

"THE MOUNTAIN TYRANT!"

Long Complete Schoolboy
Adventure Yarn Inside

THE NELSON LEE

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A striking incident from this week's thrilling story of the Boys of
St. Frank's on holiday abroad.

New Series No. 81.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

August 8th, 1931.

Following the Stirring Adventures of Nipper and Co. in Caronia!

The MOUNTAIN

Action,
Thrills,
And
Excitement
Galore
in
This
Week's
Long
Complete
Yarn.



CHAPTER 1.

The Solitary Horseman!

FROM the window where Nipper stood he could look through the heavy bars right across the moonlit gorge. The air was so clear, and the moonlight so bright, that he could see for a full mile.

It was a peaceful scene. The mountains arose steeply on both sides of the long gorge, their lower slopes densely wooded, with masses of crag standing out starkly

in the moonlight here and there. The floor of the gorge was fertile, in many places cultivated, with picturesque clumps of trees standing about. There were quaint houses, most of them mere cottages. The long, dusty winding road stood out clearly in the silvery light.

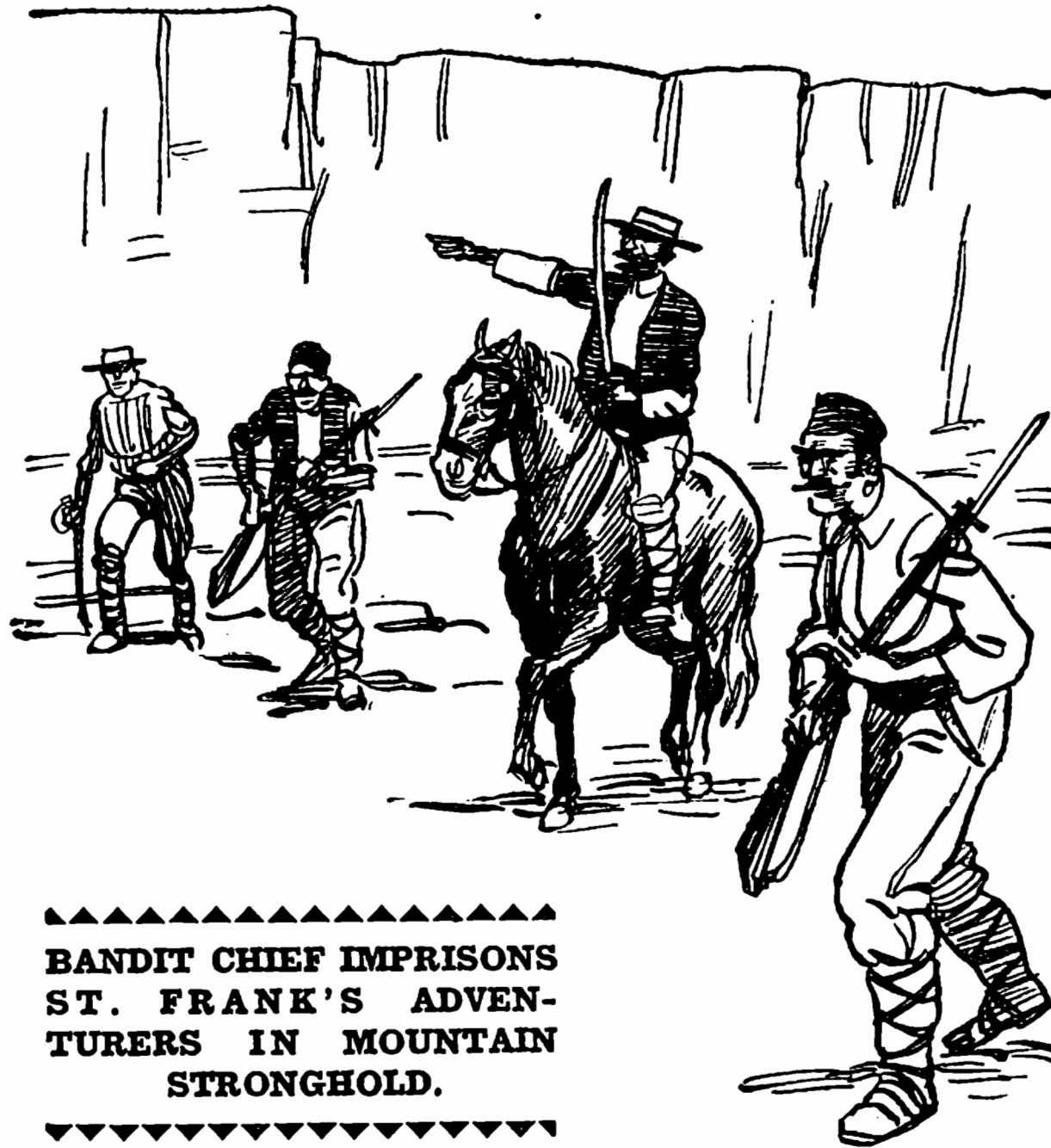
"Anything moving, old man?" asked Tommy Watson, as he came to the window.

"Nothing," replied Nipper. "A couple of our Balkan beauties are on guard just beyond the nearest trees, but that's all. It seems to me, Tommy, that old Dorrie has made rather a mess of things this time."

"Well, he can't always hit a bull's-eye," said Watson. "Personally, I shall be

TYRANT!

By *EDWY SEARLES
BROOKS*



▲▲▲▲▲
**BANDIT CHIEF IMPRISONS
ST. FRANK'S ADVENTURERS
IN MOUNTAIN
STRONGHOLD.**
▼▼▼▼▼

jolly glad to get out of this place. These mountain men are too beastly ferocious for my liking. And we're not out of the wood yet. There might easily be a hitch."

"With the guv'nor on the job, there's nothing for us to worry about," replied Nipper confidently. "All the other chaps asleep?"

"About half of 'em," said Tommy. "Handy is kicking up the dust, though; he's at the back, with half a dozen fellows round him, chewing the rag. But that's nothing. Handy's never doing anything else. I say! Isn't this moonlight marvellous?"

It was certainly a fascinating scene. The very peacefulness of it seemed contradictory. Such tranquility out in that gorge; yet here were these St. Frank's boys imprisoned in this grim mountain

cave. They were in far-off Caronia, practically in the Balkans.

This corner of Caronia was in the province of Kazatova, and it was a rugged, hilly region, populated by fierce mountain tribes. They were a wild people, completely under the sway of Miklos Keiff, the uncrowned king of the mountains. His word was law; his rule was absolute. In these hills the laws of the Caronian Government were ignored; for Miklos Keiff was a law unto himself.

"I hope the girls are all right," murmured Watson, after a while.

"No need to worry about them," replied Nipper. "The guv'nor saw to it that they were taken to one of the houses, and some of the women are looking after them. Dorrie and Umlosi are in another cave, close by. We shall be together again to-morrow, when we move out of here."

"Always providin' we do move out," murmured another voice.

Sir Montie Tregellis-West joined his chums at the window.

"Hallo, Montie," said Nipper, with a smile. "I thought you were asleep."

"I defy anybody to sleep, laddie, with that frightful ass of a Handforth shoutin' the odds," replied Sir Montie. "In any case, I don't feel like sleep, I don't, really. You'll probably laugh, but I've got a presentiment."

"A which?"

"I don't usually get these frightful things, but you know what I mean—a presentiment," said Montie. "One of those rummy feelings that somethin' is goin' to happen. A sort of hunch. In fact, I don't believe we shall get out of this beastly place as easily as we all seem to think."

"Rats!" said Nipper. "The gov'nor's in command!"

"Begad, rather! I know! But even Mr. Lee isn't a magician," said Tregellis-West. "Well, there it is. I've got this frightful feelin', and I can't get rid of it."

"Got to sleep, old man," murmured Nipper gently. "You'll be all right in the morning."

Sir Montie drifted away, gloomily shaking his head. He was swallowed up by the darkness, for there were no lights in the cave, and the moon was high over the mountains so that no stray beams entered the barred window.

It was a curious prison, this. The cave was a natural formation of the rock, but its original wide opening had been walled up. In this wall, which was composed of rock fragments crudely cemented together, were a low doorway and a small window. Escape was out of the question, for the iron bars at the window were of great strength, and the door was a solid six-inch-thick slab of wood, fitted with massive bolts.

To all intents and purposes the St. Frank's boys—to say nothing of Lord Dorrimore, Umlosi, and the Moor View girls—were all prisoners of Miklos Keiff. But actually the situation was not nearly so acute as it seemed.

Nipper and Tommy Watson left the little window and felt their way through the darkness towards the rear of the cave. Edward Oswald Handforth, the aggressive leader of Study D, was making himself heard.

"I ask you!" he was saying, in a tone of indignation. "What sort of adventure is this? The whole thing's a fizzle! We haven't had a single scrap, we've done

nothing to help Orlando, and as soon as the morning comes we're going to be tamely pushed off to civilised parts."

"And a jolly good thing, too!" came McClure's voice out of the darkness.

"We came to Caronia to rescue Orlando from his beastly half-brother," continued Handforth, in disgust. "Old Dorrie had everything fixed up. And when we get here we find that Mr. Lee has stolen a march on us!"

"Shocking!" yawned Vivian Travers. "Even before we left England Dorrie had his doubts about Mr. Lee."

"Yes, rather," agreed Handforth. "He said that Mr. Lee would kybosh the whole game, didn't he?"

Yet it was certainly fortunate for Lord Dorrimore's party that Nelson Lee had displayed such energy and brilliance.

The situation, in its way, was unique.

The "crowd" had come to Caronia ostensibly as summer tourists, but their real object was to rescue Victor Orlando, of the Remove, from the hands of Prince Zeno of Kazatova.

Victor Orlando was not an ordinary Removeite. Although English enough in his speech, in his outlook, and in his appearance, he was actually the King of Caronia. His uncle, the Grand Duke Rudolph—who was the Regent of Caronia—had been at great pains to protect Victor from his enemies.

It was for this very reason, in fact, that he had been sent to a great English Public school—where it was felt that he would be safe.

He had arrived only a week or two before the summer holidays, accompanied by his lifelong friend, Paul Maddox. Paul was the son of a prominent Caronian business man—one of the men, in fact, who had wrought such wonderful changes in this little country during the past five years. The fact that Maddox senior had become a millionaire through his ambitious enterprises did not alter the fact that he had rendered sterling service to his country. Like the Grand Duke Rudolph, he was a man of foresight and courage.

There were many such men in Caronia; they were all working hand-in-hand with the progressive Regent. Caronia's industries were thriving; she was rapidly becoming a minor power in the industrial world.

The Grand Duke was very much of a dictator, and his iron decrees had at first caused consternation throughout that previously sleepy little kingdom. With a population composed of peoples of mixed blood, who spoke German, Italian, and

Slav, the problem had been a difficult one. At one blow the Grand Duke had solved the language difficulty; he had abolished the three languages entirely, and had made it a law that English was to be the one and only tongue of Caronia. He had taken England as his pattern for everything. And the bulk of the population, after the first shock, had begun to realise the sound common-sense of the Regent's policy.

Galvarad, the capital, and many other large cities, were prospering. Even the peasants in their little villages, and on their farms, were loyally and obediently doing their bit. "Everybody in Caronia pulled together, strengthening the hand of this great man—everybody except the wild mountain tribes of Kazatova.

These people, of Slavonic stock, were definitely arrogant. Under Miklos Keiff they defied every law of central government. Progress in this province had been practically nil. And Prince Zeno was taking full advantage of the situation.

He aspired to the throne; but rascal though he was, he hesitated at plotting against the life of his young half-brother.

Instead he had gained the full support of Miklos Keiff and his tribes by promising them full power in Kazatova—absolute freedom—when he should step upon the throne. He had seized young Victor, and was holding him a prisoner in one of these mountain recesses.

It was all very simple. An ultimatum had been sent to the Grand Duke. Either the Grand Duke abdicated, or Victor would never be seen again. Zeno knew well enough that he would never be called upon to carry his threat into execution. For the young king's sake the Grand Duke Rudolph would surrender. A quick coup, and Zeno would be on the throne. There might even be a brief revolution; but with Miklos Keiff and all his forces behind him, Zeno was confident.

Victor had been a guest at Dorrimore Castle when the prince's emissaries had seized him and carried him off. The one and only Dorrie promptly swore that he would effect a rescue. Victor was his guest, and he—Dorrie—was responsible. The other members of the house party were as keen on the adventure as himself, and the reckless Dorrie had taken them with him.

His plan was delightfully simple. Posing as ordinary summer tourists, they had "innocently" taken train to the mountains, apparently unaware of the fact that the town of Nid was controlled

by Miklos Keiff. Within a few hours they had been surrounded by the bandits, had been captured, and had been carried off to Keiff's stronghold, there to be held for ransom.

Lord Dorrimore had chuckled gleefully. He had known that the brigands could not resist such a tempting bait. Dorrie was prepared to pay any ransom that was demanded—thus he assured himself that he was not endangering any of these youngsters. Victor Orlando was also a prisoner in Miklos Keiff's camp. This was just what Dorrie had been hoping for, and it was his genial idea to rescue Victor, seize an opportunity, and clear out.

Everything had gone well—until Miklos Keiff had revealed himself as Nelson Lee in disguise! Then it came out, much to Dorrie's disgust, that Lee had been on the job in advance. Assisted by three of the Grand Duke's special agents, Lee had captured Keiff, and was impersonating him—Keiff himself being taken secretly to a fortress, where he was to be held a prisoner.

"YES!" repeated Handforth indignantly. "Old Dorrie said that Mr. Lee would kybosh the whole game—and now he's doing it!"

"But it's all to our advantage, you ass!" said Skeets.

"You mean we shall be safe?" asked Handforth disdainfully.

"Well, I guess——"

"We don't want any of your guesses!" interrupted Edward Oswald. "There's no guesswork about this giddy business! Mr. Lee has done all the work, and we're left out in the cold. As Miklos Keiff, he can do anything he likes, and in the morning he's simply going to have Orlando released, and we're all going back to Nid together. Easy as falling off a form!"

"It may not be so easy," said Travers thoughtfully.

"Rats! These bandits have accepted Mr. Lee without question," said Handforth. "They'll probably wonder why he's letting us all go, but what will he care? He can easily spoof his men that it's a fresh order from Prince Zeno, can't he? And once on that train at Nid we shall be back in civilisation, and we shan't have any fun at all."

"Hard lines!" chuckled Nipper. "Poor old Handy!"

But Nipper felt rather disappointed, too. He also had been looking forward to some exciting adventures. He drifted back to the window, rather glum. He was in time to see a solitary horseman gallop-

6 "THE FOOTBALL PIERROTS." Breezy holiday yarn of the Blue Crusaders.

ing along the dusty, moonlit road. He came nearer and nearer. The two men who were on guard stepped out of the shadows to challenge him, and then hastily saluted.

For they recognised the horseman as Miklos Keiff. He never paused for a moment; he came riding onwards towards the cave. By this time Nipper had recognised him, too.

"Look out, you chaps!" said the Remove skipper, a tense feeling stirring within him. "Something must have happened. The guv'nor's here. Why should he come to us in the middle of the night? Perhaps there's a hitch!"

"By George!" breathed Handforth. "I hope so!"

They waited breathlessly.

CHAPTER 2.

The Fight in the Cave!

THERE came the sounds of the great bolts being shot back, and then the heavy door swung open, and the tall, imposing figure of Miklos Keiff entered. He was bearing a lighted lantern in his hand, and he held it up shoulder-high, so that he could obtain a good view.

An exclamation sounded from the depths of his throat; a startled, amazed, half-choked exclamation.

The boys wondered; but they said nothing. Perhaps there were some of the bandits outside, and Nelson Lee must necessarily be very cautious.

Still, it was puzzling. Lee knew that they were here, for he had placed them in this cave himself. Why had he returned, therefore, looking so astonished? And the boys could now see, by the light of the lantern, that their visitor was dishevelled, dusty, and untidy. His full beard was unkempt, his hair almost matted, and his clothing showed many rents and tears.

"What's the idea, sir?" asked Handforth, in a low, eager voice. "Has something happened?"

The others had remained silent, but it was impossible to repress Handforth.

The wild-looking figure uttered another exclamation, and a torrent of words escaped his lips—foreign words. His eyes glowed dangerously. Nipper, watching him, suddenly felt a throb within him, as though his heart had missed a beat.

"I say, chuck it, sir!" protested Handforth. "You're alone, aren't you? No need to—"

"So!" burst out the visitor, his voice trembling with bewilderment. "You speak the English, yes? What is this? You are English boys, all of you?"

They listened in astonishment. It was difficult to believe that this wild-looking man was Nelson Lee in disguise. They could scarcely credit that such acting was possible.

"Of course we're English, sir!" said Handforth, staring. "You ought to know —"

"Wait, Handy—wait!" muttered Nipper, placing a fierce grip on Handforth's arm.

"What the dickens—"

"There's something—wrong!" hissed Nipper.

"Then it is so!" came the voice—almost a snarl—of Miklos Keiff. "You are English boys! There has been trickery, yes? What do you do here, in my camp? Who brought you here?"

There was a moment of tense silence, and then Archie Glenthorne's voice sounded from somewhere in the rear.

"This is all very priceless, and so forth, but what's the big idea?" asked Archie wonderingly. "I mean to say, slightly unnecessary, what? Dashed clever, but more or less pointless. Why try to spoof us, sir? Good gad! We know who you are, don't we?"

The fellows were more and more bewildered. The visitor said nothing; he just stood there, holding the lantern aloft, staring round with wild eyes.

Nipper, at least, did some of the quickest thinking he had ever accomplished in his life. For he, if no one else, had made a staggering discovery. This man was not Nelson Lee disguised as Miklos Keiff—but the real Miklos Keiff himself!

Lee's impersonation was masterly; but Nipper could tell the subtle difference. Here was the real man! His very attitude of amazement was significant; his travel-stained clothing, his obvious weariness, eloquent of long hours of hard riding. There were many things that told Nipper the startling truth.

His brain worked rapidly.

This was a disaster of the first importance. The real Miklos Keiff had escaped from the Grand Duke's agents! How he had accomplished this Nipper could not imagine, and it did not matter. What did matter was that the man was here—in his own camp. And it came to Nipper with overwhelming force that Miklos Keiff had ridden straight up, and only those two guards were as yet aware of his arrival—and they, no doubt, did



The St. Frank's boys leapt at Miklos Keiff from all sides, and the bandit chief was borne to the ground.

not even suspect that this Miklos Keiff was different from the one they had already seen that night.

Yet there were two Keiffs in the camp now!

What was likely to happen? Inevitably, Nelson Lee would be unmasked; he would be seized. A cold hand seemed to clutch at Nipper's heart as he realised the possibilities. Unquestionably, Nelson Lee would be put to death by the infuriated mountain "king."

As for the rest of the plan, everything would crumble up. The rescue of King Victor, the escape of Lord Dorrimore and

his party—all would collapse. With Miklos Keiff himself in command, and with all his wild men conscious of how they had been tricked, the consequences would be appalling.

Within the space of a few short seconds all this passed through Nipper's mind. He remembered something else, too. That solitary horseman had galloped right through the valley—he had not stopped until he had encountered those two guards only a few yards away from the cave! He had not even stopped then—he had merely acknowledged their salute. There had been no questioning. Miklos Keiff

knew practically nothing of the facts—and those guards were as yet unsuspecting.

Like a blaze of light, Nipper saw how to act. If Miklos Keiff left this cave now, nothing could save Nelson Lee—who knew nothing of the bandit chief's return—from death. In that tense moment, Nipper was thinking mainly of his beloved gov'nor.

"Listen, everybody!" he said, his voice tense, his words low. "This man isn't Mr. Lee! He's the real Miklos Keiff!"

Nipper's words cut through the air clearly enough, and there was something in his tone which electrified his listeners.

"Not—not Mr. Lee!" stammered Tommy Watson.

"Quick—all of you!" hissed Nipper. "On him! It's our only chance—and the only chance of saving my gov'nor's life! Grab him!"

"For the love of Samson!" ejaculated Vivian Travers. "He's right, too! I can see it now!"

Miklos Keiff commenced speaking, but he was hardly able to utter half a dozen words. For Nipper had sprung forward, leaping bodily upon the man's back. It was the signal for a general attack. Handforth, wildly excited, flung himself at Keiff's legs. Others clutched at his arms. The bandit chief, with a sudden roar of anger and alarm, attempted to defend himself, but he was just one second too late.

Miklos Keiff went down, overwhelmed by the superior force. The lantern went clattering over, but fortunately it did not go out. Harry Gresham caught it as it was rolling, and set it upright.

By now all the St. Frank's fellows knew that Nipper's statement was correct. For Miklos Keiff was gasping and snarling ferociously, although he was not allowed to emit one real shout.

For Nipper's first move, once Keiff was down, was to wind an arm over his face. It was a typical schoolboy effort—and it worked. With Nipper's arm crooked round the bandit chief's head, only a series of smothered gasps sounded. Nipper held on desperately.

"Bind him!" he panted. "Use anything—handkerchiefs, string—your shirts, if necessary!"

"Oh, my only sainted aunt!" exclaimed Handforth excitedly.

"Keep his legs down—hold them!" went on Nipper. "And mind his arms—he might have a dagger somewhere, and he'll try to grab it! Hold him tight, or we'll lose him!"

It was hot, breathless work. Browne of the Fifth and Travers were the first to

act decisively, and then the others followed their example. Everybody wanted to help at once, and the boys got in one another's way.

"Easy does it, brothers—easy does it," said William Napoleon Browne coolly. "I venture to suggest that we have the gentleman exactly where we want him. The half-Nelson has been applied most efficiently. Let us congratulate Brother Nipper upon his sagacity and——"

"Cut out the gas, Browne!" interrupted Nipper. "Seconds may be of importance. We've got to get him hidden."

"Hidden?" repeated Browne. "Ah, yes! Not entirely an unsound scheme."

The fellows used the first things that came to their hands for binding purposes—handkerchiefs mostly, with a belt here and there, and at least two pairs of braces. Miklos Keiff's ankles were bound together. He was laboriously rolled over, his wrists were held, and tied. Gresham hovered about, holding the lantern.

"Now for the gag!" said Nipper tensely. "A handkerchief'll do—rolled up into a ball. And that scarf of yours, Archie. Get ready now!"

"Absolutely!" breathed Archie.

Nipper pulled his arm away, and Miklos Keiff, drawing in a great gulp of breath, opened his mouth to emit a bellow. Deftly, Handforth pushed the handkerchief into that cavity, removing his fingers in the nick of time to save them being snapped.

"Great Scott!" he gasped. "He tried to bite me!"

The scarf was clapped on, drawn tight at the rear of the man's head, and tied.

"Phew!" whistled Nipper. "That was warm work! But the worst's over, thank goodness!"

They made certain of their prisoner. More bonds were applied and tightened. A second scarf was tied round his head. Nipper took the lantern, and moved up towards the far end of the cave.

"Bring him along!" he said, in a whisper.

There were many willing hands. Miklos Keiff was lifted bodily and carried to the end of the cave. Here he was pushed into a black recess. It was fairly deep, and the roof was low. Unless the cave was deliberately searched, there was little chance of the prisoner being seen.

"Out with that lantern!" said Nipper briskly.

"But look here——" began Handforth.

"Don't argue, you ass—it's got to go out!" said Nipper.

Handforth had taken the lantern a moment earlier, whilst Nipper had helped

to tuck away the prisoner. The flame was quickly extinguished and the cave was plunged into darkness.

Nipper hastened to the door, and found to his relief that it was closed. But when he touched it he found—as he had suspected—that it was unfastened.

"Now what?" asked Travers. "It seems to me, dear old fellows, that we're having a bit of excitement, after all!"

"We've got a chance of getting out!" came Handforth's voice. "By George! That door's unfastened, and we can all escape, and——"

"And give the whole show away!" interrupted Nipper tartly.

"Eh?"

"Don't you understand, you chump, that the situation is pretty desperate?" demanded Nipper. "Thank Heaven we were able to grab that man before he made his presence generally known in the camp!"

"But—but what does it all mean?" asked Church in bewilderment.

"Yes, explain!"

"What's the big idea, Nipper?"

Many of the boys were puzzled. Things had happened so quickly that they had been unable to think; and even when they did think they could not get the hang of it all.

"Don't you understand?" asked Nipper. "This man is the real Miklos Keiff. How he escaped doesn't matter. He's here! And there's just a chance that nobody else knows of his arrival."

"Those two guards saw him!" said Tommy Watson excitedly.

"Yes; but they probably mistook him for Mr. Lee," went on Nipper. "Let's hope so, anyway. They couldn't have seen the two Miklos Keiffs together—and that's a point in our favour. Don't you realise, you chaps, that there are two Miklos Keiffs in the camp now?"

"My only hat!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"There's the real one, in this cave—and the impostor, outside," continued Nipper. "And Mr. Lee is only safe as long as the real Keiff is kept hidden. That's why it was so necessary for us to grab him and bind him up."

"But what can we do?" asked Jimmy Potts breathlessly. "We can't keep him a prisoner for long, can we? He's bound to be found sooner or later, and then——"

"If only we can keep him dark until to-morrow, everything will be all right," interrupted Nipper. "Don't you see? The gov'nor has planned for us to leave in the morning—with Orlando, too. That's our only real chance. By keeping

Miklos Keiff a prisoner until to-morrow, the gov'nor's plans will go through all right. After we've gone, Keiff will be discovered—but it'll be too late then. We shall all be out of reach."

"By George! That's true!" said Handforth, taking a deep breath. "I say, what a brainy wheeze! You've saved the situation, Nipper! What's the next move now?"

"The next move," said Nipper, "is to tell the gov'nor."

"But how?"

"The door's unbolted, and one of us can sneak out," replied Nipper in a low voice. "It's the only thing to be done. Mr. Lee must be told of this development. His very life depends on it!"

CHAPTER 3.

Nelson Lee's Plan!

LORD DORRIMORE, meanwhile, was imprisoned in a smaller cave, with Umlosi as his only companion.

"Well, my cheery old chunk of anthracite, things haven't worked out so sweetly as we expected," he had said, upon finding himself alone with the giant African chieftain. "In fact, it looks to me as though we've made a mess of things."

Umlosi had given one of his characteristic grunts.

"Wau!" he rumbled. "Have I not always said, N'Kose, that the great Um-tagati is the mightiest of all magicians? Thou sayest he is this man of the great beard, and yet he resembles him not."

"But he's Lee, all the same—worse luck!" growled Lord Dorrimore. "He's a great fellow, Umlosi, but he's too darned particular. I was hoping for a pretty little scrap up here, but there'll be nothing doing."

"And I, too, N'Kose," growled the Kutana chief. "'Tis many moons, my father, since I battled as a man should."

"And it'll be a good many moons before you get another chance, by the look of it," said his lordship gruffly. "This affair is turning out as tamely as a pleasant Sunday afternoon."

"Thou speakest in strange terms, O N'Kose, but thy meaning is nevertheless clear," said Umlosi. "Wau! Methinks men are becoming timid. What chance is there for a warrior in these days of peace?"

"Make no mistake about it, Umlosi, these mountain fellows aren't timid," said Lord Dorrimore. "They'd give you

a fight, right enough, but our mutual pal, Umtagati, has tossed a spanner into the gear-box!"

"Again thou speakest in wondrous strange terms, my father, but again I gather thy meaning," came Umlosi's voice. "Umtagati is the great magician, but he liketh not the fighting."

"I wouldn't say that," replied Lord Dorrimore. "Lee enjoys a scrap as much as anybody; but he seems to think that I took a big chance by bringing all those youngsters up here. He doesn't want them to be involved in any scrap. Just as if there was the slightest danger of—"

He broke off, for at that moment Nelson Lee himself had arrived.

Lee came quietly, unobserved by any of the Kazatovians. He slipped into the cave noiselessly, and two men with less acute hearing than Dorrie and Umlosi would not have heard his entry. But both the sporting peer and his mighty black friend were men of vast experience; they had been through countless adventures together, and their ears were attuned to the merest whisper.

"Hallo!" said his lordship abruptly. "Who's there?"

"You ought to guess who it is, Dorrie," came Nelson Lee's stern voice. "I've come here secretly because I want a quiet word with you."

"Oh, help!" groaned his lordship dismally.

"Wau! Thou art wondrous welcome, O Umtagati," rumbled Umlosi.

Nelson Lee, who had entered in absolute darkness, now secured the door and felt his way forward. For a moment he flashed on a small electric torch, and he found the two prisoners squatting against one of the rock walls. Lee switched off, and sat down beside them. He struck a match, handed Dorrie a cigarette, and took one himself. Presently, only the twin glows of their cigarettes showed in the pitchy blackness.

"Well, get it off your chest," said Lord Dorrimore at length. "You're going to give me a lecture, I suppose?"

"It's quite evident, Dorrie, that your conscience is guilty," replied Lee. "Man alive! What possessed you? What made you bring those boys and girls up here into these wild mountains? I could forgive you, perhaps, for bringing the boys, but those girls!"

"Don't talk in that tone," grunted Lord Dorrimore. "You know those girls as well as I do, old man. How do you suppose I could have left them behind?

I did suggest it, but you should have heard what they called me!"

"That's no excuse——"

"Besides, I didn't fancy leaving 'em behind," went on Dorrie defiantly. "Those girls are real sports! They've got as much pep and ginger and pluck as the boys. They were as keen as mustard on coming, and I saw no reason why they shouldn't be included in the fun."

"Fun!" repeated Lee sharply. "Do you call it fun to bring them amongst these mountain brigands?"

"They're not half as black as they're painted," retorted Lord Dorrimore. "Hang it, Lee, you know as well as I do that there was no real danger. It's well known that Miklos Keiff and his men treat their prisoners with the most elaborate respect. And why? Because their racket is ransom. It wouldn't pay them to harm any of their victims."

"That's all very well——"

"It's my strong line of defence," broke in Dorrie. "You asked me to justify myself, and I'm doing it. You may think I'm a jackass for risking my money in this way—but I'm a millionaire, and I can do as I like with my own cash, can't I? I came prepared to whack out as much ransom as Miklos Keiff demanded, and while the negotiations were going ahead, I aimed to locate King Victor's prison, and to stage a spectacular rescue."

"Oh, you did?" asked Lee. "It sounds very pretty, Dorrie."

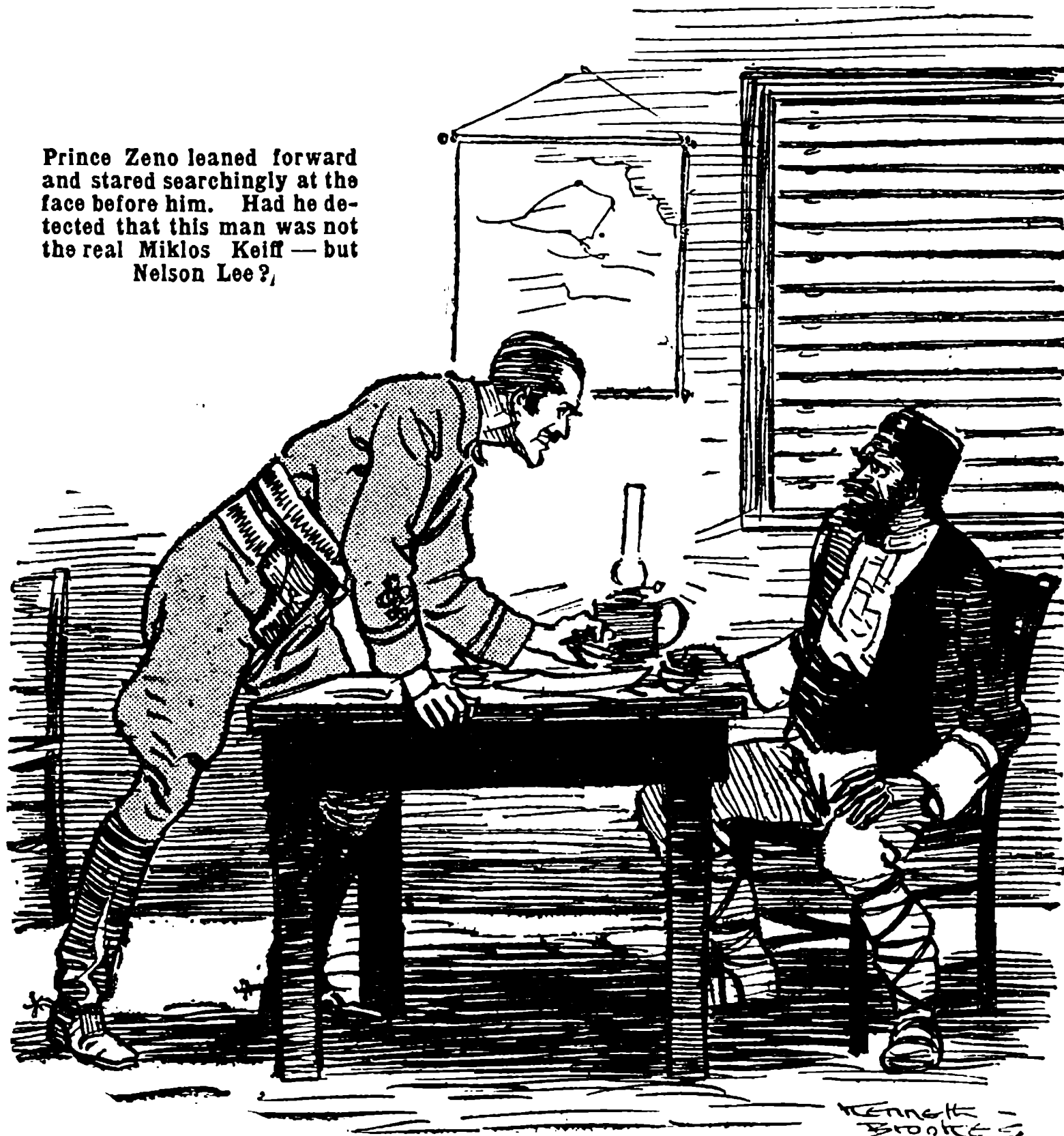
"You needn't think that I intended dragging the girls into that part of the game," said his lordship. "Or the boys, either, if it comes to that. Umlosi and I were to carry out that stunt. You've dished us—robbed us of a really first-class bit of excitement. I brought the boys and girls because young King Victor is their chum, and—and—— Well, they wanted to come, and I saw no reason why they should be denied. Why shouldn't they be captured by bandits, and held for ransom?"

"Dorrie, you're hopeless!" said the disguised Lee.

"Perhaps I am—but when you were a boy, didn't you dream of being captured by bandits and held for ransom?" demanded Dorrie. "Doesn't every boy dream of it—and every girl, too? But what happens? Everything goes according to programme—we get captured, and then the bandit chief turns out to be a schoolmaster in disguise! If you don't call that a fifty-degrees-below-zero frost, what do you call it?"

Nelson Lee could not help laughing.

Prince Zeno leaned forward and stared searchingly at the face before him. Had he detected that this man was not the real Miklos Keiff — but Nelson Lee?



"Looking at it from your point of view, Dorrie, I can, perhaps, appreciate your feelings," he said dryly. "And I dare say the boys and girls are disappointed, too. But you, with your usual thoughtlessness, have failed to appreciate the inner peril of this situation."

"Confound all that," said Dorrie gruffly. "Young Victor Orlando was my guest, and these blighters kidnapped him under my very nose—and under the noses of those boys and girls. We all thought we'd join in an effort to rescue him."

"At any ordinary time, perhaps, the plan would have been safe," commented Lee. "Spectacular, of course, but safe. What you forgot, Dorrie, was the acuteness of the Caronian political situation."

"Forgot?" said Dorrie. "I never even knew it! I'm not interested in politics."

"Then you should be—when they affect the safety of your party," retorted Nelson Lee. "That suave rogue, Prince Zeno, is stirring up a whole bag of trouble in Caronia. He has secured the wholehearted support of Miklos Keiff, and thousands of these mountain dwellers. With the young king a prisoner, the time is ripe for a swift revolution. By coming here like this, you ran the risk of involving all those youngsters in a Balkan turmoil, and these Kazatova mountains will be the centre of the fighting."

"Wau!" came a rumble from Umlosi. "Thou sayest there will be fighting, O Umtagati?"

"Not for us, old friend," replied Lee. "I'm making plans to fetch young Victor in the early hours of the morning. He will be brought here, and we shall all move down to Nid shortly after daybreak."

"And what will these gentle mountain folk have to say about that?" asked Dorrie.

"In the guise of Miklos Keiff, my word is law," replied Lee. "They may be surprised—they may object—but I shall have my way. In any case, I have always got Prince Zeno to fall back upon. I can tell my trusted lieutenants that it is a new plan of the prince's. But don't worry about that. We're going."

"That's what I am worried about—I don't want to go," grunted his lordship.

"You hopeless idiot, that's the only reason we came into these mountains," said Lee, exasperated. "Once we've got hold of King Victor our mission is accomplished. Do you want to fight for the mere sake of fighting? I'm very much afraid, Dorrie, that you're a bloodthirsty fellow. Thank Heaven I was here to take command of things!"

"We'll agree to differ about that," growled the millionaire peer.

"I understand that Zeno himself is expected here to-morrow—to consult with Miklos Keiff," continued Lee. "Well, Miklos Keiff will be gone when his highness arrives—and so will the king."

"Back to railways—hotels—streets and motor-cars," said Dorrie disdainfully. "Personally, I don't think much of these bandits. Look at this gorge, for example. Just a few miserable caves, and some cottages and huts. Do you mean to tell me that the Grand Duke Rudolph is afraid of this rabble?"

"You can call it rabble, Dorrie, but I know better," said Nelson Lee. "You can't judge anything by what you have seen here. Farther back in the mountains Miklos Keiff has his real garrisons. Hundreds of ferocious mountain men, highly trained. Guns, ammunition—everything. His garrisons are far more extensive than even I know of. We have only caught the merest glimpse of this man's strength. That glimpse is enough. We both came to rescue the young king, and if we can take him safely out of this trap to-morrow, so much the better."

"Oh, well, I suppose you're right," admitted Dorrie gruffly. "All the same, I'm disappointed over the whole business. I was hopin' for a bit of excitement."

"I want you and Umlosi to be ready to move as soon as daylight comes," said Nelson Lee. "You must pretend to be subdued—cowed. I don't want any of

these Kazatovians to suspect, for that might lead to disaster. I am going to give the boys the same warning, and the girls, too. I don't anticipate any hitch, but we're not out of the wood yet. I'm taking a pretty big risk by impersonating the genial Mr. Keiff."

"Yes, you're the only one who's getting any kick out of this affair. What do you suppose they'll do to you if they twig?"

"I don't suppose anything at all," replied Lee. "They'll kill me out of hand just as quickly as they can get their fingers on their knives or guns. I've tricked them already, and it is my plan to trick them even more completely. Oh, yes, Dorrie, they'd give me short shrift if they 'twigged,' as you aptly put it."

NELSON LEE did not remain much longer in that small cave. Once again he impressed upon Lord Dorrimore and Umlosi the necessity of acting their parts—until they were well clear of the bandit country. Then Lee emerged into the moonlit night, his object now being to visit the larger cave, where the boys were imprisoned.

But, as it happened, the famous school-master-detective was not yet to learn of the narrowness of his escape; he was not to know that the real Miklos Keiff was actually within the camp.

For he heard, throbbing on the night air, a sound which at first he took to be the distant purr of an aeroplane engine. As he paused, and looked down the moonlit gorge, with its frowning cliffs on either hand, he beheld some dazzling points of light in the distance.

"Cars!" he murmured. "I wonder who this can be, at such an hour? H'm! I dare say these fellows will expect me to be in evidence."

He could see the points of light—twin pairs. So there were two cars, at least, and they were speeding along the dusty, winding road. They had come from the south—from Nid. Lee knew that the only exit from this gorge was by way of a narrow, tortuous pass.

He moved down towards the modest building which was Miklos Keiff's headquarters in this border camp. He was not seen by two Kazatovian guards who were closely watching the entrance of the big walled-up cave where the boy prisoners were held. Those men had seen their chief enter that cave—and they had not seen him emerge. They were already becoming curious—even concerned.

Lee passed behind them almost, skirting a clump of trees and some low-built cottages. He passed one or two powerfully-

built men, and they saluted him in an ill-disciplined way.

He arrived at Miklos Keiff's house, with its front of white stucco, just as the two cars came up amid clouds of dust. Lee could see that they were expensive, high-powered semi-racers, and he was not surprised when the tall, well-built figure of Prince Zeno alighted from the foremost.

"Well, my friend?" said the prince curtly. "What is wrong?"

Nelson Lee had been unprepared for the coming of Prince Zeno, and he knew that he was now treading on delicate ground. Zeno was no mountain peasant, like these Kazatovians—he was a clever, scheming man. He knew Miklos Keiff well. It behoved Lee to be wary.

"There has been much activity, your Highness," he said, in Keiff's gruff tones.

"Where is the escort that was to have met me in the pass?" demanded Prince Zeno angrily. "Where are your men now? Is this any manner in which to receive one who is soon to be your king?"

Lee appreciated that Prince Zeno had been in communication, earlier, with the real Miklos Keiff, but Lee had known nothing of that. He was at a disadvantage.

"I plead the forgiveness of your Highness," he said, bowing humbly, but using a tone of mocking arrogance. "I have been much occupied——"

"By St. Peter! So I hear!" broke in the prince angrily. "Occupied by capturing foreigners, and bringing them to this camp! That is one reason why I am here, Keiff. I shall want to know your reasons for this move."

"But what is wrong?" demanded Lee aggressively. "You mean these English fools? I have captured them, and why not? When there is a chance of profit, I am not slow——"

"This is no time for such nonsense!" broke in Prince Zeno hotly. "Come, Keiff, we must talk of this at once."

He strode into the building, and Lee followed. Soon they were in the low-ceilinged living-room, with its crude furnishings, and its smelly lamp—which, fortunately, did not give much of a light.

"Now, Keiff, what is this you are doing?" asked the prince anxiously. "What of our compact? Have you forgotten that we have but one aim? This is no time for the holding of foolish tourists. Where is Victor?"

"He is in captivity, as you ordered, your Highness."

"But where?"

"In this gorge—in a special prison."

"So I imagined!" rapped out the prince. "In this gorge! Do you not realise, Keiff, that these English tourists are trying to trick you? I understand that they came openly to Nid. There you captured them, and brought them here. You fool! It's my belief that Lord Dorrimore and his party expected you to capture them—wanted you to capture them, and why? So that they may be near King Victor. They are scheming to help him."

Lee was inwardly startled by Prince Zeno's complete knowledge of the truth.

"Pshaw! Who am I to concern myself?" he growled blusteringly. "Am I not Miklos Keiff? Am I not the king of all these mountains? You come to me, your Highness, with these angry words, but I would remind you that I am master here!"

CHAPTER 4.

By Command of Prince Zeno!

ZENO stared at him strangely.

"You adopt a new tone with me, Keiff," he said curtly. "This arrogance will not avail you. I say that you are being foolish. You have agreed to accept my absolute authority, and, unless you take your orders from me, you shall not see that coveted post in my new Government when it is formed."

Lee was learning a few things.

"I am sorry, your Highness," he muttered. "I forgot myself."

Zeno eyed him coldly.

"You are not quite the same, my friend," he said. "I cannot exactly tell how you are different; but I would advise you to remember our former conversations. When I tell you that this English party has come here with the fixed intention of frustrating our plans, you must believe me. And we will take no chances. Victor must be removed at once!"

"In the morning I shall have him——"

"No; not in the morning," interrupted the prince. "To-night, Keiff—now!"

"But, your Highness——"

"Must I remind you yet again that I am in full command here?" broke in the prince harshly. "What is the matter with you, man? I say that the boy shall be taken out of his prison to-night, and sent under a strong escort of your most trusted men to the Grod Valley."

Nelson Lee glowered—deliberately. He was inwardly alarmed. His only course, now, was to make a big show of defiance. He must resist this plan. For if young Victor Orlando was taken to the Grod Valley there would be very little hope

14 "THE SECRET OF THE SWAMP!" Stirring adventure in the African jungle.

of rescuing him. Lee had heard of the Grod Valley. It was deeper in the mountains, guarded by narrow passes. It was Miklos Keiff's inner stronghold.

Nelson Lee thought rapidly. The very mention of the Grod Valley made the simple peasants of Nid and district turn pale. There were thousands of men in that rich, fertile zone of the Kazatova Mountains. Miklos Keiff's armies were trained there; his war materials were stored there; he himself lived there, in a sort of wild monarchy.

"Nay, the boy is safe here, and he shall not be moved," said Lee shortly. "Have no fear, your Highness. These English people will not be allowed to go near him."

"You say that he shall not be moved?" repeated Prince Zeno, glaring.

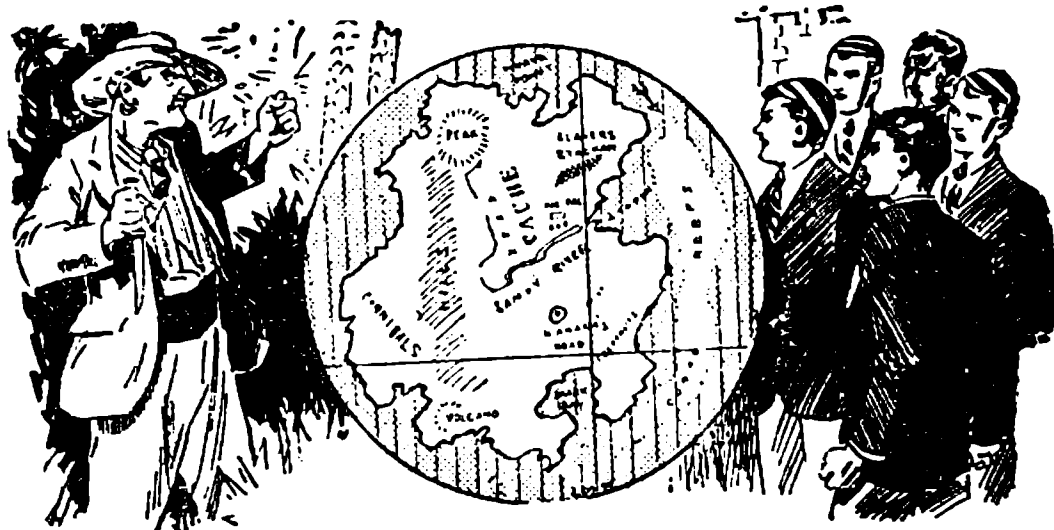
"Ay, and I repeat it!" thundered Lee. "Am I not King of the Mountains? There are some things, your Highness, which——"

"So!" snapped Zeno. "You are becoming arrogant again, my friend! You are King of the Mountains, eh? I don't know what has happened to you."

He came closer, peering inquisitively in the lamplight, and Lee knew that he would be obliged to give way.

"Perhaps I go too far, your Highness," he muttered, turning aside so that the dim lamplight should not fall upon him. "If it is your wish—your command—that the boy shall be removed, I will give the necessary orders."

"That's better," said the prince, with a sneer. "If you had not given the order, Keiff, I should have given it myself, and



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your men would have obeyed me. Unless you compel me, I have no desire to belittle you in the eyes of your followers. But have my own way, I will. Do you understand that? Let us hear no more nonsense about your being King of the Mountains. Who has been putting this preposterous comic opera stuff into your head?"

Lee did not reply.

"You have already agreed to subordinate yourself to my authority," continued Zeno. "That compact was solemnly made, Keiff, and I am surprised that you should be adopting this present attitude. Enough! We will go out now, we will visit the young king, and we will personally see him start off under escort for the Grod Valley."

There was no alternative. Nelson Lee was exasperated beyond measure; but further protest would only strengthen Prince Zeno's suspicions—and that might well lead to exposure. The prince, astute man that he was, already detected a vague difference in this impostor. Lee's only chance of remaining safe was to play second fiddle.

"Too much is at stake, my friend, for any blunder to be made now," said the prince grimly. "We are nearly ready for the great coup. The Grand Duke is being pressed; my agents are intensely active. Any day, now, I expect to receive Rudolph's complete surrender. Then, my good Keiff, you will have your soldiers in readiness, and there shall be a great march into Galvarad—a victorious entry, eh?"

"My men will soon dispose of the Government soldiers!" declared Lee contemptuously.

"They will offer little enough resistance," remarked the prince. "The Grand Duke has many enemies, and my agents are sending in excellent reports from every part of the country. When the day arrives, we shall have everything our own way. But I am relying upon you, Keiff, for the spectacular effect when the right moment comes. This is no time for seeking paltry ransom! I thought we had already agreed that all that sort of thing was to be abandoned?"

Lee shrugged.

"The habit of years, your Highness, is difficult to abandon," he said gruffly.

"Well, you had better remember in future," said the prince, again giving Lee a curious glance. "We are out for a big stake, Keiff, and we must keep our heads. Now, we will see about young Victor."

They went out, and Lee was glad that a number of his—or, rather, Miklos

Keiff's—picturesque supporters were near at hand. In a bellowing voice he commanded them to attend.

"We go to the cave where the young prisoner is held!" he said, in a voice of curt authority. "Twelve of you will prepare for an immediate journey into the Grod Valley."

There were some murmurs of surprise, and even one or two questions, but Lee ignored them.

"You, Brotz, will be in command," he went on, singling out a brawny ruffian whom he knew to be one of Miklos Keiff's most trusted lieutenants. "I shall charge you with the safe custody of the royal prisoner."

Brotz shrugged his massive shoulders.

"As you say, chief," he replied. "But what of the work you have already planned for me? Did you not say——"

"You go to the Grod Valley," interrupted Lee imperiously. "Enough!"

Brotz stared, but said nothing. Lee began to feel the ground trembling beneath his feet. His very entry into this camp, in the guise of Miklos Keiff, had been fraught with peril from the start. He could only guess how Keiff treated his men, and Lee instinctively knew that he was slightly wrong somewhere. But he was not sufficiently wrong to make these men openly suspicious.

"Come!" he said, with a wave of his hand.

They all moved up the valley, in the moonlight, and Lee wondered what the excitement could be some little distance off, where a number of the mountain men were grouped together, talking animatedly, pointing and gesticulating. But they did not approach—perhaps because of Prince Zeno's presence.

Fortunately, Lee knew where King Victor was imprisoned, and he led the way into the specially prepared cave. It was very different from the other caves in which the boys and Dorrimore and Umlosi were held prisoners.

Victor Orlando's prison was only reached by means of a narrow tunnel, and it was guarded by two stone doors. A great deal of trouble had been taken in preparing this place; special furniture had been brought into the valley, and a whole gang of Keiff's men had worked on the cave for weeks. For Victor was no ordinary prisoner; he was being treated well.

Within the tunnel, Lee turned to Prince Zeno.

"It is a thousand pities, your Highness, that the boy should be moved," he said, making a last effort. "It was your order that this cave should be prepared.

You see how impregnable it is. Why take him away? What chance is there that these English prisoners can get near him?"

"It is useless, Keiff," replied the prince. "These English are clever—daring. I agree with you that there is very little likelihood of Victor being rescued. But why take any chance at all? By removing him to Grod Valley, he is rendered absolutely safe. Must we go over this again, Keiff?" he added impatiently.

"Your orders, your Highness, shall be obeyed," said Lee gruffly.

They entered the cave. It was roomy and lofty, with one big sloping wall, in which there were three windows cut out of the solid rock, and protected by massive bars.

It was quite comfortable inside. There was an excellent carpet on the floor, comfortable chairs, a table, and a bed. There were books, magazines—there was even a well-equipped bath-room, partitioned off at the rear end of the cave.

The young prisoner himself was in bed, and he now sat up, blinking in the light of the flaring torches which some of the men carried.

"Zeno!" said Victor, in English.

"I regret, my dear half-brother, that you should be disturbed in the middle of the night," said Prince Zeno smoothly. "But I am afraid I shall have to trouble you to get up. Circumstances compel me to change your quarters."

Victor Orlando was a sturdy, cheerful-looking youngster. It was difficult to believe that he was not English—that he was not just an ordinary member of the St. Frank's Remove. He gazed scornfully at his rascally half-brother.

"Are your plans going amiss already, then?" he asked, with a sniff. "What a chump you are, Zeno. Even if you do grab my throne, how long do you think you'll keep it? It's not worth all this trouble!"

"I did not come here to argue," said the prince. "Get dressed at once. You are making a journey—into the Grod Valley."

"It's a pity you can't choose a decent time for your beastly journeys," said Victor, with a yawn. "Still, I'm your prisoner, and I suppose I shall have to obey orders. But rats to you, all the same!"

He took it very philosophically. He was soon dressed, and then, under the escort headed by the bandit, Brotz, he started off. Prince Zeno and Nelson Lee watched the party leaving. The prince was re-

lieved—and Lee saw Victor going with bitter feelings.

For it was impossible to make any effort to stop him. Any such effort would have brought disaster upon the whole English party.

"Now I shall breathe more freely," said the prince. "As for these other prisoners, Keiff, you will hold them securely. You understand? No ransom—no communications with their relatives. It is just as well that you have seized them all. Hold them prisoners at all costs."

He spoke briskly, and he was clearly more contented in mind. Presently, to Lee's relief, he took his departure.

"Until to-morrow, Keiff, I shall be staying in Nid," he said, as he got into his car. "After that, I don't know. There is much work to be done—and little time to do it in. *Au revoir*, my friend. Don't forget my wishes."

CHAPTER 5.

Suspicious!

NELSON LEE stood in the moonlight, watching Prince Zeno's car as it was swallowed up in the vague smother of dust.

The prince's last words had given Lee something to think about. He had already decided that he would send urgent messages after Brotz and have Victor brought back. For, with Prince Zeno out of the way, his—Keiff's—word was law.

But of what use bringing Victor back if Prince Zeno himself was to be in Nid? Lee planned to escape from this wild country by means of the railway at Nid. There was no other method; for in all other directions the mountains were impregnable. Or, at least, the secret passes were known only to the Kazatovians.

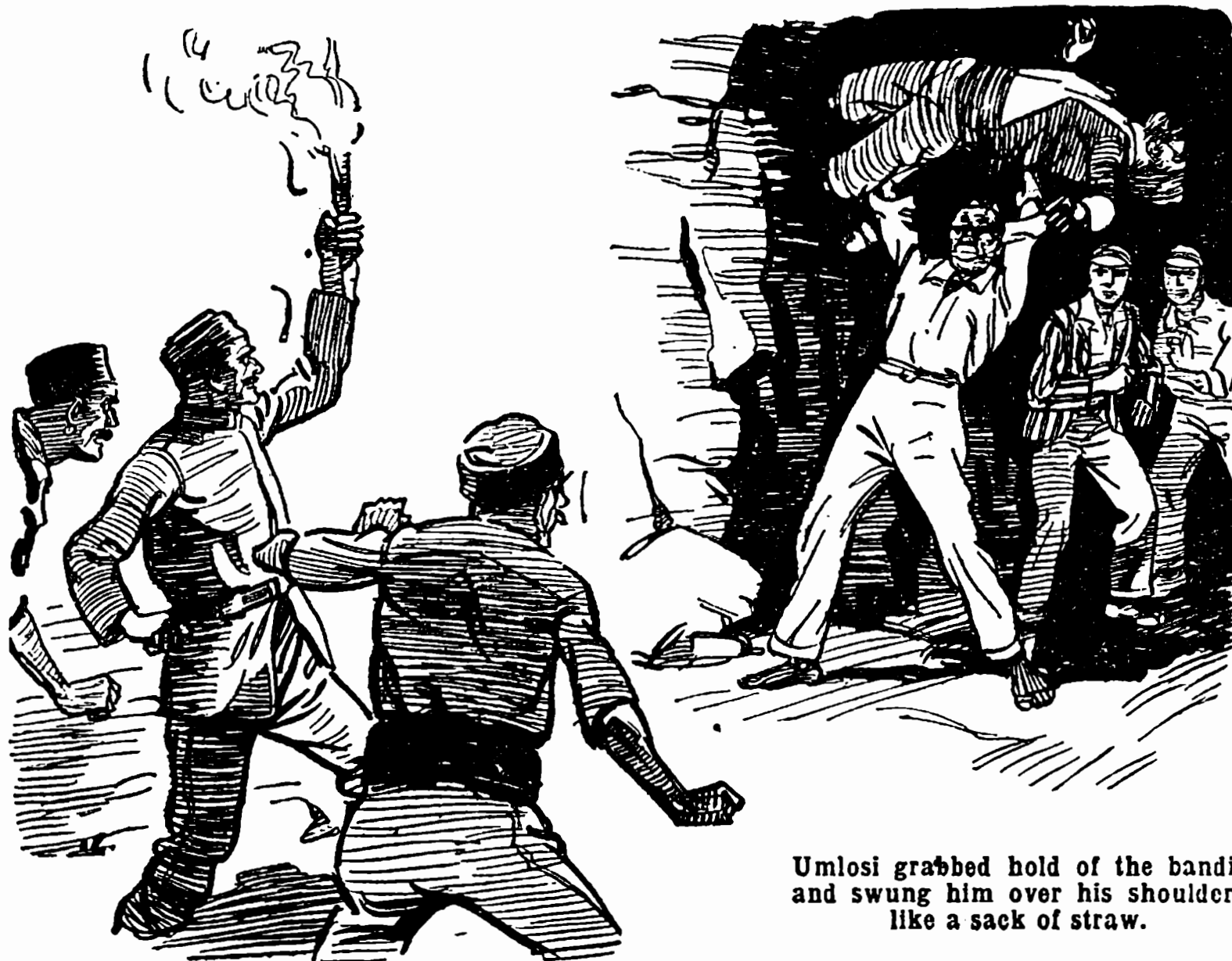
"Confound the fellow!" muttered Lee, frowning. "If I arrive in Nid to-morrow with Victor, Dorrie, Umlosi, and all the boys and girls, he will immediately suspect. H'm! It's a problem."

He thoughtfully turned towards Keiff's house; and then became aware, for the first time, of the excited men who were grouped near by.

"What is this?" asked Lee impatiently, in Keiff's harsh tones.

"There is something wrong, chief, in the cave where the English boys are imprisoned," said one of the men eagerly. "Josef and Paul say that they saw you entering that cave some time ago, and that you did not emerge."

"What foolishness are you talking?" asked Lee sharply.



Umlosi grabbed hold of the bandit and swung him over his shoulders like a sack of straw.

"But they are so certain of this, chief, that they will not move from the spot," said the man. "They are still watching. They say that you are there. Yet we know that you are here."

Although Nelson Lee had no suspicion—yet—of the real truth, he was concerned. It would not do to have these men so alert.

"Where are Josef and Paul?" he demanded angrily. "The fools! I will soon convince them."

He was led to the spot, and the two rough mountain men gazed upon him in awe as he came up.

"Are you mad, Josef?" demanded Lee.

"If you are here, chief, then it was your ghost which entered that cave half an hour ago!" breathed Josef tremulously. "We saw him! We saw *you*, chief! Is that not so, Paul?"

"You dolts! You imbeciles!" snapped Lee contemptuously. "I entered the cave, and I came out. Did you not see me emerge?"

"Nay, chief, we were watching," said Josef. "We saw nothing. Yet you could not emerge without us seeing, for the moonlight is bright."

The other men were pressing round now, and there was a demand for the boys'

cave to be entered and searched. Lee was puzzled—but he was relieved in one respect. These men had stuck to their post, and by doing that they had prevented Prince Zeno from learning of this peculiar development.

"Wait," said Lee curtly. "I will go to this cave alone. You have been dreaming, but in order to satisfy you I will enter and make sure. Remain here—all of you."

He strode forward, and the excited men hesitated, hanging back. Then, at the last minute, they came running up—just when Nelson Lee had made the startling discovery that the door of the boys' cave was unbolted!

There was something wrong here, very obviously!

"The door!" exclaimed Josef. "Is it unbolted, or—"

"It is unbolted now, if that is what you mean," interrupted Lee, making a noise with the bolts. "Did you expect it to be open, fool?"

Josef blazed fire.

"You are free with your words to-night, chief," he muttered. "Yet I tell you there is something wrong. Paul and I saw you enter this cave—and yet you are here. And there is something different in you. Is that not so?" he went on, appeal-

ing to the others. "Miklos Keiff is changed!"

"Ay!" went up a growl from the bandits.

"It is enough to change any man, to have such childishness in his followers," said Lee sourly.

But a staggering thought had come to him. Two Miklos Keiffs! Was it possible that the real bandit chief— But no, that was incredible, unthinkable! He faced his men grimly.

"Who is leader here?" he demanded arrogantly. "By St. Peter! Do you defy me to my face, you rabble? Get back! When I give my orders, they shall be obeyed! Back! I will enter this cave alone!"

His ferocity had effect, and the men retired, muttering. Lee, with a swift step, entered the black doorway, and pulled the door to after him.

"Guv'nor!" came a soft, tense whisper out of the blackness.

"Hush!" breathed Lee. "Are you all awake?"

"Yes, sir," murmured Nipper. "Something's happened! Do they suspect you yet, guv'nor?"

"What do you mean?"

"Miklos Keiff came here, sir—and at

first we mistook him for you!" came Handforth's excited voice. "Then we found that he was the *real* Keiff! We thought that you might be in an awful mess, sir!"

"The real Miklos Keiff," repeated Lee tensely. "Good heavens! Then my suspicions were right! The Grand Rudolph's agents must have let their prisoner escape!"

"There's nothing else to think, sir!" whispered Nipper. "Anyhow, we knew that if we allowed him to get away again it would be all up with you. So we bagged him."

"By James! You did what?"

"Collared him, sir—bound him, gagged him, and hid him away at the back of the cave," said Nipper. "He's here now, and we thought that as long as we kept him prisoner, you would be safe."

"Well done, young 'uns—splendid!" said Lee approvingly. "I dare not remain here any longer. Keep him quiet—and remain quiet yourselves. I will seek an opportunity of returning later, and then we can talk. For the moment, I must attend to these men. They are already suspicious."

Before he could finish speaking, the door burst open, and Josef and Paul and the other men, carrying flaming torches, came

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crowding in. Their swarthy faces were alight with suspicion and alarm.

"What now?" demanded Lee, turning upon them angrily. "Did I not tell you to wait? There is nothing amiss in here; these paltry children are alone, as I expected."

"Yet there is something strange going on!" declared Josef excitedly. "Even you, chief—even you are not the same. Why do you come here alone and talk with these foreign boys?"

"Ay, why is he so friendly with them?" asked one of the other men. "He comes, and he whispers. It is unlike Miklos Keiff to keep his trusted men at arm's length."

"There is naught the matter, fools!" thundered Lee. "There is no other man in this cave. Get out of here! Am I to be obeyed, or am I to be defied? The first man who refuses to take orders will be reported to Prince Zeno."

As the bandits held their torches aloft, Nipper and Handforth and the other boys cowered back, apparently frightened. Suspicious as the men were, they could see nothing here to cause them any alarm. Josef and Paul were the only two who were still not convinced. The others were beginning to believe that there had been some blunder.

They were disappointed, and, in fact, nonplussed. They went crowding out of the cave and Lee followed them. He closed the door and shot the bolts. When he spoke his tone was contemptuous.

"What kind of men have I under my command?" he asked. "Are they men, or are they imaginative women. Back to your posts!"

"But Josef and I saw——" began Paul.

"Enough!" thundered Lee. "Either you and Josef were dreaming at your posts, or you have been drinking. There is nothing wrong with these boys, and they shall remain undisturbed until dawn. But stay! Perhaps it would be better—Yes! I will do that!"

He spoke as though to himself, and he strode off towards the little cave where Lord Dorrimore and Umlosi were imprisoned. His men followed, muttering amongst themselves. Two of them were about to question him, but he did not give them the chance.

"The other prisoners—the Englishman and the negro—they shall be placed with the boys," he said curtly. "It is better that they should all be locked up in the one cave. A close watch must be kept over them throughout the night. You understand? Four men, at least, will remain on duty at the door. We can take no chances with these foreigners."

By this time, Lee had arrived at the smaller cave, and he entered. As he had expected, Lord Dorrimore and Umlosi were on the alert. Lee only had an opportunity of breathing a few words into Dorrie's ear.

"You're going into the other cave—with the boys," he whispered. "Something wrong, Dorrie. Keiff has returned—the boys have captured him. They'll give you the details."

"You scoundrel!" growled Lord Dorrimore. "Keep your filthy paws off me!"

"Things are going wrong generally," whispered Lee. "It looks as if you'll have your excitement after all. I'll come and see you later—when I get the chance."

In loud, blustering tones, he ordered Lord Dorrimore and Umlosi to get out of the cave; his other words, spoken in a low whisper, had not been heard by any of the Kazatovians.

But as Lord Dorrimore and Umlosi were transferred to the boys' cave, they were far from feeling as subdued as they pretended. Dorrie, in fact, was frankly bucked. So things weren't going so nicely! Good! This would probably mean some hectic excitement.

Hardly a word was spoken. They reached the big cave, they were thrust in, and Lee himself bolted the door.

"Great Scott! It's Dorrie!" came a whisper from the darkness. "And old Umlosi!"

"Good egg!"

"Dry up, young 'uns!" whispered Dorrie. "Listen!"

They could hear Nelson Lee giving orders. There was a shuffle of feet, some mutterings from the men. Then a comparative quiet. Looking through the bars of the window, the boys could see that an extra strong guard had been placed on duty. Nelson Lee himself was walking away, alone, and some of the other bandits were going in the opposite direction. It seemed that the brief spell of excitement was over.

Lee was relieved; but he was by no means certain that he could carry this bluff completely through. Miklos Keiff's men were becoming acutely suspicious now—and as the night advanced, and they had time to think, they would become more suspicious still. However, as long as they did not enter that cave, and find their real chief, all might yet be well.

Lee wanted time to think. It was necessary to get out some immediate plan of campaign. All his original schemes were wrecked. The unexpected coming of Prince Zeno had made a very big difference.

Nelson Lee was beginning to think that it would be better to remove Lord Dorrimore and his entire party without any further delay. Victor could then be rescued later. But the first thing was to think—and think hard.

CHAPTER 6.

The Search Party!

“SO that’s it?” said Lord Dorrimore, with a nod. “Gad! No wonder Lee was anxious to shove Umlosi and me in this cave with you boys!”

“I don’t see why, sir,” murmured Handforth. “He could have trusted us to look after the prisoner, couldn’t he?”

“Ahem! Perhaps so,” said Dorrie. “But it’s far better to be on the safe side, young ’un.”

Nipper had explained all the circumstances, and Dorrie and Umlosi were startled, to say the least of it. They had inspected the prisoner, and they were satisfied that he was incapable of taking any action. Dorrie, in fact, considered that the boys had made a pretty workman-like job of it. Miklos Keiff was as helpless as a trussed chicken.

“What’s been happening, Dorrie?” asked Nipper eagerly.

“Well, roughly, I gather that Prince Zeno has butted in and made a general mess of things,” explained his lordship. “I don’t quite know how, but poor old Lee’s in a rare stew. And it’s not exactly cheering to find that this Keiff blighter has turned up. Some of the bandits spotted him, and they’re getting suspicious. You see, they saw two editions of Keiff, in two different parts of the camp at once. At least, that’s what I understand.”

“No wonder they’re suspicious, then,” said Handforth tensely. “By George! Will it mean trouble for Mr. Lee?”

“Whatever trouble Mr. Lee gets into, he’s capable of getting out of,” replied Lord Dorrimore coolly. “I’m not worried about Lee. He’s well able to look after himself. But there’s no denying that the return of Keiff has complicated things more than a little.”

“These men seem to be getting excited out here,” came a whisper from one of the others, near the window. “Some of them are lighting torches, and they’re all jabbering together sixteen to the dozen.”

“Let’s have a look,” said Lord Dorrimore.

It did not take him long to guess what was in the wind. Josef, Paul, and the others were preparing to act for them-

selves! Nelson Lee, by the very strength of his personality, had kept them in subjection—in spite of their suspicions. But now that Lee had gone, they were not so subdued. They had originally intended searching the boys’ cave, but Lee had prevented them. They were going to search it now!

“H’m! This looks ugly!” murmured Dorrie, frowning. “These blighters are coming in here—and if they find our pal up the corner, they’ll make a few awkward inquiries.”

“What shall we do, sir?” asked Handforth tensely.

“Wau! There is but one thing to do, N’Kose,” rumbled Umlosi, who was listening intently to the talk. “We shall fight!”

“A good idea, Umlosi—but I doubt if it would pan out well,” said his lordship, shaking his head. “These fellows are pretty handy with their knives, and we’re all unarmed. If we start a scrap, we shall be at a disadvantage—”

“With my bare hands, my father, I can crush many of these enemies,” said Umlosi, clenching his fists as though in readiness.

Before Dorrie could make any reply, another party of Kazatovians appeared—fetched, no doubt, by one of the suspicious guards. There was a full dozen, and they brought more flaming torches. They were brawny, big-limbed, swarthy men, and they were all jabbering together in low-voiced excitement. They no sooner joined the others than the whole party, numbering a full two dozen, moved towards the cave.

“Crumbs!” muttered Church. “This looks nasty, you chaps! Look at their daggers!”

The few fellows who could see out of the window were startled. All the bandits had unsheathed their knives, and they were evidently ready for action. The blades could be seen gleaming wickedly in the torchlight.

“No fighting, Umlosi,” muttered Lord Dorrimore, into the giant black’s ear. “Sorry, old chap, but you’ll have to control yourself.”

“Alas, N’Kose, thou art surely jesting?” groaned Umlosi. “Are we to let these men slaughter us, then?”

“They won’t attack us unless we attack them,” replied his lordship. “And we can’t start a scrap, Umlosi. If we do, the boys will suffer. They’re plucky enough, but they can’t fight against a blood-thirsty gang like this. For their sake, we’ve got to bottle up.”

(Continued on page 24.)

Grand Special Wireless—But Not Laugh-Less—Number



HANDFORTH'S Weekly

No. 16. Vol. 1.

GENERAL NEWS BULLETIN

By the Chief Announcer,
E. O. HANDFORTH

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August 8th, 1931.

**THIS WEEK'S
WIRELESS TALK**
MUSIC AT ST. FRANK'S
By William Napoleon
Browne

HALLO, everybody! This is St. Frank's calling. I hope you are all listening-in to this week's broadcast. Your license costs twopence a week, and you can get it at the nearest paper shop by asking for a NELSON LEE.

Another Special Number this week, you fellows and girls—and the brightest of the whole bunch. Who thought of this stunt? Whose mighty brainbox originated this stunning wheeze? Not to keep you in suspense, I'll tell you. It was me. (That's another fifty lines for bad grammar.)

You will find the turns in this week's programme quite as good as usual, and that's saying a lot. My WEEKLY is the brightest paper in Britain. I've said so over and over again.

Even the Editor of the NELSON LEE has confessed that he has never read anything like it before. He ties a wet towel round his head every time he reads my stuff. I expect that's to prevent himself cracking his face with laughter.

Shall I have the pleasure of broadcasting to you again next Wednesday? You bet I shall. Once a reader always a reader—ch? By George! If I wasn't as modest and shy as a tender violet, I could swank a bit about my WEEKLY. As it is, I'll just close down for two minutes, while Mr. William Napoleon Browne is taking a couple of cough lozenges.

Stand by for one moment, please.

S. O. S.

We have here a very urgent S.O.S., which we desire to broadcast before the next item.

"If there is any reader of the NELSON LEE named Hezekiah Shuggleworthy, he has our deepest sympathy."

I will repeat that—shall I? No? Oh, all right!

AHEM! (All wireless lecturers begin with a cough, you know.)

Brothers and sisters, we are this week to consider the flourishing state of music at St. Frank's. A very interesting subject, beshrew me.

All sorts and conditions of instruments are to be heard at this school, ranging from the Whacking Birch to the Jew's Harp. Notable composers also are not absent, and many worthy pieces of music have been written during maths.

In this connection I have only to draw your attention to Handforth Minor's very fine Concerto for Comb and Two Bent Pins, which he composed for a Form-room concert. The Concerto opens with a slow Adagio passage on the Comb; but soon the gentle twanging of the Bent Pins is heard, and the theme works up to a bold Rondo Capriccioso on the Comb, Bent Pins, Two Rulers and an Ink Pot. The Comb solo is played most movingly by Mr. Juicy Lemon.

As for Handforth major, he is an adept on that very delicate instrument the Jawbone. He is also very good at blowing his own trumpet. Brothers Church and McClure always play second fiddle when he is about. Brother Long has obtained great credit for playing the Bones with his knees.

As for myself, I am content to play on the feelings of readers of this incredible magazine. But courage! I will harrow your souls no longer. It is time for me to leave the "mike" to the feeble artistes who come after me. Farewell, brothers and sisters!

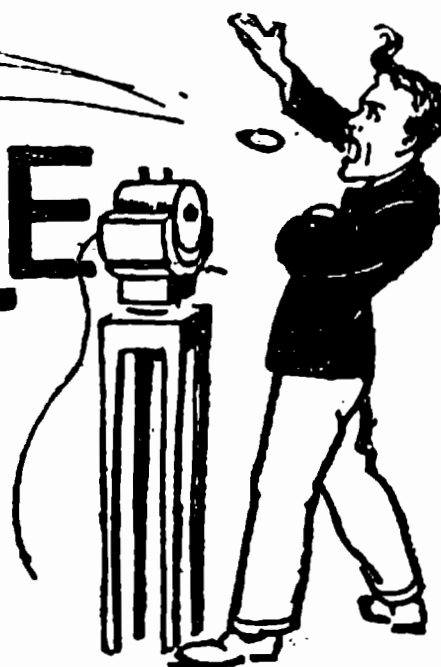
Time Signal From Greenwich.

Pip-pip-pip-pip-pip-please dud-dud-dud v
st-st-st-stutter.

Vivian Travers takes pleasure in announcing half an hour of



VAUDEVILLE



ALL STAR PROGRAMME.
(The actors will "see stars" after the show.)

E. O. HANDFORTHIA,
The famous singer—or so he thinks.

NIPPER,
Impersonator—he doesn't agree with television.

REGGIE PITT AND JACK GREY.
They call themselves comedians.

TOMMY WATSON
Composes a limerick—that's where he ought to go.

ST. FRANK'S TROUPE.
Their song concludes the show—thank goodness!

A Voice: "Now disguise yourself as an egg—and beat it!"
(Nipper does so.)

Hallo, everybody! Are you still there? Good. The next item on the agenda is Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey, the Pie-faced Comedians. You'll laugh yourselves hoarse—if you get somebody to tickle you.

Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey.

"Hallo, Reggie!"
"Lo, Jack!"
"Haven't seen you lately. Where've you been?"
"Me? Been big game hunting. Africa."
"Did you go after the lions?"
"Yeh!"
"Have any luck?"
"Top-hole! Didn't meet a single one."
"Did you bag any gorillas?"
"Yeh! Got one! Jumped on it and cut off its tail."
"His tail! Why not his head?"
"That was off already."
"Meet any leopards?"
"Any—what?"
"Leopards."
"Oh, yeh! Dodged round a tree and met a leopard right on the spot."
"Is it true that a leopard changes its spots?"
"Dunno 'bout that. I changed mine pretty quick."
"Here, I can't talk to you any longer, Reggie. There's someone over in the corner shouting for all he's worth."
"Yeh! It's old Corny Trotwood—he's talking to himself."
"Well, there's no need to shout when you talk to yourself."
"Yes, there is. He's deaf."
"Boy, you're so silly that you're surprised at yourself."
"Oh, yeh!"

HALLO, everybody! Our programme will begin with a song by Senor Edwardo Handforthia, the famous Italian tenor, who is not allowed to sing in his own land because everybody mistakes his voice for Vesuvius in eruption. Senor What's his-name will sing the Great Aria from an Italian opera, accompanied by the saxophone and six pea-shooters.
Saxophone: Warr-r-warr-r-whoooooosh—oosh!

Senor Handforthia.

Out in the awful freezing snow (Warr-warr!)
He stood a-selling matches in the street.
The beggar had no home to which to go (Warr-warr!)
He had no shoes on his poor old feet (Boo-hoo!)
(Loud applause.)
The tear-drop ran a-glistening down his nose (Whoomp-warr!)
His overcoat and gloves were hardly new.
His thumbs and his fingers all was froze (Warr!)
And, poor old bean, he didn't know what to do.
A Voice: "Well, I jolly well know what to do. Take that!" (Exit Senor Handforthia.)

I'm sorry to say that Senor Handforthia can't finish the song because his feelings and an ancient talking-egg have overcome him. But here is NIPPER, the great Impersonator, who will render a few of his celebrated impersonations. He is so clever that on one occasion he disguised himself as a pillar-box, and the postman came along and emptied him.

Nipper: "Ladies and gentlemen, first of all I will disguise myself as Lord Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar."

"If I addressed a letter at St. Frank's, do they'd deliver it to?"
"Yeh! They'd return sender."

Hallo! Back again sorry to say that our Pie-face have sustained a slight accident gone home. A couple of them to slip out of the hand of the gallery and fortune their silly heads.

Now we have Mr. Tommy Watson with a couple of footling may not be able to hear because his voice is a bit to the east wind.

Tommy Watson
A silly old farmer of Herefordshire. Cut his hair in the reaping. His ears and his teeth. Were bound up in a shawl. But the rest of him hasn't.

There was a young lad of Herefordshire. Who was rather exceptional. But he grew, so they say. Twice as fat in one day. It turned out he'd swallowed.

Now, to finish up with a farewell song by the Vaudeville Troupe. They ought to dance as they've decided not to. Reasons. Their feet. The Jazz Band of Educated accompanists afterwards will accompany the singers in a tuckshop for a bust-up. Ooomph-pha! Ooomph-boom!

It's surprising when you And we often wonder There are so many different Of bidding one "Good-bye!" ooom!

To those who jaw the weather And make a fearful din You say "Good-bye!" these, "Well, well, old man!" While, if you're rather thin And he is tall and slim The proper words for you Are these: "Well, well!" (Pom-pom!)

A sailor when he goes to sea Says "Good-bye" to the And Frenchmen kiss each other And murmur "Au revoir" But if your friend's an idiot Just give the chump That you're fed up with By bidding him: If these don't suit, as it is And nothing else will We always think it's best To warble "Toodle-oo" We wish you TOOOO OOOOOOO!

Our Wireless Play

IN THE FOG!

(SCENE: The deck of a small motor-boat called "The Mary Ann," which has been lent to Handforth by his uncle for a week.)

E. O. H.: Well, you fellows, she's a nice little craft, isn't she? We'll just start up the engine and go for a cruise in the Bay.

CHURCH: It's a good job nobody has walked off with her. Bit risky, wasn't it, leaving her moored to the jetty?

E. O. H.: By George! Did you ever hear such rot? As if a fellow can't tie his boat to the jetty of a night without somebody taking it away. You talk nonsense, Churchy. Stand by! I'm going to start her up. Avast there, Mac!

McCLURE: How do you avast?

E. O. H.: Well, as a matter of fact, I'm not quite sure. But all sailors have to avast, so you two blokes had better avast right away, unless you want a couple of thick ears. Let's see! First of all you flood the carburettor or something. (Krrrrk! Sz-z-z! Oooo-warrrrk!)

CHURCH (holding his ears): Cheese it, fathead!

E. O. H.: Who are you calling a fathead? (Biff!)

CHURCH: Yaroooooh!

E. O. H.: Now I'll just pull this lever. (Brrrrrrk! Sch-sch! Sch-sch!) Fine! She's off!

McCLURE: Here, I say, Handy—hadn't we better not go to-day. It's getting foggy. We can hardly see a foot from the gunwale.

E. O. H.: Ass! I don't believe a gunwale has got a foot. What is a gunwale, anyway?

McCLURE: The side of the boat, ass! (Biff!) Yooop! (Sch-sch! Sch-sch!)

E. O. H.: We're travelling now! Look at the water bubbling behind.

CHURCH: It's so foggy that I can't see a thing. We're lost. Great Scott! There's a crowd of shipping in the Bay. We shall run into something in a minute.

E. O. H. (uneasily): What rot! I'll sound the siren. (Aaa-hooooooooooooo!)

McCLURE: Look here, Handy, turn back towards the shore. We can't possibly go for a cruise to-day. It's so foggy that you can't see your hand before your face.

E. O. H. (reluctantly): To tell you the truth, I don't know which is the direction of the shore. We've been twisting about, and we may be heading for the open sea for all I know.

CHURCH: Ye gods! Then we're doomed!

E. O. H.: Don't talk like a chump. (Aaaa-hoooooooooooo!) If we keep on long enough we're bound to strike something.

CHURCH (feverishly): I know! That's what's putting the wind up me.

McCLURE (shouting): HELP! HELP!

E. O. H.: Oh, cheese it! That won't do any good. Besides, nobody can hear you, anyway. (Aaa-hoooooooooooo!)

CHURCH: Don't keep fooling about with that siren. It sounds like the beastly wail of a beastly ghost.

E. O. H.: Well, we don't want to run into a cargo boat if we can help it. The

siren will keep them clear. (Aaaa-hooooo ooooo!) I wish to goodness I knew just where we are and in which direction the shore is. By George! I hope we're not heading out to sea.

McCLURE: Oh, crikey! Shut off the engine.

E. O. H.: That would make it worse still. We should be drifting helplessly about the bay.

McCLURE: HELP!

CHURCH: What's the good of—

A VOICE FROM THE FOG: Who the dickens is that making all that row? What yer doing in that boat?

ALL THREE: Where are we?

THE VOICE: Where are yer! Why, tied to Caistowe Jetty with a bit o' rope. Where didja think yer were?

E. O. H. (feebly): Great Jupiter! We didn't untie the rope! We're still moored to the jetty. Why—what—what—YAROOOOOOH!

CHURCH: Take that!

McCLURE: And that!

E. O. H.: Yaroooooh! By George, you rotters! I'll—

(Exit Church and McClure hurriedly.)

This is the St. Frank's station calling. That concludes our programme for this week, and we are now closing down until next Wednesday. Good-night everybody! Good-night!

Unrehearsed Realism During Action of Play.



McClure: "It's getting oggy."

THE MOUNTAIN TYRANT!

(Continued from page 20.)

"Methinks thy decision is full of wisdom, O, my father," nodded Umlosi.

After that, there was no chance of further talking. The bolts had been shot back, the door was opened, and the men came crowding in, holding their flaming torches aloft. They had been cheated of their search earlier, but their supposed chief was not here now. Josef was the man who was causing most of the trouble.

"You think I am mad, yes?" he was shouting fiercely. "But Paul and I saw! It was Miklos Keiff himself who entered this cave—and he did not emerge!"

"But Keiff has not long left us——" began one of the other men.

"I tell you there is something amiss!" interrupted Josef, pushing some of the boys aside, and striding forward. "I do not believe that the man who spoke to us was Miklos Keiff! You still think me mad, yes? But he was different—he was strange. I am full of suspicion. I tell you, all is not right!"

This man, Josef, was the shrewdest of them all. For, whilst the others were content to shrug their shoulders and wonder what had caused their chief to change so much, Josef suspected the actual truth. He was determined, at all costs, to make a thorough search of the cave.

The others were ready enough to help. They made no attempt to harm Lord Dorrimore, Umlosi, or the boys. They growled at them, and glared ferociously, and their knives looked dangerous; but they made no attack.

They treated them, in fact, with supreme contempt, pushing them aside roughly, and going about their search in such a businesslike manner that the boys could only stand back and breathlessly await the inevitable.

Even Handforth, aggressive and warlike as he was, saw the impossibility of resisting these men. They were brawny fellows, every one of them; they were armed to the teeth, and they actually outnumbered the boys. To start a fight would be to ask for trouble.

A great shout arose from the end of the cave. Josef was there, with several others. Louder shouts arose, and Lord Dorrimore grunted.

"That's done it," he murmured. "Now for a few fireworks from Miklos Keiff. Somehow, I have half an idea that Mr. Keiff will be slightly annoyed."

"What are we going to do, sir?" asked Tommy Watson anxiously. "Where's Mr. Lee? Can't something be done?"

"Nothing at the moment, old chap," replied Dorrie. "Mr. Lee doesn't even know what's going on here—and if he did, I don't think he could stop these men now. They're far too excited. Besides, they've discovered their real leader. Mr. Lee's game is over."

"He's out there, and he doesn't know what's happened," whispered Nipper, in agony. "They'll go to him, and they'll trap him like a rat! Oh, Dorrie, they'll kill him for this!"

"Let's—let's make one terrific scrap of it, sir!" urged Handforth, with sudden excitement.

"No, no! Wait!" growled Dorrie. "You young ass, aren't things bad enough already? Our time will come sooner or later—and then we'll put up a good show."

Some of the boys had been expecting that the door would be left unguarded, and they had even thought of making a sudden bolt for liberty. Unfortunately, two of the men had remained on guard. There was no escape that way.

At the end of the cave, Josef and the other bandits were giving vent to their feelings in loud-voiced exclamations. At the same time they were unfastening the bonds of the prisoner. By the time the big man was on his feet, the others had no doubts regarding his identity. This was Miklos Keiff himself—dirty, dishevelled, nearly foaming at the mouth with fury—but unquestionably the great Miklos Keiff.

For about five solid minutes the bandit chief let off steam. He raved, he roared, and he ignored the eager questions of his followers. Perhaps it was just as well that Miklos Keiff allowed his rage to escape in words and not action, or it would have gone badly for the St. Frank's adventurers. When at last he had calmed down, he was still dangerous.

"Who are these boys? What are they doing here?" he shouted, waving his great arms wildly about his head. "They seize me—they bind me!"

"Did I not tell you?" asked Josef triumphantly, as he looked at his companions. "Our chief is here! That other man is a spy!"

"A spy!" went up a shout.

"Ay, a spy sent by the Grand Duke!" Josef said. "Do you not understand? He all but tricked us! I was the only one who suspected—and I was called a madman and a fool!"

"What is this you are talking?" demanded Miklos Keiff harshly.

Gabbling almost feverishly, the bandits attempted to explain.

"We will not remain here," interrupted Keiff, after a while. "These people I will deal with later. They laid hands on me—and they shall suffer!"

He faced the prisoners menacingly, and his eyes were burning with an intense hatred. Lord Dorrimore could tell that Umlosi, close beside him, was fairly quivering with suppressed emotion. It was requiring a great effort of self-control on Umlosi's part for him to hold himself in check.

"Steady, old friend!" whispered Dorrie. "The time isn't yet."

But Umlosi, for all his long years of association with civilisation, was at heart a primitive. And when Miklos Keiff, in striding forward, thrust Nipper out of his way so violently that Nipper crashed head-long to the floor, the great Kutana chief leapt into the flickering torchlight with a low, angry cry.

"Dog! Wouldst thou lay hands upon one whom I love?" he rumbled. "Wau! What art thou but filth?"

Miklos Keiff stared in amazement.

"A strange rabble, this, in my camp!" he snarled. "There shall be a heavy reckoning. Out of my way, you black animal!"

He struck contemptuously at Umlosi; and what happened after that was swift and dramatic. Umlosi, with a mighty roar, leapt forward like a panther. He seized Miklos Keiff bodily, lifted him clear of the floor, and hurled him at the other bandits.

"Good gad!" breathed Dorrie, aghast.

He expected to see Umlosi cut to pieces on the spot. But Umlosi was not such an easy victim. As three of the bandits rushed at him, he met their attack. One went down with a shrieking cry, to lie writhing on the floor; another collapsed without a sound; and the third was swept off his feet, and flung contemptuously over Umlosi's shoulder.

"Seize him!" panted Miklos Keiff, struggling to his feet. "This—this animal has dared to strike me! He has struck one who is the ruler of thousands! Seize him and hold him!"

Daggers were gleaming, and many were on the point of being hurled at Umlosi.

"No, not yet!" shouted Keiff. "He shall suffer for what he has done—and to strike him dead now would be painless. Seize him, I say, and tie him with ropes!"

Reluctantly, the others put away their daggers. They closed in on Umlosi. He fought with tremendous enthusiasm, but against such overwhelming odds even his great strength was unavailing. Very soon

he went down, with half a dozen men on him.

"Dorrie!" gasped Handforth, clutching at Lord Dorrimore's arm. "Can't—can't we do something?"

"Not now," murmured Dorrie. "They're not going to kill him, thank goodness! We can help him better by pretending to be frightened!"

Umlosi, his legs and arms tightly bound, was carried bodily out of the cave. There was a great clattering of heavily-shod feet. The torchlights cast flickering shadows on the rock walls. Then the last of the bandits went out into the night, and the door of the cavern prison was closed and bolted. Men were left on guard.

The excitement, for the moment, was over—but it was very evident that a great deal more was to come.

CHAPTER 7.

Exposed!

MIKLOS KEIFF had arrived in his camp a tired, almost exhausted man. Since then he had spent some time in that black cave, bound hand and foot and gagged.

Yet now as he stood in the moonlight, surrounded by some two score of his followers, he revealed no signs of exhaustion. His strength had been restored to him by the startling things he had heard.

He had been bewildered at first, by the conflicting statements of Josef and Paul and the others. But out of all this tumult of talk one fact stood out like a beacon light. The impostor was in the camp still. He had not been warned. He knew nothing of the real Miklos Keiff's return. And that meant in all probability that he could be easily trapped.

It was no news to Miklos Keiff, of course, that his double had been taking command. Keiff had come here deliberately to unmask the intruder, and to undo any harm that he might have done.

His followers listened breathlessly as he told them how an unknown man—an Englishman—had surprised him some nights earlier at a distant inn. This Englishman, assisted by three of the Grand Duke's agents, had rendered him helpless, and the Englishman had then miraculously transformed himself until he was a replica of the prisoner.

Keiff wasted no time in explaining how he had escaped. It had been comparatively easy. On the way to Galvarad he had been temporarily placed in a wayside barracks for the night. Some of the soldiers in that garrison were revolutionaries; they were Prince Zeno's paid spies. Learning that Miklos Keiff was captured, they took measures to effect his release.

Post-haste he had returned. Arriving at Nid, he had secured a horse, and he had ridden into the gorge, only to be seized by the schoolboys before he had made one single inquiry.

"We have the advantage, my men," he said gloatingly. "This Englishman who has had the audacity to impersonate me knows nothing of my return. We shall capture him easily, and his punishment shall be death!"

"Ay, death!" chorused the bandits.

"When daylight comes we will deal with these others, these boys whom I have seen and the girls you tell me of," continued Miklos Keiff, breathing hard. "But while the moon still rides in the sky we will settle with the impostor. He is a dangerous man, a clever man. We can take no chances, my friends."

He had been startled to hear that Prince Zeno had been to the camp, and that even his Highness had not suspected the impostor. If this man could fool Prince Zeno, then he was indeed clever. And it was disturbing to learn that the prince had imparted a great deal of valuable information to the spy.

The situation, in fact, was most alarming. However, the boys and Lord Dorrimore were safely under guard. Umlosi, bound and helpless, was also under lock and key. The girls hardly counted.

"And the young king?" demanded Miklos Keiff, glowering. "You say that Victor has been sent into the Grod Valley?"

"That was no trickery, chief," said Josef. "Prince Zeno himself gave the order."

"It is perhaps all to the good," grunted Keiff. "The boy will be safe enough in the Grod Valley. For the moment we will attend to this intruder. Later, I must get in touch with Prince Zeno; I must know exactly what has taken place. And he, too, must be told."

Keiff boiled afresh as he remembered that the impudent Englishman was actually occupying his—Keiff's—own bed! Well, it would be easy enough to seize him. Taken in his sleep, he would receive short shrift.

But it was not so easy to take that impudent Englishman.

For when Keiff's headquarters had been surrounded and Keiff and his men had burst in, they found the place empty. The bird had flown.

Great was Keiff's rage.

"Have every exit from this gorge guarded!" he shouted thickly. "There must be a search. He cannot have escaped completely. He must be here somewhere, and when we find him death will be too good. He shall suffer first, suffer untold tortures!"

It was at this interesting hour of this eventful night that Prince Zeno returned. He had had no such intention; but soon after arriving in the mountain town of Nid he had heard that Miklos Keiff had left a

train from the south some hours earlier, and that he had ridden away into the hills.

On the face of it the statement sounded absurd, for Prince Zeno, at that very time, had been speaking to Miklos Keiff in the gorge. At all events, the prince considered the matter important enough to return and make inquiries.

What he learned staggered him.

After the first excited disclosures, during which the full force of the plot was revealed, Prince Zeno and Miklos Keiff closeted themselves in the bandit's headquarters. The prince was shaken.

"Our enemies are moving rapidly, Keiff," he said huskily. "I can scarcely believe what you have told me. You were captured, and this Englishman disguised himself until he exactly resembled you. Amazing! It was he I spoke to earlier."

"Does your Highness know who this man can be?" asked Miklos Keiff eagerly.

"From your description, I have no doubt who he is," replied the prince. "He is a man known as Nelson Lee—a great friend of this Lord Dorrimore. Indeed, he is a schoolmaster at the school where King Victor was being educated. Yet he is almost a famous detective in England—a man of brains and courage and resource."

"I can well believe it, your Highness," agreed Keiff, with conviction.

"This is the man who is at large in this gorge," continued the prince, pacing up and down. "He must be captured, Keiff. At all costs, he must be seized and held. While he is at liberty my whole enterprise is in jeopardy."

The prince could see, now that it was too late, how very different the real Miklos Keiff was from the imitation. There was no arrogant blustering here; Keiff was well under his thumb, so to speak.

"Can you not realise the narrowness of our escape?" continued Zeno, with an eloquent gesture. "If you had not returned, Keiff, this man Lee would undoubtedly have liberated Lord Dorrimore and the negro and the other members of the English party. I can well believe that he would have liberated King Victor, too. His resource is amazing. Somehow he would have found a way."

"But now he is a fugitive, and sooner or later we shall capture him," said Miklos Keiff grimly. "Then, your Highness, we shall hold the upper hand, yes?"

"While that man is at liberty, I am uneasy," said Prince Zeno. "You must use all your men if necessary, Keiff. The search must commence at once. It is well that Victor was sent into the Grod Valley. There at least he is beyond the reach of these interfering English."

"From the Grod Valley there is no escape," nodded Miklos Keiff.

"We have been fooled—we have been nearly beaten," continued the prince hoarsely. "From now onwards, Keiff, we must be on the alert. I count myself much to blame



Watched by armed guards, Nipper & Co. were forced to do gruelling work in the terrific heat.

for having been deceived by the impostor. Yet even when I was talking with him I was vaguely suspicious. I could scarcely believe that you would have captured these English boys and girls, so that you could hold them to ransom."

Keiff shrugged his shoulders.

"Should I do that, at such a time?" he asked scornfully. "No, your Highness. Our stake is much higher."

"We must hold these people here, and Leo must be found," said the prince. "I will remain with you, Keiff, until to-morrow at least. Before I go—and my business is urgent—I want to learn that Lee has been seized. But you must not kill him."

"Your Highness!" protested the bandit chief. "Is it not the law of the mountains that any man who strikes the chief—"

"The law of the mountains must be set aside," broke in the prince curtly. "Very soon, my friend, I shall be King of Caronia. Do you think I want a complication with the British government owing to the killing of a British subject? No. Leo must be found, and he must be held a prisoner. That is all. You must not harm him."

"But later?" asked Keiff eagerly.

"Later, when I am on the throne—well, we will leave the matter," replied the prince. "It will be very different then, my friend. You shall have your revenge—but at the right time. You understand?"

"I can wait," muttered Miklos Keiff, his eyes burning.

AT that very time, while the hunt was becoming hot, Nelson Lee, shed of his disguise, lurked in a dense patch of woodland.

In this game of hide-and-seek, Nelson Lee was well capable of looking after himself. He had little fear that he would be captured.

He was intensely worried over the collapse of his plan. He was furious with the unknown traitors who had allowed Miklos Keiff to escape and return. That was the one factor which had brought about this alarming situation. And if Lee could find any consolation at all it was in the knowledge that he himself had not blundered.

The great detective had not been caught napping so easily. He had been very much on the alert, in fact, and he had known that something unusual was amiss. Hearing excited voices near the cave he had crept close, and one glimpse of Miklos Keiff had been enough. Like a shadow of the night itself Lee had melted into the blackness, discarding his make-up at once. For it was a menace to him now.

His thoughts strayed towards the Grod Valley. He knew the way; he knew that it lay beyond difficult and treacherous mountain passes. But King Victor was in the Grod

Valley, and Lee had come into this country on the Grand Duke's behalf to rescue King Victor from his enemies.

Perhaps, all things considered, matters were not so bad.

Lee was worried about the boys and girls. At the moment he had no plans for rescuing them. However, there was not much likelihood that they would come to any harm. Prince Zeno was a rascal, but he had his own reputation to consider, particularly as he was plotting to mount the throne. It would be fatal for the prince's aims if any harm befell these English "tourists." It was quite likely that they would have an unpleasant time, but they were not in any danger.

Well, they had asked for it—at least, Lord Dorrimore had, and the boys and girls had been rash enough to back him up. They couldn't very well grumble now, for the hole in which they found themselves was of their own making. It might serve perhaps to teach them a lesson. The next time they would not be so rash.

"If they came after excitement and adventure, they're getting both," Lee told himself. "By all appearances I'm in for a spell of hectic adventure, too. Well, I'm not going to pretend that I'm sorry. The hounds are out, but they won't find it such an easy task to run their quarry to earth."

And in spite of the peril of his position, Nelson Lee chuckled. To be perfectly frank, he was just beginning to enjoy himself.

IT was rather different with the rest of the party.

Lord Dorrimore and the boys and girls were prisoners, under strong guard. Their lot was not so happy. Lee, although a fugitive, was at least a free agent, and the very fact that he was being hunted gave life a zest for him.

When morning came Lord Dorrimore and the boys were marched out of the cave. They had had very little sleep, and they were feeling tired and weary. The boys felt a bit bucked when they were marched into a big open space where Irene Manners and Doris Berkeley and Mary Summers and all the other Moor View girls were much in evidence. Not that they were free; armed men stood everywhere.

Prince Zeno had something to say.

"I have had you brought together so that I may address you generally," he said. "I need hardly point out that this predicament is of your own making. You came into this country deliberately, and a state of war now virtually exists between my armies and the forces of the Grand Duke. Therefore, much as I regret it, I am compelled to hold you my prisoners, until such time as it suits me to restore you to liberty."

"You won't be able to keep us here!" shouted Handforth aggressively. "We're not afraid of your silly bandits!"

"No fear!"

"St. Frank's for ever!"

"Hurrah!"

"What about the Moor View?" cried Winnie Pitt. "We girls count a bit, don't we?"

"Rather!"

There was another outburst of exciting cheering, and Lord Dorrimore could not help grinning. Even Prince Zeno concealed his exasperation and smiled.

"You are all very bold—very plucky," he said suavely. "But in this present situation boldness will not help you. It may be some weeks before I bring off my final coup, and during those weeks you will remain here. It will be all to your advantage if you obey orders without question."

"Whose orders?" asked Lord Dorrimore bluntly.

"The orders of Miklos Keiff," replied the prince. "Since you entered this adventure with your eyes open, my friends, let us at least conduct the whole affair in a gentlemanly way. You have had the misfortune to get the worst of things. I'm really quite sorry for you. But I do hope that we shall not have any melodramatics."

"Even Mr. Nelson Lee's plan, so clever, so astute, has fallen to pieces. At this very moment he is a hunted fugitive, and I expect him to be captured at almost any hour. But don't worry about him; he won't be harmed. These mountain men may look fierce, and they may be wild, but they're not murderers. At least, I shall not allow them to give vent to their fiercer emotions in this instance."

"So let's have a clear understanding about all this. As for young Victor, he is quite safe. And when my plans have gone through to completion—well, you will all be at liberty to depart when you please, including Victor himself. You will be escorted to the nearest border, and even if you complain to your government I very much doubt if you will have any case."

"You're a clever beggar, Zeno," said Lord Dorrimore frankly.

"I am careful, if that is what you mean," said the prince.

"You would really like to deal pretty drastically with both Mr. Lee and myself," continued Dorrie, "but you daren't. At least, you realise that the consequences might be serious for you if you did any injury to a British subject. Don't you think you had better escort these boys and girls back to the railway at once, and send them to Galvarad? There's no point in keeping them here."

"No?" asked Prince Zeno. "Do you think I want them stirring up further trouble, arousing the Grand Duke's supporters to a high pitch of excitement by their tales? No, Lord Dorrimore, they will remain here with you, until it suits me to send them away. With regard to the question of ransom, I beg of you to abandon that hope. Miklos Keiff and his men will not listen to

you if you offer them large rewards for your liberty. Keiff is not interested in ransom just at present."

Dorrie grunted. He had only brought the boys and girls here because he had relied upon his wealth. He had been prepared to pay any amount of ransom money if it came to the point. So it was rather disturbing to learn that money was now of no avail.

They were prisoners, they were to be held, and it seemed that their adventures in the Kazatova Mountains were only just beginning.

CHAPTER 8.

Miklos Keiff Shows His Teeth!

EVERYTHING was very nice whilst Prince Zeno remained, but as soon as his Highness had departed there was a great change in Miklos Keiff and his men.

The prisoners were not locked up again, but after they had been provided with a rough but wholesome breakfast they were allowed to walk about at will. They were more or less relieved.

"Things aren't so bad, you chaps," said Nipper. "Of course, we can thank Prince Zeno for this treatment. The Kazatovians wouldn't have been so pleasant. And if it comes to that, I'm not sure that they'll remain pleasant for long."

"Just what I was thinking," murmured Mary Summers.

None of them had failed to notice that the party was practically surrounded by a cordon of brawny mountain men, all of them armed with daggers and rifles. They were picturesque enough, but their presence was not exactly welcome.

"I want you boys and girls to kick me," remarked Lord Dorrimore. "Yes, I mean it. You can all have a go, and the harder you kick, the better. I deserve plenty."

"Oh, draw it mild, sir!"

"You mustn't say that, Lord Dorrimore!" protested Irene Manners.

"But I do say it," insisted Dorrie. "I brought you into this affair, and now I can't get you out of it. But how the deuce was I to know that these bandits would be forbidden to accept ransom? And as for helping young Victor, we're dished there, too. He's been taken off to the Grod Valley, wherever that may be."

"And what about Umlosi?" asked Handforth. "I've noticed he hasn't been allowed out, like the rest of us. They're not going to harm him, are they?"

"They'd better not!" said Lord Dorrimore, a hard light coming into his eyes. "Hallo! These beggars are closing in a bit. What are they up to?"

The Kazatovians were forming a complete ring round Lord Dorrimore and the boys and girls. Now it was noticed that Miklos Keiff was approaching, riding on a splendid

horse. Keiff had changed completely, and he had trimmed himself up a bit. He made an imposing figure in all his splendour, with his native dress and his wide-brimmed hat and jingling spurs.

"His Nibs is scowling a bit," murmured Dorrie. "In fact, he doesn't look any too pleased with himself or life in general. Good egg!"

"I can't see anything to be pleased about, sir," whispered Handforth.

"No? Then I can," said his lordship. "Isn't it pretty clear that Mr. Lee hasn't been found? Why else should this bold bandit be so peeved? Good old Lec! Trust him to look after himself!"

But when Miklos Keiff rode up and dismounted he made no reference to Nelson Lee. He swaggered as he walked, and he advanced right in amongst the prisoners.

"I have heard that you English are industrious and hard-working," he said mockingly. "Is that not so? It is a pity that you should have this idleness thrust upon you. But is it not said that the idle hands make the mischief?"

"Judging by the look of your military forces," said Dorrie, "we're not likely to get up to much mischief. Now look here, Keiff, if there is any way in which we can come to terms—"

"But no, my friend," interrupted Miklos Keiff. "You must remain here, my prisoners, until his Highness Prince Zeno completes his work."

"Dirty work!" said Handforth, with a sniff.

"And since you must remain, why, it is better that you should work," continued Keiff, with a shrug. "For if you work, then you cannot make the little plots, yes? And if you are separated, then it will be all the more certain. There is so much work to be done here, and I shall now draft you off into different parts of the gorge. The boys shall be set at road-making, and there is plenty for the girls, too. They can wash, yes? And mend? And wash dishes?"

He laughed as he saw the glances passing between the prisoners.

"It will pass the time," he explained shrugging. "And I must tell you that every exit from this gorge is guarded. Even the mountains are closely watched. If you are foolish enough to run into the woods, in the hope of eluding my men, you will soon be found out and thrown into one of my darkest caves, there to remain. Am I making myself clear? If you work well and offer no resistance you will be adequately fed, and you will have at least the liberty of the open air. If not"—he shrugged again—"there will be the dark caves!"

HE was as good as his word, too. Much to the indignation of the St. Frank's fellows and Moor View girls, they were divided up into small parties, and they were taken off under escort.

The boys were set to work on the rough dusty roads of the gorge, and the girls were removed into the heart of the "village," and here, in threes and fours, they were given so much menial work to do that they hardly had time to breathe.

The boys, too, were kept at it until they were aching in every limb, until they were perspiring freely. Lord Dorrimore was no exception. He had not worked so hard for years.

Miklos Keiff's object was clear. He was tiring them out, so that when night came they would be weary and ready for sleep. Sleeping, they would be harmless enough. The man was a ruthless tyrant. He showed his prisoners no mercy; he worked them brutally.

From Miklos Keiff's point of view, it was an excellent plan. A few days of this and there would be very little spirit left in these English boys and girls. Working hard, day after day, they would have their *morale* completely broken.

There was something else, too, a little "entertainment" which Miklos Keiff reserved until the evening of that first day. He felt that his youthful prisoners should not be denied the privilege of witnessing this interesting affair.

Keiff was filled with rage after a hard, exhausting day. He had travelled from end to end of that gorge; he had directed operations here, there, and everywhere. But not

a sign of the missing Nelson Lee had been found. Lee had eluded all the searchers, and he was still at large. Miklos Keiff, in consequence, was in an evil humour, in just the right humour, in fact, for the task in hand.

In the evening light, while the boys and girls were enjoying a little well-earned rest, Umlosi was brought forth from his prison cave, accompanied by a strong escort.

Not one word did Keiff say to Dorrie or the boys and girls, yet there was something subtle in the way he allowed them to drift up from different directions. Nobody attempted to stop them. They were all curious about Umlosi, wondering what was in the wind.

They were soon to learn, much to their horror.

There were signs on Umlosi's face that he had suffered a great deal during that long day, for he was looking strained and haggard. His bonds had not been loosened once. In his eyes, however, there was a proud, contemptuous expression.

He was placed upright against a cliff of soft sandstone. Having had experience of Umlosi's strength earlier, his captors took no chances now. Six men held him whilst his ropes were untied. Only one arm was released at once, and this was stretched out and securely fastened with fresh ropes to a wooden stake which had been driven into the soft stone. His other arm was treated in just



Jokes from readers wanted for this feature! If you know a good rib-tickler, send it along now. A handsome watch will be awarded each week to the sender of the best joke; pocket wallets, penknives, and bumper books are also offered as prizes. Address your jokes to "Smilers," Nelson Lee Library, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4.

HIS LUCKY DAY.

Tommy: "Mother, didn't I hear you tell cook to lock the pantry door?"

Mother: "Yes, dear."

Tommy: "Well, she didn't, and so just to teach her a lesson I ate all the tarts that were left."

(J. M. Cormich, 1111, Pollock Shaws Road, Glasgow, has been awarded a handsome watch.)

A DUD SHOW.

A man applied for a job in a wild beast show. Said the manager:

"I have no job for you, unless you like to dress up as a wild monkey."

"Right you are," replied the man.

Later he was performing in a cage as a monkey, when the cage collapsed and he fell into the

lion's den. He screamed for help, but the next moment a voice came from the lion's mouth:

"Shut up, you fool! You'll get us all the sack!"

(N. Inglis, 2, Spanish Battery, Tyne-mouth, North Shields, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

WHOA BACK!

Driver (arrested for speeding): "I wasn't doing forty miles an hour, your Worship. I wasn't even doing twenty. I doubt if I was doing more than ten—"

Magistrate: "We must stop this immediately or you will be backing into something."

(P. Fisk, Kirmington, Ulceby, Lincs, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

ALL DEPENDED ON THE HORSE.

Farmer (to farmhand on horse that is bolting): "Hey, you, where are you going with my horse?"

Farmhand: "I dunno. Better ask the 'orse."

(G. Carr, 137, Cheltenham Street, Collyhurst, Manchester, has been awarded a penknife.)

CORRECT.

Teacher: "Now, Jimmy, what is the longest line of longitude?"

Jimmy: "A clothes-line, sir."

Teacher: "Don't be absurd. Why do you think that?"

the same way. This done, his tormentors then roped him round the waist and ankles to another stake that had been driven into the ground.

Miklos Keiff nodded with satisfaction—evil satisfaction.

"All is ready!" he shouted, with a wave of his arm. "Now, my marksmen, we will test our skill, yes?"

It was an ideal spot for a "game" of this kind. Stretching out in front of that cliff was a smooth expanse of turf, whilst beyond the ground sloped upwards almost in a semi-circle, providing a great natural amphitheatre on which the crowds of spectators could stand and obtain a clear view of the performers and the victim.

"What are they going to do with Umlosi?" asked Handforth anxiously. "I say, Nipper, what's the game?"

"I don't know," replied Nipper. "But Dorrie's pushing his way forward. Can't you see him? We'd better wait, you chaps."

"Good gad! They're not absolutely going to do anything frightful to the old boy, are they?" asked Archie Glenthorne. "I mean to say, I rather thought we had been told that there was to be no dirty work at the cross-roads."

"Listen," said Nipper.

They all stood tense. Lord Dorrimore, his jaw set grimly, had pushed his way forward through the Kazatovians. Now he was

facing Miklos Keiff, who clearly had been expecting him.

"What are you going to do to this man?" demanded Dorrie bluntly, with a jerk of his thumb towards Umlosi.

"You are very concerned about this black-skinned savage," sneered Miklos Keiff.

"That 'black-skinned savage,' as you call him, is one of my closest friends."

"Yes?" Keiff shrugged. "You choose strange friends, you English."

"You haven't answered my question."

"You ask what I do with him?" shouted the bandit chief, in a sudden burst of fury. "That man has struck me; he has done this before my own men. And for that offence he shall die!"

Dorrie pursed his lips.

"Die?" he repeated sharply. "But Prince Zeno gave his assurance——"

"I am in command here!" snapped Miklos Keiff. "And in any case, did Prince Zeno mention the name of this nigger? You English, yes, you are safe. But this black man shall die. Perhaps it will teach you all a lesson, yes? When you see the nature of his death you will understand the nature of our mountain vengeance. We have our own ways here, in Kazatova, Lord Dorrimore."

"I will warrant they are dirty, murderous ways!" retorted Lord Dorrimore. "You had better think again, Miklos Keiff. I should

Jimmy: "Because it stretches from pole to pole."

(A. Wallace, 13, St. John's Road, Faversham, has been awarded a book.)

LABOUR-SAVING.

Traveller (to farmer sitting on tree-trunk): "You look happy."

Farmer: "Yes. I wanted to fell this tree, and the lightning came and did it for me."

Traveller: "That's good. Now what are you going to do?"

Farmer: "Wait for an earthquake to dig up my potatoes."

(G. Jones, 70, Portobello Road, London, W.11, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

AMUSING.

Little Boy (to old stationmaster): "When does the next train come in?"

Stationmaster: "Why, you little rascal, I've told you five times that it is due at four forty-four."

Little Boy: "I know, but I like to see your whiskers wobble when you say four forty-four."

(A. Barlow, 53, Sturgeon Road, Walworth, S.E.17, has been awarded a book.)

A MISPRINT.

Angry gentleman (interviewing printer): "What do you mean by publishing my retirement?"

Printer: "But I thought you wanted it published, sir?"

Gentleman: "I do, but you've put it under 'Public Improvements.'"

(Iris Williams, 106, Coventry Road, Queen's Park, Bedford, has been awarded a book.)

"FLY."

Customer: "Hi, waiter, there's a fly in my soup."

Waiter: "Don't worry, sir; it can't drink much."

(J. Read, 1, Queen Street, Yeovil, has been awarded a penknife.)

ARGUMENTAL.

Foreman: "What's all that arguing about down the road?"

Labourer (indignantly): "Why, the man running the steam roller wants us to call him a chauffeur."

(T. Thorpe, 4, Bolton Road, Wednesfield, Staffs, has been awarded a book.)

OBLIGING.

Boxing pupil (after being floored): "I say is it necessary for me to be knocked down like this?"

Boxing instructor: "Oh no, sir! Stand up and I'll show you a dozen other ways."

(R. Young, 12, Scargreen Avenue, West Derby, Liverpool, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)



advise you to release my friend Umlosi. If you do not——"

"So!" snarled Keiff. "You begin to threaten! You—my prisoner! Away with him, and see that he does not interfere!"

He spun round on some of his men, and Lord Dorrimore was roughly seized and dragged back. It was noticed, too, that groups of powerful men had placed themselves handily near the St. Frank's boys, although the girls for the most part were not interfered with. It was clear that Miklos Keiff was determined that there should be no interference.

Keiff himself, with a dagger in his hand, strode out in front of all the others. He held the dagger aloft.

"Let me show you, my English friends, just what this game is," he shouted mockingly. "I fling my dagger, and if my aim is good, I send it into the heart of the condemned man. See! But do not be concerned; I am deliberately throwing wide."

A roar of rage went up from Edward Oswald Handforth. Always impulsive, reckless to a degree, he started to charge forward. Before he could move a yard, however, one of the bandits seized him and held him in a vice-like grip. Handforth struggled desperately but unavailingly.

Keiff flung the dagger with all his strength. It shot through the air, spinning with incredible rapidity, glinting in the evening light. Then the blade struck the soft sandstone within an inch of Umlosi's shoulder. It quivered wickedly.

"You see?" gloated Miklos Keiff. "Had I chosen, I could have sent the dagger into the prisoner's heart. Oh, yes! I am an expert. But some of my men are not quite so clever in this art. This shall be a test for them. Six have been chosen, and the man who scores a bull's-eye will be richly rewarded."

Lord Dorrimore and the members of his party, who had heard every word, were aghast. It had not been necessary for them to understand Miklos Keiff's speech. His action had been sufficient.

So this was the bandits form of execution. Instead of placing their victim against a wall and shooting him, they placed him against a wall, and used him as a test of skill for their dagger-throwing.

It was a cruel, vile form of torture.

And good old Umlosi, whom the St. Frank's fellows regarded as one of their closest friends, was to provide the ghastly sport!

CHAPTER 9.

The Dagger Throwers!

UMLOSI himself seemed absolutely indifferent.

But Lord Dorrimore, at least, knew that the great Kutana chieftain was suffering acute mental agonies. It had always been Umlosi's desire to die fighting,

to go under, weapon in hand, in the thick of battle. To die like that, in Umlosi's opinion, was to die like a man.

But like this, bound to stakes, the target of hand-thrown daggers. It was an humiliation.

"Come, my fine men!" shouted Miklos Keiff. "Let us make the start. You shall hurl your daggers one at a time. You, Paul, shall be the first, yes."

Lord Dorrimore was about to shout something, but Keiff spun round again.

"Just a word!" he said grimly. "If you, Lord Dorrimore, or any of your boys attempt interference you will be seized and flung into the black cave, there to remain during the rest of your stay. See my soldiers!" he added with an eloquent wave of his hand. "There is nothing you can do. You are outnumbered ten to one. I urge you to be sensible, and watch. It will be quite entertaining."

Dorrie set his jaw, but when he spoke it was not to Miklos Keiff, but to Umlosi. Many of the girls were already covering their faces with their hands, and some were turning away.

"Old friend, it was I who led you into this," said Lord Dorrimore tragically. "I want you to forgive me, Umlosi——"

"Nay, N'Kose, say not such words!" called Umlosi. "Thou hast nothing to reproach thyself with. Wau! Thinkest thou I fear these jackals? Am I not the King of the Kutanas? They cannot kill me with their paltry knives!"

"Good old Umlosi!" yelled Handforth, unable to restrain himself.

"Hurrah!" burst out the others.

"Do thou stand and watch, my father," continued Umlosi. "Perchance thou wilt be interested. Let these arrogant fools begin their game, for I am ready."

Perhaps Miklos Keiff did not like the look of Dorrie and the boys—or the girls, either, for Irene & Co. were becoming positively warlike. At all events, Keiff made a quick sign, and one of the men stepped forward, his dagger ready.

It was all so swift, so dramatically sudden, that there was no time to interfere or even to think of any plan for helping Umlosi. The dagger was raised, the man's arm shot forward, and the weapon, spinning, leapt on its murderous way.

And then the unexpected happened.

With a roar of supreme contempt Umlosi burst his bonds and tore himself bodily away from the stakes. With the agility of a panther he leapt aside; in the same flash his right hand reached out, and with unbelievable deftness he caught the dagger in the same instant as it buried its point in the soft sandstone.

Whizz!

There was not the loss of a moment. The dagger was returned, this time flung by Umlosi. And Paul, who stood there with an expectant flush on his swarthy face, staggered



Disguised as Prince Zeno, Nelson Lee sent the guards on a fool's errand while Victor Orlando made good his escape.

drunkenly. He fell, that dagger buried in his chest.

"Thus do I answer the dog who attempts to take my life!" boomed Umlosi.

He came bounding forward as he spoke. Miklos Keiff and his men, still bewildered by what had taken place, were at a momentary disadvantage. They could hardly believe the evidence of their eyes. Again they had underestimated the enormous strength of the giant negro, and they had not known that he had contracted his powerful muscles when being roped to the stakes.

Even the boys and girls were stupefied by the speed of Umlosi's actions. They were just beginning to recover now, as Umlosi charged to the attack. They saw him fling himself at the bandits. Men were tossed into the air like straw-filled sacks. Confused shouts arose, and Miklos Keiff, now finding his voice, thundered out orders.

"On the ball, you chaps!" yelled Handforth. "Come on, St. Frank's!"

"Hurrah!"

"We girls are in this!" cried Mary. "I say, let's make a big fight of it!"

"Hear, hear!"

In their excitement all of them—girls as well as boys—would have been rash enough to attack their captors. And then indeed the result might well have been tragic.

But luckily enough once again Prince Zeno arrived unexpectedly on the scene. Unheard by the bandits Zeno's car had driven up, and the prince himself, attracted by the

noise and the commotion, came hastening to the spot.

"Hold!" he shouted furiously. "Keiff! Put a stop to this!"

Miklos Keiff heard the voice, and as he turned round he looked like a sullen animal. Unquestionably his was the weaker will. He cowered under Prince Zeno's angry eye.

"What madness is this?" demanded the prince. "You fool! You blundering dog! Did I not warn you? Cease this fighting at once! Let that black man be seized and held, but do not harm him!"

"Your Excellency!" gasped Miklos Keiff. "Your Highness! I thought—"

"You thought that I would not return?" snapped the prince. "I did not intend to return, but now I am glad. Have any of these boys and girls been harmed? Make certain at once!"

Keiff, still cowering, turned away. His eyes were glowing with a light that was very akin to hatred; the prince was his master.

Fortunately the interruption had occurred before any real fighting had started. And now, under Keiff's new orders, the boys and girls were left unmolested. Umlosi, having done tremendous damage in a few short moments, was overpowered and again bound.

"Let him be put back in a cave under strong guard," ordered Prince Zeno. "Lord Dorrimore, I shall expect you and the members of your party to disperse quietly, and return to your respective quarters. This—er—entertainment is over."

Dorrie regarded the prince in a not unfriendly way.

"Your return was opportune," he said quietly. "My friend would have died, I fear, had you not come."

"Your friend?" sneered Zeno. "You English choose strange friends, do you not? But you are quite right, Lord Dorrimore. My return was in all truth most opportune. However, I assure you such a thing as this will not again occur."

He turned on his heel, nodding, and walked away. Five minutes later he was standing face to face with Miklos Keiff, and they were alone.

"Now, Kieff, what have you to say?" demanded the prince harshly. "What of my orders?"

"The fellow is but a nigger, your Highness!" protested Miklos Keiff. "He laid hands on me, and any man who lays hands on a Keiff is doomed to die!"

"Come, come!" said the prince sharply. "Have I not already told you that these people are to be treated as exceptions? This is not a blood feud, Keiff; this is not a vendetta. Among your own people, yes, I should not interfere with your quarrels and your feuds. But do you not realise that this man, although black, is a British subject? Moreover, he is quite a monarch in his own country, a man of great importance."

Keiff was silent.

"I returned because I am on my way through to the Grod Valley," continued the prince. "I have decided upon a fresh course, Keiff, a course that will hasten matters. We must lost no time now. I shall compel young Victor to write a letter to his uncle, and that letter will be carried by special courier to Galvarad. I am hopeful that the results will be immediate—and favourable."

He paced up and down for a moment or two.

"But I did not expect to find you indulging in this sort of folly!" he said, turning once again upon Miklos Keiff. "By Heaven, man, when shall I make you understand? We are both aiming high. Do you wish to remain a mountain chieftain for the rest of your life? I have opened an avenue for you which may lead to power and riches. Such power as you have never before dreamed of."

Miklos Keiff's eyes were still lowered, and he remained silent.

"If my plans succeed, and they can only succeed if you give me the loyal support I demand, I shall be sitting upon the throne of Caronia within a very few weeks," said Prince Zeno. "And you, my friend, will be a minister in my first government. I shall make you war minister, since you are a great soldier. You will have a great salary, and you will be one of Caronia's greatest men. Would you jeopardise all this just for the sake of satisfying your paltry desire for revenge on a nigger?"

"Your Highness, I did not understand that this man mattered," muttered Miklos Keiff.

"He does matter, just as much as the others," retorted Prince Zeno sharply. "It will mean international complications if one of these people die by violence. The British government is alert, watchful. It is very jealous of the lives of its people. Should it be made public to the world that I countenanced the murder of any of these people, I should be discredited in the eyes of all nations. Death means little or nothing to you, Miklos Keiff, but all peoples are not the same. Here in the mountains, you hold life cheaply. But the killing of one single

COMING NEXT WEDNESDAY!



person might involve the half of Europe in a terrible war!"

The prince had said very much the same to Miklos Keiff on previous occasions, but he was beginning to realise that he would never make this swarthy brigand really understand.

"Since it is your wish, I will obey," muttered Keiff sullenly.

Prince Zeno eyed him closely. Zeno was no fool. He could tell that Miklos Keiff resented his—Zeno's—authority. Yet Prince Zeno did not quite realise how deep that resentment went. This mountain brigand was his ally—but Miklos Keiff was slowly but surely getting tired of playing second fiddle.

CHAPTER 10.

The King's Prison!

"WELL, we will dismiss the subject," said Zeno suddenly. "What of Lee? My main object in returning is to go through to the Grod Valley, as I have told you. But I am anxious, too, about the man Nelson Lee. You have found him?"

Miklos Keiff grunted.

"No," he said briefly.

"No?" repeated the prince, with an oath. "What do you mean, Keiff? How is it possible that you and your men have failed?"

"Prisoners of The Pass!"

By E. S. BROOKS.

A devastating explosion. The darkness split by a lurid flame. Great boulders thundering down everywhere.

The pass has been blown up. The St. Frank's adventurers are trapped in the mountains. Prince Zeno is determined to mount the throne of Caronia—at all costs.

This is only one of the many thrills in next week's smashing story of Nipper & Co. Blazing action and palpitating excitement from the first chapter.

"The Phantom Foe!"

By JOHN BREARLEY.

The ruthless criminal has been exposed—and now Thurston Kyle, the Night Hawk, is out for vengeance.

"Handforth's Weekly!"

"OUR ROUND TABLE TALK!"

ORDER IN ADVANCE!

He could not have escaped from the gorge, could he?"

"There is no exit by which he could have escaped," replied the bandit chief sulkily. "Every pass is guarded. We have searched throughout the day, but we have seen nothing of him."

The prince bit his lip.

"This is disturbing," he said, pacing up and down again. "I was confidently expecting to learn that Lee had been caught. Where can he be? How can he have eluded your men? There are woods, yes, and caves. But you have searched them all, have you not?"

"All."

"I know that the man is clever, as slippery

as a Red Indian," continued Zeno, frowning. "You must watch your other prisoners carefully. This Lee will try to help them, perhaps during the night."

"But that is impossible!" protested Miklos Keiff. "He dare not come into the open. He is skulking somewhere in the woods, or in the mountains. And while he remains in the mountains he can take no action. My guards are watching everywhere. He dare not show his face within the gorge itself."

"H'm! I should be more easy in mind if he were a prisoner," grunted the prince. "However, perhaps you are right. He is unarmed, he has had no food— But wait. Perhaps I am not right in saying that he is unarmed. It is almost certain that he provided himself with weapons before he fled."

Miklos Keiff shrugged.

"One man against hundreds," he said scornfully. "Are you afraid of this one man? I assure you, your Highness, that he is helpless. During the night, or by to-morrow at latest, he will be a captive."

And the prince had to be content with that.

He did not delay long in the gorge; he merely waited for a quick meal, and then he was provided with an adequate escort. He could travel no farther by car, since the route northwards lay through steep, difficult mountain passes. Horses were used. So shortly after darkness had fallen the prince set out, pressing onwards towards the Grod Valley.

The distance in itself was not great. Perhaps not more than ten or twelve miles. But it was a hard route, and no great pace could be maintained. Through frowning canyons, where the rocks rose sheer for hundreds of feet, and where it was only possible for the men to ride in single file. Down dizzy mountain paths with a sheer precipice on one hand and a rock wall on the other. Winding, twisting, climbing and descending alternately, the prince continued his journey.

At different intervals he passed groups of Miklos Keiff's armed guards. These little camps were everywhere. The Grod Valley was utterly inaccessible, except to those who knew its secrets.

At last the final pass had been traversed, and Prince Zeno paused to gaze upon the scene. It was moonlight now, and as he sat motionless on his horse he marvelled at the wondrous spectacle before him. Below stretched a great fertile valley, reaching for scores of miles across to the opposite mountain range. Down there forests and fields and rivers could be seen. It was Miklos Keiff's real home—his mountain fastness.

But this was no time for admiring the beauties of the scenery. Prince Zeno pressed on. Down into the valley he went with his escort, and at last he pulled up on the outskirts of the great village—it was practically

a town—where Miklos Keiff's own mountain tribe lived. But the prince did not enter the village.

Still with his escort, he climbed some rocky slopes, and finally he entered a low cave. For here, as in the gorge, there were many caves in the cliffs.

Zeno was still thinking deeply. This wild country, in fact, gave him much to think about. He did not like the attitude of Miklos Keiff. Inwardly, he swore that when he reached the throne he would crush these mountain bandits with a ruthless hand. He would use them, yes, but when they had served their purpose he would abandon them.

They were too tough. Splendid supporters in such a cause as his. But once that cause was won they were liable to be a nuisance. They were too fiery, too ready to shed blood. One day they might even desire to shed his—Zeno's blood.

The prince was already drunk with power; he was intoxicated by the very thought of his great campaign. Why should he be hindered any longer? He would force Victor to write to the Grand Duke, and if Victor refused he would be tortured.

Grim and relentless, the prince passed down a black, narrow tunnel. He was ushered through a slit of a doorway, and the door itself was heavily closed after him.

"Ah, Victor!" he said, striving to make himself pleasant.

He was within King Victor's new prison. It was a smaller cave than the one he had previously occupied, and it was not so luxuriously fitted. The walls were rough and jagged, and overhead there were great black gaps, crevices in the mountain side. There was no window, either. Ventilation came into this cave through the roof crevice.

There was only a chair, a rough table, and a camp bed. A candle was burning, and King Victor had been sitting at a meal. His morale was in no way affected, which was evidenced by his first words.

"You do dodge in and out, don't you, Zeno?" he asked in that cheery way of his. "What's the idea now? Have you just come along to taunt me, to tell me how you'll run the country when you get to the throne, or is it just a brotherly call?"

Prince Zeno advanced into the cave.

"I am glad," he said, "that you are keeping so cheerful——"

He broke off, for at that second he thought he saw a shadow emerging from the blackness at the side of the cave, beyond the radius of the candle light. Foolish, of course, since only Victor was in——

A figure leapt upon him, and they stood face to face.

"Nelson Lee!" gasped Prince Zeno, dumb-founded.

Crash!

Lee did not waste a single breath in words. His right fist swung up with the force of a battering-ram, and it took Prince Zeno on the point of the chin. His Highness nearly

turned a back somersault. He staggered, crashed over, and lay still.

"My only hat!" breathed Victor. "That was a beauty, sir!"

"I'm afraid I've hurt your brother a bit, Orlando," said Lee. "Perhaps I struck too hard, but in such circumstances as these we cannot afford to take any chances. One shout from Prince Zeno and the guards might have come——"

"Don't worry, sir," interrupted Victor, his voice now throbbing with excitement. "You couldn't have hit that rotter too hard. And please don't call him my brother. He's not really an Orlando at all. He hasn't had half what he deserves."

"The candle, young 'un!" said Lee briefly.

He examined the prince, and was satisfied that no real harm had been done. But there was no question that Zeno was completely knocked out. It might be an hour or more before he recovered.

"Luck is with us, Orlando," said Lee, with satisfaction. "I did not expect for a moment that Zeno would turn up to-night, and for him to enter this cave alone was little short of providential. For now there is a way of escape."

"Escape, sir?" breathed Victor, his voice having a little catch in it.

"Why not?" replied Lee. "Why should we remain here? There is a way, young 'un, and we'll take it!"

NELSON LEE'S presence in the cave was not so mysterious as it at first seemed.

Prince Zeno had been right in describing Lee's cleverness in woodcraft as being like that of a Red Indian. The great detective had had little difficulty in eluding his pursuers, and before the dawn had broken on that eventful night he had reached the mountain heights.

By climbing steadily, untiringly, he had not only scaled the most difficult of the crags, but he had made a good start on the journey towards the Grod Valley. His objective was King Victor's new prison.

Throughout the day Lee had slept, after partaking of the food he had brought with him. Sleep had been very necessary, for there was difficult work ahead, and no man can work efficiently without sleep.

Long before darkness Lee was awake again and once more on his way. With the coming of the night he had reached the Grod Valley, eluding the guards so cleverly, with a stealth which Umlosi himself could not have equalled, that they had no suspicion of his presence.

By using his ears, by creeping up to groups of the bandits and listening to their talk, Lee had formed an astute idea as to King Victor's prison. Perhaps luck had favoured him. But determination had really played a greater hand in the game—determination combined with daring.

Lee had learned that there were crevices in the roof of Victor's prison. He had ropes with him, and for three arduous hours he had climbed, taking his life in his hands.

At last he had reached a crevice in the roof, and listening intently, he had heard the sounds of Victor's movements. He had called down; he had been answered.

Then Lee discovered that although there was no possible way of Victor reaching that gap in the roof, there was nevertheless plenty of room for him to squeeze through if only he could mount so high.

Nelson Lee had come here on a rescue effort. He lowered his rope, and he attempted to pull King Victor to freedom. Unfortunately the rope had broken almost immediately afterwards, jagged and torn by the glass-like rock in the crevice.

So taking the bull by the horns, as it were, Lee had wormed his way down through that treacherous crevice, dropping into the cave.

He had burned his boats by taking this action, but he had plenty of confidence in his own ability, and he believed that a chance would offer itself for him to escape, and to take Victor with him.

The coming of Prince Zeno had provided that chance.

"THERE!" said Nelson Lee contentedly. He secured the last button, and stood before the schoolboy king in the candle light.

"How do I look?" he asked, smiling.

"It's marvellous, sir!" panted Victor.

"Well, my dear half-brother, I think we shall soon be leaving this dreary cavern," said Lee mockingly. "I regret the necessity of removing you so soon, but it is imperative. I hope you will not raise any foolish objections."

Victor's eyes opened wide.

"Why, it's—it's uncanny!" he breathed.

"Zeno's voice to a T! I've never heard anything so wonderful in all my giddy life."

"We'll see how it works on the guards," said Lee softly. "Delay, Orlando, would be foolish now. Fortune has played into our hands, and I have always found that it is profitable to pursue a run of good luck. People who waste their opportunities get nowhere."

"But—but what can we do, sir?" asked Victor breathlessly.

"I don't know any more than you, but we will at least get out of this prison," replied Lee. "After that— Well, we shall be more or less in the lap of the gods."

Lee, glancing towards the back of the cave, could not help remarking the similarity of this situation to the one in the gorge, when Miklos Keiff had been captured by the St. Frank's fellows and hidden.

It was Prince Zeno who was the victim this time. He was bound and gagged and hidden away. The chances were that he would not be discovered for several hours,

perhaps not until the morning. Victor had had his last meal, and in any case, Lee was determined to give some special orders to the guards. The guards, believing him to be Prince Zeno, would probably obey those orders to the letter.

"Now," said Lee crisply, "let's get about it, young 'un. No sense in waiting any longer. How do you feel?"

"Fine, sir!"

"You're really game for this adventure?"

"Rather!"

"Good fellow!" said Lee approvingly. "Then we're off!"

He strode to the door, motioning to Victor to stand near by, well out of the flickering candle light. With the door half open, Lee turned, looking back.

Outside in the darkness were two of Miklos Keiff's men. They saw a uniformed figure in the gloom of the tunnel, and they immediately assumed it to be Prince Zeno.

"You young fool!" said Lee angrily. "Are you determined? I warn you—"

"I won't—I won't!" shouted Victor in a defiant voice. "I tell you I won't agree!"

Lee cursed; then with a sudden command to the guards he strode forward. It was very dark, and only the dim outline of his figure could be seen.

"Keep this boy locked up for twenty-four hours!" he ordered savagely. "Do you understand?"

"Yes, your Highness," said one of the men in a startled voice.

"It will do the young fool good to be starved for a day!" continued Lee ferociously. "His obstinacy— What is that?" he added abruptly, pointing. "By St. Peter! Who is that lurking out there in the darkness? There! To your left, you dolts! Go and see!"

The startled guards could see nothing, but they ran in the direction which Lee had indicated. His voice was Zeno's to an exactitude.

Lee turned swiftly.

"Now!" he breathed in the merest whisper.

Like a shadow Victor crept out of the doorway, slipped round the edge of the tunnel, and stole away in the opposite direction. He was swallowed up in the darkness, for there was no moonlight here under the frowning cliffs.

Nelson Lee shot the bolts of the door with noisy violence; then he strode out into the tunnel entrance and called.

"Where are you, you men?" he demanded impatiently. "Come! Guard this door! Do you expect me to wait here for hours?"

The guards came running up.

"There is nothing, your Highness!" panted one. "We saw no figure, and—"

"No matter!" interrupted Lee. "Obey my orders with regard to the boy. Perhaps I was mistaken just now; it may have been a shadow. Do not go into this cave for twenty-

(Continued on page 44.)

Write To The Editor Now, Chums—All Letters Welcome.



THIS week's acknowledgments: F. Hamilton Browne (Tooting), Horace Pryke (Walderslade), John R. Fearn (Blackpool), Eric S. V. Ryland (Birmingham), John Hoskins (Portland), C. Wallace Gowdey (Montreal), E. Parkington (Westcliff-on-Sea), David Andrew Moorhead (Castlereagh), Norman Marshall (Westmount, Quebec), G. Williams (Bethnal Green).

Most of the letters acknowledged above were addressed to Mr. Edwy Searles Brooks. Many readers appear to think that Mr. Brooks is the Editor of the Old Paper. He is not. Therefore, to save confusion, it is important that all future letters for discussion on this page must be addressed to—The Editor, NELSON LEE LIBRARY, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Any points in these letters requiring Mr. Brooks' personal attention will be placed before him by the Editor.

To refer again to that old subject—the age limit at which readers should cease buying the Old Paper—may appear unnecessary, but it isn't. Such a matter cannot be too strongly emphasised, for it always happens, every week, that there are some readers who are trying to make up their minds whether to give up or keep on. The following comment from Mr. Horace Pryke's letter may help a bit: "I wonder, too, how many readers, and old ones at that, stop reading Our Paper when they leave school? It seems so silly and indefensible; in the name of common-sense, why break a bond that has existed, perhaps, for many years, simply because one has grown a few years older? For my own part, I intend to continue to read and enjoy the good Old Paper just so long as you are spared to write for it, and that, I hope, will be for many a long year to come." Naturally, we hope, with this staunch old reader, that Mr. Brooks will be spared for many a long year; and we also hope that a great many wavering readers will follow Mr. Pryke's

example and carry on with the Old Paper regardless of their age.

You have some excuse for being confused about the occupants of Study Q in the West House, Eric Ryland. Clarence Fellowe, Timothy Tucker, and Robert Canham still occupy this study; but either you stopped reading the stories for a time, or else you failed to remember that when Kirby Keeble Parkington and his chums came to St. Frank's from Cariton, four extra studies were provided in the Ancient House. Up till then these had been empty rooms. The arrangement necessitated the re-lettering of the West House studies, and Study Q, like all the others in the West House, moved up four, so to speak, and became Study U. Exactly the same study, you see, but with a different letter. In just the same way, Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey, who used to share Study K, now share the same study, but it is called Study O. It is not at all confusing if you remember that all the West House studies have "moved up four." It might be a good idea for us to publish—if there is a sufficient demand for it—a complete list of Junior studies and their occupants.

Nelson Lee's age, John Hoskins, is not a matter of very great importance; he is in the prime of life, is as athletic and vigorous as a young man, and has the great advantage of experience. So far as we know, he has no brothers or sisters.

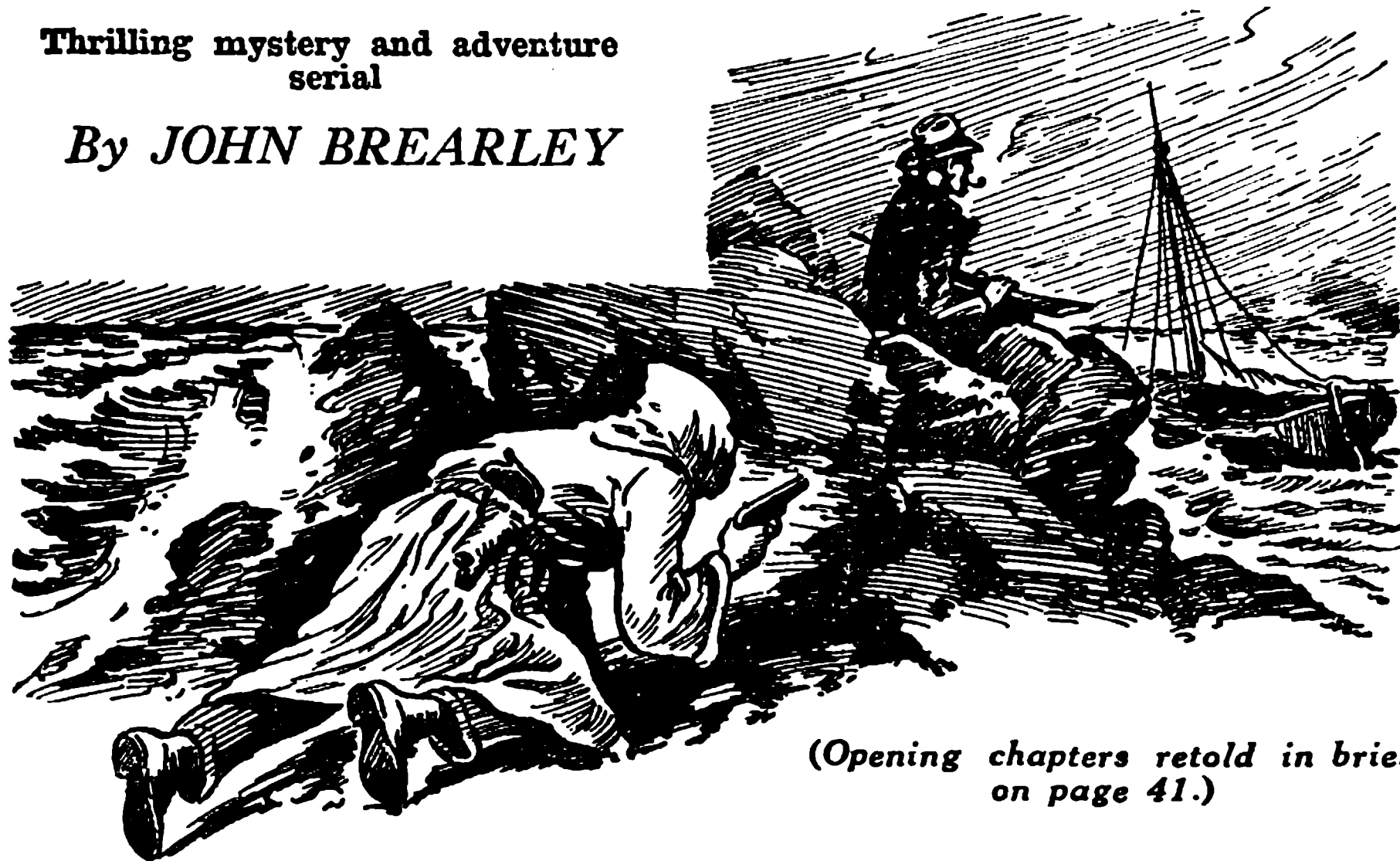
When Richard Hamilton, a poor waif, was befriended by Nelson Lee, he was known by no other name than "Nipper," C. Wallace Gowdey. And that nickname has stuck to him ever since, as nicknames have a habit of doing. At one time, a few of the St. Frank's fellows and Moor View girls started calling him "Dick," but it never seemed to fit him. So he remains Nipper, and the name will probably stick to him for good.

Snub Hawkins' Desperate Bid For Liberty.

The PHANTOM FOE!

Thrilling mystery and adventure
serial

By JOHN BREARLEY



(Opening chapters retold in brief
on page 41.)

The Exposure!

"YOU fantastic fool! Me—the Phantom Foe? You're mad. Crazy!"

The scowling captive quivered in his bonds under the impact of Thurston Kyle's terrific threat. Twisting his neck, he stared around him stealthily; at the stalwart, silent Kittens behind him, at the sleek interior of the Thunderer, and most of all at the grim figure of the Night Hawk frowning down on him. Yet for all his defiant anger, his eyes held a furtive gleam of something very like fear; and he moistened his lips frequently.

"You're mad, you lunatic!" he burst out again. "You'll get four years for this, Thurston Kyle; maybe more. The Phantom Foe—rats! I'm Captain Arthurs of the C.I.D., late of the Canadian police in Montreal. And I can bring hundreds to prove it, too, on both sides of the Atlantic!"

"But you seem to have forgotten your Canadian accent quickly!" drawled Thurston Kyle in his suavest manner; and Arthurs winced and scowled at the thrust.

"Sa-ay——" he twanged hastily. Then a sudden fierce gesture from the Night Hawk stopped him as sharply as a blow.

"Enough. You've done all the play-acting and bluffing you're going to do for

a while, my man!" snapped Kyle; and leant forward, hard eyes boring into the hateful ones before him. "Now, listen, Arthurs—Ace—Phantom Foe; whichever you please! Just to make your position here quite clear, I am going to tell you all that I know of your career. I assure you it will interest you. Lie there and enjoy it—in silence, you dog!"

He lit a cigarette slowly and blew a thin trickle of smoke from distended nostrils. A strained silence fell. It was broken at last by the Night Hawk's cold even voice, every word keen and incisive as a swordstroke.

"Ten years ago, Arthurs, you were-- The Ace; a powerful criminal, dealing in crime as a merchant deals in goods. Your specialities were organised blackmail and forgery on a large scale. Your identity was known only to a select few in the underworld; nevertheless Scotland Yard hounded your band relentlessly until they drove you to the Continent. There, thanks again to the Yard's influence, you got cold feet and bolted first to the States and then to Canada. And it was there you changed your identity and tactics.

"You obtained a position as recruit in the Montreal Police Force in May, 1923;

and with your undeniable brains, quickly worked up to a responsible position. Under cloak of that position, you ran a drug and liquor-smuggling gang to and from the United States; at the same time smashing your competitors ruthlessly with official aid, and winning great credit in doing so!

"During that time you met a man named Ralph Hackwood, an inventor who was also 'wanted' in England for embezzling money given him to develop his invention. That, I found on referring to the Patents Office here, was a certain ultra-violet ray apparatus much in advance of any others, even to-day. The apparatus, in fact, by which you render your airship invisible!"

Arthurs almost choked with rage, but his calm opponent went on dispassionately:

"Both you and Hackwood had a grudge against Britain and the British police. You put your heads together, therefore, and planned the biggest raid on this country ever known.

Hackwood, I presume, built your airship and discovered your Yellow Gas. And you, my friend, on the strength of your Canadian reputation, applied for a transfer to Scotland Yard—and got it!

"Meanwhile, Hackwood, besides looting the "Queen" liner, raided government prisons for recruits to the gang—very terrible recruits. In order to disguise them perfectly in case the police caught them at any time, you kidnapped Professor Lawrence, 'America's Miracle Man', and forced him to 'lift' their faces and graft new skin on their finger-tips, thus rendering Scotland Yard's records useless. I proved this when I examined those poor madmen you turned loose on me. The scars on one of them were barely healed. Am I right?"

A blistering curse was the only reply.

"Exactly. Well, up to a point, you were extremely clever. But then you made a mistake; a fatal one.

"You invited yourself to my house. I confess I did not suspect you then. But unfortunately for you, Huggins, the man who rode with you that time on the bullion-train—another clever trick of yours!—recognised you. He was one of the few who had known you as The Ace. His memory for such as you is superb!"

Arthurs snarled like a caged wolf.

"Curse him and you, too!" he shouted.

"So! An unknown gang threatening Britain! A notorious ex-gangster posing as a Yard officer! That was interesting. We bided our time!" drawled Kyle. "I started investigations; a somewhat long and patient inquiry. A famous detective-friend of mine crossed to Montreal at my request, and set the chain moving. I received a final cablegram that clinched the matter nearly a fortnight back.

"You became alarmed when I first went to Scotland Yard. You tried to have me shot at my own gates, covering your tracks by 'chasing' the gunman. Then, after casting suspicion on him, you kidnapped Lucius Pelton of the Treasury, shaping the circumstances so that Scotland Yard still half-believes he is the Phantom Foe, or his spy. And finally, by setting six madmen on to me and afterwards bombing my house, you tried to wipe out Snub and myself!

"The much-advertised raid you sprang last night was your latest and greatest

effort to catch me. I don't know how you discovered that I possess a genuine ornithopter, nor does it matter!"—with chill significance—"but I swallowed your bait deliberately, because I, also, planned to destroy your airship and gang in the air. And from the time I started out, three of

my men were waiting to capture you, too, on the ground!

"As you were surrounded by police officials up till an hour ago, they had to wait. They did so—in your flat. I presume, from the careful preparations you were making to disguise yourself, that you intended leaving London for good. That it was time for you to give up your pose as a C.I.D. man. I am glad to say, my friend, that you hung on—just—too—long!

"That is all! And I can prove it to the hilt!"

— —

The Phantom Loses a Duel!

THURSTON KYLE stopped and sat back, the corners of his mouth drooping in a mirthless smile of dour, infinite menace. He became suddenly passive-rocklike; watching his enemy through half-closed lids. But there was no repose in his attitude, only the dangerous tenseness of a tiger about to

Magnificent New Serial

By A Popular Author

COMING SHORTLY

Watch out for details.

spring. Arthurs, reading the silent threat in that austere face, quailed visibly. His blood chilled at the implacable hate and determination he saw in every line of the Night Hawk's rigid figure.

Throughout the long destructive speech, he had writhed and cursed like a demented man, every bitter fact and ruthless thrust piercing him like arrows. Terror and desperation gleamed in his eyes, while, constantly, his tongue moved over parched, stiff lips. For a long while the two stared at each other, the prisoner on the deck and his silent captor brooding over him. Then, abruptly, Arthurs showed his mettle by recovering with a tremendous effort.

Shock and surprise faded from his face, leaving a mask of ghastly pallor. He bared his teeth at last in a brazen laugh of contempt and defiance.

"Well—what now?" His voice rang in truculent challenge; the Canadian accent gone. "What are you going to do about it, you hound?"

Still Thurston Kyle did not relax his quietly ominous attitude. Nor did his dark eyes, veiled and inscrutable, waver.

"Are you the Phantom Foe?" he asked stonily; and Arthurs, twisting his lips viciously, laughed again.

"You say so. Well—suppose I am?" It was a confession; superfluous because his manner had betrayed him a hundred times already. But a faint sigh of triumph escaped from Thurston Kyle, and the absorbed Kittens in the background vented their feelings in a throaty growl. The fox had yielded at last.

Before anyone could speak, the Phantom Foe went on. No trace of his former terror remained; his sardonic insolence was that of a man who still holds a big trump-card, strong enough to turn the tables on his enemies and force them to a draw at least. With a curl of his lip for the Kittens and another sneer at Thurston Kyle, he spoke mockingly.

"Suppose I am the Phantom!" he repeated, watching the effect of his words. "You haven't won even now, Kyle. You've found out all about me—save one thing. My headquarters. Your assistant is there—and he'll stay there—perhaps!"

Thurston Kyle moved slightly.

"Yes?"

"Yes. Listen, Kyle; call this a draw! You've got me; that I know. But we've got young Hawkins. I had a call from one of my men to that effect this morning at the Yard. You're quite correct—it was time I left there. I shall be expected at headquarters some time this evening. And, my bonny scientist, if I don't get there—my men will come hunting for me. Understand?"

"You're risking not only Snub Hawkins, but the whole of London and Britain, too, if you don't release me. Swap me for your assistant, exchange us as prisoners of war! In return, I'll promise to transfer my activities to the Continent or the States. And"—a calculating, derisive light glittered in his eyes—"I'll even promise not to tell Scotland Yard that the mysterious and lawless Night Hawk is—Thurston Kyle!"

The Night Hawk flung back his head in a ringing laugh that paralysed the Phantom completely; smashed his bold confidence to atoms; and transformed him instantly into a snarling, raging fiend, all the venom in his nature betraying itself as he cursed his laughing opponent virulently. And then he stopped; for Kyle had stopped, too.

Quick as lightning the Night Hawk's powerful hand streaked down, grasped Arthurs by his coat lapels, and jerked him from the floor until his distorted face was within a few inches of the fierce one above him. There he was shaken like a rat.

"You dolt!" Thurston Kyle blazed at him savagely. "You'd bargain with me, would you? You'd agree to give back young Hawkins. You'd agreed to leave

HOW THE STORY BEGAN.

THE NIGHT HAWK, known to the world as Thurston Kyle, scientist, declares war on *THE PHANTOM FOE*, a ruthless criminal, who has commenced a reign of terror, killing, kidnapping, looting. Always he attacks amid a cloud of yellow gas, which stupefies his victims; then disappears literally into air, for he directs operations from an invisible airship. Kyle combines with

CAPTAIN FRANK ARTHURS, of Scotland Yard, to bring the criminal to book, but their plans are frustrated owing to a leakage of information. Lucius Pelton, of the Treasury, vanishes, and Arthurs immediately suspects that he is the Phantom Foe. The Night Hawk severs his connection with Scotland Yard; he intends to play a lone hand, for he also has his suspicions regarding the identity of the Phantom. The Phantom announces that he intends to attack the towns of Porthampton and Southtown; Kyle goes out to meet him in his own airship, the *Thunderer*. Flying through the night on wings, his young assistant, Snub Hawkins, sights the Phantom's craft, attacks, and is captured. He is taken to the gang's secret headquarters on a lonely island off the Hebrides. Meanwhile, the Night Hawk kidnaps Captain Arthurs, takes him aboard his airship—and there accuses him of being the Phantom Foe. He also demands to know where Snub is being held a prisoner.

(Now read on.)

Britain and raid the Continent. And you agreed to conceal my identity!" He laughed again and let the struggling man drop. "Well, thank you for nothing!"

"Arthurs, you're finished. You'll make no bargains with me—for you've nothing to offer. You are in my airship, surrounded by my men. Your vile schemes have wasted many lives, and for that you'll pay. I fight scum like you in my own way. And before you—pay—you'll tell me where Snub Hawkins is and your headquarters, too!"

Frenziedly, the Phantom screamed at him.

"I won't—I won't. And you can't kill me, Kyle. Hand me over to the police; I demand a proper trial, you——"

Still raving, he was picked up bodily and flung into the arms of Scraper Huggins. The Night Hawk, hands on hips, smiled bleakly.

"Close all doors and windows, men. Scraper, untie that hound and throw him loose!" The orders were obeyed swiftly. Then, fingers curling, shoulders hunched, he advanced lithely on the cowering crook. "And now, my friend, the Phantom—we'll see who is the master at last!"

Snub Escapes!

EVER since the cruel hammering he had received that morning from Ralph Hackwood, lieutenant to the Phantom Foe, young Snub Hawkins had remained still and quiet. Sore and bruised as he was, he lay stretched out on the bare boards of the island-hut, to all appearances nothing but a limp, helpless heap. But the beating, although it had damaged him badly, had not shaken his nerve in the least degree. He was always fit, hard as nails; and by keeping perfectly quiet, was giving himself every chance of recovering his strength.

Now and then he was aware of a masked face peering in at him through the window, but never by a single movement did he show that he was aware of the espionage. Face pillowed in his arms, he rested

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cannily, waiting while the hours sped by. The Phantom Foe himself was on his way to question him about Thurston Kyle. He would need all his strength and fortitude then, he guessed!

Snub growled deep in his throat at the thought, like a mastiff at bay. He could guess quite well what that 'questioning' would involve, if the Phantom was anything like his brutal lieutenant. And the boy was just as determined to die rather than utter a single word that would betray the Night Hawk's new base.

Grudgingly the long day wore on. At times the constant fog shrouding the island, parted under the sun's onslaught, letting through a few pale gleams. But the breaks lasted at most fifteen minutes, and after that the sea-mist crept back. Faint noises came to him sometimes, of voices and footsteps. All else was silent.

Late in the afternoon, however, he found himself able to stand up. A sudden outbreak of orders, given by someone in a strangely excited voice, roused his curiosity—there was something about the queer uproar that forced him cautiously to the window. Save for a short expanse of rock outside, he could see little, but somewhere beyond the curtain of mist, men were lining up quickly in orderly array, and once again he heard crisp commands ring out.

He tested the door carefully, finding it firmly locked and barred. The window was too small even for his sturdy figure—and the Phantom's lieutenant, of course, had taken his precious wings. He was caged completely.

Screwing up his eyes to slits, Snub strove to catch a glimpse of what was going on—the reason for all this strange activity. Then, suddenly, the faint velvety purr of powerful motors came to his ears, thrilling his every nerve. He pressed closer to the window. And a minute later, brushing aside the mists in rapid graceful swirls, a sleek beautiful vessel showed for a moment, rising in slow majesty from the ground. It was gone as quickly as it appeared, zooming out to sea and aloft; the soft hum of its going dying away quickly into utter silence.

An anxious pucker creased Snub's forehead deeply. The Phantom's airship had gone—with an abrupt, efficient speed that suggested a sudden call! Where was it going? It was obvious that the gang were feverishly determined to find Thurston Kyle and that other great airship that had attacked them over Porthampton. Had they found it? Was that the reason for this hasty departure? Snub relieved his feelings in a boyish but honest-to-

goodness opinion of the Phantom and all his works, as all sorts of worried conjectures flashed through his mind.

And then, in a single tottering lurch, he left the window and flung himself down again in his former limp position.

A man had loomed out of the mist, coming towards the hut. Not the lieutenant—this gangster was shorter and slimmer. Snub heard him unbolt the door and march in with a brisk step that made him tense his muscles instinctively.

The man was masked, of course, and wore the usual long, yellow cloak of the Phantom's gang, with a holstered gun and cartridge-belt buckled round his waist. Striding across, he shoved his boot roughly into Snub's ribs, and, as the prisoner stirred in well-feigned alarm, planked down a hunk of bread and a pannikin of water beside him. The last food Snub had eaten was sixteen hours before.

For a moment the gangster stood staring down at him in grim silence; so grim that Snub thought some more harsh treatment was coming besides grub. But as he stretched out timid hands towards the bread, the man only grunted and half-turned away. And in that brief opportunity, the resolute youngster nailed him.

He struck with the speed of a coiled snake. Quick as fate, his outstretched hands stretched farther; fastened round the gangster's ankles in a frantic grip of steel, and pulled. Whipped cleanly off his feet, the man pitched headlong to the floor, shock and impact knocking him breathless. And as he fell, Snub rose and landed on top of him like a wildcat.

"Got you!"

The fight was as brief as it was merciless. Planting a knee fiercely into the man's back and pinning him to the floor, the lad made one accurate grab at the gun on his hip, yanked it out and hit with all his might. The powerfully-swung barrel socked home to a heavy thud, squarely across the gangster's temple, even as he opened his mouth in a bawl for help. That shout was never uttered.

Clumsily, Snub struggled to his feet. Leaving the unconscious jailer, he tiptoed to the door, opened it and peered out. No one was near; there was no alarm. Edging back, he crossed to his late opponent again and for the next few minutes worked at lightning speed.

At the end of that time, cloaked in the man's yellow robe, masked and armed, he opened the door a second time and slid boldly into the mist. His heart was pounding heavily, for he was still weak from the beating and imprisonment.

What he was up against now he had no idea, nor yet any plans for escape. The

one comforting fact was that the Phantom's airship had gone—and must have taken most of the garrison away from this isle of evil. He pressed forward, feeling his way cautiously over the slippery, rocky ground.

Away to his left he could see a dim cluster of three huts, from one of which came a hoarse rumble of voices. And to his right, the sound of waves beating against rocks drifted to him through the mist, some way off. What was it that lieutenant hound had said?—twenty miles of rough sea to the nearest mainland. Well, to blazes with him! Anything was better than waiting here—until the Phantom Foe himself arrived.

Ducking away from the huts, he prowled fast towards the sea. The mist was playing queer tricks, hedging him in sometimes till he could scarce see a yard, at others opening before him in long channels. Nearer and nearer he approached the beating surf, keeping his right hand very close to the belted gun round his waist. And so at last he reached the craggy shore of the island—and gasped with relief and joy to find that his luck had turned now with a vengeance.

On the edge of the island, rocking gently at its moorings in a breakwater formed by jagged reefs, lay a sturdy sailing-dinghy. It was the first thing he saw, and almost as he did so, the mist swirled down again, blotting it from sight. But in that brief space, he noticed that the short mast was stepped in position, with a single lugsail furled loosely at its base and bent to the halyards. Crouching to the ground in the shelter of a rock, he waited for another clear interval, thinking fast.

He knew very little about small-boat sailing, and from the glimpse he had received of the waves and rocks ahead, guessed that getting way from the Phantom's island would be desperate work. But he had to try it, for all that.

Agonised seconds slipped by, during every one of which he expected an alarm to be raised. But no sound came from behind him; the noise of the waves filled the air. At last the moment arrived when the mist moved on again under a rippling puff of wind, and the dinghy lay clearly before him, not fifteen yards away. Poising himself for a swift-dash, he half-rose from the sheltering rock.

And then froze in his tracks, narrowed eyes glinting coldly!

Only just in time had he seen the armed man, lounging in the lee of another rock between him and the boat. A Winchester

lay across the fellow's knees, and he was smoking placidly as he stared out to sea. A sentry—guarding the one avenue of escape! Snub's teeth met in a little determined click.

He wasted no time in indecision—he had to get that dinghy somehow. Slipping the revolver from its holster, he gripped it in one hand, then, sinking flat to the ground, he began to crawl forward like an Indian scout, drawing himself along an inch at a time. The beating surf was on his side, covering the faint rustle of his cloak. Iron resolution carried him through.

Silently, he writhed towards his man. He came to the base of the rock, raised himself warily on his knees till the back of a dark head appeared over the top. He swung the gun slowly over his shoulder, and struck with bitter accuracy.

Thud!

The well-swung gun-butt took the man dully on the back of the head, rolling him down the rocks in a tumbled heap; and Snub, grabbing the man's fallen rifle, slid and clambered towards the waves for his life.

By that single sweeping stroke, Snub had hammered a clear path to the boat, his one chance of escape from the Phantom Poe's island.

(Will Snub escape from the ruthless clutches of the Phantom Poe's gang? There are amazing developments in next week's instalment—don't miss it.)

THE MOUNTAIN TYRANT!

(Continued from page 37.)

four hours—until this hour to-morrow night. The young idiot needs a lesson!"

The man saluted, eagerly expressing their willingness to obey the order. Lee strode off. His horse was near at hand. He mounted, ordered his escort to remain, and galloped off.

He had acted so quickly that the escort had no time to be suspicious. They took the uniformed figure to be Prince Zeno, even in the moonlight, for Lee kept his face averted.

He vanished into one of the black rocky passes, but near the entrance he pulled up. A shadowy figure came out of the shadow.

"I'm here, sir!" whispered Victor, his voice trembling with inward excitement.

"Good lad! Up you get!" breathed Lee.

A moment later King Victor of Caronia was seated in front of Lee, and they were riding down that forbidding pass—the road to liberty.

Single-handed Nelson Lee had rescued the boy from the dreaded Grod Valley. It was a wonderful achievement. But now the really desperate part of the adventure lay ahead.

So far, Lee had triumphed. His one object now was to reach the main camp, to engineer the escape of the entire English party.

THE END.

(In "Prisoners of the Pass," next Wednesday's all-thrilling book-length story, the St. Frank's party experience their most exciting and perilous adventures in the wild mountains of Kazatova. Be wise and order your copy early.)

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