

EXTRA-LONG DETECTIVE STORY INSIDE THAT THRILLS!

THE NELSON LEE

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New Series No. 112

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

March 19th, 1932.

Thrilling long complete detective story of Nelson Lee.

THE TRAIL



CHAPTER 1.

The Elusive Dwarf!

NELSON LEE, the famous detective, strode along the lonely road with swinging steps. His usually severe features had relaxed into a pleasant half-smile; he felt that he could afford to smile. At last he was in possession of the Silver Dwarf, that small, grotesque statuette which had brought him on a long, perilous trail from London to this outlandish spot in the south of Spain.

The Silver Dwarf was now hugged under his arm, where it gleamed dully in the faint reflection of a watery moon which endeavoured to shed its pale, cold radiance from a cloudy sky.

The scene was one of rugged grandeur and desolation. A range of mountains loomed blackly against the sky-line; a deep valley shimmered vaguely below him, stretching away for miles, until it was lost in the distance. The lonely road along which the detective walked led from San Roque to Linea. He was within a mile of the Taberno

de los Montes, where he was staying. There he would be able to examine the valuable documents which were concealed inside the statuette.

A thick hedge bordered one side of the road, and, keeping close to this, almost completely hidden in the shadows, crouched a man. Stealthily Pedro Gonzalez had followed the detective, who was completely unaware of the menace that lurked some hundred yards behind him.

Lee had no reason to suspect that the Spaniard, evil-looking rascal though he was, would want to attack him.

It was less than half an hour ago that the detective had left Gonzalez in his hut, gloating over two hundred pesetas which Lee had paid him for the Silver Dwarf. For it was Gonzalez or, rather, his son—who had found the statuette in a dried-up river, where Professor Mark Rymer had thrown it to frustrate Lee.

But that money had made the Spaniard

Hurling the bomb into the courtyard. Nelson Lee then flung himself to the ground.

Tell your pals about this extra-special series!

OF FORJUNE!



Nelson Lee is hunting for a statuette known as the Silver Dwarf, hidden in which are documents relating to the missing—and unknown—heir of the Easington fortune. On the same quest, too, is Professor Rymer who, by destroying those vital documents, will become the sole heir; and the unscrupulous professor sticks at nothing to frustrate his fearless rival.

greedy. The statuette was obviously valuable, and therefore Gonzalez decided that it was worth more than two hundred pesetas. So, armed with a thick stick, he had trailed the detective along the lonely road.

Cautiously he crept nearer to Nelson Lee. Only a few yards separated them now. Not another soul was in sight. Gripping the stick firmly in his hand, the Spaniard launched himself to the attack.

Nelson Lee heard the sound of soft footsteps behind him, and he spun round, instantly on the alert. He was a second too late, however. Gonzalez swung his stout stick and brought it down with crashing force on the detective's head. Lee dropped in a heap in the roadway, senseless.

Casting a swift glance around to make sure that no one was in sight, Pedro Gonzalez snatched up the statuette, tucked it under his grimy shirt, and ran from the spot, burst through the bushes, and took to the fields, leading for the distant lights of San Roque.

HOW long Nelson Lee lay senseless in the roadway he never knew, but the landlord of the Taberna de los Montes, alarmed by his prolonged absence, went out in search of him, and, finding him lying there, had him carried back to the inn.

When he came round the detective found himself in the parlour of the inn, and for a time he sat up, staring about him, gathering his scattered wits.

"We found you lying in the road, senor," said the landlord. "Some brigand must have attacked you. Have you been robbed?"

Nelson Lee felt in his pockets, but missed nothing. Then, with a start, he remembered, and sprang from the couch.

"The Silver Dwarf!" he cried. "It's gone!"

"Maybe that brigand, La Navajo, attacked you," suggested the landlord.

But Nelson Lee shook his head.

"He would not have known I had the

statuette. No; if anyone, it was Gonzalez himself who attacked me! Quick! I must find him!"

"But, senor, you can't go out again so soon after your injuries! It is madness! Senor—listen——"

Nelson Lee would not wait to listen. Despite the fact that his temples were throbbing and his head ached abominably, he raced along the deserted road to the mud hut of Pedro Gonzalez. The door was locked, but he banged on it until Gonzalez appeared, having arisen from his bed to do so.

"What is the matter?" he grumbled. "Cannot a hard-working man sleep peacefully in his bed——"

Nelson Lee was in no mood for soft measures. He seized the Spaniard, thrusting him back into the hut, and went in after him, closing the door.

"Where is the Silver Dwarf?" he demanded curtly.

For an instant there was fear in the eyes of Pedro Gonzalez, then it vanished, and the man seemed to be puzzled.

"How should I know, senor? I sold it to you, and you took it away!"

"And someone followed me, attacked me from behind, and robbed me of it," said Nelson Lee sharply.

"It was not I!" retorted Gonzalez. "Why should I do such a thing to the Englishman who has treated me so generously?"

"In order to make yet more money."

"But I went straight to bed after you departed," said Gonzalez.

Nelson Lee made no answer, but strode across the hut and took a stick from the corner. He held it in the light of the oil-lamp, and saw that there was blood on the curved handle.

Then he glanced up at Gonzalez—only just in time! The peasant knew that his carelessness had betrayed him, and was in the act of drawing his knife.

Nelson Lee sprang at the man, gripping him by the throat, and half-throttling him until his senses reeled. Then, quickly disarming him, he flung the peasant into the far corner of the hut, while his son cried out with dismay, thinking the Englishman would kill his father.

The detective stood over the fallen peasant, ready for the slightest hint of attack, but Gonzalez had had the fight knocked out of him and was trembling with terror.

"Where is the Silver Dwarf?" cried the detective.

"I do not know!" growled Gonzalez. "It is not here."

"You will tell me what you did with it?"

"No. Why should I condemn myself?"

"The stick condemns you!" retorted the detective. "I will drag you to San Roque, to the commissar of police, and before sunrise you will be in gaol for attempted murder!"

Spanish prisons are terrible places, as Gonzalez well knew.

"Mercy, senor! Don't send me to prison, and I will confess!"

"You attacked me and stole back the statuette?"

"Yes, senor."

"And what did you do then?"

"I took it to San Roque and sold it to a Jew."

"His name and address—quickly!"

"Why should I tell if I am to go to prison?" grumbled Gonzalez.

"Tell me the truth, and I will not lodge any complaint with the police. I promise you that."

"Very well, senor. I sold it to Isaac Benzaquen, the Jew."

"He lives in San Roque?"

"No, senor. He lives at Gibraltar, when he lives anywhere, but he has also a house at Tangiers. He roams from place to place, buying and selling. He left San Roque by train, and by morning will be in Gibraltar."

"That is the truth? Be careful, now. If I find your story is false I shall come back to hand you over to the police."

"I have spoken the truth," said Gonzalez.

"Very well, then. I have no time to waste here. The money hardly matters. I want the papers that are inside the Dwarf. You deserve imprisonment for your treachery, but as I have promised, I will keep my promise."

The detective left the hut and hastened back to the Taberna le los Montes. The landlord owned a rusty old car that could do about twenty miles per hour when put to it, and he arranged to drive the detective to the frontier town of Linea at dawn. From Linea Nelson Lee could easily make his way along the strip of "No Man's Land" to the gates of Gibraltar, and find Benzaquen, the Jew.

"There is one consolation," the detective told himself. "Mark Rymer thinks that the Dwarf is at the bottom of the river, so I have merely to buy the thing back from Benzaquen, without fear of any opposition from the professor."

CHAPTER 2.

The Professor's Plot!

MARK RYMER, however, having spent the night in Linea, rose next morning, and was in Gibraltar shortly after seven o'clock, an hour or two before Nelson Lee could possibly get there. Being in need of money—for he had left all his baggage at Algeciras, to which place he had no desire to return—he first made his way to the house of a Jewish money-lender named Solomon Barnascone.

He had had dealings with Barnascone before—for this was by no means the first time the professor had been to Gibraltar—and he had every confidence that the Jew would advance him a sufficient sum of money—at a suitable rate of interest, of course—to pay for his passage back to England.

The professor was convinced that he had nothing to fear, nor was he perturbed about the documents which had been concealed inside the Silver Dwarf; the statuette was at the bottom of the river, and all that was left for him to do was to return to England at his leisure and take up his inheritance.

Upon reaching Barnascone's house he was informed that the Jew was out, but was expected back at any moment. Rymer waited, and at half-past seven the Jew returned.

"I'm sorry to have kept you waiting," said Barnascone, when the customary greetings had been exchanged. "It isn't often that I'm out at such an early hour, but this morning I've been down to the Waterport to see old Benzaquen off to Tangier by the seven o'clock boat. You know old Isaac Benzaquen, of course?"

The professor shook his head.

"Really!" said Barnascone. "I thought everybody who had ever been in Gibraltar knew old Benzaquen. He keeps a curiosity shop in Tangier, near the French Legation, and often travels over here in search of curios."

"Indeed!" said the professor, who was not at all interested.

"Such a lucky man!" continued Barnascone, with an envious sigh. "He motored here from San Roque, leaving San Roque before dawn in order to catch the boat. And just before midnight he met a peasant carrying a small silver statuette—that was at San Roque, of course, before he left. It was a statuette shaped like a dwarf—"

"A what?" echoed the professor, leaping to his feet as though he had been shot.

"A silver statuette fashioned to represent a dwarf," said Barnascone. "Benzaquen asked no questions, but bought the thing for two hundred pesetas. Fancy that! Why, I offered Benzaquen three hundred pesetas for it, and he simply laughed at me! But—what—what's the matter?"

Well might he ask this question, for Mark Rymer's face had suddenly grown purple with rage, and his features were twitching convulsively. For a second or two he stood speechless with rage and chagrin. Then his pent-up feelings found vent in a torrent of abuse.

His cunning ruse had failed. His dream of security had been shattered at a single blow.

"How did the man find the Dwarf?" he cried. "I threw it into the San Roque river myself!"

"The San Roque river!" cried Barnascone. "My dear sir, owing to the scarcity of rain the San Roque river has been practically dried up for some time. It would be easy for a peasant, seeing the thing lying in the mud, to fish it out and take it to San Roque and sell it. Benzaquen always was a lucky man. He left by the seven o'clock boat for Tangier, and now the wind is blowing so hard that I doubt if any more boats will leave harbour to-day. When the wind drops we shall have rain, and then the San Roque

river will be in flood. You will observe how lucky Benzaquen is all the time."

"I've got to go after him," cried the professor. "The Silver Dwarf is mine, and I must have it."

"Yet you threw it into the river yourself."

"It sounds strange, no doubt," said the professor. "I will explain the matter to you."

And he did so, hurriedly, while the cunning Barnascone nodded his head to show that he understood the position.

"You must follow Benzaquen," he said. "But with this wind blowing no boat will leave for Tangier."

"I shall find a way," said the professor. "I came here this morning to borrow fifty pounds. My intention was to return to England by the next boat. What you have just told me, however, has completely upset my plans. I must go to Tangier at once, interview Benzaquen, and buy back that silver statuette."

"But he may not have it then," said the Jew. "He may have sold it."

"Exactly," agreed Mark Rymer. "That is what I fear. If my fears prove to be well-grounded, I shall have to follow the statuette until I find it. For that purpose I shall need money. Will you lend me five hundred pounds?"

"On the same terms as before?"

"Yes."

"I will."

"Good! Now comes another question. Would you like to earn another five hundred for yourself?"

The Jew's eyes sparkled.

"Need you ask?" he muttered. "There's nothing in the world I would not do for five hundred pounds."

"Then come with me," said the professor, taking up his hat. "We will go for a stroll in the Alameda. I have something to say to you which is best said in the open air, where there is no fear of our being overheard."

"Then come with me," said the professor, which are Gibraltar's nearest approach to a public park. For nearly half an hour they promenaded to and fro, the professor meanwhile expounding his plans.

"You understand?" he concluded. "If Nelson Lee obtains possession of this Silver Dwarf I shall never inherit the Easington fortune. If I can destroy the proofs of the late Earl's marriage, then I shall inherit the fortune and I shall see to it that you do not lose by it!"

Barnascone nodded his head.

"I understand, and will help you," he said. "There's a house in Engineer Lane that will exactly suit your purpose."

"And you can find a man to impersonate Benzaquen?"

"Oh, yes! There'll be no difficulty about that."

The professor said something in a low voice, and Barnascone resolutely shook his head.

"No, no!" he said emphatically. "I draw the line at that!"

"Well, will you undertake to keep him under lock and key until you hear from me that I have found the statuette?"

"Yes, I'll undertake to do that."

A few minutes later they parted; and as Mark Rymer made his way to the European quarter of the town he muttered softly to himself:

"Tit for tat, Mr. Nelson Lee! You caused me to be detained in Paris, and now I pay you back in your own coin!"

CHAPTER 3.

A Prisoner of the Vault!

UPON arrival at Gibraltar, Nelson Lee immediately made his way to the Jewish quarter of the town and accosted the first man of Jewish appearance he met. As a matter of fact, though he knew it not, the Jew had been loitering in that conspicuous spot since nine o'clock, waiting for the detective's arrival!

"Excuse me," said the detective courteously. "My name is Nelson Lee. I am in search of a man named Isaac Benzaquen. Do you happen to know him?"

"Slightly!" said the Jew, with a peculiar smile.

"Then perhaps you can tell me whether he is still in Gibraltar, or whether he has left for Tangier."

"He is in Gibraltar!" said the Jew, still smiling.

"Where?"

"Here!"

The detective stared at him in mild surprise.

"You are Isaac Benzaquen?"

"I am," said the Jew.

"Then it was you who bought a silver statuette from a peasant at San Roque?"

The Jew started. He was playing his part magnificently.

"Yes," he said quickly. "Do not tell me that the man had stolen it!"

"He had no right to it," said Nelson Lee. "But I have not sought you out to make trouble over that. Is it still in your possession?"

"Yes."

"Will you sell it to me?"

"For how much?" asked the Jew craftily.

"For any sum you like to name," said the detective. "Where is it?"

"At the house where I am staying."

"Where is that?"

"In Engineer Lane."

"Then let us go there at once! We can discuss the question of price on the way."

The Jew agreed, and conducted his unsuspecting victim to a large, square, flat-roofed house at the top of Engineer Lane,

which is a steep and narrow street, leading to the upper part of the town.

Green-barred shutters covered all the windows facing the street, but as the sun was shining with unwonted brilliance this fact gave rise to no suspicion on the part of Nelson Lee.

With a great show of politeness the Jew threw open the door and motioned to him to enter.

The detective complied, but no sooner had he stepped across the threshold than the Jew sprang after him, closed the door, and whipped out a revolver.

"Not a word as you value your life!" he hissed, levelling his weapon at the detective's head.

Even as he spoke two other men sprang out of an adjoining room and covered Nelson Lee with their revolvers, while an instant later the smiling face of Mark Rymer appeared at a doorway at the end of the passage.

"Good-evening, Mr. Nelson Lee!" he said, peering and blinking and rubbing his hands. "I'm afraid my friends have somewhat startled you! But don't be alarmed. We are not going to harm you. We are only going to provide you with free board and lodging until I have been across to Tangier and secured the Silver Dwarf!"

The detective shrugged his shoulders, and turned to the Jew who had lured him to the house.

"You were lying, I suppose," he said, "when you told me you were Isaac Benzaquen?"

The Jew grinned, and complacently stroked his beard with his left hand, whilst his right still held his revolver in a line with Nelson Lee's head.

"Yes, I was lying," he said calmly. "Isaac Benzaquen left for Tangier at seven o'clock this morning."

"And I was actually in Gibraltar at the time he left," broke in Mark Rymer. "Can you think of anything more annoying? But the fates have been against me to-day. I miss old Benzaquen and the Silver Dwarf by a quarter of an hour, and then this storm of wind springs up, and no vessel will put out of the harbour. The boat has gone, and the local fishermen are too much afraid of the wind and the waves.

"And when I went to send a cable to Benzaquen, asking him to keep the Dwarf until I arrived, I was politely informed that a ship, dragging her anchor, had fouled the submarine cable and broken it, so that my message could not be sent until the line is repaired. I knew, of course, that it wouldn't be long before you picked up the scent, and consequently I had no alternative but to arrange this pretty little scheme for preventing your getting ahead of me. You played a similar trick on me in Paris, you may remember, so that really, you know, you have no right to complain."

"I have not complained yet!" said Nelson Lee curtly. "How long do you propose to keep me here?"

"Not a moment longer than is absolutely necessary, I assure you," said the professor, arching his rounded shoulders and softly rubbing his long, thin hands. "It is impossible for me to proceed to Tangier until this gale has subsided somewhat. Needless to say, I shall leave for Tangier at the earliest possible moment, and as soon as I have secured the Silver Dwarf I shall wire my friends here—that is, if the cable has been repaired—to set you at liberty at once."

Rymer signed to his three confederates. The detective was thrown down and pinioned hand and foot. When his pockets had been rifled of their contents, he was dragged into a room at the back of the house. In the centre of the floor was a wooden trapdoor, which was promptly unbolted and opened to its widest extent.

A coil of rope was produced, and one end was knotted round the detective's waist. His arms and legs were then unbound, and he was lowered into a noisome underground vault, the walls of which were composed of solid blocks of masonry. A couple of rugs were thrown down after him, then the trapdoor was closed, and he was left to his own reflections.

CHAPTER 4.

An Unexpected Check!

ALL that day the wind howled over the Rock of Gibraltar, and the sea in the Straits was white with foam, so that the professor, who was by no means a good sailor or fond of the sea, shirked the prospect of a wetting. Knowing that Nelson Leo was under lock and key, he saw no reason why he should hurry, except that Benzaquen might sell the Dwarf.

The rough weather interfered with the repairing of the submarine cable, and the professor hesitated several times before attempting to wireless to Tangier. Wireless is a marvellous thing, of course, but Mark Rymer's motives were not at all legal or honourable, and wireless is not like a telegram, or a telephone message with which one can communicate with a fair amount of secrecy. A wireless message means broadcasting a message which might be picked up by anyone, and Mark Rymer only wanted to get into touch with Isaac Benzaquen—not the whole world!

But late that night the weather moderated, and early the next morning, despite the heavy seas still prevailing, the professor found the owner of a motor-boat who was willing to run him across to Tangier, starting earlier than the usual steamer and arriving earlier.

Consequently, shortly before eleven that morning Rymer was standing on the wooden pier of Tangier, surrounded by a clamouring mob of bare-legged Moors, most of whom were clad in saffron-yellow "jelabs," and all of whom seemed bent on tearing him limb from limb in their eagerness to secure his bag.

With much difficulty and with no little loss of temper, he managed to elbow his way through the crowd and present his bag for the inspection of the Customs official. His baggage having been "passed," he handed it to a brown-faced Moorish boy, and bade him lead the way to Maclean's Hotel.

Upon reaching the hotel, Rymer dismissed the boy and sought an interview with the proprietor.

"Do you happen to know a Jew named Isaac Benzaquen?" he asked after engaging a bed-room and a private sitting-room.

"Oh, yes," said the proprietor, with a smile. "Everybody in Tangier knows old Benzaquen."

"He keeps a curiosity shop, I believe?"

"Yes."

"Is it far from here?"

"Oh, no; a quarter of an hour's walk at the most."

"Then I have time to go there before lunch?"

"Ample time. Do you know Tangier?"

"Fairly well."

"Then you will know the French Legation?"

"Yes."

"Well, old Benzaquen's shop is close beside the Legation. You can't miss it. Anybody will point it out to you—that is, of course, if you can speak Arabic."

The professor smiled. He was one of the finest Arabic scholars in Europe.

"I think I know enough to make myself understood," he said. "Send my bag up to my room, and expect me back to lunch."

He left the hotel, and twenty minutes later he entered Benzaquen's shop—a low, dark room, open to the street, and literally packed from floor to ceiling with antique Moorish furniture, old-fashioned muskets, richly-chased swords and daggers, embroidered slippers, specimens of native pottery, curious old lamps and braziers, and real and imitation jewellery of every possible description.

The only occupant of the shop was a slim-built, sharp-featured Jew, about nineteen or twenty years of age.

"I desire to speak with Isaac Benzaquen," said the professor in Arabic.

The young Jew shook his head.

"My father is away from home at present," he said.

The professor crushed back an oath.

"Where is he?" he demanded.

The Jew regarded him with an air of surprise, in which was some suspicion.

"I do not know," he answered.

The professor whipped out a handful of pesetas, and thrust the coins into his hand.

"Now are you willing to tell me where your father is?" he asked.

"He's at Kelelin," said the Jew.

"Where is that?"

"About fifty miles from here, in the direction of Tetuan."

"When did he go?"

"Yesterday, about noon."

"When do you expect him back?"

"Perhaps to-night, perhaps to-morrow."

The professor pondered a moment.

"Maybe you can tell me what I want to know," he said. "Your father was at San Roque two days ago."

"Yes."

"At San Roque he bought from a peasant a small silver statuette, fashioned in the form of a dwarf!"

A startled look sprang into the young Jew's face, but it vanished almost instantly, and gave place to an expression of sullen obstinacy.

"I do not know. I cannot say," replied the Jew.

The professor glowered at him and then considered for a moment.

"After all, there's nothing to worry about," he muttered to himself. "Benzaquen may be home at any time, and Nelson Lee is safely cooped up in Gibraltar. There's no immediate hurry."

"Suppose your father returns to-night," he asked aloud, "what time will he arrive?"

"If he's not here by sunset, I shan't expect him until Monday," said the Jew.

"Very well," said the professor. "I will call again to-night shortly after sunset. If your father returns before I come, tell him that I have been, and say to him that he is not to part with that silver statuette until I have seen him."

A curious smile flitted across the young Jew's face, but he merely nodded and promised to obey. A moment later the professor was on his way back to Maclean's Hotel.

CHAPTER 5.

Tunnelling to Freedom!

It was characteristic of Nelson Lee that as soon as he found himself alone he set about evolving some plan of escape.

His captors had rifled his pockets, and had taken possession of his revolver, his knife, his money, and his papers. The only things they had left him, perhaps because they were things liable to be known as belonging to Nelson Lee, were his cigarette-case, engraved with his monogram, his watch and chain, and a small silver matchbox, in which were a score or so of wax vestas.

Having wound up his watch and glanced at the time—it was ten o'clock—he struck a match and proceeded to make a survey of the vault into which he had been lowered. The result was not encouraging. The vault was fully thirty feet deep and the only means of entering or leaving it was the small trapdoor in the roof.

The walls were constructed of large square blocks of rough-hewn stone, which nothing else than dynamite would have demolished. The floor was of earth, firmly beaten down, and almost as hard as concrete. The roof was formed by the wooden floor of the room above.

Having taken in these details, Nelson Lee struck a second match and explored the vault more carefully. The result of this second examination was slightly more encouraging. In one of the walls there had evidently been a door in former times, a door that had afterwards been built up, for a certain well-defined portion of the wall, about seven feet high and four feet broad, was composed of stones which were somewhat different in size and shape, and distinctly newer-looking than the rest.

"Hallo! What have we here?" muttered the detective as he noticed this well-defined patch. "There's been a door here at some time or other. This looks hopeful. People don't make doors that lead to nowhere. The very fact that there has once been a door here proves beyond all doubt that there is something more than solid earth on the other side of this wall. Probably there is another underground cellar. The floor of this vault is of earth. If I burrow down to the bottom of this wall, and under the wall and up through the floor to the vault on the other side, there's a sporting chance that I may find a way of escape."

Nelson Lee dug his heel into the earthen floor and loosened some of the soil. Then he went down on his knees and began to scrape away the earth with his hands. But the floor had been beaten down until it was hard as concrete, and at the end of two hours' toil he had only scooped out a hole scarcely bigger than his head.

At twelve o'clock the sound of footsteps in the room above warned the detective to stop. He hastily flung one of the rugs over the hole he had made, and lay down on the other side. Hardly had he done so when the trapdoor opened and a face appeared. It was the Jew who had lured him to the house, and who had been deputed by Solomon Barnascone to act as his gaoler.

"Feeding time," said the Jew briefly.

He attached a basket to a long, thin cord and lowered it into the vault. Inside the basket was a thick slice of stale bread and a mug of cocoa.

"Five minutes allowed for refreshments," said the Jew. "Hurry up!"

He squatted down by the side of the open trapdoor, and pulled out his watch. The detective removed the bread and cocoa from the basket, but he was really thinking of the task he had set himself and his need for some sort of implement to aid him.

Then he had an idea.

"Really," he exclaimed, "this is no way to treat a guest!"

"What do you mean?" asked the Jew. "Isn't the food good enough for you? You will get no other."

"I am not complaining of the food," said the detective. "But you might have given me a plate, at least."

"That's soon provided," said the Jew, hauling up the basket.

In less than a minute he lowered it again, and Nelson Lee took out the plate and placed the bread upon it. He ate the bread and

drank the cocoa, then the Jew glanced at his watch.

"Time's up," he said.

Nelson replaced the cup in the basket, and was about to place the plate beside it when it seemed to slip from his hand. It fell to the ground, where it promptly broke into half a dozen pieces.

"Clumsy fool!" growled the Jew. "You shall have a wooden plate next time. Pick up those broken pieces and put them in the basket."

Unseen by his gaoler, the detective covered one of the largest pieces with his foot, but picked up the rest and tossed them into the basket.

"Have you put the spoon in?" asked the Jew.

"Yes."

The Jew hauled up the basket and closed the trapdoor. A moment later he opened it again, but luckily for Nelson Lee he had not yet started work again.

"Tea at five," said the Jew.

He banged the trapdoor down and bolted it. The detective waited for five or ten minutes to make sure that his gaoler did not intend to return, then he snatched up the piece of broken plate which he had covered with his foot and resumed his excavations.

WITH the aid of this somewhat novel instrument—which Lee used, of course, for scooping out the earth—the detective's progress was now considerably accelerated. Even so, however, his task was sufficiently tedious, and when he abandoned it for tea-time he had not yet reached the bottom foundations of the wall.

After the frugal meal lowered to him by the Jew, he resumed his task, and, coming to a more sandy patch of earth, he had delved down to the bottom of the wall by ten o'clock. And by midnight he had made such substantial progress that he snatched a few hours' much needed sleep, in the comforting assurance that a few hours' work in the early morning would see his task accomplished.

The detective awoke at about three a.m., and he immediately set to work. Armed with his primitive implement, he crawled into the subterranean tunnel he had made and attacked the layer of soil which he now hoped was all that separated him from the adjoining vault or cellar.

For two solid hours he worked without cessation, and then, just as he was expecting every moment to break through, his eager fingers came in contact with the under-surface of a thick slab of stone.

"A stone-flagged floor!" he groaned. "I didn't bargain for this. H'm! It's going to be more difficult than I thought. I shall have to scrape away the soil from under this flag, and then try to heave it up."

Nelson Lee toiled on for another hour; then he crawled back to his prison cell and covered up the entrance to the tunnel with one of the rugs. A few moments later his gaoler appeared with his breakfast.

"The professor has sent his compliments," said the Jew, as he lowered the basket. "And he asks me to tell you that he leaves for Tangier early to-day by motor-boat. He hasn't heard any news of Benzaquen yet as the gale has interfered with the repairing of the cable. But as soon as he has seen him and secured the Silver Dwarf, he will endeavour to let you know at the earliest possible moment. In the meantime, he trusts you are keeping in good health and not giving way to the blues."

The detective made no reply; but as soon as he had finished his breakfast and his gaoler had departed, he returned to his underground burrow and resumed his task with redoubled energy.

An hour passed—two hours—and then his dogged efforts met with their reward. Inch by inch he raised the ponderous flag, till at length, with a final vigorous thrust, he heaved it aside and crawled out into another underground vault, which differed from the one he had left in two important factors.

In the first place, the floor of this second vault was not of earth, but was paved with slabs of stone. So much the detective knew already; but it was not until he had struck his last remaining match that he discovered, to his intense relief, that this second vault was not entered by means of a trapdoor in the roof, but by means of an ordinary upright door at the top of a flight of stone steps.

He glanced at his watch. It was half-past ten. He stole to the top of the steps and placed his ear to the keyhole of the door. Hearing nothing, he tried the handle. The door was locked or bolted on the outside.

He peered through the keyhole. So far as he could see, the door opened into the kitchen. A fire was burning in the grate and a kettle was singing on the hob. Of the Jew there was no sign.

He applied his shoulder to the door and gave it a vigorous push. Once, twice, thrice he pushed. Then the door burst open with a resounding crash, and he fell floundering on his hands and knees on the kitchen floor.

IN the meantime, the Jew was coming down the passage leading to the kitchen. Upon hearing the crash of the cellar door, he whipped out his revolver and quickened his pace. At the same moment as he darted into the kitchen the detective leaped to his feet. With a startled cry, the Jew flung out his hand and pressed the trigger of his revolver. The bullet grazed the tip of Nelson Lee's ear and flattened itself against the wall. The next instant the detective sprang at his burly foe.

For a second or two they fought and struggled in a desperate hand-to-hand encounter. Then they fell to the ground, locked in each other's arms: and even as they fell the barking of a dog was heard, followed by excited shouts.

Tensing himself for a final effort, the detective loosened one hand from the Jew's

throat and dealt him a rasping blow between the eyes which momentarily stunned him. Then he scrambled to his feet hastily and snatched up the Jew's revolver, which had fallen to the ground in the course of the struggle. Hardly had he done so ere the dog rushed into the kitchen—a long, lithe, snewy deerhound.

"Good dog! Seize him!" cried a voice from the far end of the passage.

The deerhound uttered a low, fierce growl and launched itself at the detective's throat. Quick as thought, the latter leaped aside, and at the same time pressed the trigger of the revolver.

The bullet crashed into the deerhound's skull, an inch or so behind the ear, and the huge brute dropped to the ground as though he had been struck by lightning. A moment later—before the echoes of the shot had died away—the detective had cleared both the Jew and the dog with a single flying leap and was racing down the passage towards the front door.

Standing at the end of the passage was one of the Jew's accomplices—a tall and villainous-looking Spaniard. He produced a short, black-handled dagger, but the moment he perceived that Nelson Lee was armed with a revolver he spun round on his heel and flew upstairs as fast as his legs would carry him.

The detective sent a bullet after him to hasten his flight. Then he hurriedly opened the door and sprang out into the street, where his appearance gave rise to something like a sensation. His clothes were bespattered with mud and were encrusted with a liberal coating of clayey soil. His hands were begrimed with earth.

Ignoring the stares of the curious on-lookers, he thrust his revolver into his pocket and hastily glanced at his watch. It was ten minutes to eleven. Mark Rymer had left for Tangier that morning by motor-boat. There was a steamer leaving Gibraltar for Tangier at eleven. There was a sporting chance of catching the boat and reaching Tangier in time to save the valuable statuette from falling into his rival's hands.

Encouraged by this hope, Nelson Lee raced down the steep and narrow street. Men and women turned to stare at him, dogs ran barking at his heels, and one man even attempted to bar his progress, under the impression that he had committed a theft and was fleeing from the police.

But it was all in vain. It was after eleven o'clock when Nelson Lee reached the bottom of Engineer Lane, and by the time he arrived at the quay the boat had slipped her moorings and was already steaming out to sea.

CHAPTER 6.

A Friend in Need!

"SURELY I cannot be mistaken! It is Mr. Nelson Lee, is it not?"

The detective was standing on the end of the pier, gazing regretfully at the boat as it receded into the distance.

At the sound of the speaker's voice he started and turned round to find himself facing a naval officer. Then his eyes flashed recognition. The naval man was an old friend, and one for whom Nelson Lee had solved a mystery and extricated from serious troubles.

"You have sharp eyes, commander," said Nelson Lee. "I should not have thought that even my most intimate friend would recognise me in my present condition."

The commander smiled.

"Sailors have to be keen-eyed," he said. "But what on earth have you been doing to get yourself into this disreputable plight? You look as though you had been working in a coal mine for the past few days."

"I feel like it," said Nelson Lee. "As a matter of fact, I have been mining, though not for coal. I was kidnapped yesterday morning—"

"Kidnapped in Gibraltar!" exclaimed the commander, amazed.

"Kidnapped in Gibraltar," repeated the detective. "Kidnapped and imprisoned in an underground vault, from which I have only just succeeded in burrowing my way to the open air again. Do you happen to know Professor Mark Rymer?"

"I know him by name, of course, but I haven't the pleasure of his acquaintance. But why do you ask? Surely you cannot mean to insinuate that Professor Rymer was in any way responsible for your being kidnapped?"

"It was he who arranged the whole business."

"For what purpose?"

"To keep me in Gibraltar until he had time to secure the Silver Dwarf."

"The Silver Dwarf? What on earth is that?"

Nelson Lee explained all about the stolen statuette and all that it meant, both to the missing heir and Mark Rymer. He explained the position in which he found himself and how important it was for him to get to Tangier at the earliest possible moment.

"Well," said the commander, "I can help you. Come with me to the Governor. You can't travel on to Tangier without a wash and clean clothes—and a shave. And I dare say the Governor could arrange for a plane to take you across the Straits."

There was a certain amount of delay over this, however, because the governor was engaged on important business. But when Nelson Lee had been granted an audience and had explained everything the governor was only too pleased to help.

It was not long before Nelson Lee was once again his normal spick-and-span self, and, having obtained some money, was now seated in an aeroplane, flying over the Straits towards the African coast.

But the governor did even more than that. He sent the police to the house in Engineer Lane, only to find it untenanted. The culprits had flown, fearing such a visit.



Having knocked out his gaoler, Nelson Lee spun round—to find a ferocious dog leaping towards him with bared fangs!

BY four o'clock Nelson Lee was in Tangier, and the aeroplane had returned to Gibraltar.

Benzaquen's shop was half-way down a narrow lane, leading off the main street. Just as the detective turned into this lane an elderly Jew, mounted on a sturdy-looking pony and leading a heavily-laden mule, came to a halt outside the shop and sprang to the ground. No sooner had he done so than a second Jew, much younger

than the first, rushed out of the shop and embraced the elder with affectionate effusiveness. The old man then disappeared into the shop, whilst the young one set to work to unload the mule.

"Father and son, I should guess," hazarded Nelson Lee.

He was right. The elder Jew was Isaac Benzaquen, who had just arrived from Kelelin. The younger was his son, the young

man who had interviewed Mark Rymer
in the day.

The detective quickened his pace and fol-
lowed old Benzaquen into the shop.

"Are you Isaac Benzaquen?" he asked in
Arabic.

"I am," said the Jew. "And you?"

"My name is Nelson Lee," said the detec-
tive. "I have called to see you with refer-
ence to a small silver statuette which you
purchased from a peasant at San Roque—"

A startled exclamation just behind him
caused him to wheel round. Benzaquen's son
had entered the shop whilst Lee had been
speaking, and had heard him mention the
silver statuette.

"What is it, my son?" asked Isaac. "Why
agitated?"

The son looked embarrassed. He was
anxious to warn his father to be careful what
he said, but he did not know how to do it
without the detective hearing him.
Suddenly, however, a happy idea occurred to
him. He would speak in Hebrew, which, for
all practical purposes, is an unknown tongue
to the Gentiles.

"Take heed how you answer this man,"
he said, addressing his father in Hebrew. "I
hear there is trouble brewing for you in con-
nection with that statuette. There was
another man here this morning—a strange,
unholy man, with a monstrous nose and ter-
rible eyes. He asked, even as this man has
asked, about the silver statuette."

"Did you give it to him?" asked Nelson
Lee in Hebrew.

The young Jew started and flushed to the
roots of his hair. His happy idea had failed.
It was evident that the detective was as well
acquainted with Hebrew as he was with
Arabic.

"Did you give it to him?" repeated Nelson
Lee, his voice vibrating with suppressed
excitement.

"No-o," faltered the young Jew.

The detective heaved a sigh of relief. He
was in time, after all. Despite his good start,
Mark Rymer had not yet secured the Silver
Dwarf.

"What did you say to the man who called
this morning?" he asked.

The young Jew glanced at his father.

"Answer him, my son," said Benzaquen.
"We have nothing to conceal and nothing to
fear."

"I said to the man that I knew nothing
of the statuette," replied the son. "I told
him my father was away from home, but
would return either to-night or on Monday.
He said he would return again shortly after
sunset."

"Then he may be here at any moment,"
said Nelson Lee briskly. He whipped out
his purse and threw a gold coin into the
young Jew's hand. "Go to the door and
watch for him," he said. "Let me
know the instant he comes in sight."

Again the youth glanced inquiringly at
his father.

"Go, my son!" said Benzaquen. "It is
Nelson Lee who desires it. He is an upright

man, and a man to be feared. It is best we
should obey him."

The son withdrew and took his stand just
outside the door. The detective then turned
to the father, and briefly told him the story
of the Silver Dwarf and the neck-and-neck
race which had taken place between himself
and the professor.

"I have no desire to take any advantage
of you," he said in conclusion. "You will
now understand from what I have told you
that whatever price the professor is prepared
to pay I am prepared to pay a bigger. What
do you say to a thousand pesetas?"

The Jew gave a hopeless shrug.

"Alas and alack! I have already sold it
for a beggarly three hundred," he said
despairingly.

"Sold it?" cried Nelson Lee sharply. "To
whom have you sold it?"

Before the Jew could reply, his son put his
head in at the shop door and announced that
"the other gentleman" was coming down
the lane.

"Tell him when he comes that your father
is engaged," said the detective swiftly.
"Don't tell him that I am here. Just tell
him to take a seat and keep him waiting
until your father and I have finished our
conversation." He turned to Benzaquen
again. "Have you a private room?" he
asked. "A room where we can talk without
being seen or overheard?"

By way of reply the Jew quickly raised a
curtain and ushered him into a low, dark
room at the back of the shop. From there
he led him across an open courtyard, up a
flight of steps, and into a cosily-furnished
sitting-room.

"And now for your story," said Nelson
Lee. "To whom have you sold the Silver
Dwarf?"

"To the Kaid of Kelelin," said Benzaquen.

"The Kaid?" said Nelson Lee. "That's a
sort of sheik or native chief, isn't it?"

"Yes," said the Jew. "Kelelin is a small
village about fifty miles from Tangier, on
the way to Tetuan. It is inhabited by one
of the fiercest tribes in Morocco, and the
Kaid is their chief."

"When did you sell him the Silver
Dwarf?"

"Early this morning. The Kaid had
visited me some weeks before, and told me
he wished to purchase jewellery. I went to
Kelelin with jewellery, and, thinking the
statuette might appeal to him, I took it with
me. He liked it so much that he offered
me three hundred pesetas for it on the spot."

"Then there is only one thing to be done,"
said Nelson Lee. "I must go to Kelelin."

"It will be useless," said the Jew. "The
Kaid is as superstitious as he is obstinate
and ferocious. He has taken it into his head
that the statuette is a charm dating from the
time of the great King Sueiman. More-
over, he has a violent hatred of all foreigners
—especially of the English—and nothing that
you can say will induce him to part with the
Dwarf."

"We will see about that," said the detective grimly.

"Be warned by me; do not go!" urged the Jew earnestly. "It is as much as your life is worth to venture into Kelelin."

The detective shrugged his shoulders.

"I must get the Dwarf, and nothing will stop me!" he said. "I shall most certainly go to Kelelin at the earliest possible opportunity. In the meantime," he pulled out his purse, "here are a thousand pesetas, which I wish you to divide between yourself and your son. In return for this, I want you to promise me that you mention no word of what you have just told me to the man who called this morning, and who is now in your shop. Do not even tell him that I have been here. He believes that I am a prisoner in Gibraltar. I wish him to continue to believe so."

Old Isaac clutched the money and thrust it into his leather wallet.

"Your wishes shall be obeyed, most noble sir," he said. "I swear that both my son and myself will be as silent as the grave. Not a word shall cross our lips."

The detective looked him full in the face. Apparently he was satisfied with his scrutiny, for he smiled and nodded his head.

"It is well," he said in Hebrew. "I trust you. Now show me how I can leave this place without being seen."

The Jew led the way down the steps again and across the courtyard. He pointed to a narrow passage which led to the main street of Tangier.

"Farewell," he said. "May Heaven preserve you from harm!"

"Say rather 'au revoir,'" said Nelson Lee. "I shall hope to see you again when I return from Kelelin—with the Silver Dwarf!"

CHAPTER 7.

The Kaid's Decree!

NEXT day was Sunday. At sunrise a car, fitted with caterpillars to enable it to travel over the desert, passed through the eastern gate of Tangier and sped away at a steady pace across the barren sandy waste that stretched towards Kelelin. Two persons rode in the car. One was Nelson Lee, the other was a trusty native guide, recommended and provided by the British Consul.

A car cannot travel so fast over the desert as on a road, and it was not until noon that they arrived at Kelelin, which was little more than a straggling collection of small thatched huts, grouped in an irregular circle round the house of the Kaid.

The Kaid's house was of stone, and was built in the form of a hollow square, with an open courtyard in the middle. An orange tree stood at each of the four corners of the courtyard, and in the centre was an ornamental fountain, the waters of which fell into a circular basin.

Each of the four walls of this courtyard consisted, in the first place, of a row of Moorish arches, leading into the lower rooms of the house. Above these arches was a kind of gallery, at the back of which was another row of arches, leading into the upper rooms. And above these rooms was the flat roof of the house, part of which was arranged as a garden.

Having brought the car to a standstill and fixed up a temporary camp and shelter from the sun by the side of the vehicle, the detective sent his guide to announce his arrival to the Kaid and to arrange for an interview.

An hour elapsed, then the guide returned, and when he did so his face was grave and troubled.

"It would be better to return to Tangier, excellency," he said. "The Kaid is angered by your request for an interview, and I fear——"

"Never mind what you fear," said the detective impatiently. "Has the Kaid refused to see me?"

"No, excellency," replied the guide. "The Kaid—whom Allah preserve!—has consented to grant you an audience, but——"

"Then lead the way!" commanded Nelson Lee decisively.

The guide obeyed, and a few minutes later the detective stood in the courtyard. The Kaid was seated, Moorish fashion, on a rich Oriental rug. Behind him stood his body-guard—four stalwart Moors, each of whom was armed with a rifle and a sinister-looking knife.

"What is thine errand, dog of a Christian?" demanded the Kaid, when Nelson Lee was ushered into his presence.

"I have come to crave a favour at your hands," said the detective.

"Then thou hast come in vain," retorted the Kaid. "Thou art surely a stranger in this land, or thou wouldst have known that the Kaid of Kelelin is not one that grants favours to the Nazarene."

"It is true that I am a stranger and a Nazarene," said Nelson Lee. "It is also true that I have heard that you do not regard my fellow-countrymen with favour. At the same time, the boon I crave is so small, and the reward I offer is so great, that I am not without hope that my humble request may be granted. Your Excellency bought from Isaac Benzaquen, the Jew, a silver image, fashioned in the form of a dwarf."

"I do not deny it. What of it?"

"Your Excellency bought the image for three hundred pesetas. I have here a thousand pesetas—give me the image and the money is yours. That is all I ask. Did I not speak truly when I said it was a small boon that I craved?"

"Small it may be," said the Kaid, with an insolent laugh. "Nevertheless, it is greater than I am minded to grant."

"Your Excellency will not sell the image?"

"Not for a hundred thousand pesetas!"

"Will your Excellency permit me to examine it for a moment or two? It is not

the image itself that I desire to possess, but that which is contained therein."

"Thou speakest in parables," said the Kaid. "How can that which is composed of solid metal—"

"But the image is not solid," said the detective. "It is hollow, and within it there are certain writings which I desire to peruse."

The Kaid's eyes sparkled, and he turned to his bodyguard.

"Did I not tell ye that it was a charm?" he cried. "Ye hear what the Nazarene saith? There are writings within the image! Doubtless they are the secret writings of the great King Suleiman!"

The detective smiled faintly.

"Your Excellency is mistaken," he said. "The writings within the image are merely the official record of a marriage which took place in England twenty-five years ago. If your Excellency will only permit me to examine the image—"

"Never!" exclaimed the Kaid. "Never again shall the eyes or the hands of an accursed Nazarene pollute the sacred image."

The detective shrugged his shoulders.

"Am I to understand, then," he said, "that you will neither sell me the image nor allow me to examine it?"

"Neither the one nor the other!" agreed the Kaid emphatically.

"Very good," said the detective. "Hassan"—he called to his guide—"we will depart!"

His coolness, together with something in the tones of his voice, made the Kaid uneasy.

"Stay!" he ordered, as the detective turned to go. "Whither goest thou?"

"To the Sultan," said the detective curtly.

The words had hardly crossed his lips ere he would have given all he possessed to recall them. Their effect on the truculent Kaid was as that of a red rag to a bull. He leaped to his feet, his face ablaze with fury.

"A threat! By the Beard of the Prophet, a threat!" he cried. "The Kaid of Kelelin is threatened in his own house, and by an accursed Nazarene!"

He signed to his four retainers, and immediately they sprang to Nelson Lee's side and seized him by the arms.

Then the Kaid whipped out a revolver and levelled it at the detective's head.

"For once thou hast spoken truly," he said. "Thou shalt indeed go to the Sultan, whom Allah preserve! Thou wilt not be the first dead man he hath received as a present from his loyal subjects in the village of Kelelin!"

NOT a vestige of fear displayed itself on the detective's calm, unruffled face. He knew that his life was hanging by the slenderest thread, yet never for an instant did his presence of mind desert him.

"You are going to shoot me?" he asked, in the most matter-of-fact tones.

"Again thou hast spoken truly," replied the Kaid. "It is thy wish, thou sayest, to go to the Sultan. Bismillah! Thy wish shall be granted. Thou shalt go to the Sultan—whom Allah preserve!—and thou shalt take with thee a bullet in thine head, as a present for his Majesty, from Abtsalem el Bakaly, the Kaid of Kelelin! Hast thou anything else to say?"

"Yes, I have one thing else to say," replied the detective. "Since threats and warnings alike have proved useless to turn you from your purpose, I will make your Excellency an offer. In return for my freedom I will present your Excellency with a wondrous charm of magic power—a charm no bigger than a pigeon's egg, yet so mighty that solid rocks will crumble into powder at its touch!"

The Kaid was superstitious to the last degree. The detective's words produced a visible impression on him. His eyes glistened with mingled avarice and expectation.

"Hast thou the charm with thee?" he asked craftily.

"I have," said Nelson Lee.

The Kaid burst into a loud guffaw.

"Fool—fool!" he cried, snapping his fingers in the detective's face. "If thou hast the charm, why should I spare thy life to gain possession of it? Can I not take it from thee after thou art dead?"

"True," said the detective calmly. "But the charm is of no value—it is even dangerous—to those who know not how to use it aright."

"Then thou shalt show me how to use it before I order thee to be shot!" retorted the Kaid.

"And if I refuse?" asked Nelson Lee.

"You will not refuse!" retorted the Kaid, in a menacing voice. "If thou refuse to show me the charm of thine own free will, I will have thee tortured! Where is the thing?"

The detective—who had no intention of refusing, for he had already formed a little scheme in his mind—thrust his hand into his pocket and drew out a cardbox box.

Thrusting the revolver into his belt, the Kaid snatched the box from Lee's hand and opened it. Inside it was a mass of fluffy cotton wool, in the centre of which was a small bomb.

During his brief talk with the Consul in Tangier, the detective had seen this bomb, and on making inquiries learned that it was filled with a kind of nitro-glycerine, and had been found in the possession of a certain notorious revolutionary, who had been arrested when trying to force his way into the Legation buildings.

The detective, knowing that he was about to set out on a dangerous mission, had laughingly suggested that this little bomb would form a very useful addition to his means of defence, and the minister had allowed him to take it.

And this was the "charm" which the

Kaid of Kelolin was now fondling with such affectionate interest!

"Don't drop it!" warned Nelson Lee as the Kaid removed the bomb from the cardboard box and eagerly examined it. "If the charm should fall to the ground the evil spirits that are imprisoned therein would burst their bonds and overwhelm us with destruction. Your Excellency should not have taken the charm from the box until I had first said the mystic words that put the spirits to sleep."

"Teach me the words and I will put the spirits to sleep myself," said the Kaid.

The detective glanced around before he replied. He was standing in an open courtyard, the walls of which were composed of a double tier of Moorish arches. In front of him, in the centre of the courtyard, was the ornamental fountain, with its shallow, circular basin and its swiftly-moving goldfish. Close behind him was the passage which led from the courtyard into the street.

On his right hand were two of the Moors who formed the Kaid's bodyguard, on his left were the other two. He held out his hand to the Kaid.

"Give me the charm," he said. "I will show your Excellency how to hold it whilst the mystic words are being said."

Suspecting nothing, the Kaid placed the little glass ball in Nelson Lee's hand.

The four retainers lowered their rifles and whispered to each other that they were going to see something wonderful. They were right!

"First of all," said Nelson Lee, "you raise the charm in the air—thus!" He raised his hand above his head. "Then you wave it to and fro."

Suiting the action to the word, he waved his hand backwards and forwards twice, then suddenly, before they could grasp his intention, he tossed the bomb towards the middle of the courtyard and flung himself flat on his face.

"By the beard of——" the Kaid began.

But ere he could complete his sentence the bomb alighted on the marble edge of the basin at the foot of the fountain.

The moment the bomb struck the fountain it exploded with a roar that shook the house to its foundations. The fountain toppled over like a house of cards before a puff of wind. One of the orange-trees was entirely uprooted, whilst the others were stripped as bare as telegraph poles. Fragments of marble and multi-coloured tiles were scattered in all directions.

So violent was the concussion of the air that the Kaid and his four retainers were swept off their feet and hurled against the nearest wall with so much force that for several minutes they were too stunned to comprehend what had happened.

And by the time their scattered wits had returned, by the time they scrambled to

their feet, the detective had vanished and was nowhere to be seen!

CHAPTER 8.

The Basha of Tetuan!

OWING to the fact that he had flung himself flat on his face before he had thrown the bomb, Nelson Lee escaped the fate which overtook the Kaid and his four retainers. Almost before the echoes of the explosion had died away, the detective leaned to his feet again and darted through the passage which led from the courtyard to the street.

The village of Kelelin consisted of a scattered collection of thatched huts, which were grouped in an irregular circle round the palace of the Kaid.

Alarmed by the roar of the explosion, men and women swarmed out of these huts like bees out of a hive. Some of them, catching sight of Nelson Lee, attempted to bar his progress. One plucked an old-fashioned pistol from his belt and fired at the detective as he ran. Luckily for Nelson Lee, the bullet merely grazed his cheek, and before the Moor could fire again the detective felled him to the ground with a blow between the eyes.

Eventually, after several narrow escapes of being captured, the detective reached the spot where he and Hassan, the guide, had left the car. They did not trouble about the tent they had rigged, but leaped into the vehicle.

Fortunately the electric starter functioned at the first time of asking, and the engine roared into life. The guide took the wheel and drove across the sandy wastes away from Kelelin.

"How far are we from Tetuan?" asked Nelson Lee.

"About six miles," replied the guide.

"There is a British consul there?"

"Yes, Excellency. But why do you ask? Are we not going back to Tangier?"

"Not at present," said Nelson Lee. "The Kaid and his followers will be after us as soon as they have recovered from their panic, and if we were to attempt to reach Tangier they would have plenty of time to overtake us before we could arrive there. We must make for Tetuan in the first place. Do you know the road?"

"Oh, yes!" said Hassan.

The guide coaxed the old car to produce a speed of about twenty miles per hour, its caterpillars flinging up the dry sand in clouds. Before they had covered a quarter of a mile a score of armed and mounted Moors, with the Kaid at their head, streamed out of the palace in hot pursuit. Nelson Lee pulled out his revolver and emptied it among the horsemen, but, undaunted, they continued to charge onwards.

At first they gained on the car, but by dint of manipulating the controls, the guide managed to increase the speed of the car to thirty miles per hour. Maybe a horse can gallop at that speed, but it cannot maintain the pace. When at last the white walls of the little seaport town of Tetuan came in sight, the Moors were still five hundred yards or more in the rear.

"They'll never catch us now," commenced Nelson Lee, with satisfaction.

"They will never try, Excellency," said Hassan. "The Kaid is a bold man, but he will not dare to venture into Tetuan. See! Already they are slackening speed!"

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

A QUARTER of an hour later, or a few minutes after five o'clock, the detective and his guide drove through the quaint arched gateway of the little town and brought the car to a standstill at the door of the British vice-consulate.

"How do you do?" said the consul when Nelson Lee had introduced himself. "What can I do for you?"

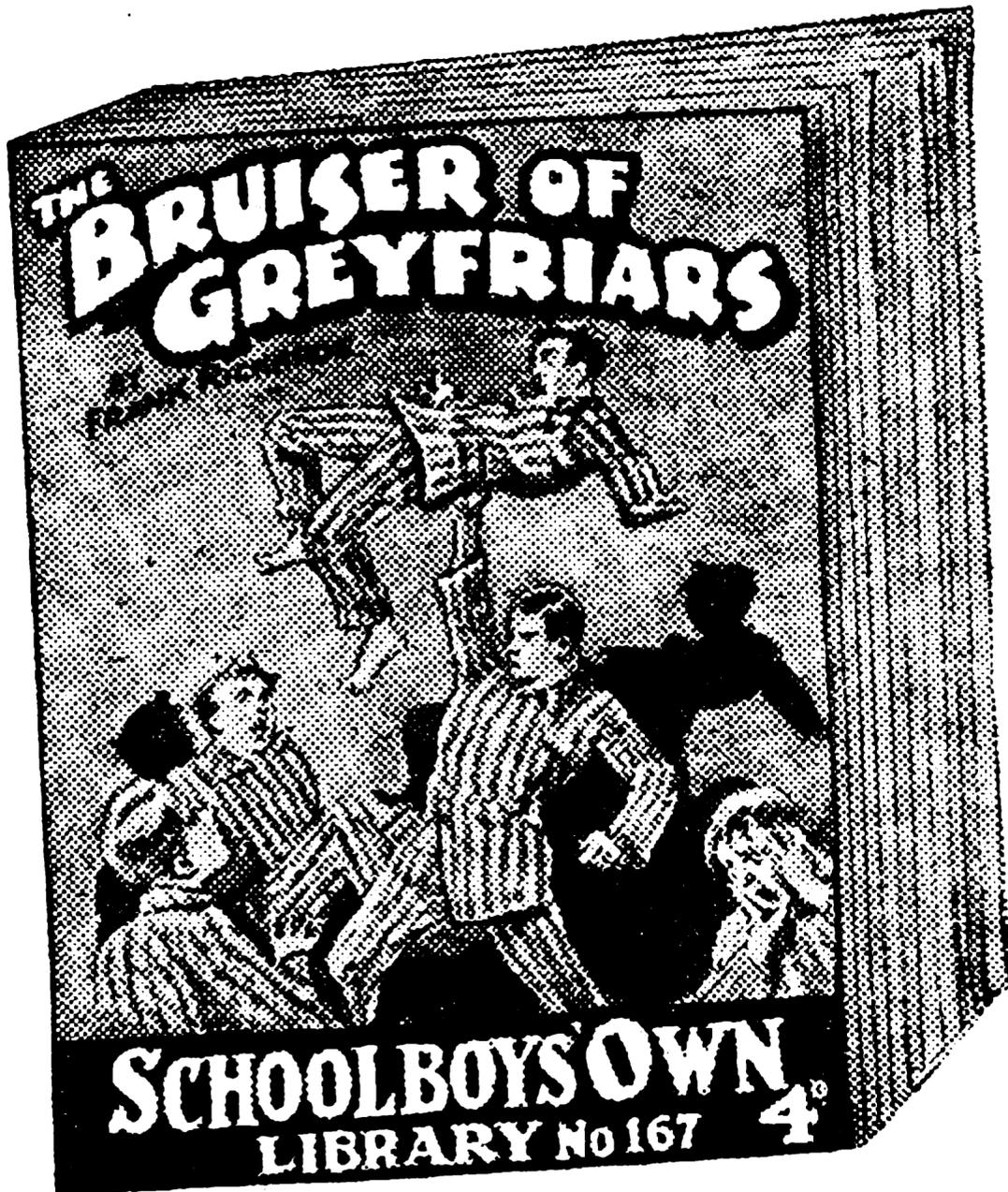
In a few well-chosen sentences the detective rapidly narrated his strange and perilous adventures.

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

"Legal right!" said the consul, with a

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

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

"True!" said the consul. "But I do not think you need have any scruples about applying it to the Kaid of Kelelin. Of course, if you wish, I will make a formal complaint to the Basha about the way the Kaid attempted or threatened to murder you. But you can take my word for it that nothing will come of the complaint. The Kaid may receive a mild reprimand, but you won't get any compensation, and you certainly won't get your so-called Silver Dwarf. When one is in Rome, it is best to do as the Romans do. If you will be guided by me, you will make no formal complaint, but will simply treat the Kaid in the same way that he would treat one of his fellow-countrymen, or as one of his fellow-countrymen would treat him in similar circumstances."

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

The consul answered his question with another.

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

"It is worth considerably more than that," replied the detective dryly.

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

"I would give five hundred."

"Have you fifty pounds with you?"

"Yes."

The consul consulted his watch.

"It is too late to see the Basha to-day. Time matters nothing to these Moors," he said. "Come to my office at ten to-morrow morning. Bring the fifty pounds with you, and leave the rest to me."

SOMEWHAT mystified by the consul's words, the detective took his departure and dismissed his guide, making arrangements for the man to return to Tangier. The detective engaged a room at one of the local hotels, and had the car garaged in a shed in the yard.

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

Seated in the principal gateway, surrounded by a bodyguard of Moorish troops,

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

Upon catching sight of the British consul he waved the various suitors aside and beckoned to the consul to approach.

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

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

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

Another ten pounds changed hands.

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

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

More money passed into the Basha's hand.

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

Again there was the passing of money. The Basha gravely stroked his long white beard.

"It shall be even as you say," he said. "I will send a hundred soldiers to Kelelin in an hour's time. They shall surround the house of the Kaid and take away the accursed image. They shall bring it with them to Tetuan and deliver it to your friend. Bismillah! I have said what I have said!"

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

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

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

have named, and I will see to it that a horse is there for him."

The consul thanked the Basha and the two men withdrew.

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

CHAPTER 9.

The Magician of Morocco!

ISAAC BENAQUEN, the Jew, was a honest man, and having taken money from Nelson Lee for a certain purpose, stuck to his bargain. Consequently, although Mark Rymer tried all his tricks upon him, he failed to get any information concerning the Silver Dwarf, neither could he be sure whether Nelson Lee had been there or not.

Finally, the professor left the Jew's shop in a furious temper and sent a cable—the wire having been repaired—to Barnascone, the Jew at Gibraltar, requesting information. But he had to wait until the following morning for his answer, and when it came he understood in a flash that he had been outwitted.

"The bird has flown," said the cable. Obviously Barnascone could not put it any plainer than that for fear of incriminating himself.

After that Mark Rymer roamed round Tangier seeking information mainly in the markets and bazaars, but so well had Nelson Lee covered his tracks that nothing could be learned of his movements.

Not until late that day did Mark Rymer think what best to do, and then he went into the sok, or market place, which is situated just outside the walls of the town at the foot of the hill which leads up to the British Legation.

Mark Rymer made his way to a small, low tent made of striped canvas. It was all in darkness and was apparently deserted; but the moment he raised the doorflap the shuffling of slippers was heard, followed by the short, sharp query:

"Who comes?"

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

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

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

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

The old man inclined his head.

"And thou?" he asked.

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

He slipped some money into the magician's hand.

"I have come from England in search of a silver image, fashioned in the form of a dwarf," said Rymer. "It was brought to Tangier by Isaac Benzaquen. I followed him hither yesterday, but learned that he was away from home. He returned last night, and I went to see him, but he would not give me any information. It may be that the silver image is in his possession, or it may be that he has sold it. He will not speak; he will tell me nothing. So I have come to thee. They say in the city that naught is hidden from thy magic. Canst thou tell me what has become of the image whereof I have spoken?"

The old man thrust the money into his leather wallet and hobbled across the tent. He opened an ivory box and drew out a crystal phial, which was three parts filled with perfumed ink. Then he seated himself again, with the professor sitting opposite him.

"Give me thine hand," he said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Dost thou know the Kaid?" continued the professor. "Will he sell me the silver image if I go to him and offer him much money?"

The old man shook his head.

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

"Why not?"

"Because thou art a Nazarene. The Kaid of Kelelin is the sworn foe of the Nazarenes, and would deem it a pollution to accept thy money. There is but one man of all the Nazarenes with whom he is friendly."

"And who is that?" asked the professor cagerly.

"A fair-haired man from Sweden," replied the magician. "His name is Dr. Olsen. He is a mighty traveller, and a wondrous medicine-man. He cured the wife of the Kaid when the woman was sick unto death, and in return for this the Kaid hath allowed him to pitch his tents in the garden of his house. With him alone, of all the Nazarene race, hath the Kaid of Kelelin had friendly dealings."

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

Again the old man shook his head.

"I can show thee a better way," he said. He held out his hand. The professor took the hint and pressed more money into his greasy palm. "The Kaid of Kelelin hath a brother named Achmed," went on the magician. "Achmed is a servant at the French Legation in this city. He hath great influence with the Kaid, who hath never denied him aught that he hath asked of him. If thou were to go to Achmed to-night, and were to pay him well, I doubt not that he would go with thee to Kelelin to-morrow, and would coax the Kaid into selling thee the image whereof thou hast spoken."

"Excellent!" said the professor. "Thou art as wise in the ways of the world as thou art learned in the mysteries of magic. I will see this Achmed to-night, and, if my plan succeeds, I will see thee again on my return from Kelelin, and will further reward thee for thy help."

PROFESSOR RYMER left the magician's tent and made his way to the French Legation, where he first sought an interview with the minister, and afterwards with Achmed. The latter proved only too willing to fall in with the professor's plans, and just before sunrise next morning the two set out for Kelelin.

The professor would have liked a car as Nelson Lee had done, but he was not over flush with money, and had to guard his resources. Besides, there were not many cars in Tangiers to be hired, and it was quicker to hire horses and leave the city before daylight.

The professor was in a hurry, and did not spare his horses. Travelling without rest, they sighted Kelelin shortly before noon.

They halted for a while at a lonely-looking sainthouse—one of those small, square buildings with a domed roof which the Moors erect over the supposed burying-places of departed saints.

"We are now about four miles from Kelelin," said Achmed. "In another three-quarters of an hour—"

Suddenly he paused, for at that moment his eyes fell on the scared face of a Moor, who was peering through the doorway of the sainthouse.

"My brother—the Kaid!" he gasped. He sprang from his horse and ran towards the sainthouse. "Greetings, my brother!" he said, taking the Kaid's head between his hands and kissing him on the forehead. "What art thou doing here?"

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

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

"Curse the silver image!" cried the Kaid, interrupting him. "It is that which has driven me into hiding. A Nazarene came to my house yesterday and demanded that I should sell him the accursed thing. I refused, and would have killed him, but he escaped and fled to Tetuan. He hath given money to the Basha, and the Basha hath sent out the soldiers against me. Allah be praised, I have a friend in Tetuan who warned me of the Nazarene's plans, and I fled ere the soldiers arrived."

"And what hast thou done with the silver image?" asked Achmed.

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

"To whom hast thou given it?"

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

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

The Kaid shook his head.

"It is one thing to hide—it is another to flee!" he said with some amount of dignity. "It is not meet, my brother, that the Kaid of Kelelin should shame himself by running away."

CHAPTER 10.

The Flight That Failed!

BY that time the soldiers had seen them, and were thundering down the road at whirlwind speed. Mark Rymer ground his teeth in impotent rage and laid his hand on Achmed's arm.

"Ask thy brother to whom he hath given the silver image," he said. "Maybe I may secure it even now."

"To whom didst thou give the silver image?" said Achmed, turning to his brother.

"To Doctor Olsen," said the Kaid sullenly.

"Doctor Olsen!" exclaimed the professor. "The Swedish explorer who has pitched his camp in your Excellency's garden?"

"The same," replied the Kaid.

Without another word the professor leaped on to his horse and galloped off in the direction of Kelelin. Nelson Lee, who was then within twenty yards, saw the action, and

instantly guessing its meaning, broke away from the soldiers and charged in pursuit.

Desperately Rymer urged on his horse, but Nelson Lee, mounted on a faster animal, rapidly decreased the distance between them. Soon he was galloping alongside his enemy. The professor dragged a revolver from his pocket, and pointed it at the detective. Before he could pull the trigger, Nelson Lee had launched himself from his horse, landing on Rymer's back and pulling him from his horse. Together they landed on the ground, rolling for a distance clutched in each other's arms.

A short struggle ensued, and then the detective succeeded in springing to his feet. By that time some of the soldiers had galloped up, and, dismounting, they flung themselves upon the professor and held him helpless. Rymer, his face livid with rage, glared at the detective in baffled fury.

"Don't harm him," said Nelson Lee to the soldiers. "Search him for any weapons and take them away. Now, Rymer, have you found the Silver Dwarf?"

Sullenly the professor allowed himself to be searched. He did not answer the detective's question; but there was no need. The rest of the soldiers had surrounded the saut-house, and had plied the Kaid with eager questions. Now one of them came running up to Nelson Lee.

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

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

"His name is Doctor Olsen," said the soldier. "He came to Kelelin many moons ago, and he cured the Kaid's wife when the magicians said she must die. In gratitude for this the Kaid permitted him to pitch his tents in the garden of his house. If your Excellency will mount and ride back with me, I will take you to the camp forthwith."

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

"Let him go," he said. "We will now return to Kelelin, to the camp of the Swedish medicine man."

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

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

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

It was half-past one when they reached the explorer's tents, situated on the shady side of a picturesque Moorish garden.

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

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

The detective frowned his annoyance.

"When do you expect him back?" he asked.

"Maybe in a week, maybe in two weeks. I do not know," said the Moor.

The detective uttered an exclamation of dismay.

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

"I cannot say," replied the Moor. "I have told you all I know. My master left for Tetuan two hours ago, and he said to us that he was not sure when he would return."

"Did he take any baggage with him?"

"Nothing save a knapsack."

"But the Kaid gave him a silver image this morning."

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

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

"He has taken it with him. I saw him place it in the knapsack."

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

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

They mounted and rode to Tetuan, where the detective paid the soldiers handsomely for their services. Then he set to work to hunt for Dr. Olsen.

THE detective wasted much time inquiring at the various hotels, but failed to find a trace of the Swedish explorer.

Then he met the British consul, to whom he put his question.

"Have you seen Olsen, the Swedish explorer? He left Kelelin this morning for Tetuan—"

"Then he is going somewhere beyond Tetuan," interrupted the Consul. "I know Olsen. He hates towns and prefers desert life to all other forms of existence. He keeps a light aeroplane at the aerodrome, and when—"

"An aeroplane! Then that explains his disappearance," cried Nelson Lee. "Which is the quickest way to the aerodrome?"

"It's just outside the east gate," said the Consul.

The detective thanked him hastily and rushed off to the aerodrome. As was to be expected, the aerodrome was a haphazard affair—just a level stretch of ground for landing and taking off, with a couple of hangars.

A French mechanic was in attendance, and Nelson Lee promptly questioned him closely.

"Yes, m'sieur," he said. "Dr. Olsen left here about noon in his private plane. He told me he was going to Marseilles in order to see a relative who was boarding the Indian mail boat there."

"Can I hire a plane?" asked Nelson Lee.

"There is only one 'plane here," said the mechanic. "And that is by no means an up-to-date machine."

"It will have to do," said the detective. "I have a pilot's certificate. I will leave a banker's draft as security."

The details were soon arranged and within half an hour Nelson Lee was piloting the ancient machine over the blue waters of the Mediterranean.

He got what speed was possible out of the ancient 'plane, and the groaning, complaining engines gave of their best, but it was growing dusk when he sighted the French coast, and the P. & O. boat was just steaming out of the harbour past Monte Cristo's island.

From Tetuan to Marseilles, in a straight line, is a distance of, roughly, six hundred miles, and Nelson Lee's old 'plane had performed wonders in covering the distance, with a following wind, in seven hours and a half.

But the mail boat had left. Still, there was just the chance that Dr. Olsen had not yet returned to Tetuan. Nelson Lee came down on the aerodrome just outside the town and glanced about him, hoping to see a light aeroplane that might answer the description of Olsen's machine. But he was disappointed.

He questioned a mechanic, who shrugged his shoulders expressively.

"M'sieu is unfortunate. Dr. Olsen left half an hour ago for Tetuan. Look!"

Nelson Lee gazed in the direction indicated by the mechanic's pointing finger, and out of a bank of clouds, to the south-west, he saw a tiny speck emerge and speed on its way until it was lost to sight in the haze.

The detective had been so intent on the controls of his own 'plane, and the sight of the departing mail boat, that he had failed either to hear or see that other tiny 'plane leaving Marseilles. There was nothing else for it but to return to Tetuan.

But first he scribbled a message, and, paying the mechanic well for his services, he sent a cable to the British Consul at Tetuan, asking him to meet Dr. Olsen at the aerodrome and request the Swede to wait in Tetuan until Nelson Lee could arrive.

That done, the detective replenished his petrol tanks and set off in the gathering shades of night, flying as fast as his machine would take him, in the teeth of the blustering wind, back towards Tetuan.

CHAPTER 11.

A Race Against Time!

MONEY, to some men, is an evil, and Nelson Lee's payments to the French mechanic proved his undoing, for the man promptly went to a café and spent it before he troubled to send the cable, with the result that he delayed it by at least two hours.

Nelson Lee could not return to Tetuan as fast as he had flown to Marseilles, on account of the head wind. He had gone to Marseilles in seven hours and half, but the return journey took him nearly nine hours.

But Dr. Olsen's light 'plane was remarkably speedy and efficient, and he covered the distance in seven hours, even against the wind.

By that time Mark Rymer had been able to make inquiries, even if he did not find out quite as much as Nelson Lee had done, he certainly learnt that Dr. Olsen had flown to Marseilles and had taken the Silver Dwarf with him.

The professor soon found out that there was no other aeroplane to be procured in Tetuan, Nelson Lee having taken the only one available, nor was there a boat leaving for Marseilles that night.

Mark Rymer waited until the following morning, and then, just after dawn, he set out to find some way of getting to Marseilles as quickly as possible. He was on his way to the waterfront when he heard the roar of an aeroplane, and, glancing up, saw Dr. Olsen's light 'plane circling over the aerodrome.

The professor immediately hastened to the spot and confronted the Swedish explorer as he landed. They talked together for some time, and then, the professor having arranged matters, Dr. Olsen calmly walked into the town to take breakfast at the best hotel in the place.

As a matter of fact, Mark Rymer had actually bought the light aeroplane from Dr. Olsen, and flew off in it after an hour's preparation, heading eastward.

When the Consul did receive Nelson Lee's cable, he hastened out to go to the aerodrome, but came face to face with the explorer in the street. After brief explanations, Olsen agreed to postpone his departure for Kelelin.

It was nearly eight o'clock that morning before Nelson Lee arrived, weary and hungry, but the sight of Dr. Olsen awaiting him cheered him, although a second later Olsen's words plunged him once more into the depths of despair.

"I have bad news for you, Mr. Lee, I am afraid," he said, as Nelson Lee attacked his much-needed breakfast. "The Consul here has told me about your chase after the Silver Dwarf. It seems I have been interviewed this morning by the very man you did not wish me to meet."

"You have seen Professor Rymer?"

"Yes. He was at the aerodrome when I landed."

"And you have given him the Silver Dwarf?"

"No. I didn't have it to give to anyone. But I told him where it was."

"Where is it?"

"Well, on its way to Colombo. But I had better start at the beginning. In the first place, my only sister is married to an Englishman, named Harvey Howard, who is

the manager of an extensive tea-plantation at Napane, Ceylon. For some time she has been living in England, but on the eleventh of last month she left London to join her husband in Ceylon. She travelled across France and was due to join the P. & O. liner, Bengali, at Marseilles, yesterday.

"As I had not seen my sister for some time I thought this was too good a chance to miss, and arranged to fly across to Marseilles and see her on the boat—which, as you know, I did. But before I left Kelelin, the Kaid came running into my tent and thrust a silver statuette into my hand. He told me he had purchased it from Benzaquen, the Tangier Jew, but had afterwards repented, because it is not lawful for a true believer to possess an image of any kind whatsoever. He begged me, therefore, to accept it as a present, and I made up my mind on the spot that I would take it with me to Marseilles and give it to my sister as a little souvenir of Morocco.

"You can guess the rest of my story. I saw my sister. I must have left the aeroplane at Marseilles half an hour before you arrived. Here, at Tetuan, Mark Rymer talked with me, and made out that he was anxious to secure certain documents in the Silver Dwarf. He had two courses open to him. One was to fly eastwards to Port Said and catch the Bengali there; but in my light aeroplane such a flight by an amateur inexperienced in aviation would be dangerous. But an Italian boat leaves Brindisi for the Far East, calling at Colombo a day or two after the Bengali.

"This liner leaves Brindisi to-morrow morning, and by landing for petrol at Tunis the professor has a sporting chance of catching her, but as he could not guarantee to return my 'plane, he actually purchased her from me."

"I must fly to Brindisi, then," declared Nelson Lee.

"That old 'plane would never get there," said the Consul.

"I shall have to chance that. I cannot remain here while the professor secures the Silver Dwarf. I must—wait a minute! Is there a shipping guide in this place?"

"At my office," said the Consul.

They rushed round there and soon discovered that a fast mail boat was due to leave Marseilles the following morning. It was due to go straight to Bombay, and being a new liner would take very little time on the journey.

From Bombay Nelson Lee could make his way to Ceylon, either by a fast car or aeroplane, as circumstances permitted. It was agreed that, at that time of the year, anyone inexperienced in aviation would be running unnecessary risks in attempting a flight to southern India. In any case, with anything like luck, the detective ought to arrive at Colombo close on the heels of Mark Rymer.

Accordingly, accompanied by Dr. Olsen, who undertook to fly the machine back to Tetuan, the detective flew once more to



Locked in each other's arms, Nelson Lee and Professor Rymer struggled desperately as their horses galloped alongside each other at full speed.

Marseilles, where he had ample time to cable to Ceylon before joining the fast mail boat that lay in the harbour.

CHAPTER 12.

The Professor Draws a Blank!

EARLY on the morning of February twenty-fifth, the Italian boat arrived at Colombo, the principal seaport of Ceylon. The liner dropped her anchor in the bay, some distance from the pier, and the services of a small tender were requisitioned for the purpose of conveying the passengers and their baggage ashore.

In accordance with the plans he had previously formed, the professor made his way, as soon as his luggage had been passed by the Customs, to the Grand Oriental Hotel, familiarly known as the G. O. H., which is just opposite the landing-stage.

"I want to leave my baggage here whilst I make a short trip up-country," he said



to the proprietor. "I shall stay here when I return. Do you happen to know a tea-planter by the name of Harvey Howard?"

"I'm afraid I don't."

"He is the manager of the Kanapedi-wattee Tea Estate," continued the professor. "He lives, I believe, at Ulapane. Is that far from here?"

All these details were contained in the brief letter of introduction given to him by Dr. Olsen, before the Swedish explorer had discovered the truth of the professor's motives.

"Ulapane is about sixty-five to seventy miles from here," said the proprietor. "There are two trains a day to Ulapane, but I am afraid you have missed one, and the next does not leave for another six hours."

"Is it possible to motor there?"

"Certainly, provided you don't mind a few bumps and jolts. Our main roads are good, but Ulapane is an out-of-the-way place, and

you will have some wild country to cross, where the roads are indifferent."

"My business is urgent. If you can hire me a car I will set out immediately."

It was a ramshackle car that the professor procured, but the engine was in splendid condition and that was the main thing. He drove it himself, having first studied his route on the map. He had no desire to be encumbered with a guide.

FOR the first two or three miles after leaving Colombo the professor's route lay through level and comparatively uninteresting country, but then began to ascend and to wind its way in and out amongst lofty hills and mountains.

With every succeeding mile the scenery became more gorgeous and more varied. Forests of cocoa palms alternated with vast plantations of cinnamon and cinchona.

At one time as far as the eye could reach there would be nothing to be seen but an endless succession of tea and coffee estates, with here and there a solitary bungalow or a line of tea-pickers' huts. Then a sudden bend of the road would change all this, as if at the touch of a wizard's hand, and would reveal to the astonished traveller a rolling panorama of rugged mountain peaks, interspersed with swiftly-rushing rivers and foaming cascades.

Having left the main road and ventured on an indifferent road which led towards Ulapane the professor was forced to drive slowly to escape disaster in the numerous pot-holes. In places mountain streams flowed across the road, so that his progress was necessarily slow.

It was half-past six and growing dusk when he came to the Ulapane railway-station and stopped to inquire his way.

"Do you know where Mr. Harvey Howard lives?" he asked of one of the officials.

"Yes, sir. It's about five miles from here and not very easy to get at. You'll want a guide."

At that moment a tall and well-proportioned native strolled into the station. Like most of his fellow countrymen he was bare-footed and bare-headed, but in addition to the cloth which was wound round his loins he also wore a short white linen jacket, which, as the professor afterwards learned, was the distinctive garb of the foreman of a tea-plantation.

"The very man!" exclaimed the railway official, on catching sight of the Cingalese. "Here is Rawana. He is one of the foremen on Mr. Howard's estate. Give him half a rupee and he will ride with you and guide you to the house."

The professor thanked him and hurried down the platform to where Rawana was standing.

"You are one of Mr. Howard's foremen, I believe," he said.

"No, sar," he said. "You make one big mistake. Me hab no truck wid Massa Howard now. Me serve him well for two, tree year and how he reward me? He call me one tief, before de pickers, too, and say to me dat if he find me any more on de estate he beat me wid his whip. I make him smart for dat one time. You tell him so from me!"

The professor grasped the situation at once. Rawana had evidently been discharged for theft and was thirsting for revenge. Such a man might prove very useful to Mark Rymer.

The professor knew that Nelson Lee would stick to the trail and might not be so very far behind. He might even have cabled to the Howards at Ulapane, so that there might be trouble coming. It was as well to be prepared for the worst, and such an ally as Rawana might mean success. Rawana would not stick at trifles.

Rymer thrust a couple of rupees into Rawana's hand.

"I want to go to Mr. Howard's house," he said. "He is no friend of mine. Possibly he is my enemy. His wife has a silver image which I wish to possess. I am going to ask her to give it up to me. If she refuses I shall have need of help to take the thing by force. I have much money, and those who help me will be well rewarded. You understand?"

Rawana nodded his black head and bared his gleaming teeth in an evil smile.

"Then show me the way," said the professor. "We will motor there at once!"

THEY left the station and drove up the steep and rugged road which led to the village, a straggling collection of whitewashed huts, thatched with straw. After passing through the village they emerged into more or less open country, a broad and rapid river being on their left and interminable line of tea-plantations on their right.

Two miles from the station they crossed the river by a ramshackle swing bridge, and then the road became little better than a cart track, pitted as it was by the wheels of carts. A quarter of a mile farther on Rawana called a halt.

"Me go no farder now," he said. "Me stay here wid car. Massa Howard find me here and he will beat me wid his whip. You go by de picker's huts dere and you see one little hill, and on de top of de hill you see de bungalow."

"Right," said the professor. "I don't expect I shall keep you waiting long."

It was easy enough to find the bungalow since all roads, paths and trails led that way. Once clear of the huts the professor saw before him a steepish hill, on the summit of which, surrounded by an extensive garden, was a long, low, whitewashed bungalow with a wooden veranda in front.

It was eight o'clock when Mark Rymer

arrived at the foot of the veranda steps. At the top of the steps was an open door leading into a spacious entrance-hall, which was furnished as a sitting-room and lighted by a couple of paraffin lamps. Both Mr. Howard and his wife were sitting in this hall, the latter engaged in sewing, the former reading a newspaper. Upon hearing footsteps on the veranda Mr. Howard laid down his paper and advanced to the door.

"Good-evening," said the professor, raising his hat. "Mr. Harvey Howard, I presume."

"That is my name," said the young planter, regarding him with a keen and penetrating stare. "Am I right in supposing that you are Professor Mark Rymer?"

The professor started but recovered his composure in an instant.

"How did you recognise me?" he asked.

"I didn't recognise you," said Mr. Howard bluntly. "But we had been warned that you would probably pay us a visit, and consequently as I am not expecting anyone else I guessed that you must be the person we had been warned against."

A venomous look crept over the professor's face and his eyes contracted to the merest slits.

"Your warning, as you call it, came from Nelson Lee, I presume?" he asked.

"That is so," said the planter.

"Then you know what has brought me here?"

"Yes. You have come to make inquiries about a silver statuette which was given to my wife by her brother, Dr. Olsen."

"Exactly," said the professor, as he drew out Dr. Olsen's letter of introduction. "I have a letter of introduction here, from Dr. Olsen."

"I do not wish to see it," said the planter, waving it aside.

"Pardon me, it is addressed to your wife."

"Do you wish to see it, my dear?" asked Mr. Howard, turning to his wife.

"No, thank you," she replied, without raising her head.

A dangerous light gleamed in the professor's eyes, but he merely bowed, replaced the letter in his pocket, and turning on his heel glided away.

CHAPTER 13.

The Professor Attacks!

"**Y**OU back soon," exclaimed Rawana, when Mark Rymer rejoined him. "Me think you surely stay for tiffin at de bungalow."

"Curse him! He never even asked me inside the house," replied the professor, white with rage. "He treated me like a dog!"

"Good—good! Me like to hear dat!" chuckled Rawana. "Massa Howard your enemy as well as mine. You help me get revenge, me help you get dat silver image. What your plans?"

"We can't discuss our plans here, and we need some sort of shelter for the night. Do you know of a place where we can go?"

"De old rest house," said Rawana. "Come wid me. I show you."

Rest house is the Cingalese name for a wayside inn. In the other side of the river, almost opposite the swing-bridge, there had been one of these wayside inns, but it had long since been abandoned, and now was little more than a heap of ruins.

They motored back there and drew the car in under the shadow of the walls.

"How many people are there in the bungalow?" asked the professor when he and Rawana had taken refuge in the ruined rest house.

"Four," replied the native. "Massa Howard and his wife, and de two servants—men servants. Dey are Tamils, like myself."

"Will they help us if we raid the house?"

"No," said Rawana, with a shake of his head. "Dey die for Massa Howard."

"Can we bribe the tea-pickers to help us?"

Again Rawana shook his head.

"Well, we've got to get help from somewhere," said the professor testily. "It is impossible for us to tackle four people. Besides, I don't want to appear in this business unless I'm absolutely compelled. This is what I want to do. I have three revolvers here and plenty of cartridges. If you can find five other men to help you, I will lend you the revolvers, and I will give you a hundred rupees apiece. With the help of your five confederates you must break into the bungalow at dead of night—to-night—and secure all the inmates. When you have bound them, you must carry them out of the house and lock them in the stables."

"I shall be hiding in the garden, and as soon as you have imprisoned Mr. and Mrs. Howard and the servants in the stables I shall enter the house and proceed to hunt for the silver image. When I have found it, I shall come back here and motor back to Colombo. After I have left you, you can loot the house and help yourself to anything you may happen to fancy. In the meantime, however, the first thing to be done is to find five suitable men to help you."

"Easy!" murmured Rawana. "For dat money I get five hundred men."

"Five will be sufficient. Where can you get them?"

"In Ulapane village. Me go dere now and bring dem back. You wait here."

RAWANA accordingly took his departure. It was midnight when he returned, bringing with him five stalwart, evil-looking natives. In a few brief sentences the professor explained his plans. Then, with Rawana at their head and the professor bringing up the rear, the little band marched out of the ruined rest house, and turned their faces towards Harvey Howard's bungalow.

The night was so pitch dark that nothing could be seen of the bungalow until they arrived at the garden gate. After pass-

ing through, Rawana bade his companions halt whilst he went forward to scout around. He was absent about five minutes, and when he returned his face was radiant with satisfaction.

"All well," he said, addressing the professor. "No lights, no noise, everybody in bed. You give us de pistols."

The professor produced the three revolvers. He loaded them and handed one to Rawana.

"To whom shall I give the other two?" he asked.

"Give Ramasamy one," said Rawana, pointing to one of the natives, "and give Kangarny de other."

The professor obeyed.

The five men stole towards the house, and halted at the foot of the steps which led up to the veranda at the front. Rawana pointed to the window on the left of the entrance hall.

"Dat Massa Howard's bed-room," he said. "Rama and Happeosamy and Meenatchy and Kangarny will stay here and watch dat window. Me and Ramasamy will go round to de back and kill de servants."

"Kill dem!" said Kangarny, in surprise.

"Dat was not de plan!"

"De Inglese too gentle," said Rawana impatiently. "Safer to kill, den no tales told. We go, and if dey try to escape by de window you stop dem."

Without waiting for a reply, he beckoned to Ramasamy, and the two of them stole away. Stealthily they crept down the covered passage, and reached the veranda which led to the servants' bed-rooms. Rawana halted outside the door of one, and signed to Ramasamy to take his stand outside the door of the other.

"Watch me. Do as I do," he whispered.

He whipped out his knife and glanced at his confederate to see that he had done the same. For several seconds the two men crouched outside the bed-room doors, and then, with one and the same movement, Rawana turned the handle and flung the door wide open.

A stalwart-looking native, with the customary loincloth around his waist, was lying on an iron bedstead in the farthest corner of the room. Roused by the sound of the opening door, he sat up in bed, with a low, hoarse cry of alarm.

Dark as it was, Rawana's eyes were keen enough to take in every detail. In two strides he cleared the space between the door and the bed. Like a panther leaping on its prey, he flung himself on the scarce-awakened servant and buried his knife in his breast.

Flushed with triumph, Rawana turned towards the door, with the object of rejoining his confederate, and found him standing in the passage, a perplexed expression on his face.

"Oder room empty," he said.

"Empty!" echoed Rawana. "How can it be? Dere are two servants. Dere is one." He pointed to the lifeless figure on the bed.

He stole into the second bed-room and speedily convinced himself that Ramasamy had spoken the truth.

"Something wrong," he muttered.

They crossed the courtyard and cautiously explored the bed-rooms on the opposite side. They were all unoccupied. In a swift succession they entered every room in the house, including Mr. Howard's bed-room, but still with the same result. Except for themselves and the murdered native, the house was deserted.

Rawana scratched his black head in bewilderment. Then a sudden idea occurred to him. He rushed across to the stables, which were some little distance from the house. Mr. Howard, he knew, often went motoring. A horse is better for traversing a tea estate than a car, but Mr. Howard also possessed a car, and part of the stables had been turned into a garage.

When he entered the garage the mystery was solved to a certain extent. The car was not there.

"Me understand," he said, returning to Ramasamy. "Massa Howard and Missy Howard gone to pay visit, and take one of dem servants. We better tell Inglese before dey come back."

He communicated the news to the four men he had stationed in front of the house. Then the whole half-dozen wended their way to the garden gate, and reported their discoveries to Mark Rymer.

"Then the sooner I set about searching the house the better," said the professor. "Let two of your men mount guard at this gate and two at the gate on the other side of the garden. You and Ramasamy had better post yourselves on the road below. As soon as I have found the silver image—which won't be long, I expect—I will pay you your money, and then you can loot the house. If Mr. and Mrs. Howard return before I have finished, you must take them prisoners and keep them out of the way until my search is ended."

Rawana disposed of the men in accordance with these directions, and a moment or two later Mark Rymer stood in Harvey Howard's bungalow, with the whole house and all its contents completely at his mercy!

CHAPTER 14.

What Mark Rymer Found!

HAVING armed himself with a hatchet and an electric torch, Mark Rymer began his search for the Silver Dwarf by thoroughly exploring the entrance hall, which was furnished after the fashion of an English drawing-room. He surveyed every room in turn and hunted in every corner. Finally, he peered into the bath-room and the kitchen, and even visited the servants' bed-rooms.

The result in each and every case was the same. The Silver Dwarf was not there!

So far the professor had sought for the Silver Dwarf on tables, shelves, and brackets, on tops of chests of drawers, on mantelpieces and so forth. He now set out on a second tour of exploration, in the course of which he opened and examined every drawer and cupboard and wardrobe in the house, smashing open those that were locked with his hatchet.

Not content with this, he turned out all Mrs. Howard's trunks and boxes. With the aid of a bunch of keys which he found in a writing-desk, he opened Mr. Howard's private safe and overhauled its contents. But his second tour of exploration was no more successful than the first. The Silver Dwarf was nowhere to be found. It was not in the house.

As this bitter truth forced itself into Mark Rymer's mind, a spasm of rage and despair convulsed his parchment-like face. For several minutes he paced to and fro in the dining-room; then an idea occurred to him, and despair gave place to new-born hope.

"Jove, I know what she's done with it!" he exclaimed. "When she received Lee's message, she took the Silver Dwarf to Colombo, and deposited it in the bank. The bank, of course, would give her a receipt for it. If I can find the receipt, I can go to the bank with a forged letter from Mrs. Howard and claim the Silver Dwarf before Nelson Lee arrives."

Rymer hastened back to the safe and hurriedly set to work to examine the various papers it contained. Failing to find any bank receipt in the safe, he turned his attention to the writing-desk. Here, again, he failed to find any bank receipt, but just as he was turning away his eyes fell on two cablegrams, fastened together with a paper clip. One of the cablegrams was folded in such a way that part of the message was visible, and the last words were "Nelson Lee."

"These are the cablegrams he sent to warn them of my coming," Rymer muttered to himself as he drew them out of the pigeon-hole. "I may as well see what he has told them."

He ripped them from the clip, unfolded the topmost slip of paper, and found that it was a cablegram despatched by Nelson Lee from Marseilles. Its contents were as follow:

"Mrs. Howard, Ulapane, via Colombo, Ceylon.—Statuette given to you by your brother contains important documents. Leaving here to-day by ss. Sikh Prince. Arrive Bombay 24th. Arrive Colombo as soon as possible. Do not part with statuette, or allow anybody to examine it, or give anybody any information about it until I arrive. Refuse to see Professor Mark Rymer concerning this matter. Would suggest you deposit statuette with bankers for safe keeping. NELSON LEE."

"I knew it," muttered the professor, under his breath. "Without a doubt she has taken his advice, and the Silver Dwarf is now at the bank."

He unfolded the second cablegram. No sooner had he glanced at it, however, than he uttered a gasp of amazement. For this is what he read:

"Handed in at Sydney, New South Wales, February 23rd.

"To Howard, Ulapane, Ceylon.—Arrived to-day. Statuette found in your cabin after leaving Colombo. Tom returning to England in about a month. Will bring statuette and leave it at Colombo. Letter follows.—ROBINSON."

FOR several minutes the professor stared at the cablegram in mingled bewilderment and dismay. Then the truth of the matter dawned upon him.

Mrs. Howard had evidently left the Silver Dwarf behind her when she had disembarked from the liner at Colombo. A friend of hers, named Robinson, who was travelling in the same boat, had evidently found the statuette in the cabin, and had taken it on with him to Australia. Upon arriving at Sydney, this friend had wired to Mrs. Howard, telling her that somebody was leaving Sydney in about a month's time, and would drop the Silver Dwarf at Colombo on his way to England.

"That's what's happened, without a doubt," mused the professor. "The Silver Dwarf is now at Sydney, and to Sydney I must go."

He picked up the cablegram and glanced at the date.

"Mr. Robinson cabled on the 23rd of February—two days ago," he mused. "He says that his 'Tom' will start from Sydney with the Silver Dwarf in about a month's time. That means that he will leave about the 23rd of March. It is now the 26th of February. It will take about a fortnight to reach Sydney from here. If I can leave Colombo to-morrow, there is just the chance I shall get to Sydney and secure the Dwarf before Nelson Lee can find out where it is. Good! I'll get back to Colombo at once."

Suddenly an expression of annoyance crossed his face. The professor had borrowed money from Barnascone in Gibraltar, but his expenses up to now had been considerable, and this unexpected trip to Sydney meant another outlay. Yet he had promised Rawana and his five accomplices a hundred rupees apiece for their help that night. If he kept his promise he would not have enough money left to take him to Sydney, and, in any case, as his search had failed, he was in no mood to keep his promise.

"It can't be done," Rymer growled. "If I pay those beggars I shall be handicapped. But why should I pay them? Why shouldn't I quietly slip away?"

He stole to the door and cautiously peered out into the inky darkness. All was quiet outside, but just for an instant he caught the gleam of car lights a mile or more away.

"The Howards coming back!" gasped the professor. "I haven't a moment to lose."

He darted out of the house and glided

away into the dense shadows of the shrubs, heading for the ruined rest-house where he had left his car. He had not proceeded as far as the pickers' huts when the sound of firing fell upon his ears.

The planter and his wife, accompanied by the coolie, had fallen in with the two men Rymer had posted on the lower road. Rawana had fired at Mr. Howard, but had missed his aim. The planter had replied with a couple of shots, one of which had penetrated Ramasamy's brain. The coolie had rushed back to the lines to arouse the loyal pickers, while Rawana had taken to his heels, partly to warn Mark Rymer and partly to collect his promised pay.

The professor, of course, knew nothing of all this. He had heard the shots and he had hidden in the bushes while the pickers rushed from their huts to help Mr. Howard. When they had gone, Mark Rymer hastened on his way to the ruined rest-house.

No one was about when he arrived there, and he worked like a demon to get the car on to the indifferent road and to induce the engine to show signs of life. He had just succeeded, and had just taken his seat at the wheel, when the dusky figure of Rawana came flying after him, brandishing his revolver, and yelling:

"Ayo! Ayo! Massa Inglese! Where are you going? You no pay my money yet!"

The professor's reply was a mocking laugh which stung the native into sudden and vindictive fury.

Without pulling up, he levelled his revolver and emptied the remaining chambers at the half-seen figure in the car. But the darkness marred his aim, and all five shots flew harmlessly over the professor's head.

The next moment Mark Rymer had slipped in the clutch: he drove recklessly down the rocky road to Ulapane village, and beyond to the railway station and the main road.

By that time two things were borne in upon the professor. He hardly knew where he was, and his petrol was running low. He still had enough for a good many miles, but it was very doubtful if he had enough to take him to Colombo.

Instead of turning to the left and driving back to Colombo, he turned to the right and headed for the mountain capital of Kandy, from which place he could get a fast train to Colombo.

CHAPTER 15.

Rymer's Ruse!

AT a quarter to eleven the following morning—the morning of February 27th—Mark Rymer left the Queen's Hotel, at Kandy, and sauntered across to the railway station. He had hoped to find a train leaving for Colombo earlier than that, but he was disappointed.

"What time does this train reach Colombo?" he asked.

"One o'clock, sir."

"Good. First-class single, please."

He received his ticket, and a moment or two later the train steamed out of the station. Mark Rymer had taken his seat in the refreshment car, which was a long, well-ventilated car, furnished with tables and cane-bottomed seats.

It might have been quicker to have waited for petrol and gone on to Colombo by motor, but there were two very good reasons why the professor preferred the train. He had found the engine of the car showing signs of trouble, and Harvey Howard might be looking for the man who had ransacked his bungalow, and would not expect to find him so far north as Kandy.

What had happened to Rawana, the professor neither knew nor cared. He was not to know that the Cingalese had attempted to pursue the professor, taking a short cut through the jungle, but had trodden on a poisonous snake and had received a bite which had caused his death.

There were several tea and coffee planters in the car. Two of them were sitting at the table behind the professor, and by-and-by he heard one of them mention the name of Harvey Howard. He pricked up his ears and, without appearing to do so, eagerly listened to what they were saying.

"No, I haven't heard anything about it," said one of the planters. "When did it happen?"

"Last night," said the other. "Howard and his wife had been out visiting. Well, it was more this morning than last night when they headed for home, and just as they reached the bottom of the hill on which their bungalow stands, they were fired at by a couple of natives. Fortunately, neither of them was hit, but Howard shot one of the scoundrels through the head, and the other took to his heels. I haven't heard full particulars yet, but I'm told that when Howard reached his house he found that every room in the place had been literally turned inside out, though nothing had been stolen."

"That's strange," said the first planter. "If the natives ransacked the house, why didn't they steal anything?"

"That's what everybody else is asking," said his companion. "Of course, I may be misinformed, but it certainly says in the paper that Howard phoned to the police and reported that nothing was missing."

"Have they found any clue to the scoundrels' identity?"

"Yes. The fellow whom Howard shot was a Tamil of the name of Ramasamy. The other fellow—so Howard believes—was one of his foremen, whom he had dismissed a few days previously for theft."

He had scarcely finished when the train arrived at Paradeniya, which was the junction between the main line from Kandy to Colombo and the branch line from Ulapane. As the train pulled up the professor happened to glance out of the window, and even as he did so his eyes fell on the trim-built figure of Harvey Howard, who was standing

on the platform, evidently waiting for the train.

"Hallo! Here's Howard himself!" cried one of the planters, springing to his feet. "Let's have him in here to tell us his version of the affair."

He lowered one of the windows of the car and beckoned to Howard to join them. The latter acknowledged the invitation with a cheery nod of his head, and a moment later, almost before Mark Rymer had time to hide himself behind a newspaper, the young tea-planter stepped into the car.

"Talk of angels—you know the rest," said one of the planters as Howard seated himself between them behind the listening professor. "I was just telling Johnson about that affair at your bungalow this morning. He hadn't heard of it. Any fresh developments?"

"Rather!" said Howard. "As soon as my coolies heard what had happened they formed themselves into a search party, and they finally came across Rawana's dead body in the jungle."

"How had he died?"

"Bitten by a snake—a tic-polonga! But what on earth he was doing just where he was found no one can say, and I don't suppose anyone will ever know now."

The professor heaved a sigh of relief. This news meant that his part in the affair could not be proved against him.

"There is no doubt, I suppose," said Johnson, "that the whole affair was got up by Rawana in a spirit of revenge?"

"Well, I'm not sure about that," replied Howard, lowering his voice, and went on to tell his interested listeners all he knew about the Silver Dwarf, and how he had heard from Nelson Lee concerning the statuette.

"Apparently this statuette contains important documents," went on Howard. "Nelson Lee—he's the famous detective, you know—sent a cablegram, asking us not to part with it until he arrived. He said that he was on his way to Ceylon, and might be expected at any moment. He's on the Sikh Prince, and landed at Bombay early yesterday. We were warned to expect a visit from a man named Rymer, and not to give him this statuette."

"Actually, of course, we couldn't have done so in any case, for the simple reason that my wife had left it aboard the Bengali, which was then on its way to Australia."

"We received a cablegram from Sydney, informing us that the statuette was safe, and telling us where it was. A day or two later Professor Rymer arrived at my house. He was very keen on getting hold of the statuette before Nelson Lee arrived, and I can only think that he wishes to destroy the documents which are inside it. Needless to say, I declined to give him any information. I did not even tell him that the statuette was not in our possession, and he went away in a towering rage."

"That very night my bungalow was attacked by natives, my writing-desk was



In the hand of Professor Rymer the Magician of Morocco poured a strange liquid—and then proceeded to tell him the whereabouts of the Silver Dwarf!

broken open and overhauled, and every drawer and cupboard in the house was thoroughly ransacked, yet nothing was stolen. Doesn't that strike you as suspicious? Doesn't it look as though this fellow Rymer was at the bottom of the whole affair, and that he had raided my house, with the help of the natives, in the hope of finding the statuette?"

His companions instantly agreed with this, and for the next three-quarters of an hour they discussed the theory in all its bearings.

Then one of them asked Howard if he was going to Colombo.

"Yes," he replied. "I mean to be in Colombo when Nelson Lee arrives, so that he may know all the facts as early as possible, and then he'll be able to catch a boat to Australia immediately. Nelson Lee, of course, does not yet know that the statuette is not in our possession. I would have wirelessed the Sikh Prince, but by that time she was at Bombay, and maybe the detective would have left her. In any case, coming

south to Colombo will help him on his way to Australia.

"He thinks, no doubt, that this statuette is at my house at Ulapane. If nobody meets him on his arrival he will leave for Ulapane. I must be at Colombo to tell him the truth. I would have gone in my car, but my wife was nervous of the roads after the affair last night. Should he travel from Bombay by aeroplane, and possibly land at Kandy, then motor to Ulapane, my wife will be there to explain matters."

A gleam of malignant fury leaped into Mark Rymer's eyes as he heard these words. He had been calculating on the advantage of setting out for Australia before Nelson Lee could learn what had become of the Silver Dwarf, now it seemed any odds that the detective would travel on the same boat, and that they would arrive together at Sydney.

The professor's eyes contracted to the merest slits, and a look of desperate determination crossed his face.

"I must prevent Howard from meeting Nelson Lee to-night," he decided, and then listened intently.

"You don't know when you'll get back to Ulapane, then?" one of the planters was inquiring.

"No. I shall put up at the G.O.H.," said Howard.

That was all Mark Rymer waited to hear. The G.O.H.—in other words, the Grand Oriental Hotel—was the very hotel at which he himself had arranged to spend the night.

He glanced back over his shoulder, and saw that Howard and his two companions were still engaged in earnest conversation. Taking advantage of this fact, he silently rose to his feet and glided to the other end of the car, where he ensconced himself in the corner seat nearest to the door, and once more concealed himself behind a newspaper.

CHAPTER 16.

The Death Drug!

PUNCTUALLY the train arrived at Colombo. Almost before it came to a standstill the professor leaped out, hurried from the station, and sprang into a taxi. Ten minutes later he was standing in the spacious vestibule of the G.O.H.

Near the reception desk was a towering pile of bags, boxes, and luggage. Unnoticed by any of the native attendants, the professor concealed himself behind this pile of luggage, and a moment or two later he had the satisfaction of seeing Harvey Howard arrive with his two companions and walk into the hotel.

"My name is Howard," he said to the reception clerk. "Any messages for me?"

"Yes, sir. A telegram from Ulapane."

Harvey Howard seized the missive eagerly, and the other two planters were just as eager to hear the news.

"Anything about Nelson Lee?" asked Johnson.

"Yes. He has wired to Ulapane. He has been flying from Bombay, but ran into an electrical storm, and made a forced landing at Calicut, smashing the propeller. Is coming on here by cargo boat, and arrives to-night." He turned to the clerk. "I shall want a single room to-night, please," he said.

The clerk made an entry in the register and called to one of the attendants.

"Show this gentleman to No. 95," he said, handing the coolie a key with a label attached.

"This way, sar," said the coolie, shouldering Harvey's suitcase.

"Thanks, but I'm not going up to my room just now," said Howard. "I have some business to transact in the town which will occupy me until half-past six or seven. Take my bag up to my room, and bring the key back to the office."

The coolie departed, and Howard turned to the clerk again.

"I should like to engage a room for a friend of mine," he said. "He is arriving to-night, and will leave for Sydney to-morrow morning. Is there any objection to my booking the room for him?"

"There is no objection whatever, sir," said the clerk. "What is your friend's name?"

"Nelson Lee."

The clerk made another entry in his register.

"I have booked No. 96 for him," he said.

Howard turned away and left the hotel. The moment he was out of sight Mark Rymer glided up to the desk.

"My name is Rymer—Professor Mark Rymer," he said to the clerk. "I left my baggage here yesterday, and arranged to have a bed-room here to-night. May I have my key?"

The clerk consulted the register and handed the professor a key.

"Your room is No. 94, sir," he said. "Your luggage has already been taken there."

"No. 94!" There was a ring of triumph in Mark Rymer's voice as he repeated the figures. By a lucky coincidence he and Harvey Howard had been given adjoining rooms.

He took the key and hurried up the broad and handsome staircase. Upon entering his room he discovered that the window overlooking an ornamental garden at the back of the hotel. Immediately beneath the window was the flat roof of a wooden veranda. A single glance sufficed to show him that it would be the easiest thing in the world to step out of his own window, to walk along the veranda roof, and to reach the window of the room next door.

The professor opened one of his bags and changed his travel-stained clothes. He strolled down into the coffee-room and indulged in a cup of tea. Then he put on his hat and left the hotel.

He was absent for about an hour, and when he returned he had a four-ounce bottle of chloroform in his pocket. Having

entered his bed-room again, he locked the door on the inside and opened the window.

The garden below was deserted. He stepped out on to the veranda room and stole to the window of the room next door. He forced back the catch with the blade of his pocket-knife and opened the window. A moment later the professor was standing in Harvey Howard's bed-room.

Rymer closed the window but did not fasten it. He drew down the dark-green blind so as to make the room as dark as possible. He loosened the stopper of the chloroform bottle and folded a handkerchief into a pad of convenient size. Then he crouched behind the door, and waited for the victim to appear. It was then about seven o'clock.

At a quarter to eight Harvey Howard returned to the hotel with an armful of packages. His business had taken him longer than he had expected, and he had heard that the freighter had arrived in the bay earlier than was anticipated, and maybe Nelson Lee had already come ashore.

"I've cut it rather fine, I'm afraid," he muttered to himself as he took down his key from the office board and bounded up the stairs. "I had better bundle these parcels in my room, then rush down to the Customs. I'll be sure to find Nelson Lee there."

He reached the door of No. 95, and thrust the key into the keyhole. He opened the door and strode into the dimly-lighted room, but no sooner had he crossed the threshold than the door was suddenly banged to behind him, whilst at the same instant a dark form leapt upon him from behind and hurled him face downwards on the bed.

Before he had time to shout for help, two knees were planted in the small of his back. One hand encircled his windpipe in a vice-like grip, and another hand, holding a chloroformed pad, was firmly applied to his mouth and nostrils.

In vain Harvey Howard kicked and struggled. In vain he attempted to unseat the man who was kneeling on his back, to turn his head and get a glimpse of his assailant. Slowly but surely the noxious fumes accomplished their deadly work, till at last, after a final effort to shake off his assailant, the young tea-planter ceased to struggle and lapsed into unconsciousness.

"So far, so good!" hissed the professor as he sprang from the bed. "I'll lock the door to guard against interruption, and then I'll give him another whiff that will waft him into eternity. That done, I have only to unlock the door and open the window, and everybody will conclude that he died from the effects of an apoplectic stroke."

He removed the key from the outside of the door. He closed the door and locked it on the inside. Then he drenched the handkerchief with a fresh supply of chloroform and returned to the bed to complete his dastardly work.

CHAPTER 17.

Foiled by Nelson Lee!

NELSON LEE was the only passenger aboard the freighter from Calicut, and consequently it did not take him very long to get ashore to the Customs officials. He left his baggage at the Custom House and walked across to the Grand Oriental Hotel.

"Can I get to Ulapano to-night?" he asked, addressing the clerk at the reception desk.

"It's doubtful, sir," said the clerk. "The last train has gone, and you may find it difficult to hire a car. In any case, night driving in that part is rather risky."

"And the people I am going to see will be in bed when I get there," added the detective. "I had better stay here for the night. Can I have a room?"

"Yes, sir. What name?"

"Mr. Nelson Lee," replied the detective.

"Then your bed is already engaged, sir," said the clerk. "Mr. Harvey Howard engaged it for you this afternoon."

"Mr. Harvey Howard?" repeated the detective. "Is he in Colombo?"

"Yes, sir. He intended meeting you at the landing-stage, but your early arrival has apparently upset his plans."

"Then where is he now?"

"He went up to his room a few moments ago, sir. I haven't seen him come down yet."

"What is the number of his room?"

"No. 95, sir; the next room to yours, which is No. 96. Will you take your key, sir?"

The detective took the key and went upstairs. He halted at the door of No. 95 and rapped upon it with his knuckles.

"It's Nelson Lee. May I come in?" he asked.

To his infinite surprise, the only reply was a startled oath, whilst at the same instant his quick sense of smell detected the odour of chloroform.

Swiftly the detective tried the handle, and found that the door was locked. Then, throwing all further ceremony to the winds, he applied his shoulder to the door and burst it open.

He sprang into the room. The window was screened by a dark-green blind, and the room was almost in total darkness. For a second he saw nothing save the dim and shadowy outline of the various articles of furniture. Then, as his eyes grew accustomed to the gloom, he perceived the outstretched figure of a man lying on the bed and breathing stertorously.

After switching on the electric light and ringing the service bell, Nelson Lee made his way to the bedside, and thereupon found at once that the unconscious man was Harvey Howard. A letter that had fallen on the bed from his pocket during the struggle with Mark Rymer proved his identity. To the detective's great relief, he discovered that the young tea-planter was still

alive, though unconscious and evidently in a bad way.

"Do you think he will recover?" asked the proprietor of the hotel, who had come into the room, together with several guests, for the news had been spread by the servant who had answered the bell.

"I hope so," said Nelson Lee. "But it will be touch and go with him. If he hasn't had a fatal dose of chloroform, he has had something very near it. About two more whiffs, and it would have been all over with him."

"Hadn't we better send for a doctor?" suggested the proprietor.

"If you wish," said Nelson Lee. "As a matter of fact, I am a fully-qualified medical man myself, though I have never practised."

As he uttered these words he unfastened Howard's collar and began artificial respiration. For a time it seemed as though his efforts were going to be rewarded with speedy success, but by and by the planter's breathing began to grow more feeble, his face took on an ashen, death-like hue, and ever and anon his heart appeared to stop beating.

"It's all up!" muttered one of the guests, shaking his head. "He's sinking fast."

By way of reply the detective whipped out his notebook, tore out one of the pages, and scribbled a couple of words in pencil. He

handed the slip of paper, together with a coin, to one of the native servants.

"Run with that to the nearest chemist's," he said. "Bring back what I have ordered as quickly as you can!"

The servant took the note and sped away. He was absent perhaps five minutes, and when he returned he handed the detective a cardboard box in which was a number of small glass capsules, each of which was enclosed in a tiny cotton bag, bearing the inscription "Amyl nitrite."

Having folded his handkerchief into a pad of convenient size, the detective placed one of the capsules in the centre, clapped the handkerchief over Howard's mouth and nostrils, and crushed the capsule into fragments by squeezing it between his finger and thumb.

The effect was magical. The colour began to ebb back into the young tea-planter's face, his breathing grew stronger and more regular; a few seconds later he opened his eyes, and gazed round the room with a vacant stare.

Despite the solemnity of the occasion, the little group around the bed broke into a murmur of talk and raised their voices in excited exclamations—all of which were heard in Room No. 94, and which told the listening Mark Rymer that once again had his cunning schemes been brought to naught by the famous detective.



GEORGE HERRIES

tells you about **TOWSER**

Towser is my bull-dog, and he's a really fine fellow. Some of the chaps at St. Jim's don't like him, but that's because they haven't the sense to know a first-class dog when they see one. Of course, it's true that he is rather fond of D'Arcy's trousers, almost as fond as D'Arcy is—but he treats them differently!

Towser had a new experience this week. I don't think he'd ever met a camel before, and when he did—well, well!

Take a tip from me, buy this week's number of the GEM! It only costs you twopence, and you'll be able to read all about Towser and the Camel in "Showmen of St. Jim's!" It's a wow!

THE GEM

Every Wednesday - - 2d.

TWO hours passed; it was half-past ten. Nelson Lee was sitting on the edge of Harvey Howard's bed. The young tea-planter was practically himself again.

"I didn't intend coming to see you to-night," said Nelson Lee. "After what you have passed through, I thought it would be wiser for you to refrain from talking just at present. However, since you have sent for me I have come, though I still think you would be well advised to postpone our interview until to-morrow morning."

"Why should I?" said Howard. "Thanks to you, I'm as right as a trivet now. Besides, I want to learn your opinion as to the identity of the scoundrel who attacked me."

"As to that," said Nelson Lee, "I firmly believe that the man who attacked you was Professor Mark Rymer!"

"Mark Rymer again!" gasped Howard.

"Again?" said the detective quickly. "Has he attacked you once before?"

"Well, no; I ought not to say that he has actually attacked me," replied Howard. "At the same time, I have a very shrewd suspicion that he incited a number of natives to attack my house. However, I'll tell you all about that later. In the meantime, what makes you think that my assailant was Mark Rymer?"

"I have been making inquiries," said Nelson Lee, "and I find that he is staying here. He arrived about the same time as yourself this afternoon, and was given the room next door. However, I have no evidence to prove my suspicions, and so I can do nothing. And now I would like you to tell me everything that has happened since the Silver Dwarf came into your possession."

"The Silver Dwarf?" repeated Howard. "Is that what you call the silver statuette which was given to my wife by her brother, Dr. Olsen?"

"Yes. You deposited it in the bank. I hope, when you received my cablegram from Marsilles?"

Howard shook his head rather regretfully.

"We didn't," he said. "You see, it is now on its way to Australia!" And then he went on to tell Nelson Lee all the facts.

The detective, at first dismayed, became thoughtful. He listened intently to Howard's narrative, nodding now and again as he pieced together the information in his alert brain.

"Obviously Rymer must know that the Silver Dwarf is in Australia," he remarked, with a frown. "He probably read that cable from the Robinsons when he raided your bungalow. That is why he attacked you here. He meant to prevent your meeting me, hoping that I should waste valuable time in travelling to Ulapane."

"That seems likely," agreed Howard.

"Do you know the address of the Robinsons?" questioned Nelson Lee abruptly.

"Yes. Mrs. Robinson gave it to my wife before they left the Bengali. She doesn't live in Sydney itself, but in one of the out-

lying suburbs. The exact address is Ivanhoe House, Waverley, Sydney."

The detective entered the details in his notebook.

"Do you think Rymer knows the address?" he queried.

"No," replied Howard decisively. "Mrs. Robinson wrote it down on a slip of paper, and my wife gave it to me, and I have carried it in my pocket ever since."

"Good!" The detective smiled his satisfaction. "I shall leave for Australia at the first possible moment. I believe there is a liner sailing to-morrow—the Victor Hugo."

"But won't Rymer be on that boat, too?"

"Doubtless! But that does not worry me. While he is making inquiries at Sydney for the Robinsons' address, I shall go straight there, and with that advantage I think I shall win this neck-and-neck race for the Silver Dwarf."

There seemed every justification for Nelson Lee's optimism, but once again his wily enemy's resourcefulness was to upset all the detective's hopes and plans!

CHAPTER 18.

A Game of Bluff!

THE following morning two cablegrams were despatched from Colombo, both of them addressed to Sydney. The first ran as follows:

"Robinson, Ivanhoe House, Waverley, Sydney.—Statuette found in your cabin contains important documents. Do not send it back or part with it, or give any information about it, until I arrive. Leaving here to-day. Arrive Sydney first available boat. Message sent with knowledge and approval of Howard.

"NELSON LEE, Detective."

The second cablegram was couched in the following terms:

"Sinclair's Detective Agency, Pitt Street, Sydney.—Robinson, first-class passenger arrived Sydney per ss. Bengali. Trace if possible and wire present address to undersigned at Post Office, Adelaide. Leaving here to-day by ss. Victor Hugo. Spare no expense. Secrecy essential. Payment when I arrive. Reference, Bank of Australasia.

"MARK RYMER

"(Professor of Chemistry, Westminster University)."

Rymer did not dare have his reply wirelessed to the ship lest Nelson Lee should get wind of it.

Shortly after the departure of these cablegrams the Victor Hugo put out to sea, and amongst her passengers were Nelson Lee and Mark Rymer.

There was no other available route to Australia. Aeroplanes from Ceylon to Australia

were both risky and uncertain. An aviator would have been compelled to keep close to the land, thus necessitating a flight up the coast of India almost to Calcutta, then across to Burma and so down to Singapore, across the East Indies to Darwin, and finally across the vast continent itself.

Taking everything into consideration, it was safer and possibly, in the long run, quicker, to travel by liner.

At two o'clock one spring afternoon the vessel came to her anchorage in Larg's Bay, the port of call for Adelaide. A large proportion of her passengers disembarked, and proceeded to Adelaide by rail. And amongst them were Mark Rymer and Nelson Lee. The professor disembarked in order to call for the answer to his cablegram. The detective disembarked because it was shorter by nearly three days to go from Adelaide to Sydney by train than to go by boat.

It was half-past three when the train steamed into Adelaide. At a quarter to four the professor stood in the post-office. Ten minutes later he was reading the following message:

"Rymer, Post Office, Adelaide.—Address required, Ivanhoe House, Waverley, Sydney. Awaiting your further instructions.

"SINCLAIR."

Leaving the post-office, Rymer invested in a railway guide, and a plan of the city of Sydney, both of which he consulted carefully. He then returned to the post-office, and sent off the following telegram:

"Leaving here 4.30. Arrive Sydney 11 a.m. Saturday. Arrange for one of your men to meet at station, and to have a taxi waiting outside. Shall alight from train with white handkerchief in hand as means of identification. Shall want to motor to Waverley fast as possible. Every second of value.

"RYMER."

At half-past four he took his seat in the Melbourne train.

NELSON LEE—little dreaming of his rival's plans—had already taken his seat in the self-same train, and at ten o'clock the following morning the train pulled up in Sydney Station. Before it actually came to a standstill, Mark Rymer sprang out, with a white silk handkerchief in his hand, and in the twinkling of an eye a red-haired, bullet-headed man was at his side.

"Professor Rymer?" said the red-haired man.

"Yes," said the professor hurriedly. "Quick! Let us go outside the station at once!"

They reached the outside of the station, where the red-haired man pointed to a smart, powerful-looking car, with a uniformed chauffeur at the wheel.

"There's your car, sir," he said. "I arranged for one of our own cars. Better than a taxi, if you're in a real hurry. Have you any further instructions?"

"No—yes," said the professor, as he entered the car. "Secure my luggage—three suit-cases, all labelled with my name—and take them to your office. I'll call for them and settle with Mr. Sinclair as soon as I come back from Waverley."

He turned to the chauffeur.

"Ivanhoe House, Waverley," he directed. "Drive there as quickly as you can."

The chauffeur slipped in the clutch and the car moved rapidly away from the station, gathering speed every second. Twelve minutes later it came to a standstill in front of a handsome, modern villa, standing on the summit of the cliffs which enclose that picturesque inlet of the sea which is known as Bondi Bay. One minute later the professor was ringing the front door bell.

His summons was answered by a neat servant.

"Is Mr. Robinson at home?" asked the professor.

"No, sir," replied the maid. "But Mrs. Robinson is in."

"Good! I will see Mrs. Robinson," said the professor, as he stepped across the threshold.

The servant ushered him into a cosily-furnished drawing-room.

"What name, sir?" she asked.

"Mr. Nelson Lee!" said the professor boldly.

The servant departed. A moment or two later an elderly lady, whose eager face betrayed her curiosity, entered the room and greeted him cordially.

"I am proud to make the acquaintance of so famous a detective as yourself, Mr. Lee," she said. "What ever is the exciting mystery which is connected with that silver statuette?"

The professor smiled.

"Is the statuette here?" he asked, striving to speak calmly, though every nerve in his body was tingling with suppressed excitement.

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Robinson. "It is in my husband's safe. But he left me his keys in case you called before he returned."

The professor bowed.

"If you will kindly let me see the statuette," he said, "I will show you in a moment where the documents are concealed."

PROFESSOR RYMER had scarcely finished speaking before a tall young fellow, dressed in flannels, entered the room.

"My son," explained Mrs. Robinson. "Tom, this is Mr. Nelson Lee, the famous detective. I expect Mr. Howard told you." she went on, smiling at the professor, "that Tom was to return the statuette on his way back to England. He is graduating at Cambridge, you know, but had to come home owing to ill-health."

Tom greeted the professor with anything but enthusiasm. It was plain to be seen that the young undergraduate was bitterly disappointed with the first view of the "famous detective."

"Mr. Lee would like to see the statuette now," said Mrs. Robinson, handing the boy a bunch of keys. "Will you fetch it, please?"

Tom left the room, and presently returned with the Silver Dwarf in his hand.

"There's a taxi just driven up to the front door," he said, as he placed the statuette on a small round table in front of the professor. "I wonder who it can be?"

"Perhaps it is your father," said Mrs. Robinson. "He knew that Mr. Lee was coming here this morning, and he may have hurried home to meet him."

A bell rang.

"It can't be father," said Tom. "He wouldn't ring the bell, of course. Who can it be?"

The same question was agitating the professor. Who could it be?

"I know who it is," said Mrs. Robinson, as a sudden idea occurred to her. "It's the doctor, Tom. It's a week ago to-day since he was here, and he said, if you remember, that he would call again in about a week's time to examine you thoroughly. Tell Mary to show him into the dining-room, and you can see him after Mr. Lee has gone."

Tom darted to the drawing-room door. The servant was just passing on her way to the front door.

"If that's the doctor," said Tom, "show him into the dining-room, and tell him that I'll be with him in a few minutes."

The servant passed on, and Tom returned into the drawing-room, closing the door behind him.

"And now, Mr. Lee," said Mrs. Robinson, turning to the professor, "there is the statuette. You say that it contains important documents—may we hope that before you leave you will gratify our curiosity by showing us where they are concealed?"

"With the greatest pleasure in the world," said Mark Rymer, bowing courteously.

He took the statuette in his hands. Every nerve in his body was tingling with suppressed excitement.

"To look at the statuette," he said, "you would say that it was composed of a single, solid piece of silver. That is not so, however. In reality, the head is formed of one piece, and the body of another, the head being slotted into the body in a remarkably ingenious manner, the secret of which was only known to the late Lord Easington and myself.

"In order to separate the statuette into its component parts, I take the head in one hand—so—and the body in the other. I give the head a slight turn to the right—thus—and the body a slight turn to the left. I pull the head—you see how the neck is lengthening—turn it round until the face is looking backwards; push it down, turn the face round to the front again, pull it up, and behold!"

A cry of wonderment burst from their lips.

In one hand the professor held the body of the Silver Dwarf, in the other he held the head.

"The body, as you see, is hollow," he said, as he laid the head on the table. "Inside it, as you also see, are the documents of which I spoke."

He drew out a packet of papers, folded into the smallest possible compass, and fastened together with red tape.

Amid breathless silence, and without a tremor of his long, thin fingers, Rymer untied the knot of the tape and unfolded the papers, which consisted of three certificates and a sheet of ordinary notepaper, covered with writing.

Then somebody rapped at the door.

"Come in!" cried Mrs. Robinson, somewhat impatiently.

The door opened, and the servant appeared.

"If you please, ma'am, it isn't the doctor," she said. "It's a gentleman who wishes to see you, and who says his name is Mr. Nelson Lee!"

"Nelson Lee!"

It was Tom who spoke—almost shouting the words.

"I thought you said your name was Nelson Lee!" he went on, addressing the professor.

"So it is!" said Rymer boldly.

"I don't believe it!" retorted Tom hotly. "I believe you're an impostor! At any rate, I'll soon find out!"

He sprang to the door and vanished in the direction of the dining-room.

"I—I hope there's no mistake," faltered Mrs. Robinson.

The professor shrugged his shoulders, but did not deign to reply. He knew that he was trapped—that he could not hope to escape with the precious papers—yet never for an instant did his presence of mind desert him. He knew that he had only to destroy the papers before the detective reached the room, and all would still be well—for him!

With lightning-like rapidity he glanced at the contents of the sheet of notepaper, then he placed it on the top of the three certificates and ripped the whole packet across—once, twice, thrice.

Mrs. Robinson sprang towards him and caught him by the arm.

"Why are you tearing them up?" she demanded.

He pushed her aside, and laid the little heap of paper on the tiled hearth of the fireplace. There was no fire in the grate; but an oil-stove, used to warm the room for short periods during the chilly evenings of that time of the year, stood inside the fender.

The professor pushed open the hinged top and lifted out the container, unscrewing the cap. He tilted it and poured out the oil, drenching the papers.

Again Mrs. Robinson caught him by the arm, whilst at the same time she raised her voice in a piercing cry of alarm. Again Rymer shook her off, and even as he did so an answering shout was heard from the

dining-room, followed by the rush of hurrying feet.

"Too late, my friend, too late, too late!" the professor murmured to himself. "Too late to save the papers, but just in time to see the blaze!"

He whipped out his matchbox and struck a match. He applied it to the little pile of papers on the hearth, and in the twinkling of an eye they were wrapped in a sheet of dazzling flame.

CHAPTER 19.

Beaten at the Post!

NELSON LEE knew nothing of the cunning scheme which Mark Rymer had hatched for securing the Silver Dwarf. He knew, of course, that the professor had travelled from Colombo to Adelaide, and from Adelaide to Melbourne, by the same boat and the same train as himself. He knew that Mark Rymer would arrive in Sydney at the same time as himself, but he calculated that it would take the professor at least a couple of hours—indeed, probably a couple of days—to discover Mrs. Robinson's address.

When the detective stepped into the Sydney train at Melbourne, he was well aware that his rival had already taken his seat in a first-class carriage in the forepart of the train. But, in the circumstances, the detective could not possibly foresee the necessity for any hurry.

The consequences was that the detective did not deem it necessary to make any special arrangements for anybody to meet him at Sydney; but contented himself with the mental resolve that as soon as he arrived he would take a taxi, drive to the Royal Hotel in George Street, leave his luggage there, and then go down to Waverley—in the same taxi which could wait for him outside the hotel.

Nothing transpired to cause him to alter these plans until the train pulled up in Sydney Station. With the object of calling a porter, he thrust his head out of the carriage window, and even as he did so he was astonished to see the professor and a red-haired man hurrying out of the station as fast as their legs would carry them.

This instantly aroused his suspicions, and he sprang out of the carriage and glided after them. By the time he reached the outside of the station, however, Mark Rymer had driven away and was out of sight, whilst the red-haired man had mingled with the crowd, and was nowhere to be seen.

"I don't like the look of this at all," muttered Nelson Lee to himself. "I don't see how it's possible for Mark Rymer to have found out Mrs. Robinson's address, and yet—where has he gone? Why has he rushed away in such a hurry, and without his luggage, too? Of course, it doesn't really matter much if he has gone to Mrs. Robinson's, for I wired to her that she wasn't to part with

the statuette, or to give any information about it until I arrived."

However, the detective was worried, and he decided to change his plans.

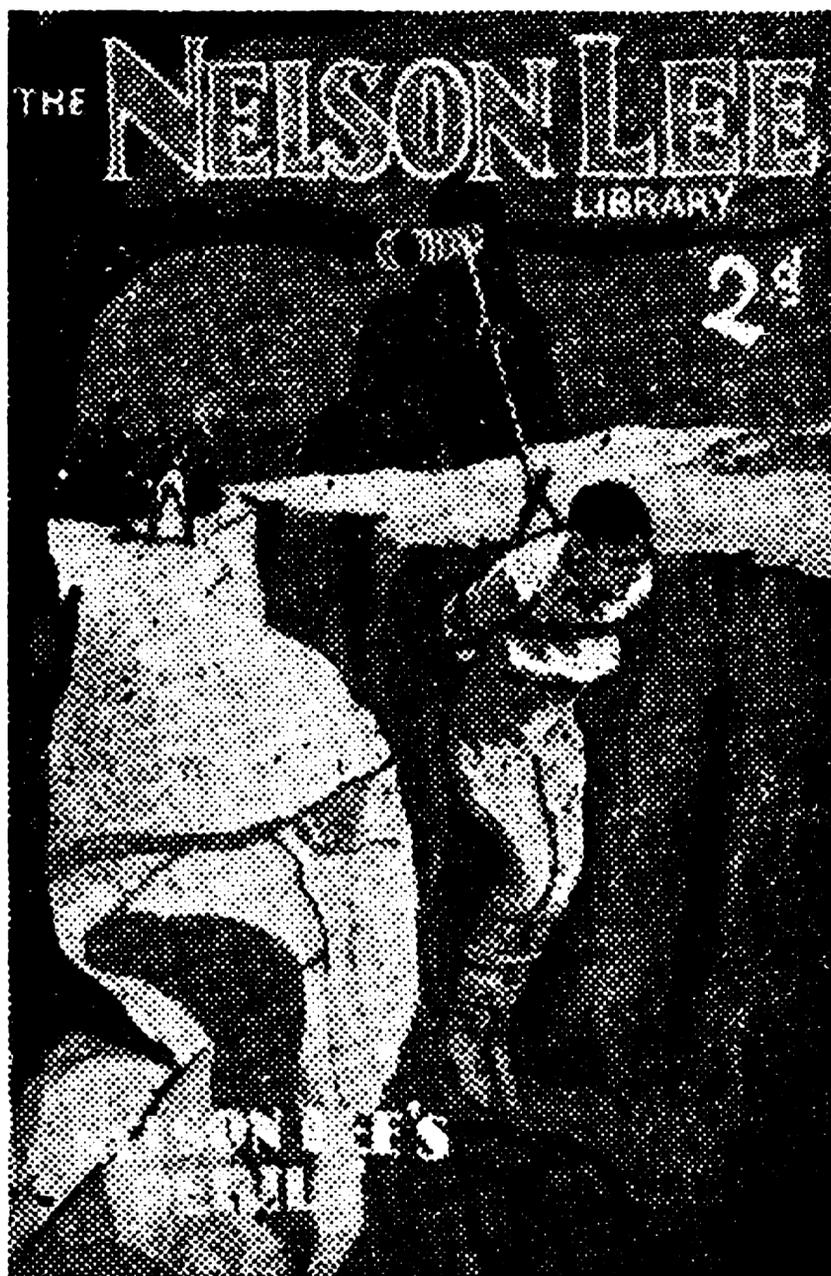
He returned to the train, pointed out his luggage to a porter, and instructed him to send it on to the Royal Hotel. Then he called a taxi and gave the order:

"Ivanhoe House, Waverley—as hard as you can go!"

He arrived at Ivanhoe House at half-past eleven, nearly a quarter of an hour after the professor. He rang the bell, and in due course the door was opened by the servant.

"Is Mrs. Robinson at home?" he asked.

COMING NEXT WEDNESDAY!



"Yes, sir," replied the servant. "Do you wish to see her?"

"If you please," said Nelson Lee.

The servant ushered him into the dining-room, which was at the opposite end of the passage to the drawing-room.

"What name, sir?" she asked.

"Mr. Nelson Lee," he replied.

The servant stared at him with ill-concealed amazement; but ere he could question her, she closed the door and left him to his own reflections.

Three-quarters of a minute passed, then the door burst open, and Tom dashed into the room.

"Ah, this is more like the sort of man I expected you to be!" cried the young undergraduate, as he wrung the detective's hand.

"I thought it was a funny thing if that ante-diluvian mummy with the parrot's beak was the famous Nelson Lee!"

The detective stared in surprise.

"What do you mean?" he demanded swiftly. "Has somebody been impersonating me?"

"Trying to," said Tom. "I thought——"

"Never mind what you thought!" said the detective, interrupting him. "Tell me quickly what happened."

"A fellow arrived about a quarter of an hour ago, and asked to see my father," said Tom. "When the servant told him that my father was out, he asked to see my mother.

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"THE MISSING HEIR!"

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ORDER IN ADVANCE!

He said that his name was Nelson Lee, and that he had called for that silver statuette which Mrs. Howard had left on board the Bengali."

"Don't say that you gave it to him!" cried the detective sharply.

"But I did," said Tom. "In fact, I was just handing it to him when you rang the bell, and he had just shown us where the documents were concealed when the servant knocked at the drawing-room door and said that you were here."

The detective's eyes blazed.

"You mean that he's still here—where?" he demanded.

"In the drawing-room with mother," replied Tom.

Lee leapt towards the door and even at that

moment Mrs. Robinson's voice was heard shouting for assistance.

Led by Tom, the detective dashed out of the dining-room, but whilst they were still in the passage they heard the sound of a striking match.

"He's burning them!" snapped Nelson Lee.

He flung himself at the drawing-room door and crashed into the room, where a single glance sufficed to show him what had happened. Swiftly he snatched up a small skin rug and darted towards the fireplace, but quick as thought the professor whipped out a revolver and planted himself in front of him.

"Stand back, or I fire!" he cried.

NOTHING daunted, the detective took a flying leap at his exultant foe, and literally toppled him head over heels.

Before the professor could scramble to his feet, Tom threw himself upon him and pinned him to the ground. At the same instant the detective flung the rug on the top of the blazing documents and trampled on it with his feet.

When the last trace of smoke had ceased to issue from beneath the rug, he cautiously lifted it up. A short laugh of satisfaction broke from his lips. The professor had drenched the papers with oil. By doing so he had partly defeated his own ends, for the highly inflammable oil had merely blazed away on the surface of the scraps of paper, leaving the paper itself comparatively uninjured.

In one or two instances, where the oil had burnt itself out, or where some particular scrap had escaped the professor's drenching, the paper was scorched or even charred; but in the main the precious documents, barring the fact that they had been torn up into fragments, were little or none the worse for Mark Rymer's attempt to destroy them.

Having ascertained this fact, the detective gathered up the little heap of paper scraps and laid them on the table. He then drew out his revolver and turned to Tom, who was still kneeling on Mark Rymer's chest, with his hands on the impostor's throat.

"You may let him get up," he said.

Tom sprang to his feet and secured the fallen revolver. Mark Rymer rose more deliberately and rearranged his disordered clothes. Then he stood for a moment facing Nelson Lee, arched his rounded shoulders, and peering and blinking like some half-awakened owl.

"You can lower your revolver," he said at last. "I know when I am beaten!"

He turned to Mrs. Robinson.

"Will you believe me, madam," he said, making her a courteous bow, "that the thing which I most deeply regret in all this morning's proceedings is the fact that I acted somewhat rudely towards you a moment ago? Mr. Lee will tell you that I am a scoundrel. Maybe I am. At any rate, I trust that I am a gentleman, and as such it is a matter of profound regret to me that I should have

forgotten even for a moment the courtesy due to a lady. Accept, my dear Mrs. Robinson, my sincere and humble apologies."

Then he turned to Tom, who was standing with his back to the fireplace.

"As for you, sir," he continued; "I am delighted to find that my old university—for I am a Cambridge man myself—is still capable of turning out young men of brains and sinew. At the same time, I am rather inclined to think that some of us old fogies are more than a match for you youngsters even yet. You smile? You are thinking that recent events disprove that I say. But how about this?"

He was looking at Tom, but at the same instant as he uttered these words, and without turning his head, he lashed out with his fist and caught Nelson Lee a rasping blow on the point of the jaw.

So completely was the detective taken off his guard that he staggered back, stumbled over the little table on which he had placed the paper scraps, and measured his length on the floor.

Even before the detective reached the floor the professor lowered his head, rushed at Tom, and butted him backwards into the fireplace. The next instant, with a mocking cry of triumph, he darted out of the room, rushed from the house, sprang into the car which had brought him from the station, and was driven away.

By the time that Tom and Nelson Lee had picked themselves up and had reached the garden gate, the car was out of sight. A quarter of an hour later it pulled up at the door of Sinclair's Agency, in Pitt Street, and as Mark Rymer clambered out he muttered softly to himself:

"The prize isn't lost yet! I may not have been able to destroy the proofs of my cousin's secret marriage, but I have found out where his son is, and if only I can dispose of him before Nelson Lee arrives I shall then be the sole and undisputed heir to the title and estates!"

CHAPTER 20.

The Secret of the Dwarf!

TWO hours elapsed. It was half-past one. Mrs. Robinson and her son, together with Nelson Lee, were sitting in the drawing-room at Ivanhoe House. With the help of Tom, the detective had pieced together the various fragments of paper, and had rearranged them in their proper order.

The three certificates, being written on one side of the paper only, had been pasted on three separate sheets of foolscap.

In the case of the sheet of notepaper, which was covered with writing on both sides, the detective had pasted it on to a square slip of glass, so that both sides could be read with equal ease.

Several of the paper fragments had been badly scorched by the flames, and some had been completely charred. The consequence was that there were several blanks in the reconstructed documents where the paper had been charred, and in other places where the paper had been scorched the writing was more or less illegible.

Nelson Lee had briefly related the facts of the case from the time of the late Lord Easington's confession, and the detective's subsequent race across the world to prevent Professor Rymer from securing the Silver Dwarf and destroying the documents it contained.

Mrs. Robinson and her son had been enthralled listeners, and now that Lee had examined the documents they were eager to learn their contents..

Nelson Lee picked up the sheet of paper which he had pasted on the slip of glass.

"This," he said, "is Lord Easington's own statement, written by himself at Easington Towers. The dates hardly matter to us. In one or two papers, as you see, the paper has been destroyed by the flames, but the greater part of his lordship's statement is perfectly decipherable. Read it for yourself."

Mrs. Robinson took the slip of glass and attentively perused the following statement, the dotted lines representing the places where the paper had been destroyed, or where the writing was illegible.

"Easington Towers,
March 10th, . . .

"I do not know whether I shall ever have the courage to make a public confession of the following facts; but, by way of easing my conscience, I have decided to place on record the true . . . I am supposed to be a bachelor, but . . . on February 14th, 1907, I was secretly married to Edith Armstrong, the orphan daughter of . . . married at the parish church of Wrexham, in Wales. I was married in the name of Reginald Bruce . . . wife never knew that I was Earl of . . .

"Ten months after our marriage a son was born . . . registered as Richard Bruce. Two days later my wife was taken ill, and within a week she was dead. The nurse who attended her . . . widow, named Catherine Seymour, and I gave her a thousand pounds to adopt the child as her own. I never told her that I was the Earl of Easington . . . and in November, 1908, she emigrated to New South Wales, and took the child with her.

"For eighteen years . . . but in 1926 I was seized with a fit of remorse, and made up my mind to . . . So I wrote to Sinclair's Detective Agency, Pitt Street, Sydney . . . full particulars . . . utmost secrecy . . . asked them to find out if my son was still alive, and where he was.

"I received their reply in December, 1926. They told me that Richard Seymour, as he is now called, was still alive and employed as a stockman . . . one of the stations . . . bush . . . interior of New South Wales. The name of his employer, they said, was Andrew Macpherson, and the station at which he was employed was situated . . . Downs, about . . . miles south of . . . gan. . . ."

"By the time I received this news . . . fit of remorse passed away . . . no further action . . . have written this . . . conceal it, with the proofs of my marriage, in the Silver Dwarf. Some day, perhaps . . . tell the truth.

"(Signed),
"EASINGTON."

HAVING read this interesting document, Mrs. Robinson handed it back to Nelson Lee.

"Those other papers, I suppose," she said, "are the proofs of his lordship's marriage."

"They are more than that," replied the Detective. "This which I hold in my hand is a copy of his marriage certificate. This is the baptismal certificate of his son, who was christened Richard Bruce, who is now known as Richard Seymour, but who is really and truly—now that his father is dead—the tenth Lord Easington.

"And this, the last of the three certificates, is a copy of the certificate of the death of Edith Bruce, otherwise Lady Easington, who is certified to have died of puerperal fever
(Continued on page 44.)



Goal !!!

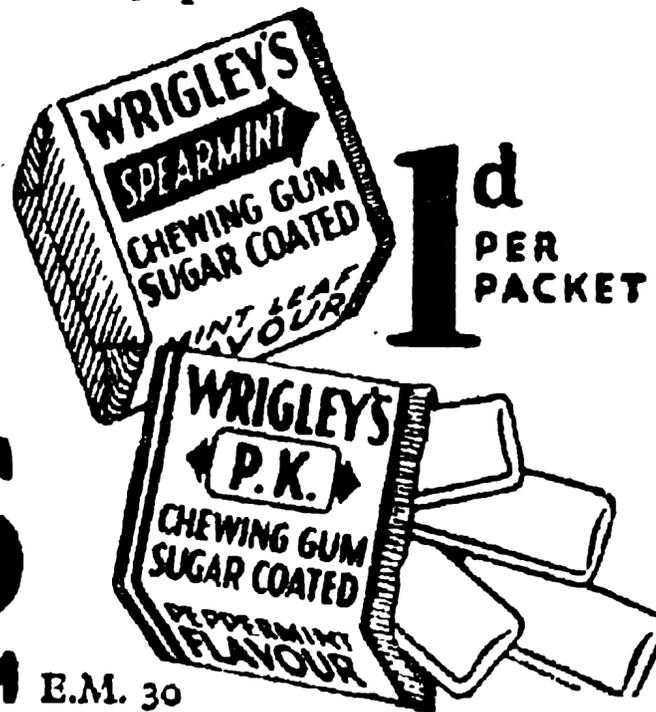
The score's now even, 2 all . . . the whistle blown for half-time. Half-time for a brief rest and a refresher. That means Wrigley's . . . of course. Nothing like a piece of Wrigley's to refresh you during the game. It keeps the mouth fresh . . . makes you feel alert. Wrigley's helps the digestion, too, and cleanses the teeth. Use it "after every meal."

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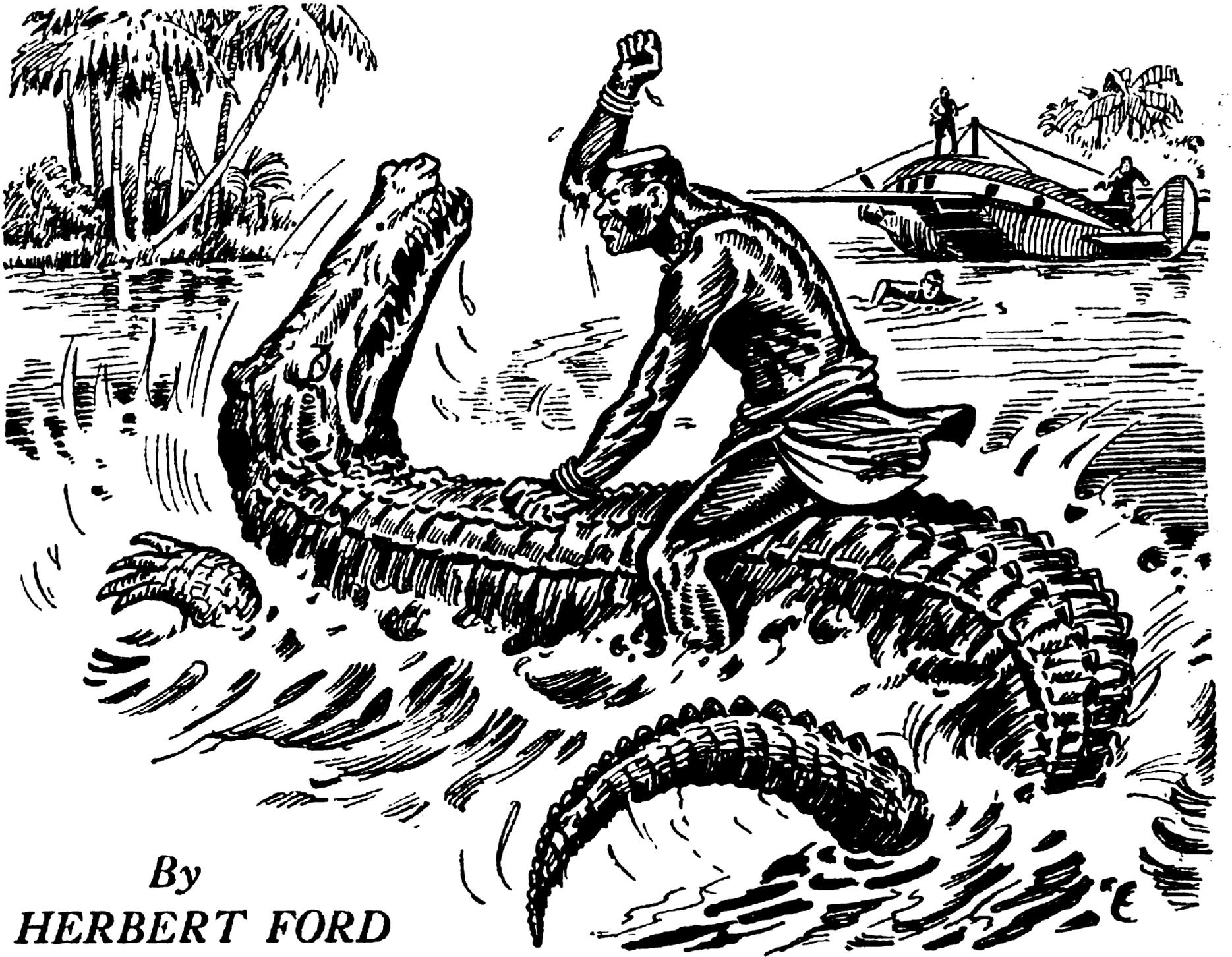
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In the Flying Fish, a wonder craft that travels through water and air, Tom Cook and his cousin, Alva Vandeck, are searching for the City of Gold. Entering a tunnel, they find themselves confronted by a gigantic waterfall. With engines racing, Al steers the Flying Fish up this roaring wall of water.

Ben Overboard!

LIKE a gigantic green veil that was spread from side to side of the cavern, that huge waterfall tumbled. Al could tell that it must be falling from a tremendous height; the rocks beneath the roaring water were not visible, yet the fact that the silvery light of the moon filtered through told Al that somewhere up above was the open air.

The very thought of it inspired him after the stuffy and sulphurous air of that underground tunnel; but it seemed that the Flying Fish could never climb against the tremendous pressure of air caused by the suction of the roaring waterfall.

Al was never likely to forget those tense moments as he crouched down in the cockpit

and watched that green veil of water which cataracted about him, soaking him from head to foot. He had but little space in which to manœuvre the craft until he had passed the roof of the tunnel, when the shaft opened out some fifty feet more. He had switched on the auto-gyro, which enabled the Fish to climb and hover.

He could faintly hear various bangs and crashes as loose articles clattered about inside the hull, and he smiled grimly as he thought of the three cased up like sardines.

"That'll be old Lulu's back teeth!" he grinned, as a loud clatter came from within. "I hope the old ship doesn't shake her engines loose, for if we fall back below—well, it's good-bye, everybody!"

As the flying-boat steadily climbed the pressure of air diminished, and her speed increased until at last Al could see the sky, spangled with millions of stars; saw the glorious moonlight, and then felt a breath of wonderfully fresh, keen air. He inflated his lungs and gave a great gasp of relief. And at last the Fish shot up above the falls, and he was able to bring her to an even keel once more.

He kept her hovering over the chasm, however, and, rolling back the hatch, called for Tom to come up.

"Come out and gaze on a sight you've never seen before, and I hope never will again!" Al shouted. "Look down there, old top! That's what the old Flying Fish has come out of; bang out of the bowels of the earth! Gee, I've been standin' on my head with my heart turnin' somersaults and my heart in my boots. But we've done it!"

Al kept the boat hovering for as long as he could to give the other a view of the terrible chasm that they had literally crawled out of. Lulu gave one long look downwards, then turned away, shaking his head.

"I find it hard to believe that we are still alive," he said, shaking his head to and fro like an old elephant. "This is indeed a boat of miracles, and passes beyond my understanding."

After an hour's cruise along the river, they tied up in a little backwater and turned in, leaving Lulu on watch. Back of them the mighty mountains reared their peaks, seeming to frown at these audacious mortals who had dared to circumvent them.

On either side of the river was rolling high veldt, and northwards were other mountains through which Tom guessed the river would take them and—as it turned out—he was right.

Al and Ben Bold spent next day going carefully over the engines and the hull of the boat, in case she should have sustained any injury. But save having to tighten up a few nuts and oil up here and there, no very extensive repairs were necessary.

"We can start bright and early in the morning, old top," said Al to his cousin. "You're skipper, so make your own arrangements."

"Shall we fly or stick to the water, or are there any other means of locomotion that this marvellous old 'bus contains?" Tom asked with a smile.

"Well, there's one other way she can get along, but I guess we'll keep that for later on, as it means some adjustment," replied the inventor's son. "I guess we won't fly, though, till we have to, because it uses up so much power. There's no violent hurry, so we'll jog along on the surface."

The adventurers followed the windings of the majestic river, stopping now and again to land and shoot for game. Time and again they saw herds of buffalo, giraffe, elephants of unusually gigantic size on the veldt, until at last they reached the foothills of the mountains through which the river passed. As the day wore on the cliffs on either side

became higher and higher, and now they were passing through a gloomy canyon that almost shut out the daylight.

"Ugh, this gives muh th' creeps, boss!" said Ben, who was taking an "easy" on deck whilst Lulu attended to the engines, although little attention was necessary, for they ran so sweetly that it was only as a precaution that anyone need watch them. "Yuh dunno how much farther we gotta go, I s'pose?"

"I do not, Ben," drawled Al. "All I know is we go northward until we hit some-thin'—then we've arrived!"

"Very good way o' explorin', too!" said the Yank, comfortably, as he bit off a large piece of chewing-gum. "But I shall be eternally glad when we git out o' these blamed canyons. Lulu's got the wind up properly—he says this hyar Fish is witchcraft. I keep on chipping him, but he don't say a word."

"Say, I guess I'd go a bit slow chippin' the Zulu, Ben," said Al gravely. "He's a good chap, but don't forget he's been a warrior in his time, and he might want to scalp you, or whatever these Zulus do!"

"Aw, what of it?" snorted Ben contemptuously. "Me, I've been a warrior, too! I battled as a feather-weight an' won th' championship o' th' U.S. Navy! Hallo, nugget!"—as the giant Zulu appeared on deck. "May I ask what you're doin' away from yer engines, ol' Tarbrush?"

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"Baas Tom attends to them in my absence," said the Zulu with dignity. "And, mark you, little man, heed your tongue! Your insolence is distasteful to me. Cease, or I shall have to chastise you!"

"Yeah? Sez yuh!" grinned Ben.

Lulu suddenly twirled and pluckyly aimed a terrific punch at the little Yank. Ben was quick as light. He grabbed the Zulu by the ankle, and with a sharp twist brought him down with a thud on the deck. Then he climbed on to the prostrate Zulu's stomach, pummelling him with his iron-hard fists like a battering-ram.

"Here, cut that out!" ordered Al, laughing. "You'll be overboard in a minute!"

As he spoke there was a swirl alongside, and the largest and most repulsive-looking crocodile he had ever seen took a snap at the twining legs which were dangling out-board.

Unconsciously the horrified Al gave the tiller a sharp twist, and the nose of the Flying Fish slewed to the left. At that second Lulu heaved the little Yank off, and, before Al could grab him, Ben was over the side!

"My stars, that brute'll get him!" yelled Al, and made a dive for his rifle which was in the cockpit.

The Cliff Dwellers!

WITHOUT a moment's hesitation, Lulu dived over the side to where Ben had appeared just above the surface. The Zulu had glimpsed the ugly snout of the great brute, and he knew that in another half-second the crocodile would drag his little pal under without hope of ever rising again.

"Get back to the boat!" he shouted, and struck out to where the crinkled snout and hideous eyes appeared above the water. The crocodile was a very ancient one, and probably short-sighted, but for all that it could move with alarming rapidity in its native element.

Ben wasted no time, but struck out for the Flying Fish, which had been carried some distance away.

Lulu, armed with only a knife, swam straight for the huge beast, using a powerful crawl stroke. He could see that the aged and half-blind brute was nosing about trying to trace his prey by smell, but was somewhat confused by this second human plunging in. Lulu made a half-circle as he neared the crocodile, dived under it and came up on the other side.

He grabbed the crinkled back, gave a mighty heave, and hauled himself straddle-legged on to its scaly back. The great tail thrashed the water and the ugly snout quested about, trying to make out what this strange beast was that was taking such liberties with him.

Crash, crash!

As tail and snout smashed on to the water, and the jaws snapped in a vain attempt to grab his leg, Lulu brought the heavy blade of his knife down on to the only vulnerable part—the soft skin and flesh at the joint of the neck. He knew that it would be vain to attempt to pierce the crocodile's armour plating anywhere else.

Then he stood on the scaly back and, as Al brought the boat alongside, the huge Zulu took a flying leap aboard, whilst Al finished the beast off with a rifle.

The report of the gun echoed and re-echoed amongst the cliffs until it sounded like a machine gun—with the most unexpected effect.

There came shrill yells, like the chattering of apes, from each side of the cliffs, and out from a thousand small caves trooped groups of weird figures.

Little dwarfs they were, of all shapes and degrees, from coal black to horribly distorted little beings with twisted limbs.

But they were one and all armed with either tiny bows and arrows or diminutive spears, which they cast with surprising strength and direction.

"By hokey, that's torn it!" Al yelled. "Below with you all—full speed ahead, Ben! We've gotta get out o' this pronto."

He zigzagged the Flying Fish across and across, so as to confuse the dwarfs' aim, but to his astonishment the shower of arrows ceased as suddenly as it had begun.

A strange and dismal cry came from the crowd of dwarfs—a cry of astonishment, followed by another single word which he could not catch, but which sounded like a name. Then one and all flopped down on their faces and raised the cry again, remaining bowed to the earth as if in worship.

Al looked round in astonishment—to see Tom Cook standing on the whaledeck, staring in sleepy-eyed surprise. Tom had heard the hubbub, and came on deck as he was.

He had been lying down with practically nothing on, for it was very hot below. And now as he stood on the prow of the whaledeck, an errant shaft of sunlight lit up his curly gold hair and intensely white skin, outlining him against the cliffs. His curls, which badly needed the barber, seemed to stand out like a halo.

"What's happened?" he asked.

"Waw! We done it now, baas!" cried Lulu, poking his head out of the hatch, his eyes goggling. "Methinks baas Alva has been and shot the sacred crocodile of these strange dwarfs."

"Tom-kuk! Tom-kuk!"

The sound came more distinctly, and Al looked at his cousin curiously.

"By hokey, they seem to have got your name pat, old man," he said. "You ever been here before?"

"Of course not," replied Tom. "I don't know what's biting them."

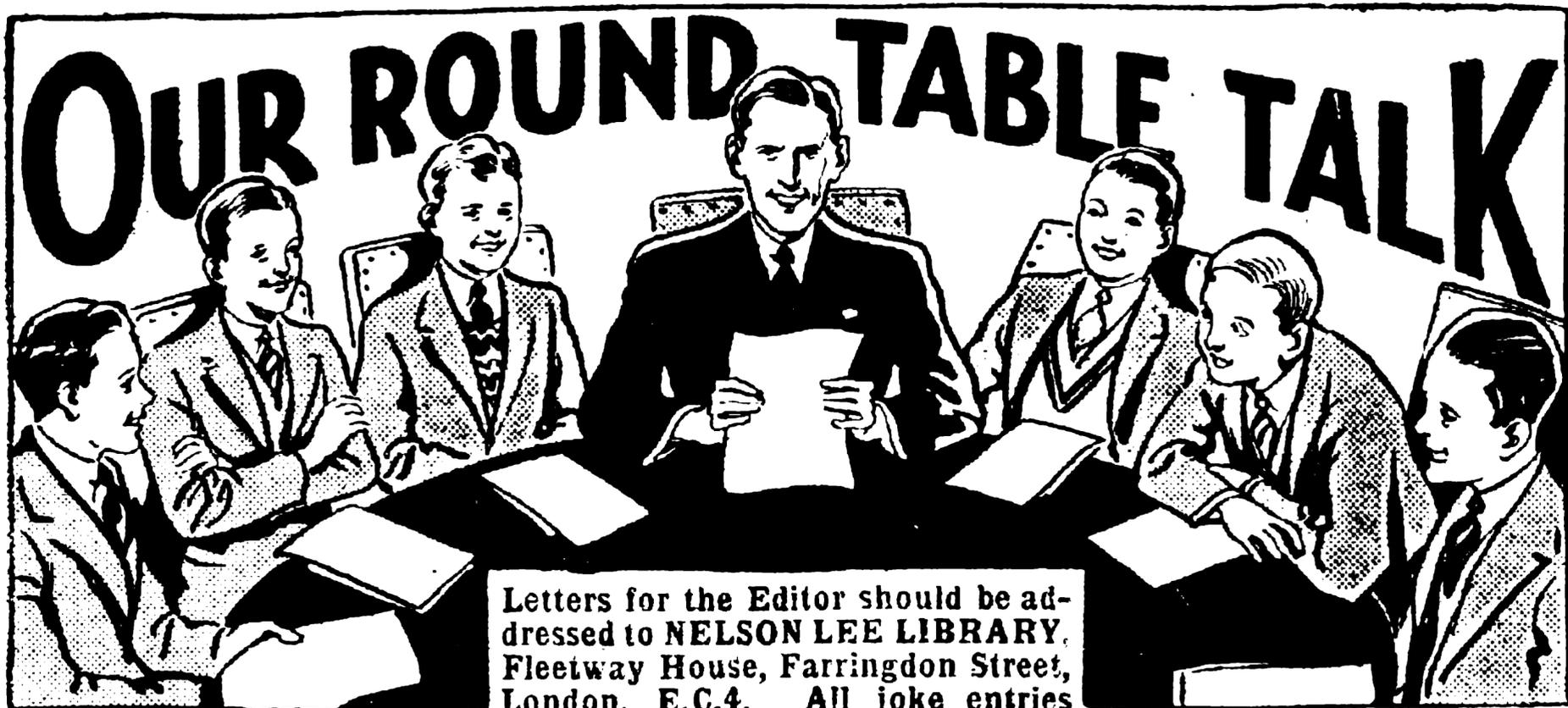
Instinctively he raised his right hand above his head as he stood in the shaft of sunlight, just as Al turned on full power and elevated the planes. The Flying Fish rose from the water and sped through the air, and a great shout of praise went up from the poor afflicted dwarfs as the strange craft disappeared.

"Thanks be we're safe out o' that," said Al, wiping his streaming forehead. "By gum, it was touch and go, old man. What's up?"

But Tom Cook didn't answer. He stood as if in a trance looking back up the canyon out of which they had just flown.

(Next week's chapters of this Super-Thrill Tale of Africa are full of sensational adventures and surprising developments.)

Prizes to be won every week by readers for good jokes.



Letters for the Editor should be addressed to **NELSON LEE LIBRARY**, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. All joke entries

must be sent to The Joke Editor, **NELSON LEE LIBRARY**, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4.

THE second story in our special series of detective thrillers featuring Nelson Lee appears this week, and after you have read it I am confident that you will be more than ever enthusiastic about these yarns.

Having solved the secret of the Silver Dwarf, in spite of Professor Rymer's villainy, Nelson Lee is now ready to embark upon the next stage of his perilous quest—a search for Dick Seymour, the missing heir to the Easington fortune. The detective's amazing adventures will be vividly described in next week's thrilling story, which is entitled:

THE MISSING HEIR!

This yarn is literally packed with exciting action and incident from the opening chapter, and smashes its way to an exciting climax which will leave you breathless. Once more Professor Rymer proves himself to be an opponent with no scruples, but in Nelson Lee he is up against a detective whose courage and resourcefulness prove more than a match for him.

Recommend all your pals to read this magnificent story, and don't forget that it's extra long as well as extra good.

And now for this week's prize-winning jokes from readers.

TALKIES IN THE HOME.

Young nephew (to very stout uncle): "Uncle, you will please get into your evening dress. Then I can throw my lantern slides on your shirt front, and you can be a talkie."

(Ivan Litten, 3, The Cross, Elmouthe, has been awarded a handsome watch.)

WIND UP.

The timid man had just entered his house and found a hefty burglar in one of the rooms.

"Well, and what are you going to do now?" demanded the burglar in a ferocious voice.

"Why—er—I might—er—help you pack your loot," quavered the frightened householder.

(A. Shuman, 20, Tredegar Square, Bow, London, E.3—a pocket wallet.)

JIMMY'S JOKE.

"I've bought a thousand musical instruments," said young Jimmy proudly.

"Whatever are they?" asked his friend, wonderingly.

"Gramophone needles!" laughed Jimmy.
(L. Sullivan, Olive-Dean, Russell, Fleetway House, pocket knife.)

DOCTOR'S ORDERS.

Waiter: "Here! What are you doing with those teaspoons in your pocket?"

Customer: "Doctor's orders."

Waiter: "What do you mean?"

Customer: "I've just been to the doctor. He gave me a prescription and told me to take two teaspoons after every meal!"

(M. Gromer, 6, Hillbrow Street, Johannesburg, S. Africa—a useful prize.)

ALARMING.

Guest (about to enter haunted chamber): "Has anything unusual happened in connection with this room?"

Host: "Not for over fifty years."

Guest: "What happened then?"

Host: "A gentleman who slept there came down to breakfast next morning!"

(L. Golding, The Dolphin, Bletchworth—a pocket knife.)

CHAMPION.

"What!" grumbled the waiter. "No tip? Why, the champion miser of the town always gives me a shilling!"

"Oh, does he?" said the surly diner. "Well, gaze upon the new champion!"

(A. W. Smith, 23, St. Andrew's Road, Maidstone—a pocket wallet.)

TAKEN LITERALLY.

Commanding Officer (to raw recruit): "Now, my man, I want you to regard the regiment as a big band of brothers, and I'm their father. Do you understand?"

Recruit: "Yes, dad!"

(B. Hobley, 20, Fredrick Road, Wylke Green, Warwickshire—a pocket wallet.)

THE TRAIL OF FORTUNE!

(Continued from page 39.)

on December 29th, 1907, nine days after the birth of her son, who was born on the 20th, and who is consequently at the present time twenty-four years of age."

"If I have understood you aright," said Tom, "you promised the late Lord Easington to find his son and restore him to his rightful inheritance, so your next step, I suppose, will be to hunt for Richard Seymour, as he is called?"

"Exactly!"

"But how will you set about it? The only clue you have is Lord Easington's statement that his son was alive in 1926, and was at that time employed as a stockman on one of the stations, or farms, in the interior of New South Wales. That was some time ago. He may be dead now."

"It is possible," said Nelson Lee. "In that case, of course, my labours will have been in vain, for Richard Seymour's death would leave Mark Rymer undisputed heir to his cousin's title and estates, and the professor would succeed to them without any further question."

"It's a good job Mark Rymer doesn't know where Richard Seymour is," remarked Tom.

"A very good job," agreed Nelson Lee. "If he knew where to lay his hands on his cousin's son, you may be sure he would strain every nerve to find him—and doubtless kill him, if I know anything of the unscrupulousness of Professor Rymer!"

"There is another difficulty I foresee," said Tom. "Supposing that Richard Seymour is alive, and that he is still at the same place as he was in 1926, how are you going to find him? There is an unfortunate gap in Lord Easington's statement—where the paper was burnt—and all you know is that Richard

Seymour is, or was, employed by a man named Macpherson, who owns a station on some unknown downs, an unknown number of miles away to the south of some unknown place, the name of which ends in ———gan!"

The detective smiled.

"I do not anticipate much difficulty on that score," he said. "You appear to forget that Lord Easington states that he wrote to Sinclair's Detective Agency, in Pitt Street, Sydney, and that it was from them that he received the information embodied in his statement."

"Ah, now I understand!" cried Tom. "You will go to Sinclair's Agency, and ask them to look up their books and give you the exact address of the place where Richard Seymour was living in 1926?"

"Precisely," said Nelson Lee, rising to his feet. "I intend going straight to the Bank of Australia, in George Street, and ask them to take charge of the Silver Dwarf and all these documents. I shall then drive to Pitt Street, and interview Mr. Sinclair, and as soon as he has told me what I want to know I shall proceed at once to Mr. Macpherson's station, wherever it may be."

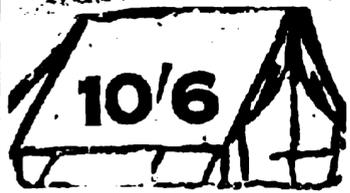
"If Richard Seymour is there, my long quest is ended. If he is not there, I shall have to find out where he has gone, and follow him. No matter how long it may take, I will never rest nor turn aside until my task has been accomplished!"

Ten minutes later he secured a taxi and was driven away, little dreaming that Mark Rymer had already obtained Richard Seymour's address, and was even then, at that very moment, on his way to Macpherson's station!

THE END.

(The Gripping Adventures of Nelson Lee in the wild bush regions of Australia are told in next week's complete Detective-adventure story: "The Missing Heir.")

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