Yes, I remember you. Your name is Sherman, I believe!" He remembered something else, too, and his eyes grew watchful. "Aren't you the man who deserted the Master of the World and flew to England with information as to his headquarters?" he asked slowly.

Unperturbed by the coldness in his manner, the ex-member of the Master's criminal band gave a complacent grin.

"That's me, I guess. Say, my noos certainly livened things up for that coyote, huh?"

"You made an awful mess of it, as a matter of fact!" snapped Nelson Lee curtly.

The man, he knew, had been granted a free pardon in consideration of his services, although those services had ultimately brought destruction to a flotilla of British destroyers which had attempted to bombard the Master's island fortress in Friesland.

Sherman shrugged.

"Shucks! Be matey, brother! I've been waitin' here for you a long time."

"Why?"

"'Cause I reckon I've got some information that'll help now that polecat's broken out again. It's stuff I found out when I was on the island. I reckon I've doped out the Master's nationality. An', what's more, I reckon I can lay a guess at where he's tucked himself away!"

If he expected Nelson Lee to show surprise, the American was disappointed. Thrilled the detective certainly was; but his "poker face" gave no hint whatever of his excitement. Neither did he make a move towards the house as Sherman plainly expected him to do.

Lee had to think quickly. If the man was a fake, a few sharp questions here and now would bowl him out. If, on the other hand, he had ferreted out a valuable secret whilst on the Master's H.Q., it would only waste terribly precious time by taking him inside. The proper course was to whirl him straight off to Scotland Yard, where Nelson Lee was anxious to go, anyway.

A glance round told him that no one was in earshot.

"You've kept your information quiet a long time!" he commented dryly, whereat the other shrugged again.

"'Cause I only proved it for sure a couple o' days ago."

"I see! And what is the Master's nationality?" fired Lee.

Stepping nearer, Sherman lowered his voice.

"Waal, I didn't reckon on tellin' you out here," he protested, "but since you ask, I'll tell. An' I can prove it, mind. The Master o' the World's a Russ—"

Quicker than a startled lynx, Nelson Lee leapt backwards. From out of the darkness overhead something that glittered had whistled past his face with a vicious hiss, thudding heavily into Sherman's neck. The man's tense whisper gave place to a shuddering shriek as he tottered backwards on his heel, tearing madly at his throat, his face hideous with agony in the half-light.

Pulling himself together, the detective jumped towards him, hand to his pocket. Before he could reach the falling man a rattle of shots and a warning shout from Nipper made him spin round fiercely. He saw his young assistant leaning right out of the car, pumping death upwards into the night as fast as he could work his automatic.

Came the thump of Sherman's body on the ground, followed by the tinkle of falling steel. And then Lee heard a gasping moan from above, saw a vague blur topple from a first-floor window, and a man hurtled through the air and thudded to the pavement at his feet.

Nipper vaulted from the car.

"I just saw a movement, gov'nor, a second after Sherman was hit. So I fired!" he gasped.

Up and down the street running feet pattered swiftly on the pavement. Windows were flung up, excited voices rang out. Nelson Lee had just time to bend over the two bodies when the policeman on beat came panting up. Sherman, he found, was stone-dead, with a knife embedded in his throat, and even as he turned the other man over the assassin stirred faintly and relaxed.

As briefly as he could, Nelson Lee explained matters to the startled constable.

"Don't move them, officer. Keep the crowd back a moment, please. Nipper, give him a hand."

By the aid of an electric torch he bent and examined the knife-thrower more carefully. He was a sturdy man, a foreigner by his clothes, with a keen, weatherbeaten face and staring eyes of a peculiar yellow-brown hue. Going through the man's pocket expertly, he found a useful sum of English notes in an inside pocket, and a small pocket-wallet, the contents of which he read through quickly.

A soft little whistle escaped him. One of the papers was a British Ministry of Labour permit issued to one, Hans Borgen, a Danish subject, and another was a passport bearing the same information. The third was a grimy piece of paper, well-thumbed and creased; and the words it bore were written by hand in the fantastic, scrolled letters of the Russian alphabet!

Memory of Sherman's last words brought Nelson Lee to his feet. He turned to the policeman.

"I'll 'phone your station for you from my house," he jerked, and pushed his way through the crowd.

In another minute he was tapping feverishly at the telephone in his study. But the first call he made was not to Clerkenwell Police Station. Instead, he wanted

Thurston Kyle's tree-surrounded house, and he wanted it quickly.

His voice, as he rapped out the number, was harsh with anxiety.

CHAPTER 6.

An Important Capture!

WITHIN a few minutes of Nelson Lee's departure, Thurston Kyle, the Night Hawk, was in the air again. For some time past in leisure moments he and Snub had been experimenting with a new form of wireless telephone for use while in flight, and now, with the delicate receiving apparatus wired to his flying-helmet, he poised himself on the veranda outside his laboratory, and in a moment was gliding aloft in slow, smooth spirals, the cool night air fanning his face and sighing through the metal feathers of his wide-spread pinions.

Although the wireless 'phone as yet was far from perfect and he had gone aloft to test it, Thurston Kyle could not bring his full concentration to bear just now. Like Nelson Lee, his brain was seething with the events of the day. He was looking forward to the attack from the Master of the World with all the longing for revenge that only a fiercely proud man can experience who has once tasted defeat. The Master had outwitted him in the last duel, at the eleventh hour. This time it would be different.

He wondered how long it would be before the arch-criminal burst into action again. One day—two? What did it matter? Kyle knew that in Nelson Lee he had a cool, far-sighted ally who would leave not a stone unturned to prepare England for battle without delay. And he felt sure that, given a fair field, his own electric "guns" would sweep the Master's Death Rays from the skies when the time came. It was a duel between Professor Fabian and himself. Scientists at war! The Night Hawk's laugh held a deadly, exultant note as he swung back across the grounds of his house, listening idly for Snub's signals from the laboratory.

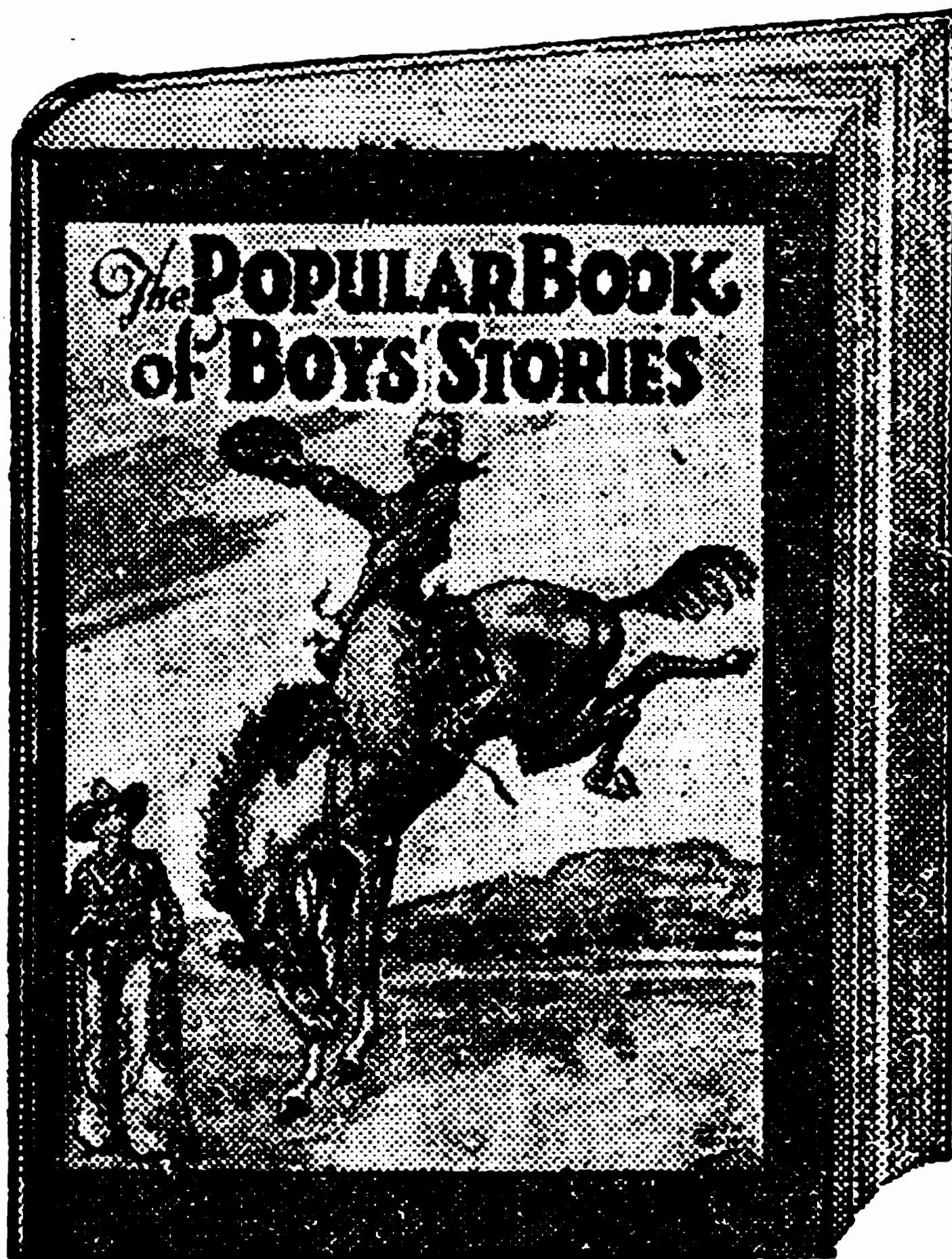
Then his laughter stopped. His eyes, piercing as those of the hawk from which he took his name, narrowed to slits. Checking in his flight, he began to drop slowly and softly as a falling leaf. His hand went to the gun at his hip, but he changed his mind and spiralled aloft once more, poisoning himself for a swoop.

A man, blurred but unmistakable, was climbing the side of the house.

With a bleak, mocking smile the Night Hawk watched his prey. From window-ledge to carved stonework, seizing on crannies and toe-holds in the weatherbeaten wall of the old mansion, the man moved with the swift precision of an experienced climber. In silence save for an occasional scrape of his boot, he drew himself up, nearer, ever

(Continued on page 14.)

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THE LAST ROUND!

(Continued from page 12.)

nearer to the glowing window of Kyle's laboratory. At last he was on a buttress, opposite his goal. That his nerve was strong he showed by making a wonderful sideways fall, such as only a man accustomed to high crags or trees can accomplish, which took him on to the veranda. He swung there for a moment like an ape on a branch, then with a quick heave and jump he pulled himself to the top of the railings, staring into the lighted room with half-shut, wary eyes. The Night Hawk, shooting down from above with his great wings flat and quivering, tore the man from his perch and flung him kicking into the air.

One sharp scream of terror burst from the climber's lips. It died next instant in a gurgle as the Night Hawk swept alongside, catching him by the throat with steely talons. Lost in the darkness of mid-air, the two bodies merged in a writhing, desperate struggle. But the man who could shake off the Night Hawk's claws did not exist. The battle was short and sharp.

Alighting on the veranda, Thurston Kyle strode into the laboratory, flinging the limp form he carried carelessly into a small arm-chair. A touch of an electric button on his bureau snapped two steel bands round the man's body and ankles, pinning him securely. Snub Hawkins, his freckled face serene but curious, sauntered across from the radio cabinet.

"In the grounds, sir?" he asked.

"Climbing the house, Snub!" answered his master. He was pouring a pungent liquid from a bottle as he spoke, but on turning to administer the stimulant to his captive he found the man's eyes wide open and glaring at him with murder in their topaz depths.

"H'm! So you are awake already, friend?"

Undaunted by his captor's grim voice and weird appearance, the man in the chair spat out a few words in a foreign tongue, vicious as the crack of a whip. The Night Hawk's lips dropped in a sardonic smile.

"Doubtless!" he mocked. "I recognise your language, my man, but Russian is beyond me. Do you speak English—French—German?"

He fired questions at his prisoner in the three languages, but the Russian only glowered in sullen silence. It was at that moment that Nelson Lee rang up anxiously from Gray's Inn Road. Snub handed the 'phone to his master.

"Yes, Lee? Anything wrong?"

"That's what I want to know," came Nelson Lee's voice sharply. "Kyle, you remember the man Sherman, who deserted the Master of the World and gave our Admiralty the secret of his hiding-place? Well, he's just been killed at my feet in Gray's Inn Road. And Nipper has just shot the killer!"

"H'm!"

"I think the assassin was really waiting for me, but changed his mind when Sherman began to—tell me something. I've rung up in case someone is lurking round your house, too."

Thurston Kyle smiled coolly.

"Someone was!" he answered. "He's in my laboratory now. A Russian, I think!"

He heard Nelson Lee catch his breath.

"So is the man Nipper killed," came the detective's voice. "And Sherman had just told me before he died that the Master was a Russian, too. Kyle, we're on something big. Is your man alive?"

"He is!"

"Good! The man we've got must have been able to understand English. Does your man?"

"He may do," drawled Kyle, "but he won't admit it. And fluent Russian is not an accomplishment of mine."

Nelson Lee thought for a moment.

"I'll be with you in half an hour," he said, and rang off abruptly.

He was there in less than half an hour, bringing with him Nipper and a little old gentleman who shrank back in alarm when confronted by the stern-faced scientist in his brilliant Chinese smock, and the snarling prisoner in the chair. In answer to his ally's searching stare of inquiry, Nelson Lee explained.

"Kyle, this is Monsieur Koreski, once of Moscow, but now of London. He is a Russian refugee from the Revolution, and I have asked him here as an interpreter. I have known him for some time, and we can trust him."

The cold suspicion vanished instantly from Kyle's sombre face. He bowed to the old exile with grave and perfect courtesy.

"That is excellent, Lee. We will use my private room. Will you bring your friend?"

In a magnificent and luxuriously-furnished room, hung with rich silk curtains and heavy with the haunting fumes of incense, Monsieur Koreski was installed on a lounge with priceless cigarettes at his elbow, and in a few minutes Kyle and Snub Hawkins returned with their prisoner still in the chair. Nelson Lee's pulse beat faster still when he had studied the man closely. Feature for feature, even to the queer staring eyes of yellow-brown hue, the Russian was the exact twin of the man who now lay in Clerkenwell mortuary, and the papers he carried in his pocket were identical, too, save for the name. The detective wheeled quickly and nodded encouragement at his interpreter.

"M'sieur Koreski, I want you to ask this man his real name, where he comes from, and who sent him. The last is very important."

Nervously at first, but gaining confidence from the stern faces around him, the old Russian did as he was bid. The reply, in a flood of scalding language, was so obviously abuse that Thurston Kyle laughed aloud as Koreski recoiled, shocked.

“Gentlemen,” the old man stammered after another try, “I fear we shall get nothing from this man willingly. He is, I judge, of North Russian stock. A terribly obstinate breed.”

Nelson Lee's lean jaw hardened, but before he could speak the Night Hawk bent forward, dark eyes flashing.

“Tell him, m'sieur,” he said softly, “that if he does not talk I will torture him till he prays for death!”

More alarmed than ever by the terrible threat and the fierce, contemptuous face of the man who made it, old Koreski faltered out the words. The prisoner's answer was a long, poisonous glare of hatred, and his lips set in a dogged line.

A tense silence fell on the dim room. Then, to Lee's astonishment, Thurston Kyle rose to his feet laughing.

withhold any secret by the time I've done with you, it will be because it's empty or dead!”

He went out, leaving fast-beating hearts behind him.

CHAPTER 7.

Terrible News!

NELSON LEE lit a cigarette and leaned back, the heavy stillness of the room unbroken save for an occasional sigh of uneasiness from old Koreski. What would happen to the prisoner when Thurston

The Night Hawk fixed the instruments to the Russian, who began to talk—telling them the plans of the Master of the World!



“Just a test, Lee,” he explained. “I knew we should get nothing from this man—if he can help it. Unfortunately for him, I shall see to it that he can't. You think he is the Master's man?”

“I am sure of it.”

“Then we shall not bother about his tongue. We shall try instead a small instrument on his brain and heart,” was the startling reply. “A little improvement of my own on a certain device that is often used these days by the American police.”

Turning, he studied the prisoner with an inscrutable smile.

“I admire your pluck in a way, my friend,” he cried, “but if your brain can

Kyle returned, the detective steelled him not to care; although, remembering how the Night Hawk had dragged precious information from another member of the Master's gang who had fallen captive, he guessed it would be drastic. At the same time, every instinct in his keen mind told him that this would-be assassin must be made to speak—at all costs. Something seemed to tell him that sensational discoveries would be made once the Russian's obstinate silence was conquered. So he waited, coolly patient, for Thurston Kyle's return. Long minutes dragged by.

When the Night Hawk re-entered the room at last, he brought with him a square box of polished mahogany, which he placed care-

fully on an exquisite Buhl table beside his captive. From its capacious interior he took out a slender hypodermic syringe, filled, as Lee saw, with a strange ruby liquid that glowed blood-red in the shaded lights of the room. Not a word had been said so far, but now a frightened gasp broke from old Koreski as the needle-point was laid on the prisoner's bared arm.

"M'sieur Kyle! You are not——"

The Night Hawk slowly raised his hand.

"Be silent, please!" he ordered in his deep, calm voice. "I promise you that this man will undergo no pain!"

The Russian's bitter lips writhed in a snarl as the syringe emptied itself next moment under his flesh, but he continued to glare at his captors with the eyes of a trapped wolf. Presently, however, sheer fascination drew Nelson Lee and the others upright in their chairs. An amazing change was spreading over the Russian's face. The hatred in his yellow eyes faded gradually into tranquil peace; an invisible hand seemed to smooth the harsh lines of rage from his face. His lips parted helplessly. And suddenly he relaxed entirely into a stupor, staring glassily ahead into space.

A ghost of a smile passed fleetingly over the scientist's face. His deft hand released the steel arms round the Russian's body, and a few quick movements stripped the man to the waist. While his audience watched, scarce daring to breathe, Kyle took from the box what appeared to be a hollow steel head-piece, a silver dial, bearing figures and a highly sensitive needle, and two delicate strips of metal, laced together by a filament of almost invisible wires.

Adjusting the headpiece accurately about the man's skull, he strapped the dial on his right wrist and finally, with marvellous care and precision, fitted the two metal strips exactly over the prisoner's spinal cord, just between the shoulder blades.

From the top of the headpiece ran three lengths of slender flex. Two ends were connected to the other instruments; the third was wired to a tiny battery inside the mahogany box. Kyle turned at last with a little bow.

"Now, gentlemen, we are ready!"

He laid a hand on the old interpreter's shoulder.

"Monsieur Koreski, you have nothing to fear. This is an experiment in hypnotism, brought down to an exact science by modern instruments. These instruments are inventions of the American expert, Professor Hartman, by which every impulse of the human brain, heart and nerve-centres can be registered. I have gone a step further. By means of an electric current and the injection of hashish and another Indian drug which I have given this man, I shall galvanise him into speech. I want you to question him as you did before. He will answer this time, I promise you. And truthfully. Let us begin!"

Every light save the one shining directly on the Russian's face went out; a faint whirr

filled the room as Kyle switched his battery into life. Under the current running through every fibre of his body, the prisoner stiffened slowly in his chair, without, however, losing his vacant stare. Nelson Lee spoke quietly from the gloom.

"Never mind his name, Koreski. Make him tell from the beginning—where he came from, who sent him, and why?"

From the depths of his armchair, the detective watched the scene: the exotic room, its silken walls lost in shadow, the tiny pool of light focused weirdly on the prisoner's dull features. To one side sat Thurston Kyle, impassive as a sphinx, with one hand on the battery switch and the other on the man's pulse. Opposite him, old Koreski framed his questions in a trembling voice and prepared to scribble down the replies. Somewhere beyond stood Nipper and Snub, silent and absorbed.

And the Russian began to speak!

Toneless but distinct, the slow Slavonic syllables flowed without check, mechanically, as though the speaker was repeating a hard-learned lesson. Faster and faster Koreski's wrinkled hand travelled over the paper. Nelson Lee was surprised to note that the old man had gone very white, and that beads of perspiration were gathering thicker on his brow with every word he wrote. Stronger grew the tension in the room as the seconds flew by; yet still the Russian droned on and still Thurston Kyle watched beside him with brooding eyes.

How long the seance would have lasted, Nelson Lee could not tell; but suddenly the end came. There was a scream that ended in a sob of terror; the pencil dropped from Koreski's nerveless fingers, and next moment he was on his feet, weeping and struggling in the detective's protecting arms.

"This—this is terrible! Mr. Lee, Mr. Lee! We are doomed!"

In a flash the Night Hawk's strong arm gripped him, too. The battery lum died away; the Russian sagged in his chair.

"Silence!" cried the scientist in a voice that petrified the panic-stricken interpreter. Striding to a cabinet, he filled a glass with fragrant old brandy and held it out.

"Drink this. Now then"—as Koreski gulped the stimulant gratefully and gasped aloud—"what has frightened you, man? Tell us what you have learnt—quickly!"

Hand to his heart, the old Russian struggled feebly to regain his nerve.

"Messieurs," he stammered brokenly, "forgive me. But, oh, such terror is approaching. I—I——"

"Come. Tell us!"

A shaking, hesitant finger and two rolling eyes indicated the prisoner.

"He—he says he has come from Russia, from the northern forests; he and another man, his brother. They came here a week ago. A man whom he calls Prince Youdinoff sent them. Oh, Mr. Lee, I remember the Youdinoffs before the revolution; a breed of devils, mad aristocrats, with vast estates among the wildest forest lands!"

"Yes, yes!" encouraged Lee tensely. "I've heard of the family, too. What then?" For old Koreski was plainly on the verge of collapse and only by a tremendous effort could he control his quivering lips sufficiently to carry on.

"This man has—has repeated his instructions. They are also written on the paper you found in his pocket. They are—very long. I will try to tell them briefly!" He gripped the table for support. "First these men were to find the houses of a certain police spy and a certain man of science, whom Youdinoff regards as dangerous. On the 17th—to-day—both these persons were to be killed. At night!"

Nelson Lee and the Night Hawk exchanged grim smiles, but neither interrupted. And now Koreski's face became positively ghastly.

"After the murders had been committed," he gulped, eyes bulging with fear, "the assassins were to meet. They were to go by car to the House of the British Government in Westminster, and await the coming of the airship—"

"Wha-at!"

Shaken to the core, Nelson Lee sprang forward, clutching the fainting old man, while the Night Hawk's lips parted in a hiss of dismay—followed by a laugh of fierce, exultant joy.

"The airship, Koreski?" blazed Lee, harsh with excitement. "Is an airship coming across London to-night?"

"Worse! It is nearly here now, m'sieur!" Koreski almost screamed. "It—oh, it is timed to be over London at midnight! At twelve o'clock this man was to signal from the gardens in Westminster for the Orange Light, as he calls it, and afterwards he and his companion were to fly southward for their lives. For then the destruction commences!"

"The—destruction—commences!" repeated Nelson Lee stonily. As letters of flame, the words burned in his brain. Prince Youdinoff—the Master of the World! He saw the madman's plans in all their fiendish detail, each dovetailing perfectly into the others. First the smuggling of skilled assassins into London with orders to strike on the same day that the great Danish airship was to be raided. And finally, before the world had recovered from the surprise of his reappearance, this lightning-swift attack upon London. The Master was wasting time no longer in bombastic challenges and threats. He was out for stark and sudden revenge!

Apparently Professor Fabian had succeeded in repairing the Fire Ray apparatus damaged by Nipper's bullets a month ago—although it still needed wireless signallers to guide its first deadly stroke. That, at least, was something; the signallers were out of action. But the Ice Ray remained, and once its grip had paralysed the city, the Master could shoot the Fire Ray down blindly.

Swiftly the famous detective glanced at his watch. Nearly eleven. He had just over an hour in which to warn all Britain of the danger that even now was gliding swiftly

towards her under cover of the night. He whirled on Thurston Kyle.

"Kyle, your guns—"

"Ready at five minutes notice!" triumphed the Night Hawk in superb jubilation. "I have all the warning I need now, Lee. All my plans are ready!"

Nelson Lee jumped for the door.

"And mine soon will be!" he cried forcibly. "Come along, Nipper. Action!"

CHAPTER 8.

One Hour of Fear!

THERE followed a hectic five minutes on the telephone. Then Nelson Lee held out his hand.

"You'll be with your guns, Kyle?"

"I shall!"

"Then—good luck! I'm for Scotland Yard. Will you keep in touch with me?"

"Wait!" The Night Hawk spoke sharply. "My plans will require big help from you yet, Lee. Can you obtain a bombing 'plane again, as you did before—but stationed nearer to London?"

"I think so. Why?"

"Because," said the other rapidly, "at the first chance we get, you and I must be aloft together. The airship must be destroyed, and the Master and Fabian with it. I would go alone myself, but I cannot carry bombs heavy enough to destroy such a giant vessel. You see?"

"Could I catch it in a heavy bomber?"

"No. But I can!" replied the Night Hawk, his great chest heaving. "And after I have crippled its engine-gondolas with grenades, you can follow with the death-blow from above!"

The daring plan made Nelson Lee's grey eyes glow. But he still saw an obstacle.

"Suppose we cannot find her? She may be too high—out of searchlight range!"

"Lee, we shall find her. Not at first, perhaps—we have a long battle to look forward to between the Death Rays and my guns—but sooner or later my electric screen will roll the Rays back and back until their green and orange glare reveals the airship's position. That was my object in designing the 'screen.' At last we shall know exactly from whereabouts in the sky the Rays are being fired. The Master will be betrayed through his own weapons!"

Nelson Lee wrung his ally's hand.

"I'll be ready at your signal!" he said simply, and ran. As he went the Night Hawk's buoyant laughter followed him.

"Au revoir, Lee—till the final duel!"

It was exactly eleven o'clock when the Rolls-Royce whirled down the dark drive. By eleven-fifteen Nipper had covered the distance to Scotland Yard, where Nelson Lee flung himself into Sir Hugh Fletcher's room, to find the Chief Commissioner, Chief Detective-inspector Lennard and half a dozen more officials who had been summoned hastily in answer to his call.

He wasted no time. There was none to spare. In two minutes he had snapped out enough information to have every man there haggard with anxiety. No need for explanations. The sight of Nelson Lee's face and burning eyes carried a conviction that swept police headquarters into a whirl of frenzied activity.

"What now, Lee?" Sir Hugh Fletcher was not usually the man to take orders from anyone, but he had sense enough now to know that London's only salvation was in the hands of the private detective—the one person who knew what to do. Nelson Lee acknowledged the compliment with a curt nod.

"Telephone broadcast to all police-stations!" he jerked. "The roads must be cleared of all traffic before midnight. People off the streets; fire-stations and hospitals warned. Tell the Air Ministry that every searchlight crew and airplane in the country must stand for action; 'air-raid orders,' tell 'em. Also I want a D.H. bomber placed at my disposal on Clapham Common. The

B.B.C. must broadcast a warning, and all wireless stations. And 'phone the Admiralty and Harwich in case the Frederica has not yet passed the coast!"

"But—our defences, Lee, against the Rays?"

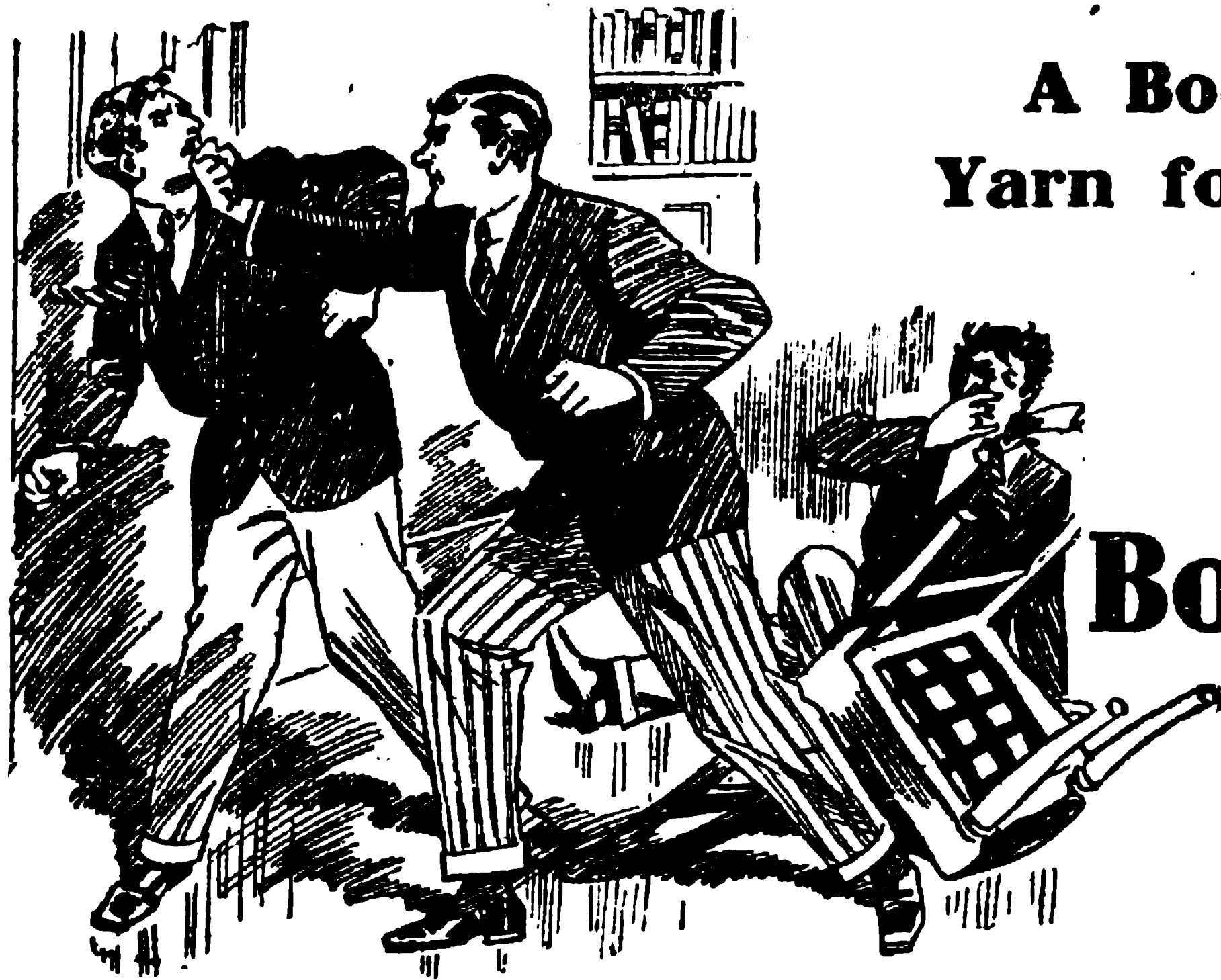
"All in the hands of Professor Thurston Kyle, Sir Hugh!"

"Kyle—the scientist? Has he taken a hand at last?"

"Yes—at last!" agreed Nelson Lee gravely.

Without another word, Sir Hugh snapped out his orders. His department chiefs vanished. The detective, cool as ice now that the crisis had come, took out his watch and laid it gently on the table before him.

And now began a period of agonised waiting that stretched even his steel nerves to breaking-point, and sent Sir Hugh striding up and down the room like a caged tiger. Forty minutes to midnight; forty minutes before the greatest city in the world was attacked by a maniac using the ghastliest weapons known to history.



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Nelson Lee's hands clenched till the knuckles of them gleamed like ivory. If Thurston Kyle's "guns" lost the duel, if the Master won the battle— He dared not think further lest his self-control broke down.

With a stare that never wavered from his watch, he checked off the passing minutes. All around him Scotland Yard was humming like a great hive. Reports began to come in; panting men darted through the open door. And Lee listened to them without looking up.

11.35.

"Flying-squad cars all out, Sir. Hugh."
"All traffic being stopped except the Tubes."
"Local stations clearing the streets, sir."

11.43.

"B.B.C. have warned all listeners, Mr. Lee." "Air defences reporting battle-order O.K."

11.50.

Ten more minutes to midnight!
"Streets empty." "Harwich says no signs of airship. Must have crossed the coast, sir. Visibility bad." "Your bomber's just starting from Kenley aerodrome, Mr. Lee."

11.55.

"Mr. Nelson Lee wanted outside, please!"
Racing down to the Embankment at the heels of a messenger, Nelson Lee gave an instinctive glance overhead. The dark skies were pitted with moving discs of light as London's air defences searched the clouds for the menacing shape of a giant airship. The streets were empty; trams, taxis and cars stayed where their drivers had been forced to leave them. Not since the days of the Great War had Lee witnessed such a sight. But now the City crouched before an enemy many times more deadly than the Zeppelins and Fokkers of those distant days.

As he had expected, it was Thurston Kyle who had summoned him. The Night Hawk was in mufti, pacing impatiently beside two big, powerful cars, in each of which two men, clad in thick rubber suits and helmets, crouched by the side of something that gleamed dully in the Embankment lights.

Nelson Lee recognised the weapons at a glance from the model he had seen in Kyle's laboratory. They were the electric "guns," ready to receive the first shock of the Master's onslaught.

"Well, Leo?"

"All in order. London's ready for defence. Your guns are posted?"

"Everywhere. They were in garages I had rented all over London. An outer circle covers Croydon, Brontford, Tottenham and Romford; an inner circle defends the area inside Streatham, Kensington, Islington and Woolwich. Their 'screens' will flow together, merging into a vast wall above London. Other guns are ready to race off to any threatened point if the Rays prove too strong there, or to follow into the country if the Master retreats."

"Communication?"

"Wireless in every car. One man to the gun, the other acting as observer."

Conversation ceased abruptly. Nelson Lee looked at his watch again; his jaw hardened. Thirty seconds. He saw the observers in the cars raking the clouds with field-glasses, the "gunners" tense at the levers of their weapons.

Ten seconds—five. He put his watch back into his pocket. And then came a sharp cry from one of the cars, and the Night Hawk pointed upwards with a ringing shout:

"There it is, Lee! Right above us!"

A blinding purple flash hissed from the two guns, a throbbing, vibrant snarl added to the confusion. But Nelson Lee was watching with bated breath a small patch of vivid green light, shooting down from the black skies, and growing larger with a swiftness that was appalling.

The Ice Ray!

The Master's greatest attack had commenced!

CHAPTER 9.

The Battle of London!

MIDNIGHT!

Down shot the emerald glare, faster, faster, spreading out in sudden gushes, dancing in the night air like a shimmering veil of mist. Its speed was terrific. Just as on that wild night above the Frisian coast when Nelson Lee had seen the Ice Ray leap to meet the British destroyers, so now it foamed down upon London. The searchlights gathered to meet it, their piercing beams paling against its brilliant glare. Soon the dazzle filled the whole sky, weird, glowing and unspeakably terrible. And more horrible still to the awed watchers below, there came no check in its downward flood. Thurston Kyle's electric screen was not strong enough yet.

Nelson Lee shot a lightning glance around him. The two gun-cars had moved slowly out into the middle of the Embankment, the gunners working at the controls with cool, deft movements that spoke of perfect confidence. Except for a faintly luminous glow hovering about the mouths of the trumpet-like muzzles, there was nothing to tell that the guns were in action, for the first battle-note of the dynamos had died away to a soft, velvety purr.

His glance flickered to the Night Hawk, still standing beside him, upright and rigid as though carved in stone. Kyle's handsome face gleamed in the dim light with unnatural pallor, but his lips were curved in a little challenging smile, and all the man's fierce, unfettered nature shone in the dark eyes that never faltered from the silent destruction the Master of the World was pouring on to London from his airship, somewhere lost in the blackness beyond.

The long-drawn horror of that first attack was agonising. Hours seemed to slip by, yet when the detective dragged out his watch again mechanically, he was amazed to find that only a few seconds had elapsed since the

alarm. A tiny trickle of sweat ran coldly down his temple, and his face grew harsh with anxiety.

And then a clutch on his arm, so vice-like that he bit his lips in pain, made him look up once more. The Night Hawk's voice shattered the stillness in a thrilling shout:

"We're holding! We're holding! Look, man, look!"

His arms were flung above his head, beating upwards as if to encourage the forces he had let loose. Nelson Lee gasped, and his heart leapt with sudden and sickening relief. Yes, something had happened. The Ice Ray was checked! It was as though an invisible wall had suddenly rushed out of the darkness and blocked its path. Wreaths of mist rolled downwards still, only to recoil in aimless billows. As far as he could see across the Thames, the cloud of green light was writhing and swaying frenziedly, trying to beat its way lower and falling back like a fog attacked by a high wind.

Venomous jets of light would find a chink in the electric screen and spurt furiously nearer to earth, only to vanish completely next instant. Heavier still grew the volume of radiant danger, but the guns were fighting desperately now. The invisible network of electric waves were holding their own in the most titanic and awe-inspiring struggle ever seen.

"Scientists at war!" muttered Nelson Lee dully. "My heavens, what a glimpse into the future!"

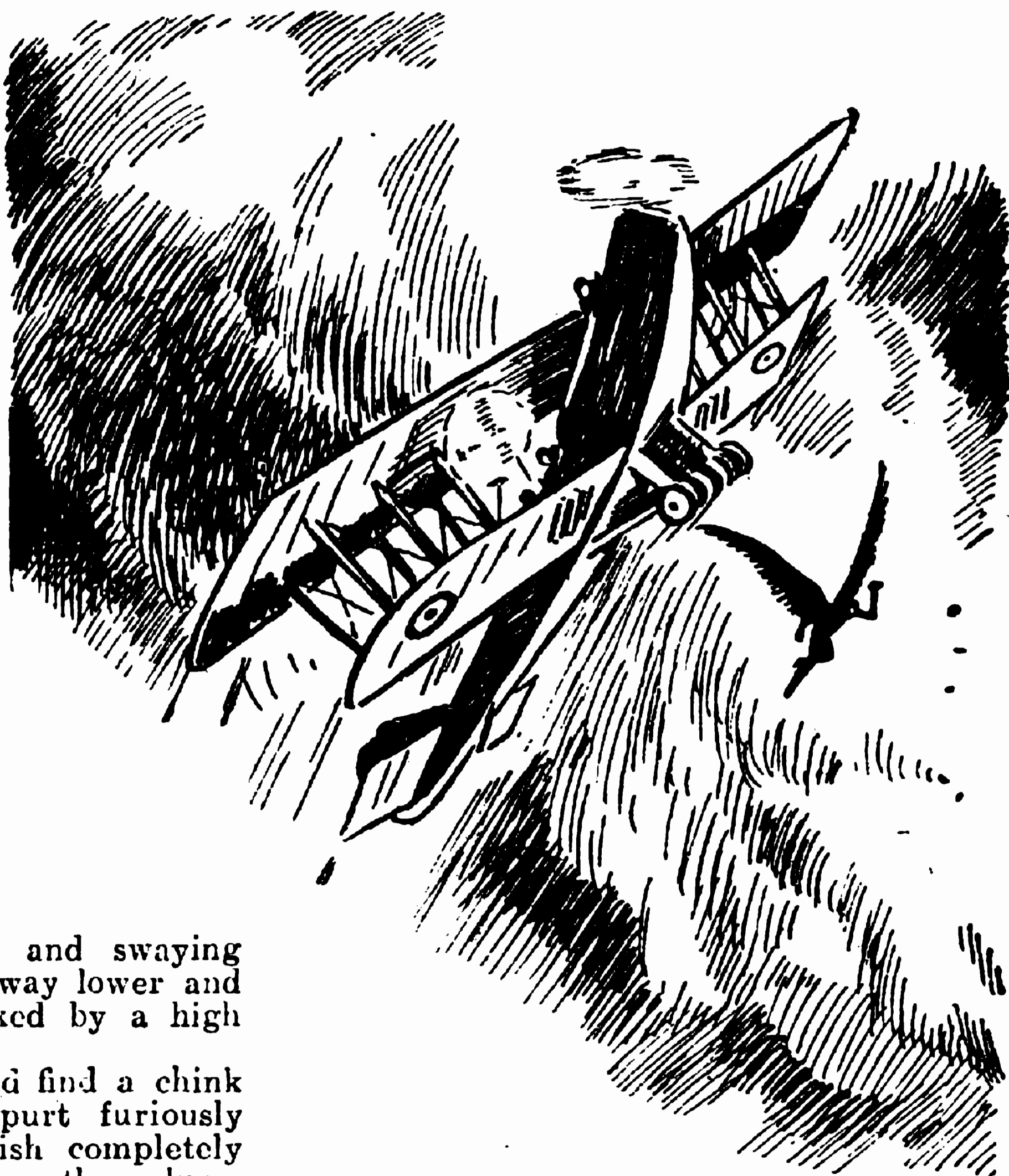
He dashed across to the Embankment wall for a better view of the battle, and gasped to find that the spire of St. Stephen's tower and even Big Ben itself were wreathed in the glow of the Ice Ray. By gad, a narrow squeak, he thought. A few more seconds, and if Kyle's guns hadn't worked the heart of London by now would have been swamped, paralysed.

Across the road he heard the scientist calling him.

"Lee! Where are you?" The detective ran back. "I must go the rounds of the guns. Every one has reported itself in action, but I can't stay here. Will you follow?"

"I'm with you!" cried Lee. "Nipper! Nipper!"

As he flung himself into the Rolls beside his assistant, another menace slashed down from the sky. Deprived of his signallers, the Master was shooting down the Fire Ray blindly, as Nelson Lee had guessed he would. They paused for a moment to watch the sickly yellow light change to a baleful orange and mingle with the green high above their



heads, and gulped with relief when that, too, was brought to a halt by Thurston Kyle's defence. Then the Night Hawk's car flashed past them down the Embankment with a shrill whoop from Snub, and Nipper, yelling in answer, darted in pursuit.

Through empty London they raced, the two boys driving recklessly with the knowledge that nothing could stop them. Nelson Lee lay back, watching the glowing sky. All London seemed to be covered by the green blanket, through which the spiteful orange streaks of the Fire Ray darted and twisted in an effort to find a gap in the "screen" so that its burning, destroying tongue could reach the City below. He could see his ally in the car ahead, crouching in the back seat with earphones to his head, and guessed he must be receiving constant messages from his guns wherever he went.

A Flying Squad car ranged alongside as they roared westwards through Knightsbridge, and Lee, knowing that it carried a wireless installation, shouted a message of encouragement for Sir Hugh Fletcher, which was instantly transmitted to the Yard. On the Great North Road half an hour later, an Air Force car packed with Staff officers fled past them on its way out to Northolt, and later, in the long road that cuts through the heart of Epping Forest, they came across the first casualties.

Nelson Lee and Nipper set their teeth at the sight that greeted them when they drew up. For a brief half-minute only, the gun that had been stationed here had failed, and in that space of time the Fire Ray had broken through. On the side of the road

lay the charred remnants of the car, but of the gun crew there was no sign. Beyond, in the forest, a wide swathe of burning trees and blackened undergrowth showed where the Ray had swept across the ground before a reserve gun, operating from behind Waltham Abbey, had switched its current round and stopped the gap.

Afterwards they raced on in grim silence. But for the strange man in the car ahead, Nelson Lee reflected, that ghastly scene would have been repeated all over London by now. Hurling back through the East End, they came across shattered houses in Stepney and saw the glare from burning docks beyond Poplar. But these were the only victories the Master of the World had scored. For the rest, the vast network of electricity over London had fended off the Death Rays as Thurston Kyle had promised.

He was winning the fight, too. Already the green and orange cloud was being forced

Nelson Lee released the bomb.
B-o-o-o-o-m! There was a
terrific explosion, and the
Master's airship burst into
flames.



higher and higher into the sky, as the guns went from strength to strength. The Master's death raid was beginning to falter.

By the time the cars slid to a halt on the Embankment again the attack had lasted an hour. On the roof of Scotland Yard, Nelson Lee found Sir Hugh and a group of his men staring eagerly upwards through field-glasses, their faces plainly showing the strain of that harrowing sixty minutes.

The Chief Commissioner lunged towards him.

"Lee! Gad, this is terrible! But we're winning; Kyle's winning. By gad, he's saved the nation—the whole world!"

Ignoring the excited questions fired at him on all sides, the detective borrowed some glasses and raked the sky. From the height of the building he had a better view of the whole scene. The Death Rays were retreating faster now; there was clear sky to the north, and a star twinkled far away in the west. Overhead the curdling mass of colour was just as thick, but it was a long way up, gradually shrinking as the screen pushed it back, overwhelming and destroying the Light-rays that swam in the ether.

But—of the air-ship there was no sign yet.

A chill spasm of fear suddenly clutched Nelson Lee's heart. What if the Master retreated now—gave up the attack on London and cruised across England, laying waste city after city in the provinces? Without a word, he thrust his way back through the police officials and ran down to the Embankment again. The moment he set foot outside, Thurston Kyle caught him by the shoulder.

"We can strike now, Lee. The Rays are narrowing down. Get to your 'plane as fast as you can!"

"It's at Clapham!" panted the detective. "Where will you be?"

"In the air above you when you're ready to start. Wait till you see my signal light. We'll fly as we did to the island!"

"Right!"

Their hands met in a numbing grip. The Night Hawk smiled.

"Good hunting, old fellow. And remember this is the final round!"

Next moment he was in his car again, on the road to Hampstead.

NELSON LEE found his bomber in the centre of Clapham Common in charge of its crew, from whom he borrowed leather coats and helmets for himself and Nipper. Climbing into the cockpit, he examined the controls, glanced at the bomb-rack and lay back watching the glimmering Death Rays, thousands of feet up now, and looking like a vast and flaming lake in the sky.

Minutes slipped by. Then Nipper leaned over and touched his arm.

"There's Mr. Kyle's signal, sir!" he whispered. "Right ahead over those elms!"

Following his pointing finger, Nelson Lee saw a tiny spot of yellow light stabbing the darkness repeatedly. His ally was waiting. He raised his arm to the Air Force men.

"Contact!"

• In a lumbering rush the great

bomber taxied across the turf, took off to the tune of a full-throated roar, and hurled itself into the air. Nelson Lee settled down to the flight, but before he had gone far giant wings flickered above the 'plane, a strong hand fastened on the cockpit edge and he glanced sideways to see the Night Hawk balancing between wing and fuselage, the light of battle dancing in his eyes.

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"Keep at this altitude till you're away from London, Lee!" he bellowed above the deep drone of the bomber. "Get clear of my screen before you rise. Follow me!"

The Night Hawk flung himself backwards into space, twisted in a lightning recovery, and the next Lee saw was the battery lamp on his belt, guiding them through the night as it had done over the North Sea.

The glitter of London dropped behind, dark countryside stretched beneath. Then the Night Hawk turned and began to climb up and up in a long, smooth slant, his wonderful wings bearing him aloft until he was forced to close the visor of his helmet against the cutting wind. And Nelson Lee, smiling quietly to himself, followed him with cool precision, while Nipper watched the ever-decreasing pool of light above which they were climbing.

The hunt for the Master's airship was in full cry. The gong for the last round had sounded!

CHAPTER 10.

The Night Hawk Swoops!

"**Y**OU pig of an imbecile! You dolt! Do something! Do something!"

"But, master, I am doing——"

"Must you argue, fool? Do something, I tell you. Why is not that accursed city beneath us burst into ruins long ago? Why, why, why?"

Seven thousand feet above London, in the main cabin of the great airship *Frederica*, Prince Youdinoff, Master of the World, was raving like the madman he was. Lines of maniacal rage distorted his sallow face, his half-blind eyes glared behind their blue spectacles and his stiff hair stood on end like the mane of an enraged lion.

He was failing. His slashing attack on London, so carefully planned, was checked!

From window to window he strode, glaring wildly for a moment from each before flinging himself away with a vicious curse of rage. Below the airship, for as far as he could see, the green and orange mist caused by his weapons rolled in sluggish confusion, drifting slowly upwards instead of flowing down to the destruction of the city he hated.

The cabin in which he raged, like the rest of the ship, was in darkness, save for two malignant eyes, one green the other golden, that winked and glowed among the whirling lenses of the Death Rays. A faint blur farther in the gloom showed where Professor Fabian crouched on his knees beside the apparatus, torn between terror of his leader and frozen dismay at the failure of his Rays.

A sudden anger, born of despair, made him answer the Master's gibes furiously.

"I don't know—I keep telling you I don't know!" he shrilled. "There is something in the ether that is stopping the Rays from reaching the ground. How can I tell what it is, you bullying ruffian?"

The Master's retort was a savage blow that stretched the old man on his face.

"You'd answer me, you dog, would you?" he shrieked, all restraint cast off long ago. "I believe you've sold me! Fool that I was to trust an English pig! Your Rays reached the Danish aerodrome this afternoon, didn't they? They reached the Zeppelin hangars in Germany and the French battleship at Cherbourg a month ago. Yet for ninety minutes we have cruised over London and your Rays remain harmless in mid-air! You've betrayed me!"

"You lie!" gasped Fabian from the floor. "I have not. Your plans for London have gone wrong. Where are the two men you sent to kill Lee and Thurston Kyle? They have not signalled you as arranged!"

"I'll flay them to the heart!" the Master swore. "But what have they to do with your failure, man?"

"I do not know!" retorted Fabian sullenly. "Yet if I knew Thurston Kyle was out of the way, I should be easier. I have always feared his scientific brain. He is the only man who could have devised any defence against my Rays. I wonder if——"

The Master sneered bitterly. His hands were working in uncontrollable fury and foam dribbled from the corners of his writhing lips.

"You wonder what?" he snarled.

Fear kept Professor Fabian quiet for a second. It was beginning to dawn upon him that his position was terribly dangerous. Excitement and baffled hate were rapidly snapping the last slender links that held the Master to sanity, and at any moment the man's madness might explode and perhaps destroy them all.

"Nothing!" he mumbled at last. Then, scrambling to his feet, he held out supplicating hands. "Master, why not retreat? We can do nothing here. See, my Rays are coming back to us faster than ever. Soon they will endanger the ship. Let us retreat and I promise you I——"

A yell of rage interrupted him.

"Retreat? Never! Not until I see that stiff-necked city below blazing from end to end. Go on—back to your machines! Don't cringe before me! Smash your way down to London, Fabian, or I swear I'll knout the hide from your shoulders with my own hands!"

The professor recoiled.

"You—you wouldn't dare!"

"I wouldn't wha-at!" It was the last straw. Gripped by something that urged him to rend and destroy, the Master hurled himself suddenly at the old man, grasped him by the throat and shook him and shook him as a mastiff shakes a rat. A thin scream died to a gasp; the gasp to silence. Fabian sagged at the knees. At last, when the first paroxysm of frenzy was over, Youdinoff flung him across the cabin in a heap.

"Now get up!" he snarled after a breathless pause. The professor did not move. Leaping to the wall, the Russian switched on the cabin lights, pulling out a gun at the same time. "Get up, you treacherous hound! You've sold me! Me, Prince Youdinoff of

Russia. Get up and see to your apparatus, or—"

But Fabian remained where he was, curiously still. Madness swamped the Master's brain.

"Then take that—and that—and that!" he yelled.

In a continuous roll, the revolver shots roared through the cabin until the hammer clicked on an empty gun. Not knowing what he did, the maniac swung round, glaring through the windows at the sea of light that was being thrown back against the ship with terrifying steadiness. His fists beat madly on the panes.

Suddenly, with a scream of fear, he recoiled. Framed in the dark window, barely a foot before him, a face had appeared out of the night, a dark, keen face with burning eyes and a sardonic, triumphant smile. He remembered the Thing that had alighted on the wings of his airplane that night he had fled from the destruction of his island—and even as he stared and raised his useless gun, the phantom disappeared.

Crash! Crash! Crash!

Trying in vain to throw off the mists that were clouding his brain, the Master staggered dazedly against the wall. Something had gone wrong; some accident had happened to the airship. Three tremendous blows had hit her. In a matter of seconds her speed had slackened, and she was rolling and pitching in the air like some uncouth monster wounded to death.

Footsteps clattered outside the door, frantic knuckles rapped on the panels and a messenger burst in, white of face and trembling.

"Your Highness—a serious disaster. We are attacked by aircraft. Our forward gondola, we think, is wrecked. We cannot get in touch with them, and—"

Babbling in a delirium of rage, the Master plunged forward. And, at the precise second he reached the door, Nelson Lee flew squarely above the Frederica at top speed, kicked the trigger of the bomb-release and twirled his heavy machine out of danger in a flash.

A deafening explosion, like the crack of doom, split the skies and rolled across the world!

B BRR-RR-RROOM!

Straight and true, into the very heart of the enormous dirigible, Nelson

Lee's bomb smashed its way, exploding with a force that ripped the envelope and the compartments inside to tatters. On the heels of the shattering, thunderous report, a terrible pillar of scorching flame leapt from the wound, staining the clouds blood-red for miles around, and spreading into a wide, hissing glare.

Out in the night, Thurston Kyle, the Night Hawk, swept round on knife-edged wings, balancing himself against the wind before dropping easily on to Nelson Lee's bomber as the detective zoomed away into safety.

"Well done, well done, Lee!" he roared; and both men stared fierce-eyed at the fiery

ruin drifting helplessly in the sky below them. "Victory at last!"

There came a sound of screaming men. The Ice and Fire Rays vanished for ever, leaving the lower world in darkness. Slowly, as if in agony, the leviathan lifted her shuddering bows.

But the end was not yet. So vast was the bulk of the great craft that precious seconds still remained before the final disruption, seconds in which men whom fear had not stunned completely could try to save themselves from a terrible death.

And one, at least, of the party who had sailed across the North Sea to the destruction of Britain, did try—

From the shattered gondola at the stern of the airship, a man with a parachute slung hastily round his shoulders by followers who were loyal even in the presence of death, leapt into nothingness, raving wildly. For twenty yards or more he dropped like a stone. Then the parachute opened and he hung in the air—the Master of the World leaving his ship, to take the slim chance that remained to him on earth.

But he never reached there. Down from the skies above him, in a whistling, thrilling and rage-driven dive, the Night Hawk swooped, hurtling earthwards heedless of anything save the one fact that the man who had terrified the world was escaping. Swerving dizzily on outstretched wings, he crashed full weight into the parachute, slashing savagely at its gear with a knife. The man at the end was thrown about helpless as a puppet until, with the parting of the last cord, he flung up his arms and dropped into the darkness.

Flashing in pursuit, the Night Hawk caught him up, gripped him with steel-like hands, beating down his frenzied resistance with furious blows. There, in the light of the burning airship, the two men fought: the Master panting and snarling, Thurston Kyle ominously quiet until, of a sudden, he got the upper hand, twisted the madman round in a shoulder-lock, and a second later was racing above the wrecked Frederica with all the power of his great black wings.

Directly over the glowing scarlet of the fire, almost stifled himself by the ghastly heat, the Night Hawk raised his burden high above his head.

"Go to the death you prepared for others!" he laughed aloud. And with all the power of his arms and muscular body, he flung his enemy down.

There was a terrible scream, a wild tossing of arms and legs. Spinning over and over in the air, the Master of the World fell for fifty yards—and the flames of the nethermost furnace reached up and clutched him.

As the Frederica, spouting fire and gas in its last death-throes, crumpled up and sagged swiftly downwards through the clouds, the Night Hawk swung himself high and triumphantly away in search of Nelson Lee.

The long battle was over. Scientists had clashed in a deadly duel and one had vanished

(Continued on page 50.)



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

TRUTHFUL.

Mother (pointing to dish): "Have you eaten all the nuts in that dish?"

Bobby: "I haven't touched one, mother."

Mother: "Well, there's only one left now."

Bobby: "That's the one I didn't touch."

(H. Rowe, 92, Lower Union Lane, Torquay, has been awarded a penknife.)

UP AND DOWN.

Two friends met in mid-air.

Tom: "Fancy meeting you here! I'm falling from my aeroplane."

Jack: "That so? I'm rising from my gas-stove."

(J. Loynd, 2, St. Cecilia Street, Gt. Harwood, Lancashire, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

SLIGHTLY MIXED!

Sailor: "Yes, mum, that's a man-o'-war."

Old Lady: "How interesting! And what is that little one just in front?"

Sailor: "Oh, that's a tug."

Old Lady: "Yes, of course, a tug-o'-war. I've heard of them before."

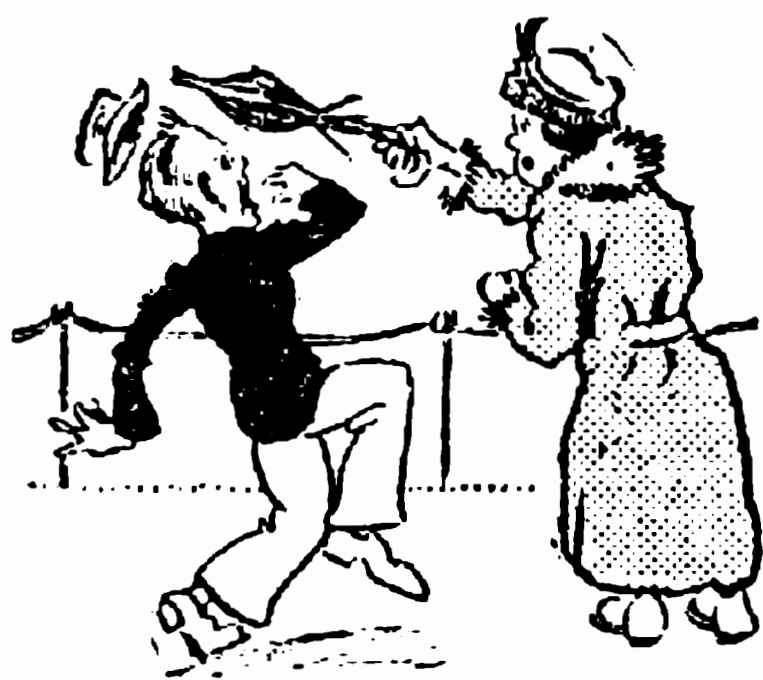
(T. Apps, 8, Piazza Britannica, Floriana, Malta, has been awarded a penknife.)

INSULTED!

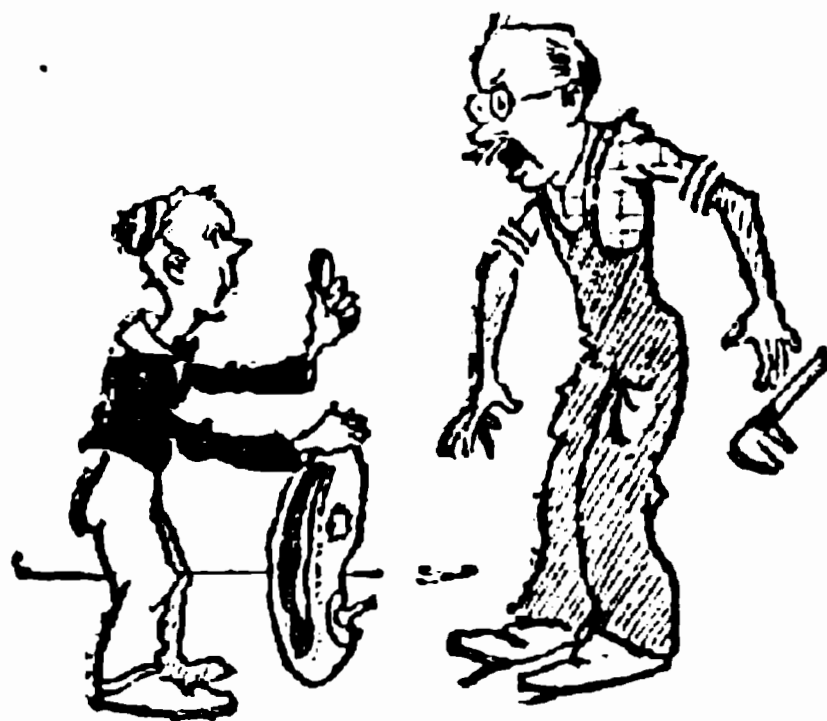
"That boy's a splendid little outside-right," remarked a man watching a junior football match, "but they don't feed him enough."

"Don't feed him enough!" exclaimed an onlooker angrily, and giving the man a blow with her umbrella. "Look here, my man, that's my son, and he's better fed than you are!"

(R. Atkin, Post Office, North Waltham, Hants—a pocket wallet.)



HEARD THIS ONE?



BIT BY BIT!

Small Boy: "Mister, you sell motor-car parts, don't you?"

Motor Dealer: "Yes, my boy."

Small Boy (displaying old inner tube and a rear light): "Well, how much would the rest of the car cost?"

(W. Edwards, 10, Market Place, Yarmouth, has been awarded a handsome watch.)

PUZZLING.

Mistress: "Mary, there are two things I insist upon, truthfulness and obedience."

Maid: "Yes, mum; and when you tell me to tell the visitors you're out when you're in, which shall it be?"

(G. Warburton, 38, Moss Lane, Altrincham, has been awarded a penknife.)

IN THE RUNNING.

American: "Gee! Over in America we've got a walking-stick made so that when you put it on the ground it walks by itself."

Irishman: "Begorra! I've got a jug that runs when you fill it with water."

(J. Atkins, Kinfauns, Lane Green, Codsall, Staffs, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

SHAKE WELL.

Pa (in tones of alarm as he sees Tommy shaking his young brother): "Why are you shaking your brother?"

Tommy: "Well, he's just taken his medicine, and on the bottle it says, 'Shake well.' But he didn't, so I'm doing it for him now."

(C. Beran, 44, Upper Rathbone Place, Oxford Street, London, has been awarded a penknife.)

PLEASANT DREAMS!

"Why do you wear your glasses in bed?"

"I am so short-sighted that I can't recognise the people I dream about."

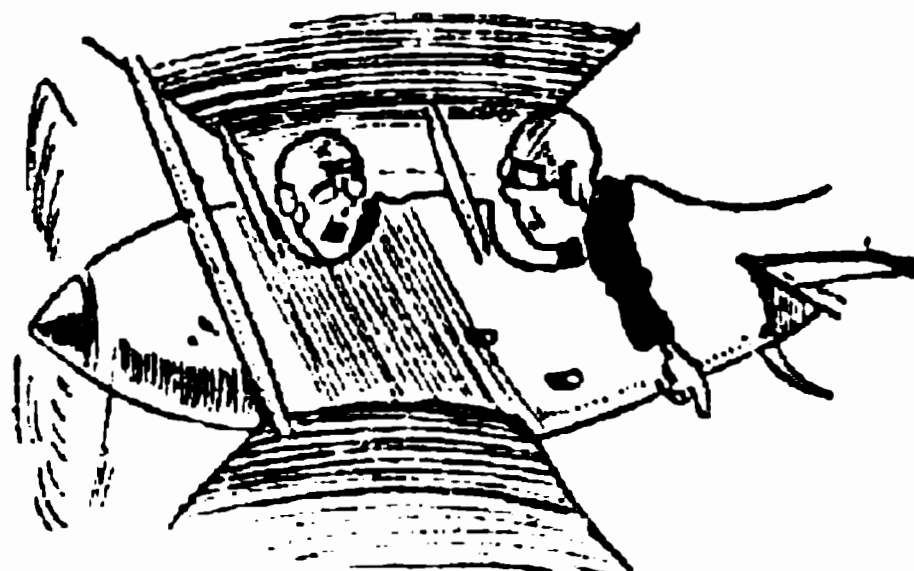
(D. Tipping, 15, Alexandra Road, Hornsey, N.8, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

SORRY TO TR-R-R-DOUBLE YOU!

Two old ladies were going up in an aeroplane, and they saw a notice which announced, "Nobody is to speak to the pilot when in flight." When they had been in the air a few minutes the pilot of the 'plane felt a timid hand touch his shoulder.

"I know it's against the laws, mister pilot," said a hesitant voice, "but I think I ought to tell you that poor Martha has fallen out."

(J. Pigden, 78, Alma Road, Sheerness, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)



CHAPTER 1.

Nipper Looks in!

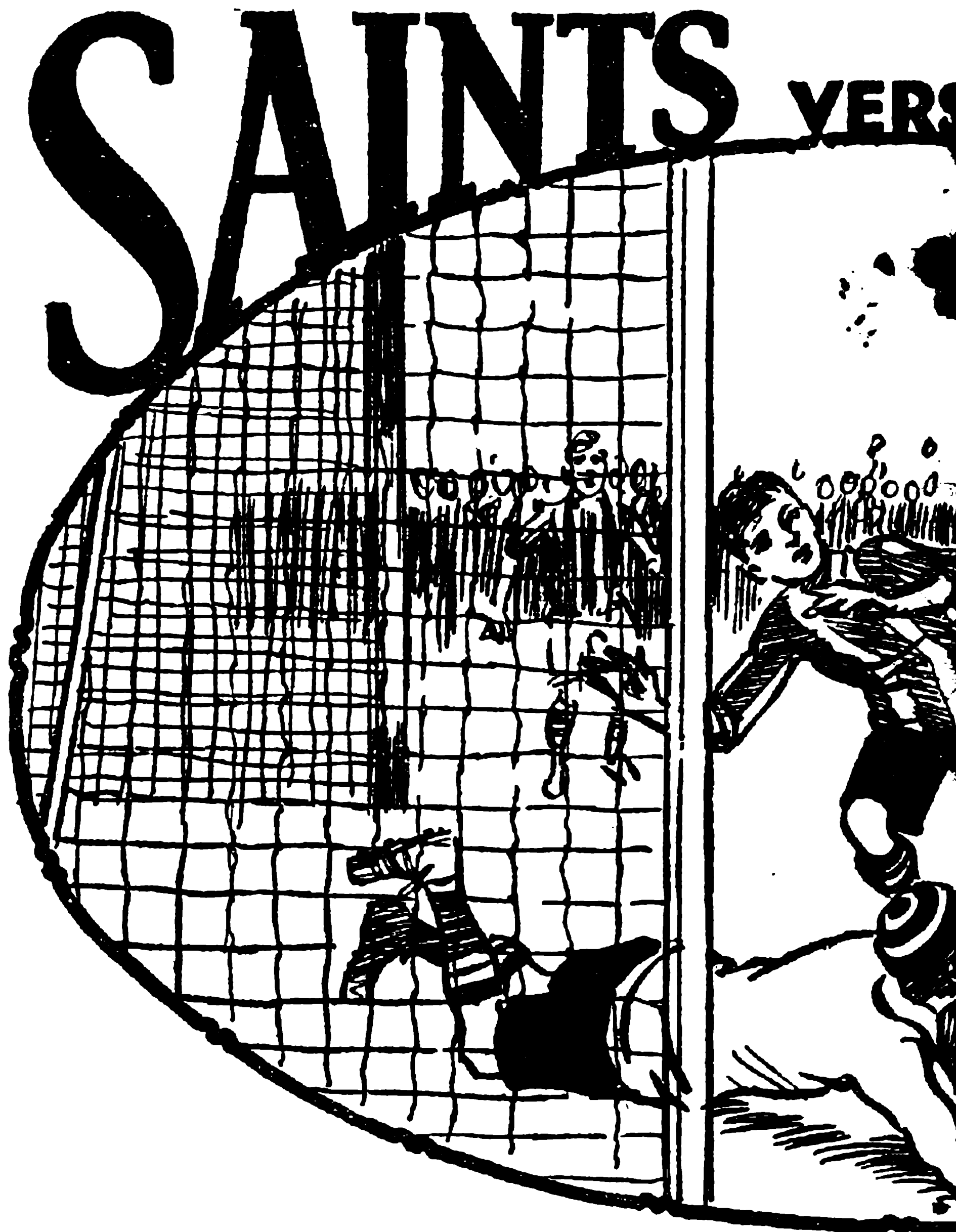
NIPPER stopped abruptly and a gleam entered his eyes.

The cheery skipper of the Remove at St. Frank's was on his way to the tuckshop. It was evening, and Study C—which Nipper shared with Tregellis-West and Watson—was in funds. Tea of a high quality was the general scheme, and Nipper was off to collect the supplies, which had been ordered earlier on in the day.

At present there was a great deal of excitement amongst the juniors at St. Frank's. For in three days' time there was a very important event due—to wit, a football cup final.

The St. Frank's Junior Eleven had played this season as it never had before. They were always a force to be reckoned with, but on their present form they had far surpassed themselves. This was due considerably to the efforts of their new football coach, Wally Freeman. Wally had had ten years in First Division football, and had also played for England on more than one occasion. Wally was at St.

The Bully Beaten!



Frank's, as he repeatedly said, to earn his salary, and certainly he fulfilled that purpose. St. Frank's had gone from good to better.

It had been on Wally's suggestion, too, that Nipper had entered the Junior Eleven for the Dorrimore Cup. This was a cup to be fought for by sixty-four Public school junior elevens—a miniature F.A. Cup, in the juniors' opinion—and what was of particular interest to them all was that it was presented by Lord Dorrimore, the famous sporting peer, and an old friend of Nipper & Co. In fact, they had spent many a thrilling time with his lordship.

From the first round—when they beat Highcliffe away—St. Frank's had looked like certain finalists, which they were. They reached the final, after getting past such doughty opponents as St. Jim's, River House, Redclyffe and Yexford.

The final, by former arrangement, was to be played at Little Side, St. Frank's. This was because Little Side was by far

THE DORRIMORE CUP-FINAL

With Nipper and Harry Wharton of Greyfriars, fighting a hard battle for honour

Yarn Featuring the Chums of St. Frank's!



match. His team was at full strength and in tip-top fettle.

But as the young skipper passed under the elms something occurred which drove all thoughts of football from his mind, and caused him to stop abruptly.

Under one of the neighbouring elms two figures were visible, one taller than the other. The tall one had hold of the other and was twisting the latter's wrist painfully behind his back.

"Now, you little fool," Nipper heard the tall one say, "are you going to Bellton for me, or shall I twist your arm a bit more?"

"Oh, stop it! You're hurting me, you brute!" came a plaintive wail from the small individual.

Nipper quickened his pace and strode towards the two figures. His mouth was set in a firm, straight line as he saw that one of the figures was Bernard Forrest, the acknowledged cad of the Remove. The smaller one was Tommy Hobbs, a fag of the Third.

Forrest was grinning as he gave another wrench at Hobbs' arm, causing the unfortunate fag to wail afresh.

Telegram for Nipper!



the best Public school ground of all. And St. Frank's were matched against formidable opponents in the final—Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars.

Naturally, this forthcoming match was awaited by the juniors—as well as by many seniors and masters—with tremendous enthusiasm, and to make it even more eventful Lord Dorrimore himself was coming down to present the cup to the winners. Scores of parents, aunts, cousins, and brothers and sisters were expected, to say nothing of many local celebrities.

These latter included, foremost of all, the Blue Crusaders Football Club. The Blues, who played at the Stronghold in Bannington, were well known at St. Frank's. And so the

Blues had offered to be present at this battle of the schoolboy giants. Irene Manners & Co., the girls of the Moor View School nearby, were also due, and others too numerous to mention.

As Nipper made his way to Mrs. Hake's shop, his mind was full of the forthcoming

PRIMORE FINAL!

and Co., and
and Co., of
ting a ding-
for football
urs!

"You obstinate little brat, are you going on that errand for me?" he demanded. "Or else—Hi, what the—Leggo!"

Nipper's eyes were blazing dangerously as he laid a hand on Forrest's arm. With a jerk he wrenched him clean away from Hobbs. Forrest, startled and infuriated at this unwelcome interruption, turned on his attacker. Hobbs seized the opportunity to make himself scarce.

"It's you, is it, you interfering cad!" gritted Forrest, as he recognised Nipper. "Take that, you rotter!"

Nipper did not take it. It was a clumsy left blow at his face. Nipper's blood was up. He dodged easily, released Forrest, and up came his right in a beautiful curve.

Crash!

Forrest took the blow clean on the point of his chin. With an agonised howl he toppled over, and lay in a heap on the grass. Nipper stood over him, his fists clenched, ready to repeat the performance.

"You bullying cad!" blazed Nipper. "How many more times must you be stopped from making the fags run your rotten errands?"

Forrest sat up and rubbed his jaw. His eyes gleamed with hate as he eyed Nipper.

"You rotter!" he cried. "Why can't you mind your own confounded business? If I want a fag to run my errands, he shall, and if he won't do it, I'll make him!"

"Oh, indeed?" said an icy voice behind Nipper.

Forrest, with a suddenly pale face, scrambled to his feet unsteadily, while Nipper turned and found himself confronted by Nelson Lee, the famous headmaster-detective of St. Frank's!

CHAPTER 2.

Wanted—Fifty Quid!

"THIS is very interesting, Forrest," said Lee grimly. "So you intend to engage a fag to run your errands, and if he refuses, to make him? Is that correct?"

"Yes—no, I mean——" Forrest broke off in confusion. He was in a cleft-stick, and he realised it. By the look on Lee's face, he knew that the Head had witnessed the whole performance, and he knew, also, that it was useless to deny it. So he kept silent.

"This is not the first time such an occurrence has happened, Forrest," continued Lee sternly, "and I intend to have a stop put to it once and for all. I shall not hand you over to your Form-master, or Housemaster, for punishment. I intend to deal with you myself."

"But—but look here, sir——" began Forrest.

"You will report to my study in half an hour for a flogging," interrupted Lee. "If I hear or see any repetition of this affair again, I shall find it necessary to take even more drastic methods. Bear that in mind!"

And with a nod to Nipper, who had stood by silent and uncomfortable, Nelson Lee passed on his way. When he was out of sight, Nipper turned to the pale-faced Forrest.

"Well, it was your own fault, you know," he said. "Anyway, perhaps it will bring you to your senses."

"You cad!" snarled Forrest, his face livid with hate. "You meant that to happen. You knew the Head was watching, and you took the chance to show off, and get it in for me!"

Nipper's eyes blazed, and he took half a step forward threateningly. He stood looking at Forrest for a moment, then shrugged and stepped back.

"If it wasn't that you were in for a flogging, I'd knock you flat, Forrest!" he said. "You know as well as I do that I had no idea Mr. Lee was so near!"

Without another word, Nipper resumed his way, and by the time he was back at Study C with the tea supplies the incident was forgotten, and football was the chief thought once again in his mind.

Yet Nipper might have realised that Bernard Forrest would never let such a thing go by quietly. Forrest was a vindictive fellow.

He reported himself at the Head's house in half an hour, and there underwent a terrific lecture and an equally terrific flogging. Nelson Lee did not spare the rod. He felt that Forrest deserved every bit of his punishment, and by the time Forrest reached the privacy of his study, the rotter of the Remove felt life was hardly worth living. One thought occupied his mind—to be revenged against Nipper!

The effects of the flogging wore off gradually. It was towards supper-time on the next day that Forrest was anything like his normal self.

After mooching around the cloisters, he repaired to Study A intent upon supper. As he entered his two study-mates, Gulliver and Bell, were vacating it.

"There's a letter for you on the table, Forrest," announced Bell.

"A letter? Who from?" asked Forrest. "The pater?"

"It's not in your pater's handwriting," said Gulliver. "It looks to me rather like our old pal Cook's writing."

Forrest went white.

"Gad!" he said. "I'd forgotten Cook the bookie. I owe the beastly man a good deal."

"Perhaps he's written reminding you. Very probable, I reckon," said Bell. "Anyway, we're going to sup with Merrell of the Fourth. Coming?"

Forrest shook his head and entered the study, whilst Gulliver and Bell moved away.

Forrest switched on the light, and picked up a mauve-coloured envelope from the table. Sure enough, the writing was that of Mr. Jabaz Cook, the Bannington bookmaker.

Forrest's hand shook a trifle as he slit it open with his thumb.

Pulling out a letter, he read:

"Dear Sir,—I should like to remind you that there is a matter of forty pounds owing to me from you. I have had various promises of payment, but have received nothing. I shall be at the Wheatsheaf to-night, if you care to see me about this matter. If I receive no payment by Saturday, I shall have to interview your headmaster.

"Yours faithfully,

"JABAS COOK."

Forrest screwed the letter up in his hand, struck a match and lit it, and flung it in the

from St. Frank's, and only by stupendous efforts on his and his father's part had he succeeded in getting back. If he was expelled again, his whole career would be ruined.

A tap sounded on the door, and Claude Gore-Pearce, the millionaire's son—and, incidentally, another cad like Forrest—came in.

"Get out!" snapped Forrest.

Gore-Pearce did not oblige. He shut the study door and advanced into the study.

"I've come to ask you a favour," he said. "Can you lend me ten pounds, by any chance?"

To Gore-Pearce's surprise, Forrest burst into a fit of bitter laughter.



With Handforth lying helpless on the ground, Harry Wharton sent in a stinging shot. Greyfriars were one goal up.

fireplace, watching it until it burnt to cinders. Then he threw himself into an armchair and frowned.

He was in a nasty mess. During the last few weeks he had been plunging heavily on horses. Cook had allowed the account to go on and on; and then he had sprung the bombshell. Forty pounds was owing—and he wanted the money immediately. Forrest had been staggered. How could he get hold of forty pounds in a lump sum? He had made rash promises to Cook only to break them. And now it seemed that the bookmaker had reached the limit of his patience.

Forty pounds by Saturday, and to-day was Thursday, and no prospect of getting the money. No wonder Forrest was alarmed.

What was he to do? That was the question! If Cook should visit Nelson Lee, the fat would be in the fire. Expulsion would be inevitable. Forrest had been expelled once

"Look here, Forrest, I don't see anything to laugh at," growled Gore-Pearce. "I need the money by Saturday—and the pater won't dub up. As a matter of fact," he added, "I owe it to that cad Cook, the 'bookie. I backed a dead cert, which came in last, on tick, and—— Why are you looking so surprised?"

Forrest told Gore-Pearce of the letter he had received. Gore-Pearce whistled softly when Forrest had finished.

"Gosh!" he said. "We owe old Cook fifty quid between us, and we haven't a giddy penny to bless ourselves with. What are you going to do about it?"

Forrest laughed in a bitter tone.

"Heaven knows!" he said. "Don't ask me. Gad, what a fix!"

"What about going down to the Wheat-sheaf before dorm. and trying to persuade

Cook to hang on a bit?" suggested Gore-Pearce. "I don't suppose he will, but it's a chance, and a little longer might help us to raise the dough."

Forrest looked sceptical, but he nodded. A little while later the two of them climbed over the school wall and headed for Bannington and the Wheatsheaf!

CHAPTER 3.

Forrest, the Schemer!

"I'M sorry, young gents, but it can't be done," said Mr. Jabas Cook emphatically. "I've waited long enough, and I ain't goin' to wait no longer. That's final."

And Mr. Cook snorted disgustedly.

Forrest glanced at Gore-Pearce worriedly. They had got down to the Wheatsheaf and were at the moment seated in a small room that the bookie rented. All arguments had been in vain. Arguing with Mr. Cook had about as much effect as water on a duck's back.

"Well, I'm a-going now," announced Mr. Cook. "You can sit in 'ere if you like. An' see 'ere, I'll give you until this time Saturday night, and then, if the dibs ain't shown up, orf I goes to yer 'Ead!"

And with that Mr. Jabas Cook vacated his dingy sitting-room.

Forrest savagely lit a cigarette. It was nearly time for them to be getting back to the school, but neither felt like moving. It seemed that the chopper would soon descend on them both.

"It's no good," said Gore-Pearce wildly. "We're done. The rotten cad! Two days to get it in. It can't be done."

Forrest did not answer, but scowled savagely to himself.

Tap!

A light tap on the door sounded and a loudly-dressed youth came into the room. The juniors recognised him as a racing 'tout who frequented the Wheatsheaf a good deal.

"Good-evening, Master Gore-Pearce and Master Forrest," said the newcomer as he shut the door and flopped into a chair. "I heard as 'ow yer were 'ere, and I thought it a good chance o' seein' yer. In a bit o' trouble wi' Cook, ain't yer?"

Forrest explained, though he saw no use in doing 'so. Grimes—the loud-dressed youth—grinned, then winked.

"Look 'ere, gents," he said confidentially, "I've got a proposition to put to yer."

"Keep it!" snarled Forrest.

"Not so durned quick, matey," responded Grimes. "Jest sit tight an' listen. On Saturday, at your school, yer've gotter special football match on, ain't yer?"

"What of it?" asked Gore-Pearce.

"Lots! What price 'aving a bet? I do a lot o' betting on fotball, now the noo season 'as started," Grimes said. "What price 'aving one with me? You may win enough to pay Cook an' have some over.

O' course, if you lost, you'll owe it ter me, but it's a sportin' chance!"

Forrest stared. He felt that there must be some catch in it. Grimes would not offer to bet if he was in danger of losing over fifty quid.

"What terms?" he asked.

"Why," said Grimes, "back ten quid each, I'll give you five to one. If you win yer'll pocket fifty quid a-piece. A bit better than being fifty quid to the bad, eh?"

"Something in it!" said Gore-Pearce. "We'd back St. Frank's, of course."

"Not on yer life," said Grimes. "I take this on only if yer put yer money on Greyfriars!"

Forrest stared. Surely there was nothing in it? Both sides were equal. But he saw Grimes' idea. Grimes was not so well up in the knowledge of Public school football. He was apparently under the impression that St. Frank's would easily win. They were on their own ground, and Grimes had heard such a lot about them; whilst Greyfriars was too far away to come under his notice. But that was where he was wrong. There was not a thing to choose between the two! The game was a toss up. It might go to anyone. Grimes felt that he was on a good thing.

Forrest was thoughtful. He felt that it would be risky to bet. If he put some money—on tick, of course—on Greyfriars, he had as n. ch chance of winning or losing as if he backed his own team. But it was too risky. St. Frank's might win, and he would be in a worse mess than ever. Then a gleam entered his eyes. He suddenly thought of something.

"Wait a tick," he said. "Give me time to think."

Ten minutes later he looked at Grimes with a grin.

"We'll take you on!" he said. He turned his head from Grimes and winked at Gore-Pearce, as if to say: "Agree to what I say!"

Gore-Pearce was puzzled, but he knew that Forrest had some scheme in his mind, and he nodded.

"Yes, we'll take you on!" he said.

"Good," said Grimes. "If Greyfriars win, I hand you fifty quid each. If St. Frank's win, you hand me ten quid each. Right! It's a go! Shake!"

They shook, and a little while later the two juniors tore back to St. Frank's. Not until they were safe in the school—there was still five minutes before dorm.—did Gore-Pearce refer to the subject of the wager with Grimes.

"You ass! That was risky. Supposing we lose?"

Forrest pulled Gore-Pearce into his study, which was empty.

"Don't be a fathead!" he chided. "I knew what a risk it was. But I've a scheme, and, in my case, it's a scheme for killing two birds with one stone. By the way, will you be here for the match on Saturday?"

"No, it doesn't interest me," said Gore-Pearce. "Still, it does to the extent of that bet. I'm going down to my pater's new home at Helmford for the week-end. I've got permish. But what about your scheme?"

"It's this," said Forrest. "As you say, it's risky to bet on Saturday's game. But supposing St. Frank's played without one of their best men?"

"It's hardly likely," murmured Gore-Pearce.

"Never mind. Supposing, f'r'instance, that Nipper was called away? There is no one in the junior school up to his standard! What would happen if St. Frank's were without Nipper?"

"Well, we'd lose then, as sure as fate," said Gore-Pearce. "But what are you getting at?"

Forrest then told him of the affair of the previous day, when Nipper had knocked him down, and of the subsequent flogging.

"My scheme is to get my own back on Nipper, and, at the same time, make St. Frank's lose the final."

"You mean, make them play without Nipper?" said Gore-Pearce. "It's a good wheeze, but could it be done?"

"It could!" said Forrest. "Supposing that sometime on Saturday morning a telegram comes for Nipper, calling him away for the rest of the day. Remember, Nelson Lee won't be here for the final. He's been called away on some case in London, with Scotland Yard. Supposing a telegram comes from Lee, asking Nipper to go to London at once—and at such a time that he could never get back in time for the match?"

"You—you mean, send a telegram, supposed to be from Mr. Lee, calling Nipper to London?"

"Exactly! He will naturally go, especially if the telegram is urgent. And what then? Dear little Nipper will get to London, find it a hoax, and come back. But he will be too late for the match. With him out of it, Greyfriars will win, we shall be in funds, and be able to pay Cook. And it will pay Nipper out, too, the cad!"

Gore-Pearce drew a deep breath.

"Gad, Forrest, you think of everything!" he said. "It is the wheeze of the century! And it'll work! It can't possibly fail!"

"Oh, it'll work all right," agreed Forrest.

CHAPTER 4.

Called Away!

KIRBY KEEBLE PARKINGTON chuckled.

"Sweethearts, we're going to win," he announced. "We must win. Can't think of losing. We've reached the final, and we simply must carry off the gid'y trophy."

"By George, rather!" roared Edward Oswald Handforth. "Shoot, you ass, shoot!"

Vivian Travers, at whom he yelled, did

shoot. The ball whizzed in and shot past Handy into the back of the goal.

"Satisfied, dear old fellow?" said Travers.

"By George! If you do that this afternoon, Travers, we'll win. Now then, you chaps," yelled the burly Removite, "send 'em in, hot and strong. The more the merrier."

It was Saturday morning, the day of the great match. Already some of the visitors had arrived, and were being escorted over the school. Nipper and his team were partaking of a final punt about on Little Side. Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, were not due yet.

Everybody was waiting for the afternoon eagerly. The team, too, was in fine form.

Mr. Alington Wilkes, the Housemaster of the Ancient House, was standing at the ropes, talking to Wally Freeman, the coach.

"Shape well, what?" he was saying.

"Shape well!" echoed Wally. "Why, it's the finest team they've turned out this season. I think they will give Greyfriars a good run for their money, eh?"

"You bet," chuckled Mr. Wilkes enthusiastically.

The team consisted of the redoubtable Handforth in goal, with McClure and K. K. Parkington as backs. Buster Boots, of the Fourth, was the pivot, with Christine, also of the Fourth, and Jerry Dodd, as his halves.

The forward line had Pitt and Travers on the right wing, and Gresham and Archie Glenthorne on the left, with Nipper in the centre. A grand team, altogether, and something for Wally Freeman to be proud of.

And then it happened.

Just as Nipper was about to take a shot, he felt a tug at his jersey. Looking round, he beheld a small boy in uniform with a buff-coloured envelope in his hand.

"Name o' 'Amilton?" inquired the telegraph boy.

"That's me," nodded Nipper, with a puzzled look. He held out his hand, took the wire, and slit it open. He pulled out a slip of paper, glanced at it, and his face went pale.

"Oh, my only sainted aunt!" he breathed.

"All right, there's no answer, kid," he added, and the boy departed. Then the young skipper turned to the rest of the team with a worried expression.

"Bad news?" asked K. K. anxiously.

"Read it," said Nipper, passing the telegram to the burly junior from Carlton. K. K. read the following, the other footballers looking over his shoulder:

"Come to Gray's Inn at once. Very urgent.—LEE."

"But—but—what about the match?" gasped Buster Boots. "Does that mean you can't play?"

Nipper shrugged helplessly.

"I'm afraid it does," he said ruefully.

"What beastly luck! And I can't understand it, either. The gov'nor knows the

Final is on to-day. He must have a mighty good reason for calling me away."

The footballers were silent. They had been so full of optimism before, but now — St. Frank's—without Nipper! True, football is not a one-man game, but there was no one in the junior school at St. Frank's to touch Nipper, and now Greyfriars had an advantage. Not one of them suspected trickery.

Nipper, resigning himself to fate, prepared to leave. He decided to shift Archie Glen-thorne to the centre-forward position, and to bring Ralph Fullwood in at inside-left. Fullwood had, until some little time ago, occupied that position, but had not kept up to form. Fullwood was a good player, but the rearranged forward line was not nearly so strong as it would have been.

After a hasty farewell, Nipper departed, catching the London train from Bannington, which was due in London at noon. The match was scheduled to commence at two.

Bernard Forrest, who had been hovering quietly in the background, observed Nipper's departure triumphantly. It had not been difficult to arrange with an outside friend of his to get the telegram sent off, and now Forrest felt that all would be plain sailing. Nipper was out of the team, Greyfriars would win, and his debt would be a thing of the past, whilst he would still have a nice little lump sum to pocket.

Gore-Pearce was spending the week-end at his father's estate in Helmford, and would not witness the match, but Gore-Pearce was fairly satisfied that all would go well.

To judge by appearances, he was right. Nipper had gone to London. Forrest knew that even when he reached the metropolis and found that it was all a hoax, he could never catch another train back to Bannington by two o'clock. Yes, the rascal of the Remove told himself, the wheeze had worked.

But Forrest had yet to learn that there is much truth in the old but familiar saying, "there's many a slip 'twixt cup and lip."

NIPPER turned up the steps of Nelson Lee's house in Gray's Inn Road at about twelve-fifteen with a gloomy brow. His thoughts were not pleasant. He was worrying about the match. He was by no means conceited, but he knew that his services would be missed. And Nipper had set his heart on carrying off the Dorrimore Cup.

He banged hard on the knocker, and a few seconds later Mrs. Jones, the old house-keeper, opened the door. At sight of Nipper she nearly had a fit.

"Why, lawks a mussy, Master Nipper!" she ejaculated. "And what be ye doin' 'ere?"

Nipper frowned. He looked puzzled.

"Where's the guv'nor, Mrs. Jones?" he asked. "I got his telegram, and here I am! Is he in?"

By now he was inside, and Mrs. Jones was regarding him curiously.

"Mr. Lee?" she said. "Why, 'e ain't 'ere. 'E ain't bin 'ere since Thursday night!"

"What!" yelled Nipper. "But—but he sent a wire telling me to come here at once. By Jove! I wonder——"

Nipper was getting suspicious now, and his suspicions were confirmed when, after further inquiries, he learned that Lee had left the house on Thursday night to travel up North on his case, and no word had come from him since. Plainly, Lee could not have sent that telegram. Therefore——

"By glory!" gurgled Nipper.

He realised, in a flash, that he had been hoaxed. Why, he knew not, nor by whom. Unless—and now he nodded sagely—someone, for certain reasons, wanted him out of the Final at St. Frank's.

"Forrest!" breathed Nipper.

Of course, why hadn't he thought of it? He might have known that the affair of the other day had not blown over. Forrest, he realised, was responsible for this. 'It was his revenge. Yet even Nipper didn't know the full reason of Forrest's hoax, and that Gore-Pearce was in it also. He was to learn this latter fact in the near future.

Nipper thought rapidly. Trains were out of the question. The match started at two. It was now half-past twelve. There was only one chance.

Madly he dashed out of the house and round to the garage. There, ready for immediate use, was Nelson Lee's Rolls-Royce Special. Lee had not found it necessary to take it North. The car would get him to St. Frank's in time. Nipper thought of something else, too. If he sent a wire to St. Frank's, telling them to delay the match, it would give him a little more time. Roughly, he'd got about two hours in which to get to St. Frank's.

Quickly, Nipper clambered into the car, started it up, and shot out into the busy Gray's Inn Road. He stopped only to send off a telegram to Buster Boots, who was acting as skipper in his place. Then, going all out, he took the direction of Sussex and St. Frank's.

He made little progress through the crowded London streets, but when he got on the open country road he opened the car full out. Lost time was made up, and no express train could have touched Nipper as he bent over the wheel, eyes alert, hope in his breast that he might yet be in time for the match.

On, on he went, and the first sign of old surroundings came to him when he reached Helmford, a town twenty miles away from Bannington. He heard a clock strike one-thirty as he passed through the town. Jove, he'd just do it!

But, unknown to Nipper, there was an obstacle to be surmounted before he reached Bannington!

CHAPTER 5.

A Shock For Forrest!

FEEL fit, old man?" asked Wally Freeman.

"You bet," nodded Ralph Leslie Fullwood.

It was half an hour before the kick-off of the great match. Little Side was packed. The crowd, consisting of all the visitors and St. Frank's boys—to say nothing of a vast multitude from Greyfriars—were packed round the ropes, and in the pavilion. The Greyfriars team were in their dressing-room, as were the St. Frank's team.

Wally Freeman gave a nod.

"Well, I needn't ask you to do your best—I know you will!" he said. He glanced at Fullwood for a moment, then at the rest of the team. "All O.K.?" he queried.

"By George, I've never felt fitter!" announced Handforth.

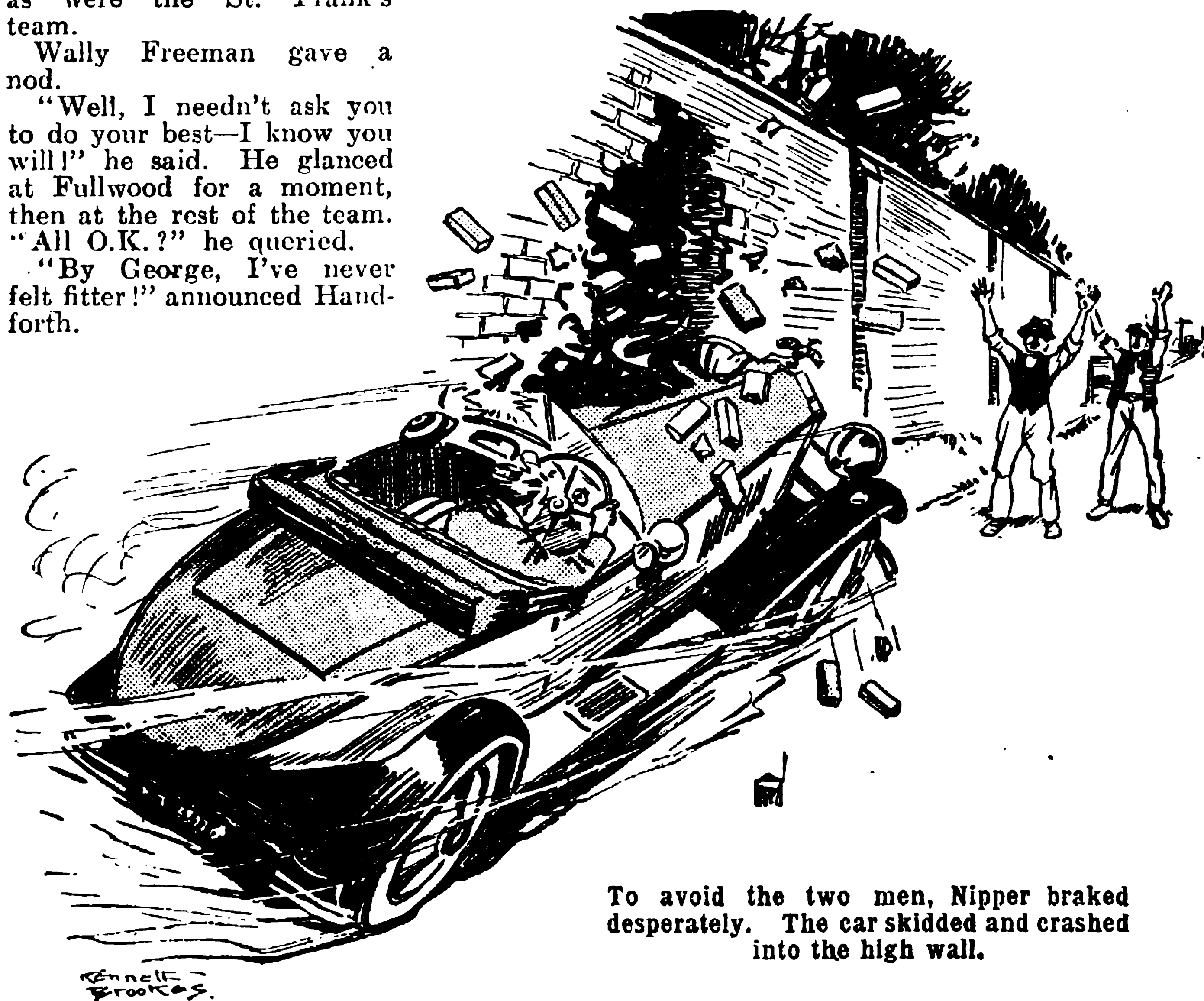
"Delay match as long as possible. Am returning.—NIPPER."

"Nipper's coming, you fellows!" cried Gresham excitedly.

"By George! That's great news!" roared Handforth. "We'll win the blessed cup yet!"

The news soon leaked out, and there was tremendous excitement. Cheers rent the air from all around the ground, and St. Frank's as a whole breathed easier.

A talk with Harry Wharton and the referee ensued, and it was arranged that if Nipper didn't turn up before two they would wait



To avoid the two men, Nipper braked desperately. The car skidded and crashed into the high wall.

"Well, if you let any through we shall be sunk," said McClure. "We're depending on you, Handy, remember."

"Trust me," said E. O. H. "Hallo, what's this? Another wire?"

A messenger boy had entered the dressing-room, with a telegram in his hand, and he looked from one to the other of the team.

"Guy named Shoes 'ere?" he demanded.

"Boots, do you mean, dear old fellow?" grinned Travers.

John Busterfield Boots stepped forward, gave the messenger a glare, and took the wire. He read the message and whooped. The wire fluttered from his hand, and K. K. picked it up. He read it out aloud:

half an hour, then take the field. Boots decided that, Nipper failing to arrive even then, they would play for a while with ten men. Only if Nipper still failed to put in an appearance would they play the other man.

And now something else was noticed. Lord Dorrimore, the founder of the cup, had not arrived. Apparently he had been delayed, and his opening speech would also have to be delayed. Dorrie—as he was affectionately called—had intended to inspect the two teams prior to the kick-off.

And so St. Frank's waited, both for his lordship and Nipper. Two-thirty came, with no sign of either of them, and then the referee decided that they could wait no longer. The two teams prepared to take the field, St. Frank's a man short.

And what of Bernard Forrest?

Bernard Forrest, at that particular moment, was in a pretty frenzied state of mind. He had been one of the first to hear the news that Nipper was returning to St. Frank's, and at first refused to believe it. But before long he became convinced that it was true, and then great had been his wrath—and alarm.

His plot had misfired. Somehow, Nipper had found it possible to return to St. Frank's. Several things occurred to the cad of the Remove that he had not thought of before. Firstly, he had not expected Nipper to tumble to the truth of the hoax so quickly. Secondly, the match was being delayed. Forrest bit his lip as he wandered off the football ground and thought of that. Never for a moment had he expected Nipper to send a wire asking the match to be delayed.

Forrest entered the deserted Ancient House and went to his study, where he threw himself into a chair. His thoughts were bitter. The situation was desperate.

A mighty cheer rent the air from Little Side. Forrest rose and went over to the window. A number of blue and white figures were running out from the pavilion. Greyfriars had taken the field.

Then another cheer, louder still, told Forrest that Buster Boots had led his team on to the pitch. There were only ten men. Forrest began to hope. The half hour was up, and Nipper had not yet arrived. The most St. Frank's could last with ten men was a quarter of an hour. Perhaps Nipper had been delayed. Supposing he failed to turn up in time? Fullwood would have to play, and, good though that Removite was, the team would be weakened, and Greyfriars ought to win.

Forrest watched eagerly. He was not interested in football ordinarily, but much depended on this match, and he wanted to watch every moment of it.

The referee blew a blast on his whistle, and Harry Wharton, of Greyfriars, and Buster Boots went to the centre. After shaking hands and exchanging a few words, Boots tossed. Wharton won, and St. Frank's lined up against a fairly stiff breeze.

Archie Glenthorne kicked off, and the great game had commenced.

FOR several minutes there was a deal of mid-field play. Then Boots fastened on the ball and sent out a long, swinging pass to Reggie Pitt, on the right wing. In a flash, Pitt had trapped and dodged round Hurree Singh, of Greyfriars, as the dusky Indian junior bore down on him. Then Reggie was away on one of his lightning runs down the wing.

On he tore, past a defending half-back, and then bore in. Johnny Bull, the visitors' right-back, came towards him, and Reggie stopped dead. For a moment he stood standing, then flashed the ball inside, where Travers fastened on to it. Vivian Travers swung round, and saw the goal in front. He ran a few steps, but finding that Bull

had transferred his attentions to him, flashed the ball back to Pitt. Reggie took it on the run, and sent in a glorious stinger at the Greyfriars citadel.

Bernard Forrest, at his study window, held his breath. Were St. Frank's going to score? First blood would mean a lot! He watched anxiously.

But if Pitt's shot had been a beautiful effort, then Sampson Quincy Iffley Field's effort in the Greyfriars' goal could only be termed as magnificent. Squiff leaped, and as the ball shot, straight as a die, for the corner of the net, his fingers touched it and deflected it round the post for a corner. A breath of relief came from the Greyfriars crowd, and the St. Frank's supporters sighed with disappointment.

Pitt took the corner kick. High over the players' heads, in front of the goal, the ball dropped, and then a lithe figure leaped. Squiff's fist met the ball, and far up the field it went, where Bob Cherry, of Greyfriars, snapped on it and sent Vernon-Smith, on the right wing, speeding away along the touchline.

"Well played, Squiff!" roared the Greyfriars supporters, and the St. Frank's supporters also joined in the cheering. In the pavilion, Dr. Locke, the headmaster of Greyfriars, who had come over specially for the occasion, turned a beaming face upon Mr. Alington Wilkes.

"Upon my word, a great game," he said. "A great effort, too, of Field's. Ha, well played, Vernon-Smith! Pass, boy, pass!"

Mr. Alington Wilkes grinned. In the excitement of the match the old Head was so far forgetting his dignity as to cheer.

Vernon-Smith had reached the goal-area, and had sent in a beautiful centre, which dropped at the feet of Harry Wharton. As the ball fell, Wharton shot, but Handforth, in the St. Frank's chicken-run, was prepared. As the ball shot in, he jumped, caught it, and with a tremendous kick sent the ball out of the danger zone.

Two exciting tussles in front of both goals within a short space of time! Forrest, still watching from his study, was in a fever of excitement. He looked at his watch. Play had been in progress thirteen minutes. He brightened. Nipper, after all, wasn't coming. Two more minutes and Fullwood would have to take the field.

St. Frank's were sorely missing Nipper now. They were playing with four forwards, and after that one attack they found themselves hard pressed.

The ball went to Buster Boots, who saw that Gresham was in an unmarked position. He kicked, slipped, and missed. Before Boots could recover, Bob Cherry had hooked away the ball and was speeding up-field with it. The St. Frank's defence was caught napping by the unexpectedness of the move. McClure rushed up in a desperate attempt to avert disaster. Bob tricked him neatly and passed to Tom Brown, of Greyfriars, who trapped deftly.

It had all been so sudden that the other St. Frank's defenders were hopelessly out of position. Brown bore down upon the St. Frank's goal. K. K. was dashing across the field in a frantic attempt to intercept, but it was in vain. The Greyfriars man drew nearer to the gesticulating Handforth, steadied himself and shot.

Handforth leaped and dived. The ball shot past him and struck with a resounding smack on the upright. Handforth lay helpless on the ground. As the ball rebounded, K. K. and Harry Wharton both raced for it. The Greyfriars skipper got it first, and shot.

Into the unprotected goal it went, accompanied by a mighty yell. The referee pointed to the centre, and—Greyfriars were one up.

Bernard Forrest sank into a chair with relief. It was something he had hoped for, but never dreamed it would happen so soon. St. Frank's one down! Life seemed to have its joys, after all.

On the field, Handforth picked himself up dolefully.

"Rats!" he grumbled. "How did that happen?"

"It's not a case of how did it happen—it happened, that's all," responded Parkinson. "Still, you did your best, darling!"

K. K. and the rest lined up, and then Boots made a motion to the referee. Everybody understood that. The fifteen minutes was up. In the dressing-room Ralph Leslie Fullwood prepared to get ready to take the field. The players waited patiently for a moment.

In the pavilion there was a bit of a commotion. Someone had just arrived, and immediately all eyes there turned on him. It was Lord Dorrimore.

And whilst all eyes were centred on his lordship, no one noticed a figure tear into the dressing-room, breathless and excited.

Forrest's plans were to receive a great setback in a few seconds!

CHAPTER 6.

Dorrie to the Rescue!

CLAUDE GORE-PEARCE started.

He lowered the binoculars slowly and a frightened look appeared on his fleshy countenance. Then he raised the glasses to his eyes again and stared.

"Yes, by glory, it is!" he muttered to himself. "Gad!" What has happened?"

Claude Gore-Pearce had obtained permission to spend the week-end at his father's large house at Helmford. The cup-final at St. Frank's did not interest him, though much depended upon it. But he knew that Forrest would send the spoof telegram all right, and he was positive in his own mind that nothing would go wrong. St. Frank's would lose, and he and Forrest would benefit in pocket and also be out of debt.

Gore-Pearce had gone up to his bed-room

for something during the afternoon. It was about twenty to two. It struck Gore-Pearce that in another twenty minutes the match at St. Frank's would commence.

Gore-Pearce had unearthed a pair of binoculars and had stared at the surrounding countryside through them from his window. From here one could see for miles. Gore-Pearce had not been much impressed by the view. He wasn't a lover of nature, anyhow. Then his glasses had become focused on a road. This road was long, winding and dusty, and led from Helmford on for some miles to another town. The Gore-Pearce estate was closed in by a high brick wall, and the road passed by a portion of this wall.

Coming from the direction of Helmford along this road at a furious rate was a motor-car. Through the glasses Gore-Pearce saw an individual bent over the wheel. He was about a couple of miles away from the Gore-Pearce estate, but through the glasses Claude got a clear view. And then, as the car began to shoot madly up a rise, the driver's face was revealed.

"Nipper!" gurgled Gore-Pearce.

For some time Gore-Pearce stood gazing incredulously through the binoculars at the approaching car, which was now hidden from view by a hill, and then he dropped the glasses frantically.

His face was livid. He saw, in a flash, what had happened. The scheme had misfired. Nipper was on his way back to St. Frank's. And at the speed he was travelling, Gore-Pearce knew he would just about reach the school in time, especially—and now he gasped—Nipper, surely, would have sent word to the team. The match would, in all probability, be delayed, and St. Frank's, after all, would have a fair chance of winning. And that wouldn't do. St. Franks, somehow, must play without Nipper.

Gore-Pearce awoke to action. He rushed from the room. In a short space of time Nipper would pass along the road by the wall of the estate. He must get there first, and stop him. Somehow, anyhow, but it must be done. He fairly tore from the house, and shot across the grounds towards the wall that overlooked the road. He reached a little wicket gate there, opened it, and passed out into the road. Staring up the road, he breathed a little easier. Nipper was not in sight yet. Faintly, from round a nearby bend in the road, he heard the purring of a car. He might do it yet. Then he saw something else.

Working in the field opposite were two burly men. Gore-Pearce hailed them. They stared.

"Hi, quick!" yelled Gore-Pearce. "Do you want to earn a quid each?"

The men, wondering what was in the wind, but ready to earn a quid each, came up at the double.

Meanwhile, Nipper had topped a rise and was roaring alongside a high wall—the wall of the Gore-Pearce estate, though he didn't know it. There was a bend a little way

ahead. He glanced at the clock on the dashboard. It was a quarter to two. If the match had been delayed, he would arrive in time. He pressed harder on the accelerator and the Rolls-Royce Special leapt forward faster still.

He flashed round the bend, and saw that the wall continued for a short distance. Then his eyes lit up in surprise and alarm. Only a few yards ahead were two men—rough-looking men—standing in the middle of the road, hands outspread. It was impossible to pass them, unless he ran them down. He applied the brakes desperately. The car shrieked in protest, skidded violently, and shot towards the high brick wall.

Cr-a-a-sssh!

With terrific force the front of the car crashed into the wall. There was a shower of flying bricks, and then the car turned turtle.

Gore-Pearce, behind a bordering hedge, went white. It had been on the spur of the moment that he had promised the two men a quid each to stand in the road and stop the oncoming car. He had also swiftly ordered them—on promise of further payment, for these two men were by no means honest workers—to grab the driver and tie him up, and to leave him behind the hedge.

But Gore-Pearce had never reckoned on a crash like this. Then, a second later, he fumed. The two men were running away. Promise of money no longer had any effect on them. They had seen the accident and knew they were responsible. That was enough. They had no wish to appear in a police court on a charge of manslaughter. With one accord, they cleared the hedge and beat a hasty retreat.

Gore-Pearce stared apprehensively at the wrecked car. The next moment he breathed easier again. From the wreckage crawled a figure—bleeding, bruised, but alive. Nipper climbed to his feet, stared about him dazedly, and saw Gore-Pearce. In his anxiety, the cad had moved from behind the hedge. Nipper saw, too, the fleeing men—and like a flash of lightning the truth struck him. Gore-Pearce had been responsible for the crash—in an attempt to prevent his reaching St. Frank's in time for the match. Was Gore-Pearce the hoaxter, then—or was he working hand-in-glove with Forrest?

Nipper made a step forward, whereat the cad of the Remove awoke to life. The funk in him rose to the surface. Nipper must know that he was the culprit. With a low cry of fear, Claude Gore-Pearce turned and ran.

Nipper stared after him grimly.

"The dangerous cad!" he breathed, and then, thinking of the match, he groaned.

Stranded—with a wrecked car. He glanced at his watch. Two o'clock. He had perhaps half an hour yet. But even if he ran to the next town, he could never get a train to Bannington in time, let alone get to St. Frank's.

The sound of an approaching car made him turn. A gleam of hope came into his eyes.

What luck! Then Nipper's eyes goggled. He stared at the driver incredulously.

"Dorrie!" yelled Nipper.

Lord Dorrimore, peer of the Realm, famous explorer, big-game hunter, and founder of the Dorrimore Cup, hopped out of his car immediately.

"Nipper!" he roared. "By the Lord Harry! What's happened, man?" He indicated the wrecked car.

Nipper grabbed Dorrie's arm.

"Dorrie! Can you get me to St. Frank's in half an hour? The cup!" he yelled. "I've been delayed!"

"Same here," grumbled his lordship, and grinned. "Had a tyre burst. I ought to be there inspecting the teams by now. And you—aren't you playing?"

"I'll explain on the way," said Nipper.

Without another word they climbed into the car and started off. It was one of Dorrie's latest racers, and it fairly ate up the miles. On the way Nipper told Dorrie all that had happened. His lordship made no comment—but pressed on the accelerator harder than ever. Nipper then fell silent, and looked at the dashboard. The clock said half-past two.

Bannington was reached, Bellton, and then they roared up the road to St. Frank's. Dorrie fairly shot into the Triangle, which was deserted. They hopped out.

"Bravo, Wharton—bravo!"

"Goal!"

"Hurrah!"

Yells and shouts came from the direction of Little Side. Nipper looked anxious. Was he too late? It sounded like a goal for Greyfriars. Was his place filled?

"You run to the dressing-room, old son!" said Dorrie. "I'll go to the pavilion. It may not be too late yet!"

CHAPTER 7.

Playing The Game!

WALLY FREEMAN patted Ralph Leslie Fullwood on the back.

"Well, out you go, old son," he said. "I know you'll do your best. No man can do more. Good luck!"

Fullwood ran to the door of the dressing-room. Outside, the players were waiting to resume.

Then the unexpected happened. A figure, dirty, dusty, grimy, bleeding in a few places, came tearing into the dressing-room. For a moment Wally and Fullwood stared in wonder at it.

"Nipper!" yelled Fullwood, and at the same time Wally rushed up.

"Good glory, Nipper!" he breathed. "Ye gods and little fishes! There's a chance yet—although we're a goal down. Nipper, you're hurt! Can you play?"

"Try me," said Nipper, and began feverishly to change into footer togs, assisted by Fullwood.



Bruised and bleeding, Nipper dashed into the dressing-room. Was he in time to play for St. Frank's in the Dorrimore Cup Final?

ON the field the game was in progress. The ball had gone out of touch, and Jerry Dodd took the throw-in. Boots' ginger head, rising above the others, cleared the ball out of the cluster of players. K. K., running up, sent it soaring into the Greyfriars' territory. Travers and Bull made a rush for it, and Travers got there first. Twirling on his heel sharply, he raced goalwards. Finding himself tackled, he passed to Gresham, who took the ball on the run and fired in a stinging first-time shot.

The leather sped for the Greyfriars' goal. Squiff jumped, but it was obvious that he would not reach the ball. A goal seemed certain—and then a groan went up from the St. Frank's supporters. A sudden gust of wind sent the whizzing leather upwards, and it struck the crossbar, rebounded and was promptly cleared into touch by Johnny Bull.

"Blow the luck!" growled Handforth, at the other end.

"Hallo, here's Fully!" said K. K., as a figure appeared from the pavilion, and a roar went up from the St. Frank's crowd. The sides would be on even terms now.

"Good egg!" said McClure, and then gave a gasp of amazement. "I say, that's not Fully. 'It's—it's—'"

"It's Nipper!" came a yell from K. K.

Nipper it was. He ran on to the field and reported himself to the referee. Then, amid tremendous enthusiasm, the game continued.

And St. Frank's, encouraged by the return of their skipper, played up whole-heartedly. There was yet a chance to pull the game round.

A ding-dong struggle ensued. St. Frank's attacked furiously, were repulsed, and their opponents launched a furious onslaught which taxed the home defence sorely.

Then, with only ten minutes of the first half remaining, Reggie Pitt received a clever pass from Nipper. Away he sped down the field.

Two opponents rushed at him, but he tricked them neatly. A few more yards, and the Greyfriars' full-back ran forward to tackle. Reggie sent over a perfect centre. Nipper trapped, ran forward, and then shot.

Squiff did his best, but he was not super-human. No goalie on earth could have stopped that terrific shot. There was a whiz as the ball flashed past Field's fingers, and then a mighty yell from the St. Frank's fellows round the ropes.

"Goal!"

"Well played, Nipper!"

"Up the Saints!"

K. K. came running up from the other end of the field, and grabbed Nipper's arm.

"Sweetheart, come to my arms! That was the best shot I've ever seen!"

The players lined up again and the game resumed. No further goals came, and when the half-time whistle blew the score was still one all.

THE second half of that game will go down in St. Frank's history. Nipper played the game of his life, and the rest of the team, inspired by his efforts, backed him up gallantly. They moved like a well-oiled machine. The combination of the forward line reached dazzling heights at time; the defence gave Greyfriars no quarter. Time and again the visitors attacked, and each time they were repulsed.

Gradually St. Frank's gained the upper hand. Greyfriars tired, and the Saints swept everything before them. Yet they could not score. In the visitors' goalmouth Squiff seemed invincible. He was the hero and the saviour of his side. Shot after shot rained in at him, and not one got past him.

St. Frank's fell back. Greyfriars became aggressive once more. A titanic struggle for supremacy began. Time was drawing near; darkness began to fall. Five minutes to go—and still the score was one all.

During a lull in the game Nipper rallied his men for one last great effort. Nobly they responded. St. Frank's were awarded a free kick, Vernon-Smith having got off side. K.K. took the kick and sent the ball soaring up the field. Harry Wharton and Nipper raced for it. The Greyfriars skipper won by the fraction of a second; he made to pass to Bob Cherry—and kicked at thin air. Archie Glenthorne had flashed past like lightning and taken the ball clean from his feet.

"What-ho, laddies," breathed Archie Glenthorne, as he shot away with the leather.

Quickly the St. Frank's forwards followed up. An opposing half-back tackled, but Archie swerved; then he was on again, and, just outside the penalty area, he backheeled. He knew Nipper or one of the others would be behind. This little scheme had been arranged beforehand. Nipper was there—waiting.

He raced up and shot on the run. Squiff, in goal, leaped sideways and just managed to hold the ball. Travers charged at him and, in dodging, the custodian slipped. The ball rolled from his grasp. Johnny Bull attempted to clear, but in his excitement he partially miskicked and only succeeded in ballooning the leather. Up jumped Nipper; with him jumped another Greyfriars defender.

The referee was looking at his watch. He raised his whistle to his lips.

Thud!

Nipper's head had reached the ball and jerked it goalwards. Desperately Squiff tried

to punch it away, but he was just a fraction of a second too late. The ball rolled into the goalmouth—and the whistle shrilled for time. St. Frank's had won in the last second of the game!

Pandemonium broke out, only to become hushed almost immediately. Nipper had collapsed on to the ground as the ball entered the net. Dimly he saw the figures of his team-mates bearing down upon him. The whole field seemed to be spinning round. The hectic events of the day had been too much for him: his mad dash from London, the crash, the excitement of the match. Everything—the players, the field, the spectators—disappeared as in a mist. Then came darkness. Nipper had fainted!

NIPPER soon came to, and he was escorted in triumph to the pavilion, where Lord Dorrimore, after a congratulatory speech, handed him the cup amid terrific cheers.

Thus ended the final between St. Frank's and Greyfriars for the Dorrimore Cup. St. Frank's had won—in spite of Gore-Pearce's and Forrest's scheming.

As for those two cads, they were duly dealt with.

When Gore-Pearce returned from Helmford, considerably uneasy, the Remove pounced upon him. And, under their fire of accusations, Gore-Pearce told all, and thus incriminated Forrest.

Nipper dealt adequately with them both. That was why Mr. Crowell, the Remove Form-master, for several days to come, noticed that Forrest and Gore-Pearce both had puffed eyes, swollen noses and other marks of assault about them. Nipper, too, so Mr. Crowell observed, had a considerably sore set of knuckles. But then, Mr. Crowell was a sport. He easily put two and two together, and that was all he did.

Forrest and Gore-Pearce, quite justifiably found themselves in Coventry, but it wasn't this, nor their battering at the hands of Nipper, that worried them.

For there was a little matter of money to be settled with two very unpleasant characters. About this, there is a little shadow of mystery. Whether they still owe the money or not is unknown, but the fact remains that both Forrest and Gore-Pearce are still at St. Frank's. It is possible, however, that they managed to smooth the matter over.

Perhaps they raised the money. Or perhaps their debtors did not relish an interview with the headmaster, seeing that that person was a famous detective, and likely to make it hot for them for leading St. Frank's pupils into bad ways.

THE END.

(Coming next Wednesday: "K. K.'s Birthday Party!"—a sidesplitting long complete yarn featuring the chcery chums of St. Frank's.)

A Lively Yarn That'll Keep You Laughing!



BOUNCER BILLY BAXTER

boasts that he'll invite
a real live rajah to
Ginger's birthday party
—and has his work cut
out to do it!



Billy Makes a Promise!

THAT'S what I said to the Duke of Mangel-Wurzel," remarked Billy Baxter to his friends, Fatty Hart and Ginger Jones. "'Jimmy,' I said, 'your castle is all right from the outside; but inside it's too damp to be healthy.'"

The three inseparables were walking leisurely down the High Street on their way home from school. They had been discussing ancient castles, when Billy, who seemed to know practically all the dukes, earls and lords in the land, had just passed the above remark.

"Garn!" said Ginger Jones in tones which contained no doubt about his disbelief. "I don't suppose you ever spoke to a duke in your life, Billy Baxter!"

This was rank mutiny, and Billy began to wonder if he had overstepped the bounds.

"Never spoken to a duke!" he exclaimed with a grin of amusement. "Why, I've spoken to dozens—and don't think I'm boasting about it. Dukes," added Billy contemptuously, "are practically nothing!"

This was certainly going some. Fatty Hart obviously found it hard to credit, although he said nothing. But the effect on Ginger was different. He had been given some extra homework for inattention in class and he was feeling rather peeved. He sneered openly.

"Ain't they now?" he responded with heavy sarcasm. "I suppose you'll be telling us next that you've played dominoes with Royalty."

Billy stared admiringly at his friend.

"Why, Ginger, has somebody been telling you about that game, or did you just guess it?"

This took the wind completely out of Ginger's sails. He and Fatty stared at Billy. Billy himself very wisely said nothing further, leaving his friends with the impression that he had actually had a game of dominoes with Royalty. He was now racking his brain to recollect a high-sounding foreign title that would impress even Ginger.

Presently he got it. In the paper that morning there had been mention of an Eastern potentate, the Rajah or something of Nunpoki, who was on a visit to this country. The rajah had brought with him his entire retinue, and was travelling throughout the countryside studying British customs. He was reputed to be tremendously wealthy, and in this Billy saw his chance to be really startling.

"As far as I can remember," he said casually, "the best game I ever had with Royalty was the time I played shoveha'penny with the Nabob of Nunpoki. I just managed to win that game by the skin of my teeth. The nabob was so delighted with the game that he wanted to give me a medal of diamonds worth millions of pounds."

"Ho, ho!" laughed Ginger mirthlessly. "And I suppose you refused it?"

Billy nodded.

"I did," he agreed. "You see, if you take any jewels from a nabob it's ten to one you

have a secret society after you, and they gradually kill every one of your family. Well, I had to think of mother and dad. So I refused it."

Both his friends pondered over this point of view in silence, and Billy could see that even Ginger Jones was beginning to believe him, while Fatty's admiration shone so clearly in his eyes that it almost dazzled him.

They continued along the High Street without speaking until presently they drew near Bynville Station.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Ginger Jones. "Looks as if there's been an accident or something!"

This was in reference to the fact that there was a large crowd gathered outside the station. But as they drew nearer it was obvious that it wasn't anything in the nature of an accident. Three large cars were drawn up at the kerb, and the people were on their tiptoes in order to see something that was taking place inside the station.

The three pals made several attempts to push their way through the crowd, but they were thrown back each time.

Billy, however, soon had an idea, and presently the three friends were standing on the ledge of a station window, clinging to the wire netting protection, and gazing over the heads of the crowd.

They had hardly reached this point of vantage when there was a commotion among the crowd and an excited whisper went round.

"Here he comes!"

At that moment two tall Hindus in white turbans came out of the station. They moved swiftly and quietly to the first car, one opened the door and stood to attention, the other took his stand opposite him in the same attitude.

No sooner had they done this than attention was again directed towards the station entrance. Two men were coming out. One was a little stout man in European clothes and turban, a flashing smile on his brown face. Jewels flashed in his headgear, and as he raised his hand in acknowledgment of the cheering crowd, rings sparkled on his fingers.

His companion Billy Baxter & Co. easily recognised as the Mayor of Bynville. Behind the pair came several other turbaned Hindu gentlemen and some members of the town council. The whole party immediately got into the waiting cars and drove off amid further cheers from the crowd.

"I wonder who he is?" asked Fatty.

Billy said nothing. He had a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach, and when an old lady who had overheard Fatty's question answered him, his worst fears were realised.

"That's the Rajah of Nunpoki," said the old lady. "He's laying the foundation stone of the new hospital on Saturday afternoon."

The old lady passed on her way quite unconscious of the distress that her innocent

information had caused. Fatty and Ginger were staring hard at Billy. Fatty's face plainly showed his disappointment and a little pain; Ginger's face showed disgust.

"Well!" said Ginger firmly. "That certainly shows you up, Billy Baxter. So you and the Nabob of Nunpoki are great friends, eh? And you didn't even know he was coming to Bynville!"

"Who said I didn't know he was coming?" asked Billy. He spoke desperately, for it was a desperate moment. "Of course I did. But do you think I'm the kind of fellow to go around telling everybody my friends' business?"

There was something to be said for this attitude, and the others were silent for a moment while they thought it over. But Billy knew that he wasn't very convincing, and what was worse, he couldn't think of anything that would make it convincing.

Moreover, there was a light in Ginger's eyes that boded no good. For Ginger had just had an idea. It was Ginger's birthday on Saturday, and he was celebrating the occasion with a party at his house.

"Listen, Billy," he said eagerly. "Why don't you invite him to my party on Saturday?"

Billy staggered a little.

"Aw, have some sense, Ginger!" he said. "What interest would a rajah have in your party?"

"Well, I thought being a friend of yours——"

Ginger did not finish the sentence, but what he insinuated was enough. Billy Baxter saw that he was properly up against it this time. His reputation was in danger.

"Oh, all right!" he said resignedly. "The Rajah of Nunpoki will be at your blessed party. It's a promise."

"Good old Billy!" said the faithful Fatty.

Billy Pays a Visit:

BILLY'S acquaintance with Eastern nabobs was not a very great one, but one point at least gave him no doubt.

Rajah's do not attend the birthday parties of any schoolboy who finds the courage to ask them. On the contrary, Billy had an idea that the mere asking would probably send the rajah into such a rage that he would order his—Billy's—immediate execution or put him through some nice torture.

However, it had to be done. Other than asking him, there was no other way he could think of to get the rajah to Ginger's birthday party, and unless the rajah attended that festive occasion Billy's reputation wouldn't be worth a button.

Matters were made more desperate for Billy by the fact that, as usual, Fatty and Ginger had not kept the great news to themselves. It seemed to Billy Baxter that the whole village was watching him, waiting for him to visit the Rajah of Nunpoki.

He kept putting off the intended visit, his nerve failing him every time, but on Friday



The huge Hindu gave Billy a push which sent him tumbling down the stairs head over heels.

evening, after tea, he encountered Fatty and Ginger in the High Street. His two friends were full of anxious questions about the rajah's visit.

"Have you seen him yet, Billy?" asked Ginger.

"I'm on my way now," responded Billy casually. "I'm not waiting long, though. Friday night is always a busy night with the rajah. It's his bath night, you know."

"Do you mind if we come along with you, Billy?" asked Fatty, as Billy started on his way.

Billy groaned inwardly, but there was the usual grin on his face as he nodded his head.

"But remember," he warned them, "you must stay outside the hotel. The rajah is very nervous about strangers. Always somebody trying to take his life, you know."

Fatty and Ginger readily promised to remain outside the hotel, and with Billy sending up a silent prayer and a hope for the best, they set off briskly to the Bynville Hotel, where the Rajah of Nunpoki was staying.

Despite their promise, Billy's two friends managed to persuade him on the way that standing in the hotel lounge was much the same as standing outside the hotel, and as

the commissionaire happened to be absent at the moment no one stopped their entry. Leaving Fatty and Ginger to occupy a comfortable settee, Billy strode boldly up the elegantly carpeted stairway.

He had no idea where the rajah's suite would be, but guessing that with such a large retinue he would probably require a whole floor, Billy believed that he would easily find the rajah's rooms.

In a way he was not disappointed. He was about to ascend the flight of stairs which led to the fourth and last floor when there was a slight movement behind him. A strong hand gripped his neck and jerked his head round quickly. Billy found himself gazing into the face of a tall, fierce-eyed Hindu.

"What are you doing here?" demanded the man tersely in excellent English.

Billy gurgled a little. The fellow was almost choking him. And Billy observed for the first time that in his other hand the Hindu held a wickedly-looking, curved sword.

"I want to see the rajah," gasped Billy. "Why?"

The query was shot out so fiercely that for a moment or two Billy was too startled to answer.

"Why?" demanded the Hindu again.

"I want to ask him to a birthday party," replied Billy.

Even as he spoke he realised how tame that explanation must sound to the man. Asking the Rajah of Nunpoki to a birthday party. It was too absurd. It was no wonder therefore, that the Hindu guard's eyes narrowed and his grip tightened about Billy's neck.

He made a swift upward movement with his sword that caused Billy to groan, but when he was about to strike the man suddenly thought better of his action.

"Pah!" he muttered disgustedly, sheathing his sword with a dexterous movement. "Who are these blunderers that they employ boys as their hired assassins?"

"Listen, mister," began Billy protestingly, roused at the suggestion that he was an assassin.

"Silence, fool!" almost hissed the other. "Go back to your cowardly masters and tell them to beware. The watchful eyes of Nunpoki see everything!"

"But, mister——"

The Hindu didn't wait to hear what Billy had to say about the matter. Still gripping his captive firmly by the neck, he hauled him down the stairs until they reached the first floor. There the Hindu gave a violent push which sent Billy rolling and bumping painfully down the remaining stairs. He came to rest in the lounge almost at the feet of the startled Fatty and Ginger.

"What's wrong, Billy?" gasped Fatty anxiously.

"What do you mean?" asked Billy aggrievedly, as he picked himself up slowly. "Do you see anything wrong?"

"Why did that fellow throw you downstairs?"

"Oh, you mean Eustace!" said Billy carelessly. "That's an old Hindu custom called speeding the parting guest."

"And did you see the rajah?"

"In a way I did," said Billy evasively. "He was taking his bath, just as I thought. But he'll be at your party all right, Ginger. He told me to tell you to be sure to have some apple-tart."

"We shall," responded Ginger enthusiastically. "I'll tell ma as soon as we get home."

Billy Meets the Rajah!

BILLY BAXTER'S reputation had been in some pretty tight corners in its time, but it seemed to him that this was the tightest of them all. He couldn't see a way out of the fix at all.

On Saturday morning he avoided his pals, and while everybody was at the opening of the new hospital in the afternoon, Billy Baxter was sitting in his room staring at the grate. Try as he did, he could find no solution to the matter, and as evening came, and the time for Ginger's party was due, Billy grew really desperate.

"There's only one thing for it," he decided

grimly at last. "I'll have to make another attempt to see the rajah."

This time he did not enter the hotel by the front entrance, but went round to the rear. For while the main staircase was guarded there was a chance that the fire-escape had been forgotten.

Reaching the fourth floor, Billy cautiously opened the door and peeped into the passage.

For a moment Billy thought the landing was empty, but presently his heart gave a thump. Squatting with folded arms and crossed legs outside a door along the passage were two Hindu guards!

This was an unexpected set-back, and Billy was thinking that there was nothing to do but retire when something curious in the attitude of the two men arrested his attention. Their heads were bent forward on their chests, and they were breathing heavily.

"Goshoo!" exclaimed Billy joyously. "They're asleep! This must be my lucky night!"

He tiptoed towards them with great caution, and presently he had his hand on the door-handle.

It was then that Billy's luck seemed to desert him. The door was locked. And just as he was looking to see if any of the guards carried keys he heard a door opening farther along the passage.

It was not a moment for hesitation. Billy darted to the next door, and by good fortune it was not locked. As he passed into the room he had a glimpse of two Hindus in European clothes coming out of a room on the other side of the landing.

Further shocks awaited Billy. The men came directly towards the room into which he had escaped, and he had hardly time to hide behind a couch when they entered the room.

"You should have killed him," one of the men was saying.

Billy shuddered. Had they seen him? Were they talking about him?

"Such things are not done in this country," said the other. "And besides, what would be the use?"

"It would give us satisfaction."

"Pah!" retorted his companion. "There is only one satisfaction that will please me. Let us search this room."

"Wait!" put in the first speaker. "I have an idea. Let us try the bath-room. Is that not an obvious place we have forgotten?"

To Billy's relief, for he had no doubt that the satisfaction referred to by the second man was torture, the other agreed to this suggestion, and the two men passed into the rajah's room by the communicating door. When they had gone Billy rose carefully and tiptoed to the door, which was partly open.

(Continued on page 50.)

Follow Dick Forrester Along the Highway of Adventure!

Knights of the Road!



(For opening chapters see page 45.)

**A Romance
of Olden
Times.**

**By
DAVID
GOODWIN.**

A Tempting Rascal!

DICK put Turpin's message in his pocket, and then cantered away, for the dusk was growing. The lights of the little hamlet of Calthorpe twinkled before him, after half an hour's ride, about a mile from the hill on which the old Grange stood. Dick knew the house well, having already spent a night there. It was an empty but strong and well-preserved old manor-house of Tudor times, and its owner, having another seat a couple of miles away, did not inhabit it. It was very lonely, and had the usual reputation of being haunted, but that was a matter Dick did not care a straw for.

"Trust Turpin for knowing a snug refuge!" thought Dick, as he drew rein at the Three Crowns in the village. "I will dine here on such fare as they can give me, and ride on to the Grange by ten."

Dick looked to Black Satan's wants, and then, leaving the black horse saddled in the stable, entered the inn and called for the best they had. The Three Crowns was a poor place, in spite of its high-sounding name; but the landlord, impressed by Dick's clothes and bearing, managed to set a very fair meal before him. But more than once, as he dined, he caught sight of someone peeping at him behind the door.

**His fortune and estates returned
to him if he turns traitor—what
does young Dick Forrester do?**

"Turpin mentioned this house as a safe haven," said Dick to himself as he took the armchair by the fire after dinner, "but there is surely some plaguey curious person who is taking a good deal of interest in me."

Dick was feeling too comfortable to shift his quarters. But as he was a little suspicious after what he had seen, he placed one of his pistols on a chair beside him, out of sight from the door, and took his ease.

Having been in the saddle all the night before, he was more than a little weary, and gradually he sank into a sort of half-doze. He did not fall asleep, but remained dreamily conscious of outside events.

Presently the door opened noiselessly, and in stole a little dapper man with damp black hair that lay across his forehead in snaky streaks, and two little twinkling eyes that seemed to cover all the room in a glance. He looked at Dick, and then came quietly up and sat down opposite, to find Dick's eyes wide open and fixed on him.

"Are you Dick Forrester?" whispered the stranger.

Dick's hand dropped on the butt of the pistol beside him.

"No need for that," said the little man, winking slyly. "I do not come as an enemy, but as a friend."

"Indeed?" said Dick. He looked the man over, but could not quite place him. He might have been a seedy sort of attorney's clerk or a bagman.

"A friend!" said the little man. "I have come to make you an offer. Is it your wish to be quits with your uncle, Mr. Vane Forrester, now of Fernhall?"

Dick sat up in his chair.

"What is that to you?" he asked suspiciously.

"Tut, tut!" said the little man. "Tut, tut, my dear sir! No offence. It is my business to know people's affairs, and I have come to you with a proposition. Would you not like to win back Fernhall—the noble estates and fortune that should have come to you from your father, but which your Uncle Vane has possession of?"

"I should, indeed," said Dick dryly. "Do you see any prospect of that same?"

"An excellent prospect, my dear sir—an excellent prospect!" said the little man, rubbing his hands, perhaps a little disappointed that Dick did not show more eagerness. "I may say a certainty, if you will do me a small service in return."

"And am I to believe," said Dick, peering at the man, "that you are able to bring all this about? You seem to know something of my affairs, but I have never seen you before."

"But I have seen you, sir!" chuckled the little man. "I can do all I promised."

"What do you want from me in return?"

"I will tell you," said the stranger. "You are acquainted with Richard Turpin, the famous outlaw. You have been seen in his company."

"Well, what then?"

The little man reached forward and tapped Dick on the knee.

"Deliver him into our hands, and I will restore you to your estates and fortune."

There was dead silence for nearly a minute, during which Dick stared straight into the eyes of the damp-haired stranger.

"Is that your price?" said Dick at last.

"That is our price," said the little man.

"It will be no loss to you, and you will regain all you have lost."

"Let us understand one another exactly," said Dick. "If I betray Turpin into your custody, my uncle is to be deprived of the estates he has wrongfully taken possession of, and they are to be returned to me. There is a difficulty to begin with. I am an outlaw, with a price on my head."

"It is part of the bargain, sir," said the little man, "that you shall receive a free pardon."

"Indeed?" said Dick. "Then, allowing that, how do you propose to oust my uncle from his ill-gotten possessions? By process of law?"

"Ah, we should leave that to you, sir," said the little man, rubbing his hands again. "We shall pay you a thousand guineas the very hour the man Turpin is in our possession, and you will do the rest. You will

see that with a free pardon and a thousand guineas it will be no hard matter to turn your uncle out. It is your outlawry that ties your hands at present. Is it not so?"

"You say truly," said Dick. "Had I a free pardon and a thousand guineas I would not long be out of Fernhall."

"We will bind ourselves to get you both in return for the apprehension of Turpin," said the stranger.

"What do you mean by 'we'?" asked Dick.

"I am acting for a personage of great rank and position," said the little man, "who is easily able to procure these things. A very great personage indeed, and you will readily understand that I must not so much as breathe his name even to you. At any rate, not yet."

"Make up your mind, sir," said Dick dryly, "that I will have nothing to do with it till you tell me his name, great or small. How else can I be sure that he is able to fulfil his bargain?"

"If you must know, sir, it is my lord the Marquis of Malmaison, who, I need not tell you, is second to none in northern England. He has great influence, and can procure a pardon with ease. Why, sir, if he desired a king's pardon for Beelzebub himself, he has but to ask for it!"

"Very likely," said Dick. "But why should Malmaison pay such a price to secure Richard Turpin?"

"The outlaw has done my lord a most grievous and scurvy wrong, sir," said the little man, "and the marquis will spare no pains or expense to secure him. My lord told me with his own lips that he would never rest till he saw Turpin swinging from the gallows upon Blackheath. I am in Lord Malmaison's confidence, and I may say the credit of this plan is due to me."

"And great credit it does you," said Dick, eyeing the little man thoughtfully.

"I think so, sir; indeed, I know that you can deliver Turpin to us, if you will. Come, is it a bargain? Do but this one thing, and from a hunted outlaw, scorned by all, you become once more a landed gentleman, with wealth and fortune and honour."

"Egad!" said Dick, leaping to his feet. "I should be an ass to refuse, and there's no time like the present! What say you? Need we delay?"

"Why, no, sir!" cried the little man. "The sooner the better!"

Boxed!

"IN three hours' time I will bring you Turpin himself," said Dick, "and you shall do what you will with him. There is one firm condition I make! Lord Malmaison himself must come forward, and take some part in this—'tis a warrant of his good faith."

"I doubt, sir," murmured the man. "My lord will not care to expose himself to any danger. This Turpin is a perilous fellow."

"My lord need not appear till after the prisoner is secured," said Dick. "He shall have a safe hiding-place. Failing his presence, I will have nothing to do with the plot. He must be there to fulfil my bargain."

"Well, I think I may promise his attendance," said the little man, "for he will be right glad to see his enemy's capture and humiliation, provided his person is safe."

"I will look after my lord's safety myself," said Dick. "Oh, be assured he shall have my full attention! And now, sir, have you settled upon any special plan for the capture of the outlaw?"

"Why, sir, I thought that were best left to you, for you know the fellow's ways. I shall provide five smart and sturdy rufflers, all well armed, with ready pistols. We prefer to take him alive, you understand; but if not—why, a bullet shall make sure of him."

"'Tis always well to make sure of such a fellow as Turpin," said Dick. "Then do you bring your armed men to Old Grange, upon the hill yonder, at half-past nine o' the clock this very night. In the west front room, as you may know, are three large, deep, oaken chests. Now, the one thing necessary is to take Turpin unawares, for he is a marvellous quick fighter and slippery as an eel; and should he be ready for your men, one or two of them may be sore hurt before they take him."

"He must be taken by surprise, of course. What better hiding-place than those chests, Mr. Forrester?"

"Well thought of!" said Dick. "Let your five men hide in the chests, and burst out suddenly when I bring Turpin into the room and give the signal. I shall at once escape, for he is likely to empty his first pistol into me when he finds himself betrayed. Your five men will be upon him before he can make any resistance, and bind him fast; or better, put a bullet through him. As for my lord, he can hide upstairs where he will be safe till the capture is made."

"An excellent plan!" cried the little man. "I see I have done well to secure your aid, sir. I will be there with my lord and the men before half-past nine."

"And I will show you the hiding-places

and make all ready," said Dick. "I will deliver Turpin into your hands by ten o' the clock. The pledge of the pardon and the thousand guineas in gold must be mine before half-past ten."

"They shall be in your hands ere that!" said the man. "A thousand thanks, good sir. And now I must hasten for there is none too much time to make my preparations. 'Tis a rare fruit we shall pluck for the gibbet this night!"

With a low bow he turned and hastened away. When he had gone Dick sat long in the armchair, staring pensively into the heart of the fire.

THE moon shone coldly on the white snow that covered the ground, and the walls and gables of Old Grange stood up black and forbidding against the sky. A low wind moaned and whispered among the shrubberies, and the place looked utterly desolate and forgotten.

In the darkness of the west front room a stout, flashy man, clad in rich cloth and lace, and shivering slightly in the cold, sat on the edge of the table and drummed impatiently with his fingers, muttering to himself. Standing up were half a dozen big, powerful-looking men armed to the teeth. And at the window, peering out into the night, was the little man who had come to the Three Crowns.

A step was heard in the hall, and Dick Forrester entered, debonair and careless as ever, save that a pistol-butt poked from each pocket of his riding-cloak. The little man at the window hurried to meet him.

"My lord," he said obsequiously to the stout man, "this is Richard Forrester, who will deliver the man Turpin into your hands. Mr. Forrester, I present you to the most noble the Marquis of Malmaison."

Dick bowed courteously to Malmaison, who raised his chin and greeted him with a haughty stare.

"You pledge yourself to deliver this outlaw into my custody?" he asked.

"I pledge myself to bring him into this room within the hour," said Dick; "but first, my lord, I shall be glad in my turn of some pledge that you will provide me with the pardon and the thousand guineas."

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. 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 is rescued by his brother, who takes him to St. Anstell's College, where he is known as Fernhall. Dirkley, the school sneak, discovers the secret. He tells Dr. Trelawney, the headmaster, who, however, because he is indebted to Dick for a service, takes no action. Dirkley himself is carried away by gipsies at Dick's request. The young highwayman receives a note from Turpin, arranging a meeting at the Old Grange, on Calthorpe Hill.

(Now read on.)

"You have my word," said the marquis, "and these five men and my attorney are witnesses to it."

"That, of course, is sufficient from an honourable nobleman," said Dick.

"And now," said Malmaison uneasily, "as the time draws near, take me to this place of vantage where I may wait while the plaguey knave is secured."

Dick bowed again, and led the marquis upstairs. He opened the door of a roomy cupboard, and advised Malmaison to step in. His lordship did so with alacrity, glancing at his timepiece the while.

burst out and secure him. But if you value your lives, do not peep out or attempt to raise the lids of the chests as much as a twentieth of an inch from now till then, or he will be off like a will o' the wisp, and good-bye to your hopes of reward!"

"Ay!" said the leader of the men. "D'ye hear, boys? Not the wink of an eyelid till you hear the signal. Then we'll bash the knave and truss him for the gallows!"

With coarse laughter the men stowed themselves in the iron-bound chests, two in each, the last man hiding alone in the third chest.

The man came forward and stood obsequiously before Dick. "I have an offer to make you," he said slowly.



"Ay, it is close on the hour," said Dick. "If you value your safety, my lord, on no account attempt to open the door till I call to you, for this Turpin is a terrible fellow, and there is no knowing what he may be at."

The marquis tried to put on a bold front, but he trembled somewhat at the knees as Dick closed the cupboard door on him. When this was done he quietly shot the bolt. Then he went downstairs.

"Into those chests with you," he said to the five armed retainers, "and when I enter the room with this Turpin have your weapons ready. When you hear me say loudly: 'Now, Turpin, share up, my bully boy!'

"This is mighty fine, so far," said the little attorney nervously, "but what is to become of me? I will be riding homewards; there is no need for me to stay."

"Nay, you may meet Turpin on the way, and if so you will have a pistol at your head, and none to protect you," said Dick. "There is a cupboard on the upper floor that will just hold you in safety and comfort."

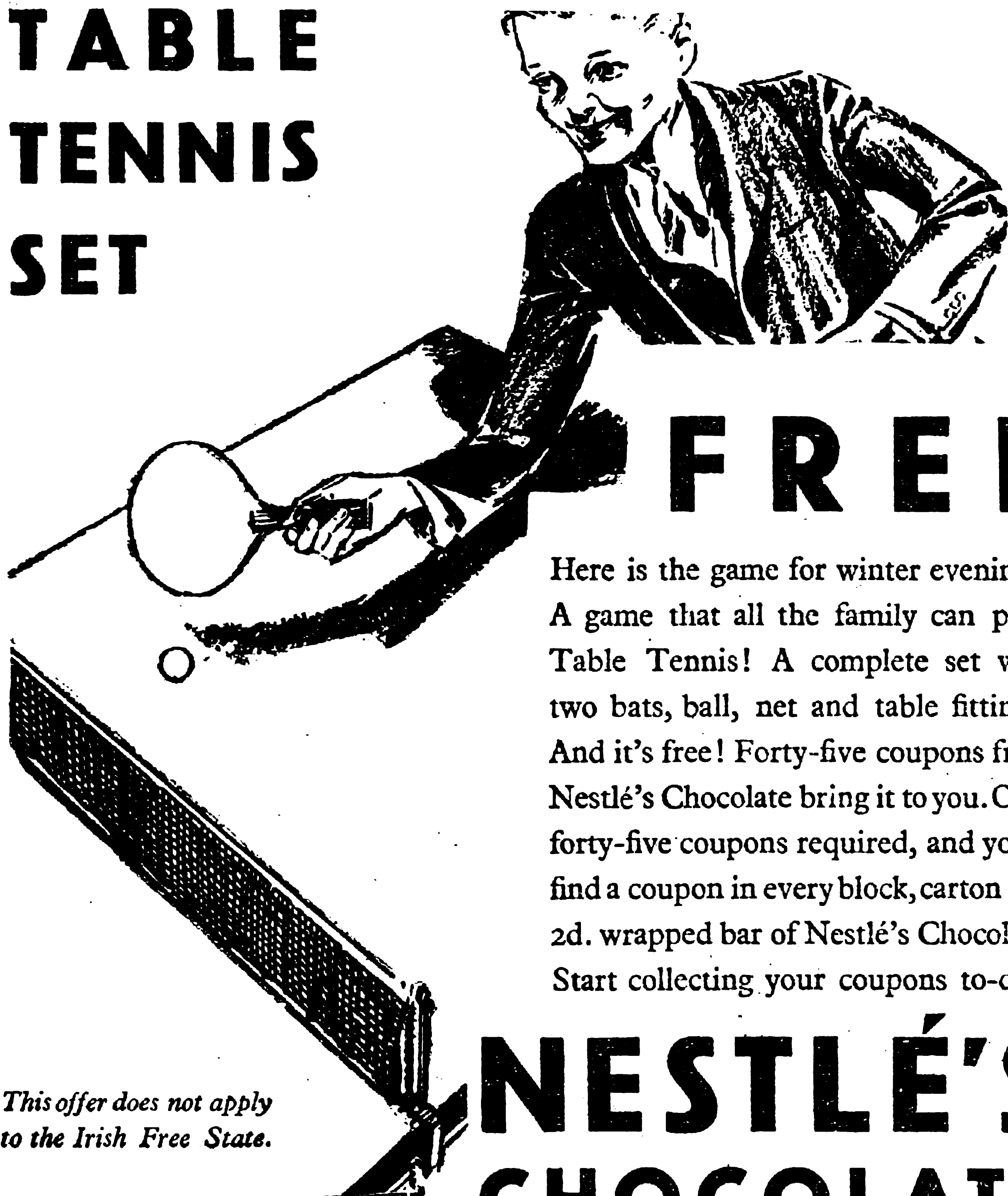
He stowed the little man in a press upstairs, descended again, and bent over the first of the three chests.

"All well within?" he inquired.

"Ay, right enough," said a muffled voice inside.

(Continued on page 48.)

TABLE TENNIS SET

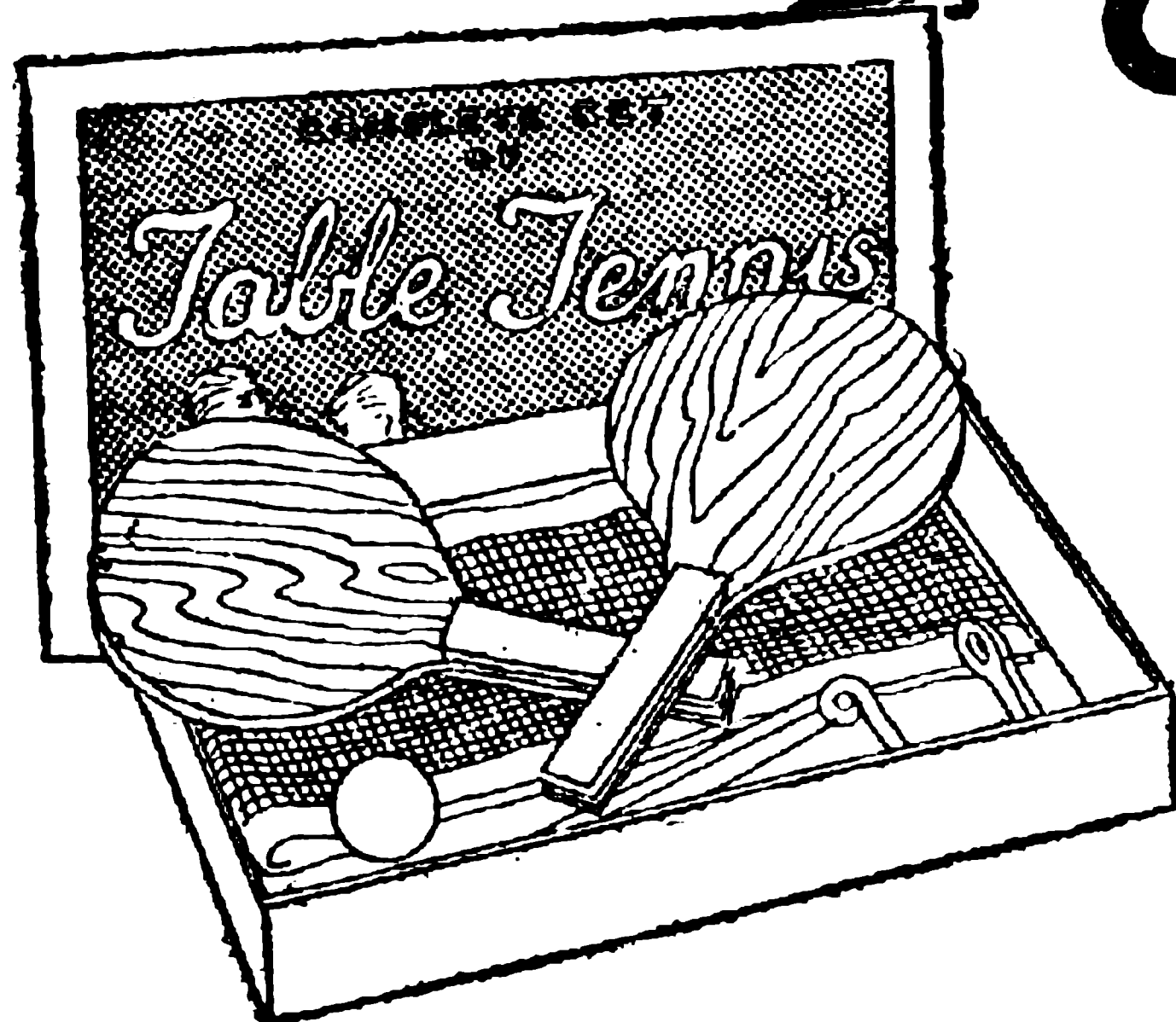


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KNIGHTS OF THE ROAD!

(Continued from page 46.)

"By my faith you are!" murmured Dick to himself as carelessly and noiselessly he shut the great iron hasp over its staple, and without a sound turned the pin that fastened it. He put the same question and did the same thing to the other chests, and stole out of the room.

Scoundrels Surprised!

TEN minutes later, as Dick Forrester rode up the snow-clad slope among the pine-trees, looking about him keenly, he saw a horseman approaching, and drew back among the trees. It was his old comrade who approached. Just as Black Bess and her rider came abreast of him, Dick spurred out across the outlaw's path.

"Stand and deliver!" he cried, laughing.

"'Od's blood, Dick, is that you?" said Turpin. "Never play such a fool's trick as that in the dark, boy; another second and I should have emptied my pistols into you!"

"Then keep the charges in them, and see well to the priming, for you may need them shortly!" said Dick. "Turpin, would you put your value as high as a thousand guineas?"

"What new jape is this?" said the outlaw, grinning.

"I am offered that sum to give you up," said Dick, "and a free pardon besides. What think you of the bargain?"

"A better offer than I'm ever likely to get for you!" grunted Turpin.

"I have made all the arrangements," said Dick. "My men are ambushed, and you will be clever indeed if you can give them the slip." And with that he told his comrade all that had happened since he dined at the Three Crowns.

"I thank my lucky star," said Turpin, "that yonder attorney lit upon a gentleman by mistake. I know no other comrade who would not have sold me at the price, and the trap is so neatly set there were not a chink to crawl out by! Dick, your hand once again!"

And never did the two outlaws grip more warmly.

"But a truce to sentiment!" said Dick. "Let us get to business and deal with those knaves. One thing I must claim—they are my prisoners. There shall be no blood-letting."

"Oh, if you choose!" said Turpin. "I was never of the bloodthirsty sort, though a bullet apiece would make them surer. But I shall deal with Malmaison myself."

"Come then," said Dick. "I have fastened them all securely, and the fiend himself could not get out of those chests. What grudge has Malmaison against you, Turpin?"

"Grudge!" cried Turpin. "Why, the villain owes me more guineas than I am ever likely to see—a fat booty! I was leagued with him in a great pillage on the Border last year, for you must know that the fellow, though of high rank, has squandered his

Hours and Hour of Sheer Enjoyment—

revenues so far that he resorts to very dirty ways of filling his coffers. He put this plunder in my way, arranging that a banker's coach with its bullion should fall into my hands. I did the dirty work and faced the danger, and then he robbed me of my share of the booty, all but a few guineas, and refused to divide. I swore to be even with him, and, knowing I keep my word, he hatched this plot to get quit of me."

"And my grudge against him is that he thought I was as vile a knave as himself, and would sell my comrade for money," said Dick. "But here we are at the door of the ambushed room. Watch while I give the signal, and you will see some sport!"

Turpin cocked his ear expectantly, a sly grin on his face, and the two walked into the room talking as they went.

"Forrester, my boy," said Turpin, nudging Dick, and speaking loudly, "I have left my pistols in the holsters. Before we divide our booty it were better I went back and fetched them. Wait here for me, comrade."

"Nay," replied Dick, following his lead, "you will not need them, and I have mine. There is no safer house than this in all the county."

"I am blithe to hear it," said Turpin, "for in truth I am not too easy in this neighbourhood. My Lord Malmaison lives not far away, and we are at loggerheads, he and I. A very muddy-minded and treacherous rogue is that same Malmaison, Dick; no better indeed than his own rascally retainers, whom he has set to persecute me when I come hereabouts."

"Ah," said Dick, "very knavish fellows, no doubt!"

"As villainous and as unwashed a set of louts as any in England!" replied Turpin, winking. "A cowardly, skulking, chicken-robbing, dog-stealing set of gaol-birds as ever disgraced a country."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Dick. "Very like, Turpin, very like! But now, Turpin, share up, my bully boy!"

The moment the words were out of his mouth there was a loud thump under the lids of all three chests, a scuffle, and a chorus of smothered oaths. Then, finding themselves fastened in, the hidden retainers became panic-stricken and banged their heads against the lids in their efforts to get out.

"Treachery!" they yelled. "Help! We are betrayed!"

Turpin and Dick leaned against the wall and laughed till their sides ached. Howls and bellows came from the chests, that rocked where they stood with the struggles of the inmates, till the lighter of the three fell right over on its side. But the solid oak tops and stout fastenings held firm. Then, gathering their wits together, the boxed-up prisoners ceased their outcry and became silent, waiting anxiously what might befall them.

(What will the two highwaymen do to their enemies? Don't fail to read next week's exciting chapters, lads.)

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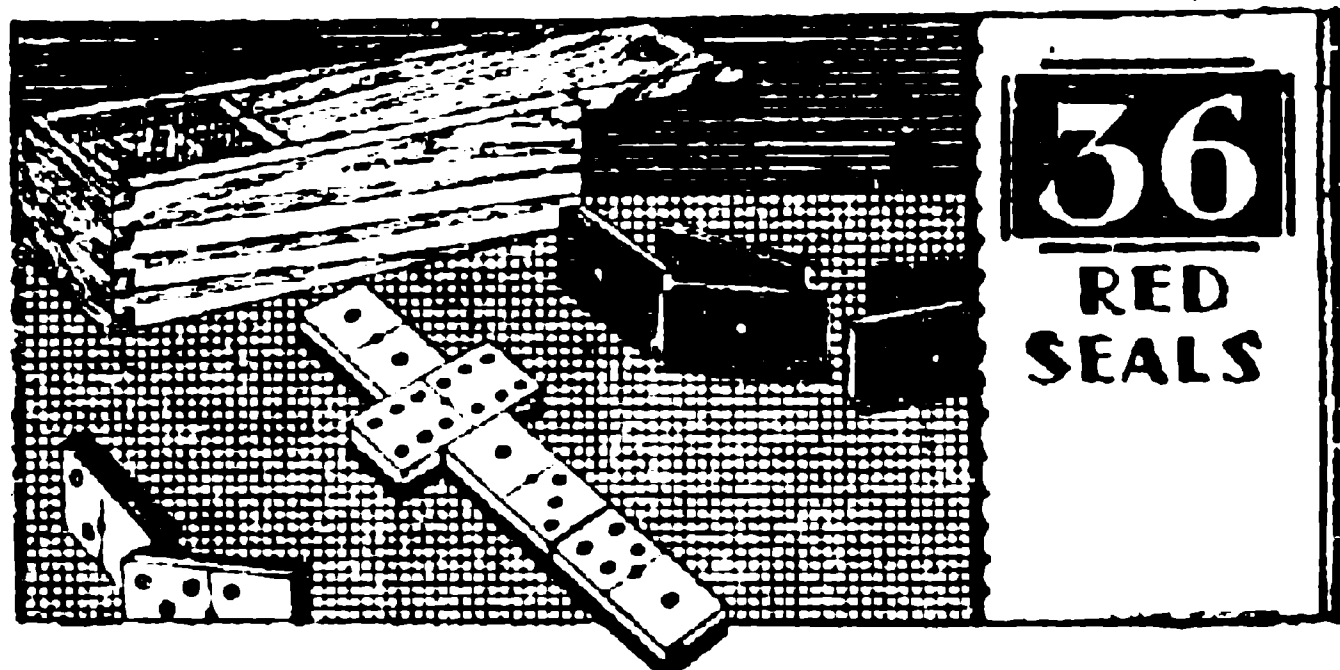
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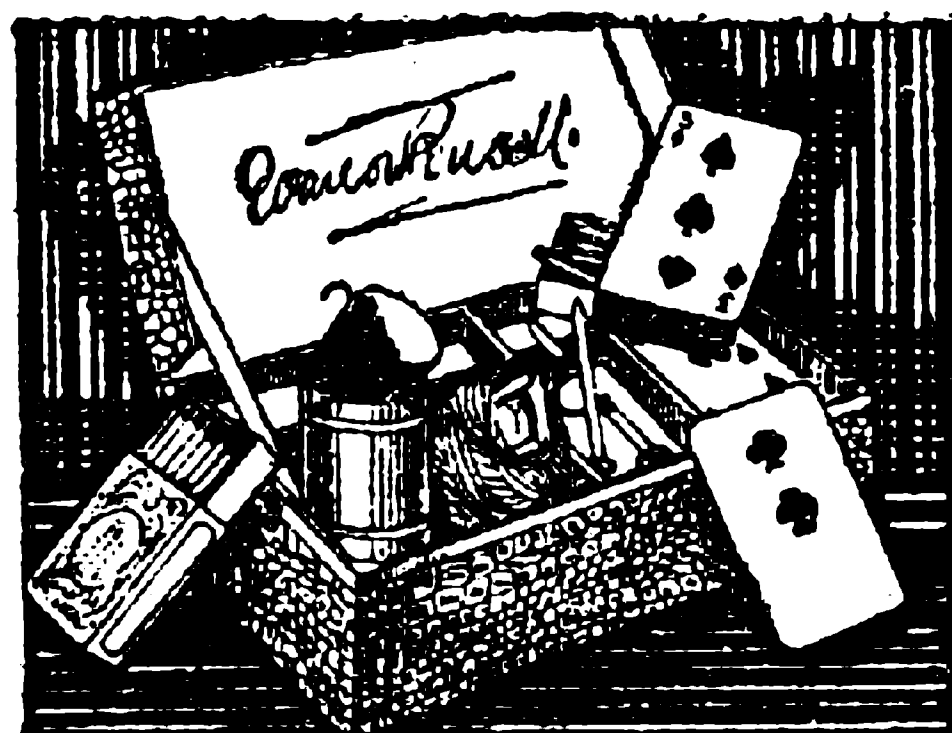
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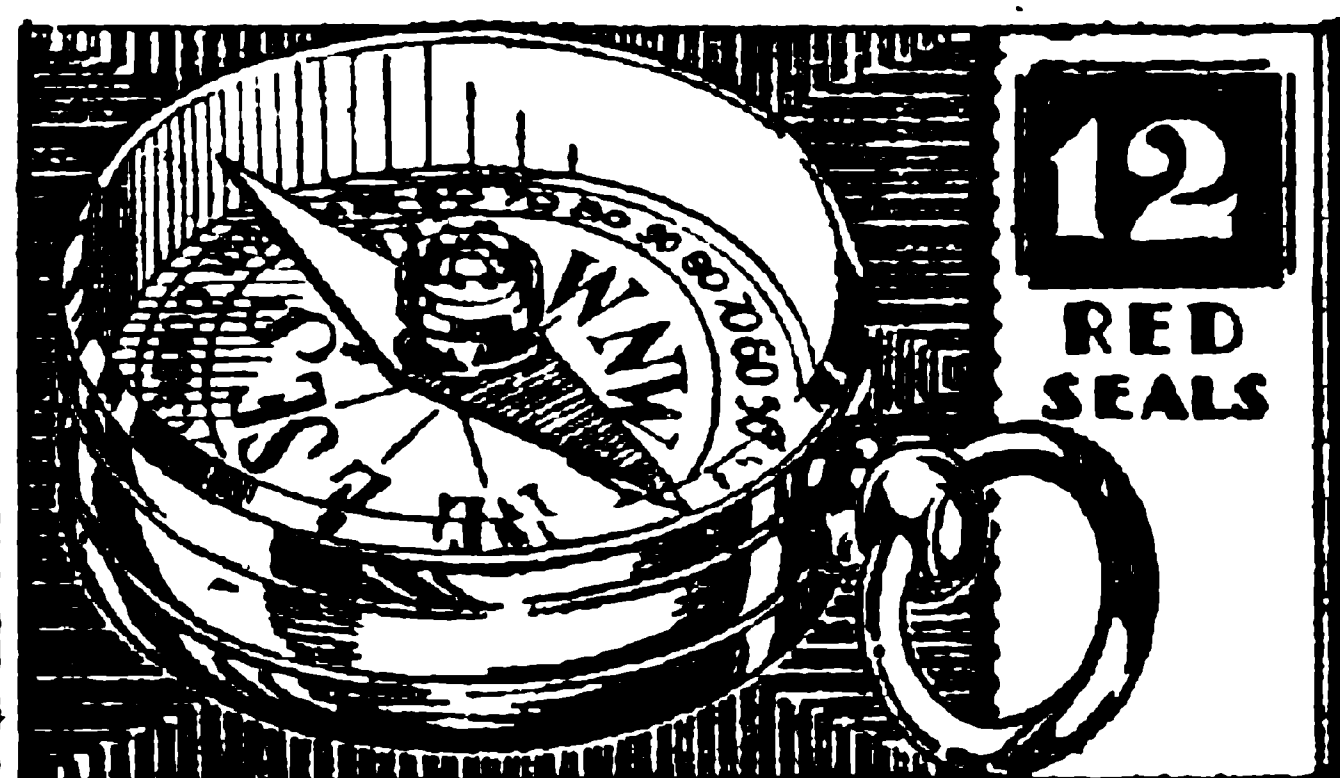
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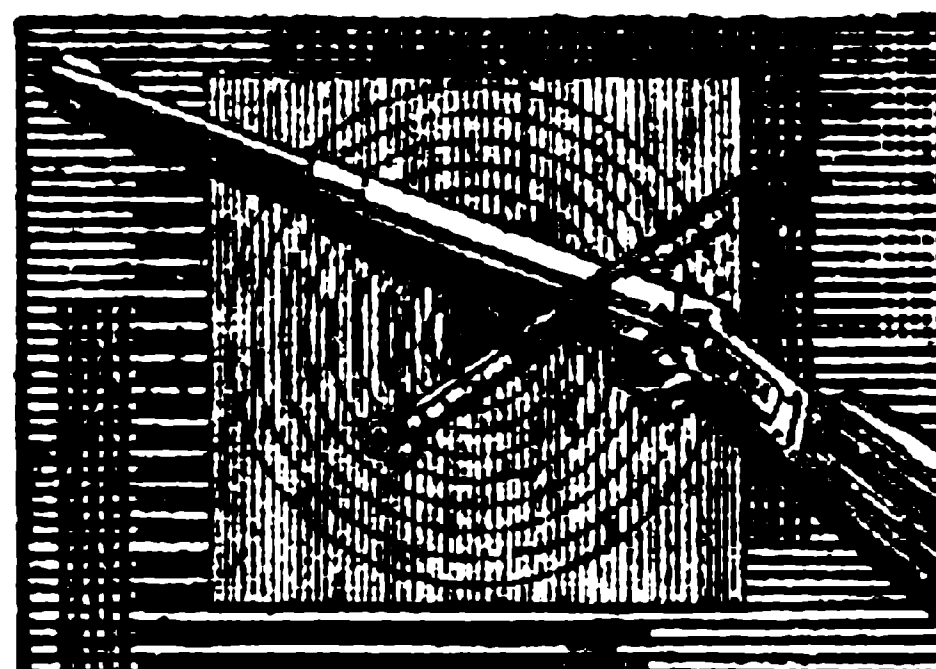
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**RED
SEALS**



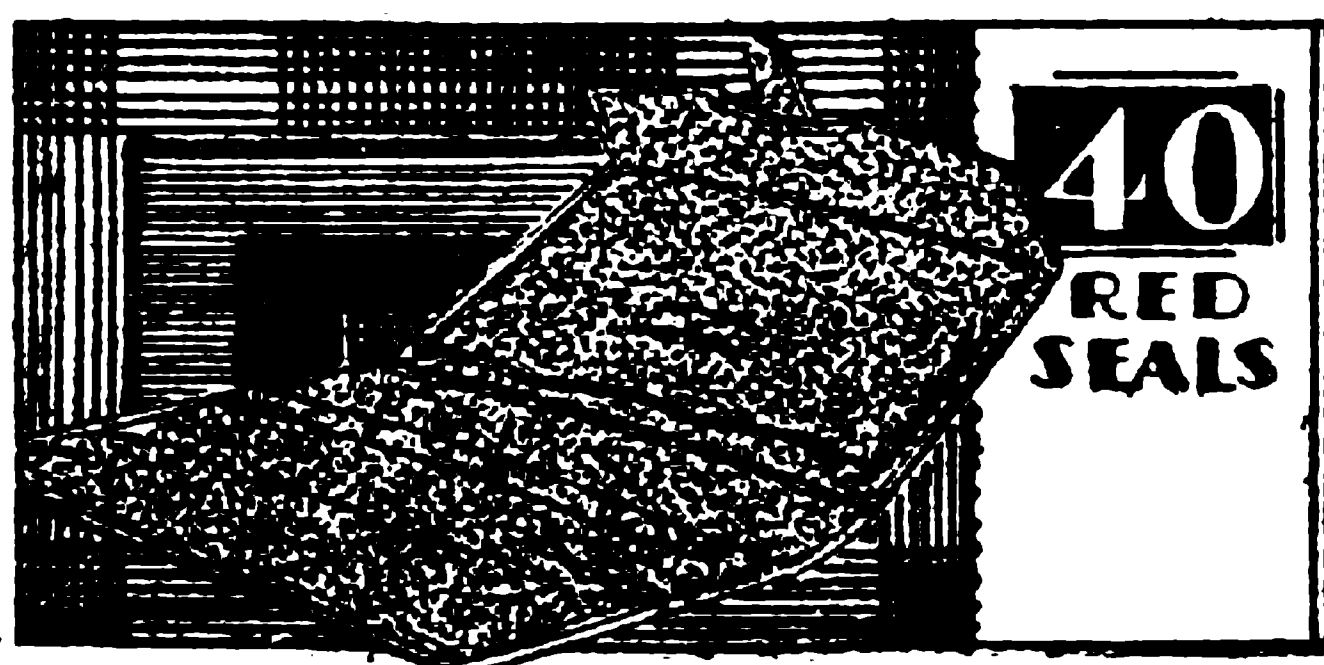
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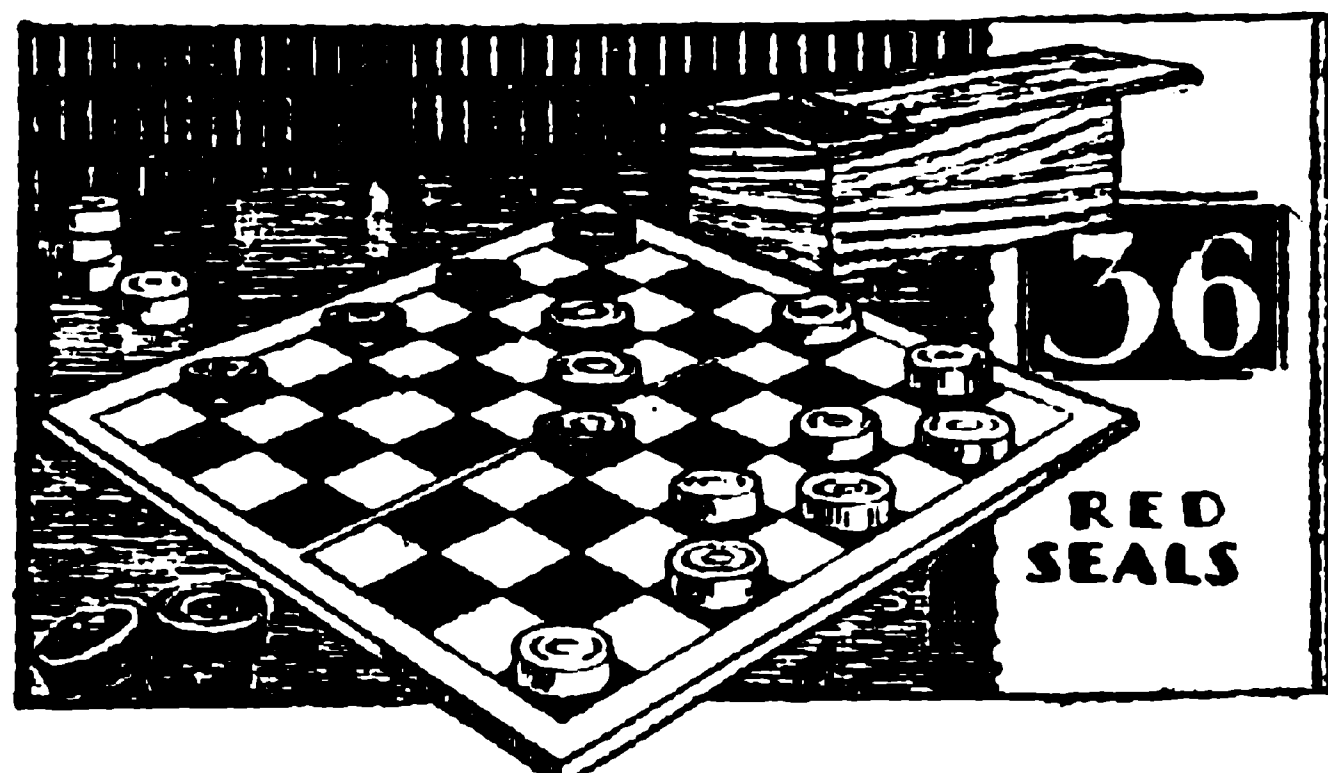
45
**RED
SEALS**



40
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**PRESENT
No. 73.—**
Superior Soft Leather Wallet with eight pockets.

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Set of Polished Boxwood Draughts, in box with sliding lid, with artistic 14 in. Draughtboard



36
**RED
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THE LAST ROUND!

(Continued from page 24.)

for ever with the weapons that had threatened civilisation. And with him had died the Master of the World.

A DAZED and grateful nation roused itself next morning after a night of suspense, to find itself free at last from the menace that had brooded over it so long. From every country and Government of the world came messages of congratulation for Nelson Lee and Thurston Kyle.

Of the two men, the detective had to bear the brunt of the next few days. There were conferences to attend, strictly-guarded reports to be made, reporters to be smilingly dealt with. But when the newspapermen stormed the old house at Hampstead, they drew a blank. Thurston Kyle and his young

assistant had vanished. The house was locked and deserted.

A week later a package arrived for Nelson Lee and Nipper, in the quietness of St. Frank's once more. Inside was a box from a famous jeweller's in Paris, containing two slim watches with a pair of tiny wings on the back of each, picked out in small minute rubies. With them was a note:

"From the Night-Hawk to two gallant comrades. May our future adventures prove as successful as the last!"

Nipper grinned cheerfully.

"What-ho! An' may they come thunderin' soon, guv'nor, what?"

A grave smile from Nelson Lee showed that the famous detective agreed.

THE END.

(Opening yarn of a magnificent new series of thrill stories next week: "The Subterranean Castaways!" A treat not to be missed, lads.)

BOUNCER BILLY BAXTER!

(Continued from page 42.)

Through the door Billy had a fair view of the room. The bath-room door on the right was open and he could hear the voices of the men. But something more important attracted Billy. In a chair at the fireside, apparently asleep, sat the Rajah of Nunpoki.

This spectacle gave Billy an idea, and he stepped quietly into the room. As he had hoped, there was a key in the lock of the bath-room door. Swiftly Billy pulled the door closed and turned the key. The two men were imprisoned.

Billy now turned his attention to the rajah, and pinched his arm several times, for it wasn't every day that one gets the chance to pinch a rajah's arm.

The effect was startling. The rajah slowly opened his eyes and stared blankly at Billy Baxter, then uttering a blood-curling cry, he reached for a sword which lay on the mantelshelf and swung it wildly at Billy's head.

"Hey!" yelled Billy.

He dodged the sword, and seeing that the rajah meant business, he sped quickly for the door, chased by the rajah, who whirled his sword above his head. He made record

speed down the main stairway and was soon outside the hotel.

On the pavement he paused to see if the rajah was still pursuing him, and finding that he wasn't in sight, he stopped to recover his breath. But presently the rajah appeared, this time without his sword, and at sight of Billy he gave a sharp cry.

"Come here!" he called.

"You bet not!" said Billy, setting off as quickly as possible, and the rajah followed.

Billy sped towards Ginger's house without gaining much in the flight, and in a few minutes he burst breathlessly into the Jones' household where the whole party was anxiously waiting his arrival.

"Here comes the rajah," gasped Billy. "We've been having a race!"

As he spoke the Rajah of Nunpoki himself appeared breathlessly in the doorway.

To Billy's astonishment the rajah smiled.

"My young friend has just saved my jewels and possibly my life," he explained to the party. "This evening two former servants, whom I had dismissed, drugged my servants and myself and searched my apartments for my jewels. Our young friend courageously attacked them alone and locked them in a room. My friend!"

The Rajah of Nunpoki embraced the bewildered Billy Baxter who, recovering almost at once, returned the embrace. Then he took the rajah familiarly by the arm.

"Let me introduce my friends, your Highness," he said with a wink. "We're having a party, as I told you. It's Ginger's birthday."

"That will be nice," smiled the rajah.

And it turned out to be the greatest birthday party they had ever spent.

(Another rollicking story featuring breezy Billy Baxter and his chums next Wednesday.)

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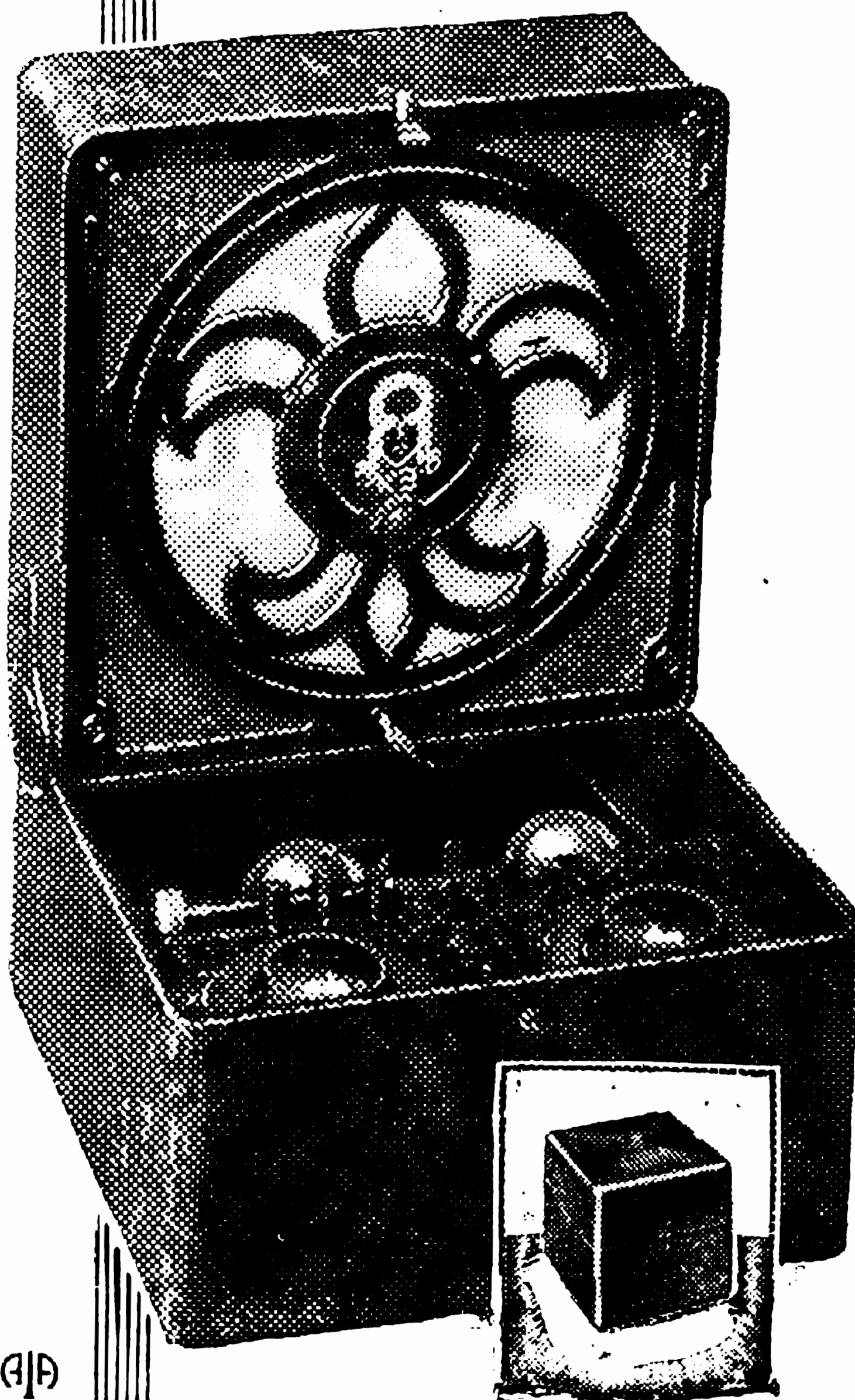
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