

MEET NELSON LEE, THE WORLD'S GREATEST DETECTIVE
INSIDE!

THE NELSON LEE

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OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

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Magnificent Extra-Long Complete Detective-Thriller

THE FINAL



From the deck of the liner, Nelson Lee looked across towards the stranded ship. With a gasp of horror he saw Rymer and Dick Seymour locked in a deadly embrace, lurch over the rail, and fall into the sea below.

A long and perilous voyage in quest of the missing heir to a great fortune has led Nelson Lee, the famous detective, halfway round the world. And ever on his trail has loomed the menacing shadow of Professor Mark Rymer, master-criminal, who has sworn to prevent the detective from achieving his object. So the fierce battle of wits between these two super-men continues—until, at last comes—THE FINAL ROUND!

CHAPTER 1.

News of the Missing Heir!

NELSON LEE, the famous detective, stared thoughtfully across the wide vestibule of the Masonic Hotel in Napier, New Zealand, and watched the surging crowd. But his mind was far away from the present scene.

He was thinking of the amazing series of adventures that had brought him so far from St. Frank's School in England, to this town in New Zealand.

He thought of Professor Mark Rymer, his enemy in this strange quest for a missing heir, and wondered where he was.

Yes, this had certainly been the most amazing of his cases. Until the Earl of

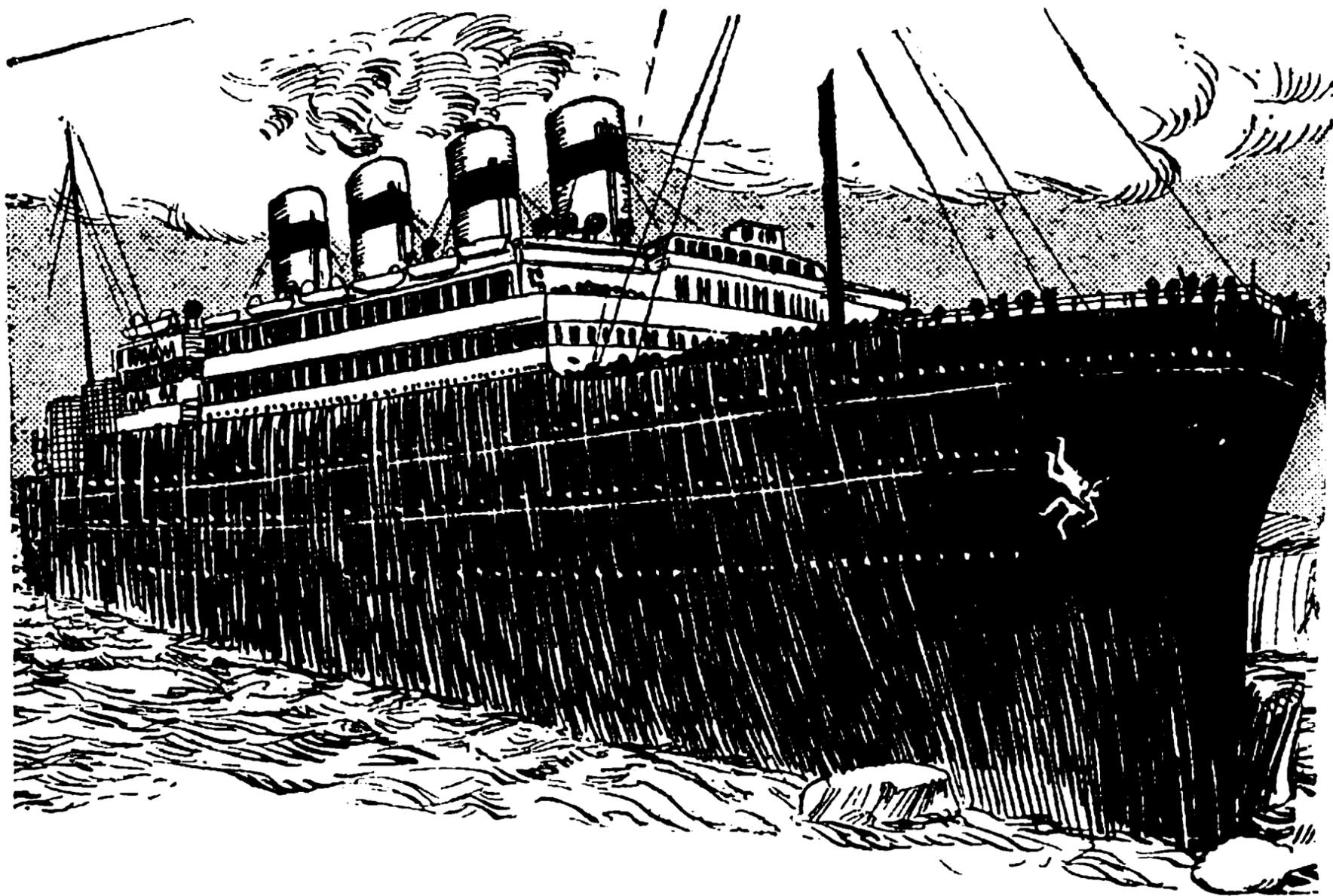
Easington had met with a fatal accident in the hunting field, his lordship had always been regarded as a confirmed bachelor, and Professor Mark Rymer, of Westminster University, an unscrupulous man, was looked upon as his only living relation.

But on his death bed Lord Easington had confessed to Lee and Mark Rymer that, many years before, he had been secretly married, and that he had a son living. His wife had died, and an aged nurse, Mrs. Seymour, had been paid well to adopt the child as her own and to emigrate with the boy to New South Wales.

Naturally, this news enraged Mark Rymer, for it spelt the doom of all his hopes. Lord Easington had died, but not before he had extracted a promise from Lee that he would

Relating the Amazing Exploits of Nelson Lee, the Famous Detective!

ROUND!



not rest until the missing heir to the Easington fortune had been found and restored to his rightful inheritance.

Mark Rymer had done all he could to prevent the detective from getting the proofs of the marriage, and from finding out anything at all about young Dick Seymour. But Lee had been successful in obtaining the necessary documents relating to the marriage and having them stored in the safe of a bank at Sydney.

Not only that, he had discovered that Dick Seymour had been employed as a stockman on a sheep station in New South Wales, but had afterwards gone to Napier, New Zealand, where he was a partner in a frozen meat concern which had afterwards gone bankrupt.

So from Australia to Napier Nelson Lee had hurried—arriving at that City after an uneventful voyage. Unknown to him, however, Rymer had also travelled to Napier, and was even now staying at the Clarendon Hotel.

Lee watched the crowd for a few minutes longer, but at the sight of the proprietor moving across the vestibule, he jumped to his feet and buttonholed him.

“I am searching for a young Englishman who goes by the name of Richard Seymour,” he said. “He was formerly employed as a stockman under a certain Mr. Macpherson, who runs a station on Garoo Downs, in New South Wales. He left Australia a little over three years ago, and came to Napier, where he bought a partnership in a small frozen meat factory. A few months later, however, his partner absconded and left him with a bankrupt business on his hands. When last he was heard of he was struggling to pull the business round, but whether he succeeded or whether he failed, whether he is still in Napier, or whether he has left, we do not know at present. Can you tell me? Can you give me any information about him?”

“I’m afraid I can’t,” said the proprietor. “To the best of my belief I never heard of such a person, and I can’t think of anybody who answers to your description of him.”

“Then I must inquire elsewhere,” said Nelson Lee. “Mr. Macpherson has informed me that when Dick Seymour used to write to him he frequently mentioned the name of a Dr. Irving, of this town. It would appear from his letters that he and the doctor were on terms of the closest intimacy. It is more than likely, therefore, that if anybody can

give me reliable information about Dick Seymour, it will be Dr. Irving. Do you know him?"

"Very well indeed, sir," said the proprietor. "He is on the staff of the new Napier Hospital."

"So I understand," said the detective. "Where does he live?"

The proprietor gave him the address of the doctor's house, which was situated on the high ground immediately above and behind the town, and a couple of miles or more from the hotel.

Despite the distance and the lateness of the hour, however, the detective promptly sallied forth, and at half-past eight he was ringing the front door bell of a handsome modern villa, built of pumice stone, and surrounded by a neat little plantation of orange and lemon trees.

"Is Dr. Irving at home?" he asked the servant who answered his ring.

"No, sir," she replied. "He was called out a few minutes ago to attend to a young gentleman at the Clarendon Hotel, who has broken his arm."

Thanking the servant, Lee retraced his steps into the town and made his way to the Clarendon.

"Is Dr. Irving here?" he asked, addressing one of the waiters in the entrance-hall.

"Yes, sir," said the waiter.

"Is he still engaged with his patient?"

"No, sir. He finished with the young gentleman ten minutes ago, and he and the young gentleman's father have just gone into the smoke-room."

The detective thanked him, and strode off towards the smoke-room, little dreaming that at that very moment Professor Mark Rymer was at the very next table to Dr. Irving.

SUCH, however, was actually the case! The professor had arrived at Napier ahead of Nelson Lee, and had taken up his quarters at the Clarendon Hotel. On the Friday he had visited all the frozen-meat establishments in the neighbourhood, and had interviewed the managers or proprietors. Many of these had assured him that they remembered young Dick Seymour very well; remembered him coming to Napier, remembered him buying a partnership in the "Southern Cross Freezing Works"; remembered his partner absconding; remembered the whole concern going smash, and leaving Dick without a penny to bless himself with. But none of them had been able to tell Mark Rymer what had become of Dick—whether he was still in Napier; whether he was in some other part of New Zealand; whether he had returned to Australia, or whether he had emigrated further afield.

Nothing daunted, the professor had resumed his inquiries on Saturday morning, and had interviewed the leading merchants and tradesmen of the town.

None of these, however, had been able to give him the slightest information of im-

portance, and at nine o'clock at night, weary and dispirited, he had returned to his hotel, where he strolled into the smoke-room, and had asked the waiter to bring him a brandy-and-soda, and the current issue of the local newspaper. Five minutes after his arrival a couple of men, one of whom was Dr. Irving, had entered the room, and had taken their seats at the table just behind him. Five minutes later still the door swung open and Nelson Lee walked in.

For one brief fraction of a second the professor was absolutely paralysed with consternation. If Nelson Lee had known Dr. Irving by sight, and had glanced round the room in search of him as soon as he had opened the door, Mark Rymer would infallibly have been discovered.

The detective, however, had never seen Dr. Irving in his life, so that the first thing he did when he entered the room was to turn to a waiter who had been standing just inside the door, and ask him to be so good as to point out the doctor to him. This the waiter did; but by the time the detective glanced in the doctor's direction the professor had recovered from his momentary stupefaction, and had concealed his face behind his newspaper.

"Only just in time!" he muttered to himself, as he cautiously peered round the edge of the newspaper. "If I'd been two seconds later——"

His musings ended in a quick, spasmodic intake of the breath. It had been a near thing.

THE detective had closed the doors, and was coming straight towards him!

For half a dozen agonising moments the professor thought that Nelson Lee had discovered him, and was coming to arrest him. An icy shiver ran down his spine, and his right hand swiftly stole into the pocket in which he kept his revolver.

Then a sigh of relief burst from his lips; his grip on the newspaper grew less convulsive; his right hand was withdrawn from his pocket, leaving his revolver untouched. He had been alarming himself without cause. Nelson Lee had not discovered him. The detective, in fact, had halted at the table just behind Mark Rymer, and had raised his hat to the two men who were sitting there.

"Dr. Irving, I believe?" the professor heard him say.

The younger of the two men bowed. The elder of the two rose to his feet and held out his hand.

"Then I'll wish you good-night, doctor," he said. "You'll look in again in the morning, of course?"

"Certainly," said the doctor. "I'll be round about half-past ten. Good-night!"

"I hope I haven't driven your friend away," said Nelson Lee, as the doctor's companion left the room.

"Not at all," said Dr. Irving. "He was just going when you arrived. But whom have I the honour of addressing?"

"My name is Nelson Lee," said the detective, as he dropped into the vacant chair, with his back almost touching Mark Rymer's.

"Nelson Lee!" cried the doctor, grasping him warmly by the hand. "The famous detective?"

"Knock out the 'famous' and I plead guilty," said Nelson Lee, with a smile. "I've just been up to your house, and the servant directed me here. Can you spare me five or ten minutes?"

"Fifty-five, if you like," said the doctor. "What is it? A badly-wrenched knee, I should say, by the way you limped across the room just now."

"Your diagnosis is correct," said Nelson Lee. "As a matter of fact, according to the Cobar doctors, I am suffering from the effects of a dislocated internal semilunar cartilage. But that isn't what I wish to consult you about just now. Did you ever hear the name of the late Lord Easington?"

"Never," said the doctor promptly. "Who was he?"

"He was one of the richest men in England," said Nelson Lee. "He met with an accident in the hunting field, last Christmas Eve, and died the same night. He had always been supposed to be a bachelor, but on his deathbed he confessed that he had contracted a secret marriage in 1907, that his wife had borne him a son and heir, and that to the best of his belief this son and heir was still alive.

"After many weary months of patient investigation I have at last discovered that Lord Easington's missing heir is a young fellow named Dick Seymour, who was formerly employed as a stockman on one of the stations in the interior of New South Wales. I have been to this station, and have interviewed the owner, whose name is Macpherson. He tells me that Dick Seymour left him a little over three years ago and emigrated to New Zealand—to this very town, in fact. He tells me, moreover, that you and Seymour were very great friends, and that if anybody can inform me where Dick Seymour is to be found it is you."

"That is so," said the doctor, nodding his head.

"You know where Dick Seymour is?"

"I do."

"Where is he?"

"In the Sandwich Islands."

Upon hearing these words Mark Rymer came near to betraying himself by the groan of dismay which burst from his lips. The detective, on the other hand, received the news with comparative indifference.

"In the Sandwich Islands?" he repeated.

"That's rather vague, isn't it? There are so many of them—Nihau, Kauai, Oahu, Molokai, Hawaii, Maui, and goodness only knows how many more! Do you know which of these islands he's on?"

"Yes. He's in Hawaii. I'll give you the exact address. If you've got a slip of paper handy, you'd better write it down."

The detective took out his note-book. Mark Rymer whipped out a pencil and tore off a corner of his newspaper.

"Ready?" said Dr. Irving. "Richard Seymour, care of Pryde and Company, Kalapana, near Hilo, Hawaii, Sandwich Islands. Got it?"

"Yes, thanks," said the detective, as he jotted down the particulars in his note-book and replaced it in his pocket. "How long has he been there?"

"About eighteen months," replied the doctor. "He came to Napier a little over three years ago. He had saved a bit of money, and he invested it all in a rotten concern known as the Southern Cross Freezing Works. Unfortunately, I didn't make his acquaintance until after he had signed the deed of partnership, or I could have told him what everybody here in Napier knew—namely, that the whole concern was a swindle from beginning to end, and was tottering on the verge of bankruptcy.

"About three months after I became acquainted with him, his partner absconded, and left poor Dick to make his peace with an army of angry creditors. For upwards of a year he struggled hard to pull the business round, but the odds were too great for him, and at last he had to go under."

"He went bankrupt?"

"No; he was too proud to do that. By dint of hard work and frugal living, and by selling all his plant and stock in trade, he managed at last to pay off all his creditors in full. When he had done that, however, he was a ruined man—absolutely penniless."

"So he emigrated to the Sandwich Islands?"

"Yes. Three months after he left I received a letter from him telling me that he had obtained employment on a big sugar, rice and banana estate, owned by a wealthy Englishman of the name of Pryde, who trades as Pryde & Co. A few weeks later he wrote to say that Mr. Pryde appeared to have taken a great fancy to him, and had promoted him to be a sort of overseer. Later still, he wrote and told me that he had been appointed manager."

"Manager!" exclaimed the detective. "That's quick promotion, isn't it?"

"It is," said the doctor. "But if you knew Dick Seymour, you wouldn't be surprised. He is the sort of fellow who wins your regard and trust very quickly—the sort you know for sure would never let you down. There was something about him that was different. That's a vague way of putting it, but I cannot express myself any better. I often used to wonder how it came about that a young fellow from the backwoods of Australia had such refined and gentlemanly instincts. But now that I know the true history of his birth, the mystery is explained."

"Then you don't think he will disgrace his new position, when I have found him, and have restored him to his rightful inheritance?"

"He will be a credit to it," said the doctor earnestly.

"I am glad of it," said Nelson Lee. "In the meantime, if I have understood you aright, he is now the manager of Mr. Pryde's estate."

"Yes."

"At Kalapana, near Hilo in the island of Hawaii."

"Yes."

"When did you last hear from him?"

"A few days ago."

"And he was still there?"

"Yes."

"And not likely to leave?"

"Not at all. Why should he? He has a comfortable and well-paid billet, he is in favour with his employer, and, between you and me, I rather fancy he's in love with Old Pryde's daughter."

"That's the best news of all."

"Why?"

"Because, if he's in love with his employer's daughter there's not much fear of him running away before I can find him."

"You will go to Hawaii?"

"I must. I can cable to him, I suppose?"

"Yes," said the doctor. "But wait a minute."

The doctor called to one of the waiters and asked for a shipping list.

"It's a peculiar situation," he said, after consulting the list. "There is no direct cable between New Zealand and the Sandwich Islands, which, as you know, do not belong to the British Empire. A cable would have to go to Wellington and then either to Sydney, and then direct to Hawaii, or else from Wellington direct to Fiji, and from there on to Hawaii."

"But a cable would be quicker than a ship," said Nelson Lee.

"On account of the roundabout cable routes from Napier," replied the doctor, "and the fact that a fast liner leaves Auckland early Monday morning, and will get you to Hawaii in five days, there is not such a lot to be gained by a cable."

"You are right," said Nelson Lee. "But this is Napier, and how do I get to Auckland?"

"There is no railway north of Napier," said the doctor. "But our roads are good, and you can easily hire a powerful car for the journey to the rail-head at Rotorua, where an express will take you to Auckland, and get you there with six hours to spare."

"It sounds easy," said Nelson Lee exultantly. "The end of my quest is in sight."

"From Honolulu," said the doctor, "you will have to take a local steamer to Hilo, but it is only a matter of eight or nine hours. From Hilo to Kalapana by car another four or five hours, as near as I can tell from Dick's letters, so that within a fortnight from now you ought to be face to face with Dick Seymour. By the way, you've never seen him, have you?"

"Never," said Nelson Lee.

"Then why not come back with me to my house, and I'll show you his photo?"

"That's very good of you, doctor," said Lee. "I should like to see a photo of Dick Seymour. I have come across the world to find him, and this is almost the end of my quest. I have been near to death scores of times, and within an ace of failure. But now, there is just one more brief journey and my task is ended, and I shall be free to return to St. Frank's. So a trip to your house hardly matters even at this time of the night. I will come with you now, and in the morning I will set off to meet Dick Seymour face to face and tell him of his inheritance."

"The photograph will be the last shred of evidence you require, I daresay," said the doctor. "And after this you will have nothing to fear, for little harm could befall you between here and Hilo."

"You are right," said the detective. "The end is in sight. More than that, I have but to wait in patience while the liner carries me to Honolulu. I have all the facts, and all the details, at my finger ends, now. All the same, I think, to make doubly sure I shall send that cable first thing in the morning, and then nothing can go wrong with my plans. I know where to find Dick Seymour. There is no possible chance of him running away from me any more, and in a short fortnight I shall have restored him to his rightful place in the peerage of Great Britain."

He put on his hat and rose to his feet. Dr. Irving followed suit, and a moment later they had quitted the room.

CHAPTER 2.

An Unexpected Ally

NELSON LEE walked beside Dr. Irving towards the latter's house, on the outskirts of the town, quite unaware that the figure of Mark Rymer was gliding stealthily after them.

Rymer had decided to dog the footsteps of the detective and make another attempt on his life at some quiet spot.

"It's too good a chance to be missed," he muttered between his clenched teeth. "Even if I fail to make an end of him I ought at least to be able to prevent him catching the Sonoma at Auckland."

With consummate skill he shadowed the detective and the doctor along the road in front of the hotel, up the hill, at the back of the town, and through the outlying suburbs beyond.

When he saw them enter the doctor's house, which was surrounded by a miniature plantation of orange and lemon trees, he seated himself at the foot of one of the trees, and set to work to review the situation.

He had heard every word of Dr. Irving's story. The missing heir was in the Sandwich Islands. The next steamer for Honolulu was due to leave Auckland on the Monday. In

order to catch that liner it would be necessary to leave Napier by car the following morning and drive to Auckland, or, possibly, to Rotorua, from which place he could take train to Auckland. If he—Mark Rymer—could rid himself of Nelson Lee then he—Mark Rymer—would be able to proceed to the Sandwich Islands alone, and would have a clear fortnight in which to find Dick Seymour and make an end of him before Nelson Lee could possibly arrive.

He took out his revolver and examined it.

wrong man, and if I wait until I can see his face it will be too late to take him by surprise. I must resort to strategy, and if it isn't Nelson Lee, I can always pass it off by pretending to be drunk."

Chuckling softly to himself, he flung himself face downwards on the ground, with his right arm underneath him grasping his revolver, and his left arm outstretched on the road.

The deception was perfect. To all appearance he had fallen down in a fit, or a drunken

TWO SUPER-MEN WHO ARE OPPONENTS IN THIS STRANGE QUEST!

NELSON LEE

the detective who "always gets his man."



Professor RYMER

Clever — and unscrupulous.



It was loaded in every chamber. The night was dark and the road deserted. One shot at close quarters and the trick would be done.

"But not here," he murmured to himself, as he replaced the revolver in his pocket and rose to his feet. "It is too near the house."

He sauntered back towards Napier. About three-quarters of a mile from Dr. Irving's house he halted.

"The very spot!" he exclaimed.

He was right. No better or lonelier spot for his contemplated crime could have been selected. Trees fringed the road on both sides, and there was not a house in sight. And the time was equally propitious, for it was close upon eleven o'clock, and of traffic there was none.

With his hand on the butt of his revolver, he planted himself with his back against one of the trees and waited. A few minutes after twelve o'clock his quick ears caught the measured tread of approaching footsteps coming from the direction of Dr. Irving's house.

"It's a thousand to one it's Nelson Lee," he mused, as he stole into the middle of the road. "But I can't afford to run any risks. It would spoil everything if I fired at the



The Silver Dwarf
Just a statue—but the key to a fortune.

stupor, or had been stunned by footpads and left for dead. His face, being pillowed on his arm, was invisible.

There was no fear of Nelson Lee recognising him, until it was too late!

Nearer and nearer came the footsteps. Suddenly Nelson Lee—for it was he—caught sight of the outstretched form in the middle of the road. With a startled cry he hurried forward and bent over it. But the cry had betrayed him. Mark Rymer had recognised his voice, and the moment the detective bent over him the professor suddenly leapt to his feet, thrust the muzzle of his revolver into Nelson Lee's face and pressed the trigger.

Crack!

There was a short, sharp report. Lee staggered back as the flame almost scorched his face—but the bullet missed, and even as he swayed, Lee lashed out with his fist and dealt the scoundrel a blow on the wrist that sent the weapon flying from his grasp.

With a scream of fury the professor hurled himself at Nelson Lee and seized him by the throat. Nothing daunted, the detective grappled with him at close quarters, twining his leg behind the professor's knee, locking his hands behind his back, and exerting all his strength to throw him.

For a second or two they wrestled in grim and desperate silence. Then with a grunt of triumph Lee swung his enemy off his feet and crashed him down on the road. Next moment he was kneeling on his chest, and gripping him by the throat.

"Foiled again, Mark Rymer!" cried Nelson Lee. "For once you have overreached yourself. At last——"

The sentence ended in a gasp of alarm, for at that moment a dark form bounded from behind the trees at the side of the road, and a well known voice cried:

"Stick to 'im, professor! I'll 'elp you to settle 'im!"

Both men recognised the voice in the twinkling of an eye. It was the voice of Bush Billy, the erstwhile leader of that gang of outlawed desperadoes who had conspired with Mark Rymer in New South Wales and had contracted to murder Nelson Lee for the sum of five hundred pounds. The gang had been broken up by Nelson Lee, and all its members had either been captured or shot, except Bush Billy, who had made his escape.

IT would be hard to say which of the two, Nelson Lee or Mark Rymer, was the more surprised at finding Bush Billy in New Zealand.

At all events Nelson Lee realised that now he had two implacable foes to deal with instead of one.

Despite this, however, the detective's courage never failed him. The instant he heard the bushranger's voice he clenched his fist and dealt the professor a sledge-hammer blow between the eyes that partially stunned him. Following this, he loosed his grip on his rival's throat, and leaped to his feet; but even as he did so, Bush Billy charged into him from behind, and skilfully "spread-eagled" him.

Nothing daunted, the detective once more attempted to scramble to his feet, but before he could accomplish his purpose Bush Billy flung himself upon him with a whoop of triumph, and pinned him to the ground with his knees in the small of the detective's back.

"Now's yer chance," cried the bushranger, turning his head and addressing the professor. "Look alive, man! Don't lie groaning there all night. Pick up yer gun and shoot him while I hold him down!"

Half dazed by the detective's blow, the professor staggered to his feet and groped in the darkness for his revolver. Before he succeeded in finding it, however, the sound of an approaching vehicle was heard, and a moment later the twinkling lights of a distant car came into view round a turn in the road, about a quarter of a mile away.

"Hurry up!" demanded Bush Billy, in a low, excited whisper. "How much longer are yer going to be?"

"I—I can't find my gun," stammered the professor, whose head was still dizzy from the effects of the detective's blow.

"Then shove yer hand into my hip-pocket and you'll find a life-preserver," said Bush

Billy, as he slipped his fingers round to the front of Nelson Lee's throat and gripped the detective's windpipe in order to prevent him shouting for help. "Hurry up!"

Trembling with excitement and anxiety, Mark Rymer thrust his hand into Bush Billy's pocket and drew out a short, thick cane, weighted at one end with an egg-shaped lump of lead. Gripping this by the unloaded end, he dropped on one knee and dealt the helpless detective a savage blow on the back of the head.

"Here! Give me the thing!" growled Bush Billy, springing to his feet. "You din't know how to use it!"

He snatched the loaded cane from the professor's trembling hand, swung it aloft, and brought it down with a sickening crash on the side of the detective's head, an inch or two behind his left ear.

"That's the way to use a life-preserver," he chuckled. "Now, come with me, and I'll show you a short cut back to Napier."

He seized the professor by the arm and dragged him into the shelter of the trees by the side of the road. Scarcely had he done so ere the car came to a standstill with a grating of brakes, and a moment later a double-voiced shout of alarm told them that the still figure had been discovered.

By the time the two occupants of the car had alighted, however, the two confederates had scaled a low stone wall, and were racing down a deserted suburban lane. A quarter of an hour later they had gained the outskirts of the town, and were walking through the lighted streets with the sober, respectable gait of a couple of law-abiding citizens returning to their homes.

"This is where I am staying," said Mark Rymer, halting outside the door of the Clarendon Hotel, and speaking for the first time since they had left Nelson Lee.

"Tell me something I don't know," replied Bush Billy.

"You knew I was staying here?"

"Why, of course!"

"How did you know?"

Bush Billy grinned.

"Dash my buttons, if you ain't the queerest cove I ever struck!" he exclaimed. "D'you know, you've never even asked me yet how I came to be so near at hand when you tried to nobble Nelson Lee."

The professor passed his hand across his aching brow.

"I'm not myself to-night," he said. "That blow Lee gave me between the eyes has thoroughly unnerved me. I seem to have been living in a sort of dream for the last half hour. Tell me all about it."

"About my being in Napier?"

"Yes!"

"You heard as how I escaped from the troopers in the Wangonilla Valley?"

"Yes! You mounted one of Bellamy's horses and galloped off before they discovered you."

"That's so. Well, I galloped the nag as far as Bobalong, turned it adrift, walked into

Nyngan at dark, and then took train to Sydney. On the Saturday morning I was strolling along the Circular Quay, when I happened to catch sight of you. I shadowed you, and found as you'd booked yer passage to New Zealand in the Waihora, so I promptly did ditto."

"You came to New Zealand in the same boat as myself?"

"Aven't I just said so?"

"But I never saw you."

"Of course you didn't. 'Cause why? You was saloon and I was steerage. Besides, I kept out of yer way as much as possible. I thought you'd maybe cut up rough if I claimed yer acquaintance on the liner."

The professor's deep eyes contracted to the merest slits. Something in the tones of Bush Billy's voice had galvanised his flagging faculties into life again.

"LET us understand one another," he said. "Why have you followed me to New Zealand?"

"That's a straight question, and you shall 'ave a straight answer," said Bush Billy. "I'm a ruined man, with a price on my head, and all through 'elping you! One good turn deserves another. It's you what got me into my present crape, and it's you what's got to get me out of it! I'm tired of this side of the world. I'll try the other. To put the matter in a nutshell, you've got to take me with yer to dear old England and set me up on a nice little farm, and a couple of thousand or so as working capital."

"And if I refuse?" asked the professor, blinking his eyes and arching his rounded shoulders.

"But yer won't," said Bush Billy cheerfully. "I know too much about Macpherson's Station, and Barnby Coppice, and the Glen, and the Wangonilla Valley, and that little affair to-night."

"In other words," said the professor quietly, "you are going to blackmail me, and if I refuse to pay you a sufficient amount of hush-money you are going to denounce me to the police."

"Spoken like a book," said Bush Billy.

The professor shrugged his shoulders.

"Finish your story," he said. "You have already told me that you came to New Zealand in the Waihora. In that case you would arrive in Napier the same time as myself. Why haven't you made yourself known to me before?"

"Bad luck," said Bush Billy curtly. "I lost you in the crowd at the railway station on Thursday night, and couldn't find no trace of yer until I saw you walk into this hotel about nine o'clock to-night. While I was waiting outside, trying to pluck up courage to come in and ask to see you, I saw Nelson Leo walk in. A bit later I saw him come out again with another fellow; and then I saw you glide out after 'em. I guessed you was up to some mischief, so I follered you."

"You followed me to Dr. Irving's house?"

"Every inch of the way. Then I followed you back to them trees, saw yer lying in wait for Nelson Lee. I kept quiet till I saw yer was getting the worst of it, then I bounced out of my hiding-place and gave you a helping hand."

"Well," said the professor grimly, "I won't pretend that I shall be pleased to have your company all the way to England; but seeing that I am completely in your power, I have no choice but to accept your terms. In the meanwhile, however, you will probably be surprised to learn that I am not thinking of returning to England just yet. You know why I came to Napier?"

"To hunt for your cousin's missing heir."

"Exactly. Well, I haven't found him. But I've found out where he is. He is a policeman in Masterton, which is about two hundred and fifty miles south of this place."

This statement was a deliberate lie, for nobody knew better than Mark Rymer that the missing heir was in the Sandwich Islands. But although he had pretended to accept Bush Billy's terms, he was firmly resolved to give that worthy the slip at the earliest possible moment. And this was the means by which he hoped to do it.

"Then you'll be going to Masterton afore you return to England?" said Bush Billy.

"Of course," said the professor. "It is no use my returning to England until I have settled accounts with my cousin's heir. Will you come with me to Masterton, or will you wait in Napier until I come back?"

"What d'yer think?" said Bush Billy. "I'll come with yer, of course! Now that I've found you, I'm not going to lose sight of yer in a hurry."

"Very good," said the professor calmly. "I'm glad you're willing to accompany me to Masterton, for I may possibly need your help again. We can't leave Masterton to-day—it is too late. I plan to catch the first train in the morning. Meet me at the railway station at a quarter to nine, and we'll discuss our future plans in the train. Is that agreeable?"

"Quite!" said Bush Billy.

"Good-night, then," said Mark Rymer, and he turned into the hotel, muttering softly to himself: "The simple-minded fool! I shall leave here by car for Rotorua at half-past six, so that while he is cooling his heels at the station I shall be well on my way to Auckland and the liner!"

CHAPTER 3.

The Champagne Pool!

MARK RYMER was up early next morning, by arrangement, in order to be ready at half-past six, when the car and chauffeur he had hired would call to take him to Rotorua. The waiter in the grill-room, however, had heard news, and hastened to pass it on, asking the

professor if he had heard of the "attempted murder of Mr. Nelson Lee."

On the professor replying in the negative, the waiter informed him that the great detective had been found, shortly after midnight, lying unconscious on one of the suburban roads. The two men who had found him—so the waiter said—had thought at first that he was dead; but it had afterwards been found that he was merely suffering from severe concussion of the brain. He had been carried to Dr. Irving's house, which was quite close to the spot where he had been found.

He was still unconscious, and likely to remain so for several days, but the doctor thought that he would eventually recover. There was no clue to the identity of his assailants, who were believed to have been two in number, and the whole affair was an unfathomable mystery.

It was a bitter disappointment to Mark Rymer to learn that his rival was not dead, though there was some compensation in the news that he was unconscious and likely to remain so for several days. For it would have been very awkward indeed, from Mark Rymer's point of view, if Nelson Lee had recovered consciousness and had revealed the names of his assailants before the professor had time to clear out of the neighbourhood.

"As it is," muttered the professor to himself, "I shall certainly be on my way to Auckland, and may even be on the high seas, bound for the Sandwich Islands, before he finds his tongue."

Rymer had planned to make the journey from Napier to Auckland, travelling by car as far as Rotorua and thence by rail. He could have gone to Rotorua—there being no railway between Napier and that place—by a ponderous motor-coach, in company with other passengers. But Mark Rymer preferred privacy and desired speed, and the motor-coach only went twice a week to Rotorua.

At twenty minutes past six that morning he emerged from the hotel, carrying his solitary suitcase, and entered the car which he had hired and which was ready and waiting for him. But almost before he had settled himself in his seat Bush Billy clambered in beside him and greeted him with a cheerful wag of his head.

"Fine morning!" he observed, grinning from ear to ear. "Just the day for a nice ride in the country. This is going to be much more comfy than bare-backed riding out of Wangonilla Valley."

For a second or two the professor was literally speechless with mortification and chagrin. Then he rapped out a savage oath.

"Curse you! Why are you dogging my footsteps like this?" he snarled.

"A nice little farm—in Lincolnshire, for choice—and a couple of thousand pounds to stock it," murmured Bush Billy, producing a short clay pipe and filling it. "I hope you've got a spare rig-out of pyjamas,

or something, for I've come away in such a hurry that I've left my things behind."

With a superhuman effort the professor curbed his rising wrath and retained his self-control. The chauffeur was waiting for the word to start. There was not a moment to be lost if he wished to get rid of his undesirable acquaintance.

"Look here," he said, with an air of pretended candour. "I'm willing to admit I deceived you last night."

"Excuse me, but you didn't," said Bush Billy, as he blew out a cloud of evil-smelling smoke. "You tried to fool me, but it didn't come off. I knew all the time you was lying, so I just kept watch on this hotel until I saw yer come out this morning. Keeping watch that way is nothing unusual to me."

The professor gazed at him in mingled admiration and exasperation.

"Do you know where I'm going?" he asked suddenly.

"No, and don't care," replied Bush Billy. "All I know is this, where you're going, I'm going, too."

"I'm going to the Sandwich Islands, four thousand miles from here."

"Glad to hear it. I shall enjoy the trip."

The professor shrugged his shoulders and calmly lit a cigar. Black murder was in his heart, but his face was as serene as that of a cherub. Never for an instant did he entertain the idea of taking this ruffian to England with him, but he was shrewd enough to see that there was nothing to be gained by arguing the point just then. He must bide his time—wait his opportunity—and when the opportunity came, he flattered himself he would know how to make use of it.

He gave the signal for the chauffeur to start, and the car moved away from the hotel on the first part of the long drive.

The powerful car, under the perfect control of the skilful chauffeur, ate up the miles, and the roads were perfect. By late afternoon they had reached Taupo, where they pulled up at the Lake Hotel for tea.

Now Taupo is situated in the very heart of the "Hot Lake" district of New Zealand. For hundreds of miles around the country abounds in hot springs, boiling lakes, spouting geysers, mud volcanoes, and roaring steam holes. Six miles from Taupo is the little town of Wairakei, and a mile beyond is the famous Geysir Valley, a romantic gorge, enclosed between precipitous banks, ranging from fifty to a hundred feet in height, beautifully wooded and carpeted with the choicest ferns and mosses.

One of the most remarkable sights in this wonderful valley is the "Champagne Pool," an enormous natural cauldron of boiling water, about twenty yards in diameter. The water in this pool is in a perpetual state of ebullition, in some places with bright clear bubbles like champagne, in others with sudden upheavals of vast masses of water to a height of nine or ten feet. On rare occasions the action of the volcanic fires beneath become



Mark Rymer crawled stealthily towards the lone figure. The heir to the Easington Fortune was in his grasp at last. One knife thrust, and Rymer knew he would rid himself of the one man who stood between him and fabulous wealth.

so violent that the whole surface of the lake is convulsed with foaming billows.

"I'm going to Wairakie," said the professor, when he and Bush Billy had finished lunch at the Lake Hotel, at Taupo. "It's a six-mile walk. You would rather stay here, I suppose, until I come back."

"No fear," said Bush Billy, shaking his head. "If you are going to whatever yer calls the place, then I'm going, too, and don't yer forget it! But I thought you were in a hurry to get to Auckland?"

"So I am, but we have a little time to spare, and this is too good an opportunity to miss seeing the famous Champagne Pool,"

"Everyone to their tastes," said Bush Billy. "And if you go, I go, too."

The professor averted his face in order to conceal a grim, sardonic smile of triumph. It was absolutely necessary to his plans that Bush Billy should go with him to Wairakie, but he had not wished to suggest such a thing himself lest his companion should smell a rat and refuse to go.

"Come along, then," he said, as he put on his hat. "I've been to the place before, so we shan't need a guide."

Bush Billy accordingly donned his cap and lit his pipe, and the two men started out. When they reached the Geyser Valley, Mark Rymer promptly led the way to the edge of the Champagne Pool. A projecting spur of rock—narrow, slippery, and perpetually drenched with steaming spray—juts out for some distance over the pool, and is a favourite coign of advantage for adventurous visitors.

"Here, 'old on, where are yer going?" gasped Bush Billy, as the professor strode on to this projecting spur.

The professor made no reply until he reached the far end of the spur, when his tall, gaunt form was almost lost to view in the writhing wreaths of ascending steam. He glanced all round to make sure that they were alone; then he turned to face Bush Billy, who had halted on the bank at the other end of the spur.

"Can you guess why I have brought you here?" he asked, in a melodramatic voice. "No? Then I will tell you. I have brought you here in order that you may witness the downfall of all your hopes!"

He raised his voice, and threw a touch of maniacal ecstasy into it. He was acting his part superbly. He wished to lure Bush Billy on to the projecting spur by pretending that he was going to throw himself into the boiling spur.

"Do you think that I am so simple as to believe that you will be content with a farm in Lincolnshire and a couple of thousand pounds?" he continued. "No, no! If I were to take you with me to England my life would not be worth living. You would bleed me at every turn—you would fleece me out of every penny I possess—you would render existence unbearable by your continual extortions and threats. But it shall not be so! Rather than submit to such a fate, I prefer to end my life—to terminate my troubles by plunging into this boiling lake!"

Bush Billy stared at him in horror-stricken dismay.

"Don't be a fool!" he gasped. "I don't mean no 'arm! Come back and——"

"Never!" cried the professor. "You have ruined my plans, and now I will ruin yours! Farewell!"

He turned round and raised his arms above his head, as though he were about to take the fatal plunge. Half-crazy with fear and anxiety, Bush Billy darted forwards and made a grab at the professor's jacket. Then, at last, Mark Rymer dropped the mask. With a wild cry he spun round on his heel, lashed out with his fist, and dealt his victim a stinging blow on the side of the head.

Taken completely off his guard, Bush Billy staggered back and lost his footing on the slippery rock. The next instant, with an ear-splitting yell of despair, the bushranger went hurtling down, through the curling mist of steam, and plunged into the boiling lake, vanishing for ever from human view.

A QUARTER of an hour later, Mark Rymer, hatless and breathless, rushed into the Geyser House Hotel, at the end of the valley, and gasped out the startling news that his manservant, John Andrews, had suddenly turned giddy on the edge of the Champagne Pool and had fallen in.

A rescue party was instantly organised and despatched to the scene of the "accident." Their search, however, proved barren of result, and some hours later the professor resumed his journey.

He reached Rotorua the same night, and went on to Auckland the next day by train, just succeeding in catching the liner aboard which he journeyed to the Sandwich Islands. After a week's voyage the liner arrived at Honolulu. Here the professor transhipped to a local steamer and in a few hours he landed at Hilo, on the island of Hawaii. For the first time since his quest began he found himself within fifty miles of Lord Easington's missing heir.

CHAPTER 4.

Found at Last!

"S O far everything is going according to plan," the professor told himself.

He had fully expected to be arrested on account of a cable from Nelson Lee at Napier, but no one had attempted to detain him, and he began to feel confident of ultimate success.

It was late in the evening when he landed at Hilo, and he decided therefore to put up for the night at one of the local hotels, and to proceed to Kalapana next day. As luck would have it, there was a third-rate American hotel just opposite the landing-stage, and as soon as the professor had engaged a bed there, and had satisfied the craving of the inner man, he interviewed the proprietor.

"Do you know a firm of planters in this island of the name of Pryde & Co.?" he asked.

"I should say!" drawled the proprietor, removing a corn-cob from his mouth and speaking with a well-marked American drawl.

"I am given to understand," continued the professor, "that the head of the firm is a wealthy Englishman, named Mortimer Pryde."

"That's so," said the American. "Leastwise, he ain't exactly the head of the firm—he owns it."

"Where is the estate?"

"Kalapana, a small seaside town on the south-east coast."

"Far from here?"

"Forty miles by road, twenty-five as the crow flies."

"How can I get there?"

"Ride, drive, walk, fly, crawl—it's all one to me."

"I can get a car here?"

"Sure. It'll be about two hours' drive. The road is none too good and dangerous for speed."

"Does Mr. Pryde live at Kalapana?"

"No. I reckon you've heard of Kilauea?"

The professor nodded his head. Kilauea is the name of the largest active volcano in the world. To be strictly accurate, Kilauea is the name of the crater, and the name of the volcano is Mauna Roa.

"Waal," continued the American. "Kilauea is about twelve miles inland from Kalapana, and Mr. Pryde's estate is between the two. His house, where he and his daughter live, is half-way up the mountainside."

"Do you know his manager?"

"Dick Seymour?"

"Yes. What's he like?"

"Tall, broad-shouldered, dark brown hair, clean-shaven, very smart-looking fellow, and as strong as an ox."

"Where does he live?"

"On the outskirts of Kalapana. Going to see him?"

"I think so."

"Waal, when you get to Kalapana, jest ask the first man you meet to show you Dick Seymour's bungalow, and ef he ain't blind, or deaf, or silly, he'll do it."

"Well, if the roads are tricky it won't be safe driving out there now the sun is setting, I'd better wait until first thing in the morning. Can you arrange to hire me a car? I can't go far away off the island. I can let you have banker's references."

"You pay cash in advance and a deposit. I shan't worry," said the American. "What time will you be wanting the auto?"

"Nine o'clock sharp. Breakfast at eight."

"Right yew are!" said the landlord, as he replaced his corn-cob between his lips. "I'll see yew fixed up."

He was as good as his word, and at nine o'clock the next morning the professor motor to Kalapana. He garaged the car at the Stars and Stripes Hotel.

"What a lovely view you have!" he remarked to the landlord, who was lounging on the wooden veranda of the hotel. "That's Kilauea, isn't it?"

"It is, sorr," said the landlord, who hailed from the Emerald Isle.

"And to whom does that estate belong?" asked the professor, pointing to a long vista of sugar-canes, banana-trees and rice fields, which extended from the outskirts of the town to the foot of the volcano.

"To Mr. Pryde, sorr."

"Lucky man!" said the professor, with an envious sigh.

"Shure, ye may well say that, sorr!" said the landlord. "That's wan av the foinest istates in the oisland av Hawaii, and the man phwat owns it is worth ivery cint av a couple av million dollars. And there's no wan but a slip av a girl to inherit it."

"Does he manage the estate himself?" asked the professor, who wished to find out where Dick Seymour lived, without appearing too inquisitive on the point.

"Not intoirely. He laves the greater part av the management to a broth av a bhoys from Australia. 'Lucky man' ye said just now, referring, av coorse, to Mr. Pryde. Bedad, it's meself that's thinking that young Dick Seymour is as lucky as Mr. Pryde."

"Dick Seymour? Is that the manager's name?"

"Yes, it is. He hadn't a cint to call his own whin he landed in Hawaii, eighteen months ago. And look at him now! He's manager av the istate, and gets a thousand dollars a year, wid an illigant house to live in, and a couple av natives to wait him hand and foot. That's his house; ye can just see the roof over beyand thim trees on the far side av that wood. See it?"

"Er—yes, I think I see what you mean," said the professor, pretending to stifle a yawn.

He had got the information he required, and he now wished the landlord to understand that he was not at all interested in his gossip, and had only been listening out of politeness.

"I think I'll go for a stroll before I have lunch," he said. "If I like the place I may stay here for a day or two."

He sauntered round the town, busying himself getting to know the "lie of the land."

AFTER lunch the heat caused him to lie down in the shade of the veranda, and he did not venture out again until towards sunset. Then he made a "bee-line" for Dick Seymour's house. A quarter of an hour's rapid walk brought him within full view of the house, which proved to be a wooden bungalow, surrounded by a miniature plantation of crew pines and candle-nut trees.

As he paused to take stock of the place, a tall and athletic young fellow emerged from the door and stood for a moment on the

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veranda, with the golden light of the setting sun shining on his handsome face.

Quick as thought, the professor concealed himself behind the trunk of a neighbouring tree. Scarcely had he done so ere a small Hawaiian boy, who had been lying asleep at the foot of the tree, scrambled to his feet with a whimper of fear.

"Don't be frightened," said the professor, patting him on the head. "I shall not hurt you—savvy?" He tossed the boy a coin. "You speak English?" he asked.

The dusky boy nodded his head.

"Then tell me who that gentleman is," said the professor, pointing to the tall figure standing on the veranda.

"Dat Seymour tuan," said the boy.

Mark Rymer's arm dropped limply to his side, and he trembled from head to foot. For quite ten seconds he stood and gazed at his intended victim in silent, gloating triumph. Then two words burst from his twitching lips in a low, vibrating hiss:

"At last!"

CHAPTER 5.

An Interesting Conversation!

BLISSFULLY unconscious of the glittering eyes which were watching him, Dick Seymour shaded his eyes with his hand and gazed across the serried rows of sugar canes in the direction of Kilauea. On one of the lower slopes of the famous volcano, now bathed in golden sunlight and distinctly visible from the veranda of Dick's bungalow, stood a large stone house, built in the style of an English country mansion, and approached by a winding drive. This was the residence of Mr. Pryde, where he and his daughter lived, and Dick gazed long and earnestly at its sun-reflecting windows.

"It's wrong of me, I know it's wrong," he muttered to himself. "I ought not to go, yet I can't resist the temptation."

He placed one hand on the veranda rail and vaulted over into the garden. A moment later he had passed through the rustic gate and was striding through the sugar canes in the direction of the road that led up to Mr. Pryde's house.

Like a cheetah stalking its prey, Mark Rymer glided after him. He thought, as was only natural under the circumstances, that Dick was going to Mr. Pryde's; and he flattered himself that he had only to shadow Dick until he saw him enter the house, and then select some suitable spot where he could lie in wait for him and shoot him as he returned to his bungalow. In other words, the professor resolved to ambush Dick in the same way as he had ambushed Nelson Leo on the occasion of the detective's visit to Dr. Irving's house in Napier.

On this occasion, however, the professor's calculations proved to be wrong. Dick was not going to Mr. Pryde's. About half-way up the road which led to the house was a

little grove of palm trees. The road had been cut through the very heart of this plantation, and was bordered on each side by a perfect jungle of trees and bushes. Upon reaching this spot Dick halted and consulted his watch. Then he planted himself with his back to one of the trees and fell into a dreamy reverie.

"So that's the idea, is it?" mused Mark Rymer. "Waiting for somebody—eh? For whom, I wonder? Miss Pryde? Very likely. Dr. Irving said he was in love with her. M'yes! I think I see how matters stand. Master Dick has arranged with his employer's daughter to meet him here at a certain time, and, like all young lovers, he has turned up too soon. Now, if I could only creep a little bit nearer to him——"

His hand stole to his pocket in search of his revolver. Then a furious imprecation burst from his lips, and he ground his teeth in impotent, baffled rage. He had left his revolver in his suitcase at the Stars and Stripes.

For the moment he was literally beside himself with rage and mortification. Then a murderous gleam leaped into his eyes and an expression of savage determination crossed his face.

"I'll not be beaten!" he hissed between his clenched teeth. "Revolver or no revolver, I'll not let such a golden opportunity slip, I have still my knife!"

He left the road, made a wide detour along the mountain-side, and ultimately reached the little palm grove. With every nerve strung up to concert pitch, he then commenced to crawl on his hands and knees towards the spot where Dick was standing. A yard or two behind the tree against which Dick was leaning was a rounded boulder of solidified lava. Upon reaching this boulder, the professor paused and whipped out his knife. Having opened the biggest blade, he grasped the knife in his uplifted hand and was just about to leap upon the missing heir from behind, when all at once the measured tread of approaching footsteps fell on his ears.

With a smothered oath he hastily concealed himself behind the block of lava, and no sooner had he done so than the well-dressed figure of a somewhat portly Englishman hove in sight.

Dick had heard the footsteps, too, and had awakened from his reverie with something like a guilty start.

"Good-evening, sir!" he said, addressing the new arrival, who was none other than Mr. Pryde.

"Good-evening!" said the latter gravely. "I thought I should find you here."

Again Dick started, and his sunburnt cheeks turned just a trifle redder. Before he could find his tongue, however, Mr. Pryde walked up to him and laid his hand, not unkindly, on his shoulder.

"I don't think I've been a bad friend to you, Dick," he said.

"You haven't, sir," said Dick. "You've been the best friend I've ever had."

"Then don't you think you owe me something in return?" asked Mr. Pryde. "When you came to Hawaii, eighteen months ago, you were absolutely penniless. I gave you employment, and in less than a year I promoted you to be manager of my estate at a salary of a thousand dollars per annum. I do not claim any particular credit for that, for I shouldn't have done it, of course, if I hadn't thought you were worth the money. At the same time, I do think that I had a right to expect that you would treat me in an honourable and straightforward fashion. Can you look me in the face and say that you have done so?"

Dick hung his head and made no reply.

"You know my position, and I think you know something of my ambitions," continued Mr. Pryde. "I am a rich man—richer, perhaps, than you think—and all that I have will one day be my daughter's. Is it unreasonable on my part, then, to expect my daughter to make a brilliant match—to marry a man whose wealth and position are at least equal to her own?"

Dick still remained silent.

"I am not going to tell you how I have discovered your secret," continued Mr. Pryde. "Suffice it to say that I have learned to-day, for the first time, that for several months you have been making love to Nellie, and have been in the habit of meeting her without my knowledge.

"I refused at first to believe that you had been guilty of such underhand behaviour, but when I spoke to Nellie on the subject she frankly confessed that such was the case, and that she had actually promised to meet you here this evening.

"Now, considering all that I have done for you, do you honestly think that your conduct in this matter has been that of an honourable and self-respecting man?"

At last Dick found his tongue.

"No, sir," he said, looking his employer full in the face. "And I have no excuse to offer, except the excuse that to see Miss Pryde is to love her. But I ought to have bottled my feelings. I realise that now, and you have brought me to my senses. Do not misunderstand me. I do not mean that you have cured me of my love for Miss Pryde. That you can never do. But you have opened my eyes to the ingratitude of which I have been guilty. You have also made me realise how impossible it is for me to remain here in your employment. If I were to remain here, not all the promises in the world could prevent me from showing Miss Pryde how much I love her. I must go away, at once—and for ever."

"I am glad to hear you say that," said Mr. Pryde. "As you say, it is impossible that you should remain here after what has happened, and if you had not suggested going away of your own accord, I should have felt it my painful duty to have asked you to accept a quarter's salary instead of a quarter's

notice. Even though you have relieved me of this task, and have practically discharged yourself, I shall still be prepared to pay you —"

"Not a cent," said Dick firmly. "I am determined to shift for myself."

Mr. Pryde bowed.

"Just as you like," he said. "I had no thought of humiliating you when I made that suggestion. I only wanted to help you. If you will not allow me to help you with money, you will perhaps allow me to help you in some other way. Where will you go when you leave here?"

"I neither know nor care," said Dick recklessly.

Again, Mr. Pryde laid his hands on Dick's shoulder.

"Don't talk like that, Dick," he said. "I should never forgive myself if you were to go to the bad. I should feel that I was morally responsible for your ruin, and I am too fond of you, my boy, to contemplate such a state of affairs with unconcern. I admit that I think you have been to blame for making love to Nellie without my knowledge, but with that exception I have never seen anything in your conduct since you came here which has not been that of an upright, fearless, and thoroughly honourable English gentleman. I don't think I ever came across a young fellow for whom I conceived a greater liking; and I don't mind telling you, candidly and frankly, that if only you had a decent income and an assured position, there is no man in the world to whom I would more willingly give my daughter than yourself."

Dick drew himself up to his full height.

"You mean that?" he asked, with eagerness.

"Every word of it," said Mr. Pryde earnestly.

"If I come to you in a couple of years and show you that I have an income of, say, thirty thousand dollars a year, you will permit me to renew my suit for your daughter's hand?"

"I will. In the meantime, however, there is one condition I must impose."

"And that is?"

"During those two years you just give me your word of honour that you will not attempt to communicate with Nellie, either by word of mouth, or by messenger, or by letter, telegram, or by any means whatever."

"I accept your conditions."

"You will leave Hawaii?"

"At once."

"Where will you go?"

"To New York, I think. In the Sandwich Islands there is no scope for a young man with brains, unless he has capital. In New York it is different. There, above all places in the world, the man who has youth and brains and pluck can always be sure of coming out on top. Good-bye. Thank you for all your many kindnesses in the past, and for the hope you have given me to spur me on in the future."

He raised his hat, turned on his heel, and strode away up a narrow winding footpath which led towards the summit of the mountain.

For a moment or two Mr. Pryde stood gazing after him. Then he heaved a wistful sigh and slowly walked away in the direction of his house.

CHAPTER 6.

"The House of Fire!"

FUMING with impatience, Mark Rymer waited until Mr. Pryde was out of sight, then he glided from his hiding-place, and once more started out in stealthy pursuit of his intended victim.

By that time, however, Dick had disappeared round a turn in the winding footpath, and when next the professor caught sight of him, he had gained the summit of one of the lower slopes, and was heading for the crater of Kilauea.

Kilauea is the crater of the volcano. Mauna Loa. When one hears the word "crater" one thinks instinctively of a cone-shaped hill, from the summit of which issue smoke, or flame, or both. In the case of Kilauea, however, there is no such cone-shaped hill. On the contrary, the crater of

Kilauea is an enormous oval pit, two miles in length and a mile and a half in width.

The walls of this pit are fully five hundred feet in depth, and at the bottom is a lake of liquid lava, which is in a continual state of seething agitation.

At night, the cloud of vapour which hangs over this gigantic cauldron begins to glow, and lights up the walls of the pit with a weird effect. Standing on the edge, one looks down into a sea of flame and molten lava, boiling and bubbling in odd and changing shapes.

Jutting out from the side of the pit—which is known to the natives by the name of "Hale-mau-mau," or the House of Fire—are a number of circular rocky ledges, and by cautiously descending these it is possible for the adventurous traveller to make his way to the very edge of the boiling pool, and to stand quite close to the fiery jets.

On the north side of the crater are the Government road from Hilo and a handsome modern hotel, known as Volcano House. On the south side is a rocky, boulder-strewn plain, as lonely and desolate as the desert of Sahara.

As Kalapana lies to the south of Kilauea, it followed as a matter of course that Dick Seymour reached the crater by way of this dreary plain. By that time the sun had sunk to its rest, and darkness had descended with that

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startling suddenness which is peculiar to the tropics.

Upon reaching the edge of the pit, he folded his arms across his breast and gazed into its lurid depths with an air of deepest dejection. Exactly why he had come he could not have explained, yet, nevertheless, he was conscious of a certain sense of consolation in gazing at the ceaseless agitation of the bubbling lava, which seemed to him to be fitly matched by the whirling turmoil which was raging in his brain. When Mark Rymer saw him standing thus, his thin lips parted in an evil, gloating smile.

"Delivered into my hands!?" he mused. "One push, and my task will be ended!"

Once more he whipped out his knife and opened the blade. Then, with the stealth of a Red Indian, he dragged himself in snake-like fashion across the boulder-strewn plain, hiding behind the boulders when the eerie light glowed brightly, and resuming his advance when the light died down again.

Inch by inch he lessened the gap between himself and Dick, till at last there was less than a couple of yards between them. Then, scarcely daring to breathe, he rose silently to his feet; but even as he did so Dick spun round on his heel, with a startled gasp, which was changed an instant later to a cry of alarm as the professor, with a single panther-like bound, hurled himself upon him, and aimed a lightning blow at his heart.

With matchless presence of mind, Dick lashed out with his fist, and struck up the professor's arm. Nothing daunted, the latter dropped his knife, and grappled with his rival at close quarters.

For one brief fraction of a second they reeled and swayed, in a reckless hand-to-hand encounter, on the very brink of the smoke-enshrouded crater. Then an ear-splitting yell of fear rang out, louder even than the roar of the boiling lava, and an instant later, the two men overbalanced themselves and vanished into the pit.

THOUGH never a sound escaped Dick Seymour's lips—for the yell of fear had come from Mark Rymer—he was none the less quite sure that his doom was sealed.

In this, however, he was wrong. The inner walls of the crater bristled with innumerable ledges, and one of these projected from the walls of the pit about fifteen or twenty feet below the spot where the two men overbalanced themselves. The consequence was that instead of plunging into the lake of lava, they fell on to this projecting ledge, where Dick, with great presence of mind, loosened his grip on the professor's throat, clutched him by the collar of his coat with one hand, and anchored himself to the ledge with the other.

For more than a minute they remained in this position, neither of them daring to move, and both of them more or less mentally dazed by the awful peril from which they had so narrowly escaped.

Dick was the first to recover his scattered wits, and dragging himself into a sitting posture, he slowly passed his hand across the professor's face which he had never seen, and which he was still unable to see by reason of the pitch darkness.

"Big nose, high-domed forehead, deep-set eyes, no moustache," he murmured to himself. "He's a stranger to me. Who are you?" he demanded at last.

There was no reply. The professor's brain was rapidly recovering its customary alertness, and he was shrewd enough to realise that if he spoke he would furnish Dick with a means of recognising him in the future.

"If you won't tell me your name," continued Dick, "will you tell me what the big idea is?"

The professor still remained dumb.

"You won't speak—eh?" growled Dick, as he slipped his hand into his pocket. "Very good! Perhaps this will assist you to find your tongue."

He whipped out a revolver and jammed the muzzle to Mark Rymer's head.

"Unless you answer me before I have counted three—" he began, but before he could complete his threat his voice was drowned by a short, sharp, deafening explosion, which appeared to take place in the centre of the molten lake, and which was followed by an ominous, sullen, booming roar.

"The lava is rising! There's going to be an explosion," gasped Dick, leaping to his feet. "Quick! There's not a moment to be lost! Follow me!"

Without waiting for the professor's reply, he thrust his revolver in his pocket, and began to climb up the rugged side of the pit, swinging himself from ledge to ledge with the agility of a squirrel.

Mark Rymer lost no time in following suit, but, as events turned out, their panic-stricken haste proved entirely uncalled for, because, by the time Dick reached the crater's mouth the booming roar had died away, and the seething, bubbling lava, which had risen some forty or fifty feet, was slowly sinking back to its former level.

As soon as Dick realised that the danger was over he once more whipped out his revolver, and the instant Mark Rymer scrambled out of the pit Dick pounced upon him, seized him by the lapel of his coat and thrust the revolver into his face.

"Now, are you going to answer my question?" he asked, striving in vain to catch a glimpse of his adversary's features. "What's your name?"

"John Smith!" said the professor in a low, sullen voice, as unlike his own as he could possibly make it.

"Where do you come from?" was Dick's next question.

"Hilo."

"Why did you attack me just now?"

"I was hard up. I wanted money."

Dick shrugged his shoulders.

"You're lying," he said curtly. "I don't believe a word you've said. However, we'll soon find out whether you're speaking the truth or not. About turn—quick march!"

"Where—where are you going to take me?" faltered Mark Rymer, holding back and pretending to be overcome with terror.

Dick pointed to the distant lights of the hotel in the north side of the crater.

"I'm going to take you to Volcano House," he said. "The proprietor is a Hilo man and knows everybody in that neighbourhood, so that if you—"

His sentence ended in a startled cry, for at that moment Rymer suddenly dropped on his knees, grasped his captor by the ankles, and jerked him backwards off his feet.

So sudden and unexpected was this novel form of attack that Dick Seymour was taken completely by surprise, and almost before he had realised what was happening he was lying on his back on the ground, and Mark Rymer was scuttling across the boulder-strewn plain with the fleetness of a hunted hare.

Fuming with rage and chagrin, Dick hastily scrambled to his feet, picked up his fallen revolver, and dashed away in hot pursuit. By that time, however, the darkness had swallowed up his assailant, and although, just at first, he was able to keep on the professor's track by following the sound of his footsteps, the time soon came when the footsteps were no longer audible, and further pursuit was impossible.

Under these circumstances, Dick had no alternative but to abandon the chase in despair; and with his brain in a whirl of bewildered conjecture as to the meaning of this mysterious attempt upon his life, he thrust his revolver back into his pocket, and struck out at a swinging pace in the direction of his bungalow.

CHAPTER 7.

Success At Last!

WHEN Mark Rymer took to his heels his one and only idea was to put as great a distance as possible between himself and his pursuer. With this end in view he made no attempt to steer any definite course, or to make for any definite destination, but simply bolted straight ahead across the plain and down the rugged mountainside as fast as his legs would carry him.

When he found that he had succeeded in shaking Dick off, he threw himself down at the foot of a verdure-clad bank and refreshed himself with a drink from his pocket flask. After resting sufficiently to recover his wind, he rose to his feet, lit a cigar and struck out in the direction of Kalapana. It was late when he was back at the Stars and

Stripes, where he quietly crept into the hotel through an unfastened window, and as quietly went to bed. At noon the next day, which was Friday, he awoke. After a quick breakfast he sauntered out on to the veranda, where he found the genial landlord leaning over the rail and gazing with a somewhat melancholy air at the distant roof of Dick Seymour's bungalow.

"A penny for your thoughts," said Mark Rymer pleasantly.

The landlord heaved a long drawn sigh.

"I was thinkin', sorr," he said, "that there's more beside meself in Kalapana that'll miss the sight av his handsome face, and the ring av his cheery laugh, and the grip av his honest fist."

"Whose face? Whose laugh? Whose fist?" said the professor, as he dropped into the nearest seat and pulled out his cigar-case.

"Young Dick Seymour's," said the landlord. "We were talking about him last night, ye'll recollect."

"Were we?" said the professor, biting off the end of a cigar. "Oh, yes, I remember now. Dick Seymour—the manager of Mr. Pryde's estate. Has anything happened to him?"

"He's gone—left Kalapana for good," said the landlord, in mournful tones. "There's not a man, woman or child—black or white—in Kalapana to-day, but whose heart is heavy as lead at the thought that we have lost him. Aye, and it's meself that's thinking that the heaviest heart of all will be the heart av the sweet-faced girl in the big house on the hill."

"Miss Pryde?"

"Yes, sorr."

"But if Mr. Seymour was so popular as all this, why has he left, and where has he gone?"

"As to why he's left, that's more than I can tell ye, sorr. They do be saying, down in the town, that Mr. Pryde has given him the sack, but it's meself that's after thinking that the ould gentleman has too much sense to discharge the best and most loyal manager that master ever had. As to where he's gone, that's easy to answer. He's gone to Hilo."

"When?"

"This morning, sorr. He came in here about seven o'clock to wish me good-bye. He had all his luggage with him, and he tould me he was going to Hilo, and from Hilo to Honolulu, and from Honolulu to San Francisco."

"Going to settle in the United States, eh?"

"Yes, sorr. That's what he said."

"And when will he leave Hilo?"

"To-day, sorr. The boat sails for Honolulu at three o'clock this afternoon."

"This afternoon!"

Mark Rymer leaped to his feet as though he had been shot. He whipped out his watch and glanced at the dial. It was five-and-twenty minutes past one. Hilo was nearly

forty miles away, and the boat left at three o'clock.

He thrust the watch back into his pocket and paced the veranda with rapid, agitated strides. After many weary months of patient search and perilous adventure, he had at last succeeded in finding the missing heir, and now it seemed that he was going to lose him again. If Dick Seymour reached Hilo and went on to Honolulu before the professor could catch up with him, the scent would be lost, and all that search must start all over again.

The bare idea was maddening. Yet what could be done? Hilo was forty miles away and the roads were far from good, hilly and tortuous. The professor had the hired car in the garage. It seemed impossible, but he made up his mind to attempt to motor those forty miles in less than an hour and a half!

He halted in front of the landlord, and literally pushed him back into the house.

"Make out your bill and tell your man to

Seymour aboard, was steaming away towards the blue horizon.

Outwardly calm, but inwardly fuming with mortification and chagrin, Mark Rymer drove to the American hotel where he had called on his first arrival at Hilo. He sought an interview with the proprietor.

"Hallo! Yew've got back, I see," said the later, who was seated on the office stool, with his feet on the stove, and the inevitable corn-cob between his lips. "Had a bully time in Kalapana?"

The professor shook his head.

"I went to Kalapana for the express purpose of seeing an old friend of mine," he said, lying with his customary fluency. "When I got there I found that he had come to Hilo a couple of days ago. I followed him here to-day, and now I learn that he sailed this afternoon for Honolulu, with the object of proceeding to San Francisco."

"That's sure rough on yew," said the American, with a sympathetic wag of his

ASTOUNDING ESCAPE FROM PRISON

. . . . Zingrave foils the Long Arm of the Law and returns to seek vengeance on Nelson Lee at St. FRANK'S.

. NEXT WEEK!

have my car round at the front as soon as ever he can," he said. "By hook or crook I must get to Hilo before that steamer sails, if I wear the tyres off the wheels of the car!"

The landlord stared at him in undisguised bewilderment.

"But—but I thought ye said ye didn't know Dick Seymour!" he exclaimed.

"I don't," retorted the professor. "It isn't Dick Seymour I'm thinking of. But I had forgotten until you mentioned it just now that the Honolulu boat sails this afternoon, and I have a most important engagement in Honolulu for to-morrow morning, which I cannot possibly fulfil unless I catch this afternoon's boat."

"Which ye never will," said the landlord.

"I'll try, at any rate," replied the professor. "But we are wasting time. Make out my bill and order my car with as little delay as possible."

The landlord obeyed, and ten minutes later Mark Rymer was on his way to Hilo. Whether he would have succeeded in making the journey within the stipulated time, if all had gone well, is a question which had no answer. For once in a way his luck was dead out.

Fifteen miles from Hilo found him short of petrol, and he lost time waiting by the roadside until another motorist came along and obliged him by selling him a full can. And when at last he drove into the little seaport town, the clocks were pointing to a quarter-past three, and the Honolulu boat, with Dick

head. "What'll yew do—follow him, or give it up as a bad job?"

"I shall follow him, of course. When is the next boat for Honolulu?"

"In two days' time."

The professor choked back a savage oath. His companion grinned.

"It sounds too bad, I know," he said, "but maybe I can fix yew up. Your friend can't leave Honolulu before the day after to-morrow. The 'Frisco packet don't leave till then. See? You've missed the Honolulu boat, but I know a man who runs estates on several of the islands round here—deals in copra and makes a heap o' dollars. He's got an airplaze which he uses to visit his many estates, and he'll fly you across to Honolulu. I happen to know he's going over this afternoon. It'll only be a matter of giving you a seat in the old flying bedstead. Are you game?"

"It sounds too good to be true," exclaimed the professor. "If there's anything to pay——"

"Shucks—anything to oblige, and there's nothing to pay, but it won't hurt you to tip the doorkeeper as yow go out, I reckon."

The landlord was as good as his word, and at four that afternoon, Mark Rymer was in an aeroplane, flying over the blue Pacific to Honolulu, where he arrived just before sunset.

It did not take him long to learn that the 'Frisco packet, the Ventura, would not arrive from Sydney for two days, so that he

had at least one clear day in which to find Dick Seymour again, and he thought that ought to be easy in a comparatively small place like Honolulu.

But it wasn't so easy as he thought. He sauntered through the principal streets of the town and visited the Waikiki beaches, and made inquiries everywhere, but there was no sign or trace of Dick Seymour.

The day before the Ventura was due to arrive began to draw to a close, and still he had failed to find his victim.

"My luck has deserted me," he mused that evening, as he was strolling past the grounds of Oahu College. "I have failed to find him. Perhaps he has altered his plans and has gone into the interior. If he hasn't, then he will book a berth aboard the Ventura and I shall have to do the same. Maybe, if I go to the shipping office——"

He checked himself with a gasp of triumphant amazement, for at that moment Dick Seymour emerged through the gates of the college grounds in company with a young American.

But although Rymer shadowed Dick Seymour all day he did not find an opportunity of carrying out his scheme.

Night came, and still Dick Seymour was alive. The next day Mark Rymer was desperate.

"Dick Seymour has booked his passage in the Ventura!" he hissed between his clenched teeth. "I must do the same. Somewhere between here and New York I shall surely find some way of achieving my desire."

He paid his bill, which the clerk had just sent up, and sauntered down to the office of the steamship company.

"The Ventura has arrived, I hear," he said to the agent.

"That's so," replied the agent.

"When does she leave?"

"Five o'clock this evening."

"Can I book a first-class berth to San Francisco?"

"Certainly! There's the plan of the boat. Which berth would you like to have?"

The professor studied the plan, selected his berth, paid his money, and received his ticket. Then he turned to leave the office; but even as he laid his hand on the handle of the door, a well-known voice outside fell on his startled ears, and drove all the colour from his cheeks.

"Is this the office?"

The voice was the voice of Nelson Lee! For one brief fraction of a second the professor was paralysed with dread; then, with matchless presence of mind, he spun round on his heel, crossed the room, turned his back towards the door and fixed his eyes on a large scale map of the United States which was hanging on the wall.

"May I consult this map for a moment or two?" he asked.

"With pleasure, sir," said the agent.

And almost before the words had crossed his lips, the office door swung open and Nelson Lee walked in.

CHAPTER 8.

So Near and Yet So Far!

AFTER Nelson Lee had been battered by Bush Billy and Mark Rymer on the road outside Napier, two days elapsed ere Dr. Irving's unremitting care and skill restored him sufficiently to enable him to reveal his assailant's name. By that time, however, the Sinoma had sailed from Auckland and Mark Rymer was on his way to Honolulu.

For another week the detective was compelled to remain at Dr. Irving's house slowly but surely regaining his shattered health. At the end of that time, against the doctor's earnest wish, he insisted upon resuming his work, and on Monday he set about picking up the trail of the missing heir once more.

As it happened a liner, faster than the Sinoma, called at Auckland and bore him to Honolulu, breaking all records for the trip on the way.

Dr. Irving had told Nelson Lee, in the smoke-room of the Clarendon Hotel at Napier, that Dick Seymour had left New Zealand, and was living at Kalapana in the island of Hawaii. Mark Rymer had overheard this conversation, and had promptly made his way to Kalapana. But Nelson Lee was, of course, profoundly ignorant of this. He had no idea that Mark Rymer had discovered that Dick Seymour had left New Zealand and had gone to the Sandwich Islands. He thought the professor was still in New Zealand, hunting for the missing heir. Never for a moment did he suspect that Mark Rymer had followed Dick to the Sandwich Islands, and was at that very moment in Honolulu.

In the second place, Nelson Lee was unaware that Dick had thrown up his situation in Kalapana, and had come to Honolulu with the intention of proceeding to America. Dr. Irving had told him that Dick was living at Kalapana, and was very comfortable and happy there. Naturally, therefore, the detective had every reason for believing that Dick was still living at Kalapana, and that he would have to go to Kalapana to find him.

In consequence of these facts, Mark Rymer, the detective's most bitter foe, and Dick Seymour, the man whom the detective had pursued more than half-way round the world, were both in Honolulu when the Ventura arrived with Nelson Lee on board.

Nor was this all. Both Mark Rymer and Dick Seymour had booked their passages in the Ventura, and were due to sail for San Francisco that evening. Yet the first thing the detective did, after breakfasting aboard the Ventura, was to seek out the purser, and make arrangements for leaving Honolulu at the earliest possible opportunity and proceeding to Kalapana.

"I want to go to Kalapana, in the island of Hawaii," he said. "I am told that a steamer leaves here for Hawaii this evening. Is that correct?"

"Perfectly!" said the purser, pointing to a small steamer which was moored to the wharf some distance nearer to the harbour mouth. "That's the boat."

"Do you know what time she sails?"

"Half-past five."

"Where must I apply for a berth?"

"At Hackfield & Sons; they are the agents."

"Where is their office?"

"About two minutes' walk from the wharf. You can't miss it; anybody will point it out to you."

"Thanks. I'll go there, now, and secure a berth, and then I'll come back and make arrangement for transshipping my baggage."

He went ashore, and a few minutes later was standing outside the agent's office, little dreaming that Mark Rymer was inside.

"Is this the office?" he asked of a dusky native who had volunteered to act as his guide.

"Yes, sah," said the native.

The detective dropped a coin into the native's outstretched hand, opened the door, and walked into the dimly-lighted office.

Despite the fact that Nelson Lee had every reason for believing Mark Rymer to be still in New Zealand, he did not act carelessly. He still kept his eyes open for any sign of his enemy, and he took nothing for granted.

But Mark Rymer had been quick and clever. Not only was his back turned towards the door, but there were other people in the office between the professor and the door. And as Nelson Lee approached the counter the professor moved round slowly and cautiously so that there was always a group of people between himself and the detective.

Therefore, Nelson Lee did not see him at all, and without so much as a second glance round the office, he walked up to the agent's desk, stated his wants, paid his money, received his ticket and took his departure.

From the agent's office he returned to the Ventura, and superintended the transshipment of his luggage.

Having nothing better to do with his time, he then set out on a six-mile walk to the famous precipice of the Pali, which is one of the "show places" of the island, and a favourite resort of tourists.

At five o'clock he returned to Honolulu, purchased a copy of the local newspaper, and a fresh supply of tobacco, and went aboard the steamer which was to convey him to Hawaii.

Having secured a comfortable seat on the upper deck, he lit his pipe and unfolded his paper. Scarcely had he done so ere the Ventura slipped her moorings and steamed away towards the harbour mouth. As the liner glided past quite close, the detective rose to his feet and waved his hat, as a token of farewell to the many friends he had made on the voyage from Auckland to Honolulu.

"Aloha Oe!" he shouted, using the Hawaiian formula of adieu. "Aloha Nui!"

The words died away in a gasp of stupefaction, and his arm dropped limply to his side.

Amongst the faces of those aboard the Ventura he had seen the face of Mark Rymer. And then some little way away the figure of a young man he instantly recognised from the photo Dr. Irving had shown him—Dick Seymour. It was quite an easy matter for Lee to put two and two together.

"Mark Rymer and Seymour on board the Ventura!" Lee gasped. "What does it mean? If Rymer is aboard the Ventura—then that must be Dick Seymour. I am certain of that. I could pick out his face in a thousand. Then Rymer was looking at the young man from behind that deck-house. Seymour must have thrown up his post in Kalapana and decided to go to America. Rymer must have found this out by some means, and now he is aboard the same boat as Seymour en route for San Francisco, whilst I am stranded in Honolulu."

He stared after the departing liner in half-dazed stupefaction. It was not until she had crossed the bar and was heading out to sea that he woke from his gloomy reverie. Then, scarcely knowing what he was doing, he sank back into his deck-chair in a state of utter despair.

"I must follow them at the earliest possible moment!" he exclaimed at last, leaping to his feet. "In the meantime thank heavens there is a cable between this place and San Francisco, and there is the wireless, so that it won't be a difficult matter to communicate with Dick and warn him of his danger. Unluckily, Mark Rymer's crimes have all been committed outside the jurisdiction of the United States, and the Ventura is an American boat, so that, even if I were an official detective instead of a private one, I couldn't order him to be arrested when he lands in San Francisco. But Mark Rymer can wait; I can settle accounts with him at my leisure. I must first put Dick Seymour on his guard and instruct him to remain in San Francisco until I can join him."

Ten minutes later he was standing on the wharf with his baggage piled in disorder at his feet, and it was not long before he was back at the office of Hackfield & Co.

He wirelessed the following message to Dick Seymour aboard the Ventura:

"Have reason believe you have desperate enemy aboard Ventura. Be warned. Remain in San Francisco until I can join you. Will pay expenses.—NELSON LEE, Detective."

To make doubly sure he cabled to the general manager of the Occidental & Oriental Steamship Co., at San Francisco:

"Stubbs, 421, Market Street, San Francisco.—Board Ventura on arrival. Ask for saloon passenger named Seymour. Inform him Nelson Lee following with urgent and important news. Instruct him to put up at Palace Hotel, and on no account to leave

San Francisco until Lee arrives. Leo leaves here per s.s. Doric, and arrives San Francisco May 18th. Meanwhile, Seymour to be strictly on his guard, as attempts on his life likely to be made. Lee advises keep indoors all day, and avoid making friends with strangers. All expenses defrayed by Leo on arrival.—HACKFIELD, Honolulu."

CHAPTER 9.

Caught in the Act!

FOUR days elapsed. It was daybreak on the morning of Monday, May 13th. The Ventura was passing into the Bay of Francisco, through the far-famed Golden Gate. For an hour she steamed through this most beautiful natural harbour; then she brought up alongside the O. & O. Co.'s wharf, and the voyage from Honolulu was at an end.

All that time Mark Rymer had watched Dick Seymour like a cat watches a mouse. But the luck had been against him, and the opportunity for which he sought—the opportunity for a stealthy stab in the back, or a swift and sudden hurling overboard, or the clasp of a hand which was decorated with a poisoned ring—had never yet presented itself.

But the professor did not despair. He had overheard Dick say that he was not going to stay in San Francisco, but was going straight on to New York with as little delay as possible. Dick had mentioned this to the purser on requesting information concerning routes and prices.

But after that Dick had received Nelson Lee's wireless message, and it had worried him. He had studied the faces of all the passengers, but the professor did not make himself very conspicuous, and Dick had never seen Mark Rymer's face, so that he was unable to identify him.

As soon as the steamer had been made fast to the wharf, the Custom House officials came aboard to examine the passengers' baggage. With them came a weedy-looking, sandy-haired youth, with a half-smoked cigarette between his lips. He was one of the clerks from the office of the Occidental & Oriental Steamship Co. Mr. Stubbs, the general manager, had been unexpectedly called up-country on important business, and he had given Hackfield's cablegram to one of his clerks, with instructions to board the Ventura on her arrival and deliver the message into Dick Seymour's hands.

As luck would have it, the first man the clerk encountered when he stepped aboard was Mark Rymer.

"Morning!" said the clerk, without removing the cigarette from between his lips. "Would yew be so very obliging as to show me which is Mr. Seymour?"

In an instant the professor's suspicions were aroused.

"I am Mr. Seymour," he said, without a moment's hesitation.



With a mocking laugh Mark Rymer threw the bomb and an ear-splitting roar echoed out as

"Yew are?" exclaimed the clerk.

"I am," said the professor, with an oily smile.

The clerk regarded him with some amount of misgiving. Even to his unimaginative brain—and he was a very dull-witted, feeble-minded youth—the coincidence appeared peculiar.

"I should like some proof of your identity," he drawled. "I have an important message to deliver to Mr. Seymour, and it would be mighty awkward, I guess, if I gave it to the wrong man. On second thoughts, I'd better see the pursuer."

Quick as thought the professor shot out his arm and laid a compelling hand on the young man's shoulder.

"Look at me!" he hissed in a low-toned, but commanding, voice.



clean into the carriage. Even as he vaulted off the one side of the coach was blown to pieces.

With a shiver of fear, the clerk obeyed. For half a dozen breathless seconds the professor stared him full in the face, his eyes alternately dilating and contracting, and glowering with a strange, weird, phosphorescent light, that came and went like the flashes of a will-o'-the-wisp. Then a grim smile of sardonic triumph flitted across his sallow face. He had hypnotised the clerk as effectually as he had hypnotised the fisherman at Penzance and the innkeeper at San Roque.

"Now give me your message!" he commanded.

Like a man in a dream the clerk produced the fateful cablegram and placed it in Mark Rymer's hands. The professor read it carefully through—chuckling softly to himself—and calmly thrust it into his pocket.

"Now, listen to me," he said, once more laying his hand on the clerk's shoulder. "You will return to Mr. Stubbs, and you will tell him that you have given the cablegram to Mr. Richard Seymour, a tall, handsome, broad-shouldered young fellow with dark brown hair. You will say that Mr. Seymour thanks him for his courtesy, and will stay at the Palace Hotel until Mr. Lee arrives. You asked the purser to introduce you to Mr. Seymour, and you did not speak to anybody else on board the liner except Mr. Seymour and the purser. You have forgotten you ever saw me or spoke to me. Do you understand?"

"I understand," said the clerk, in a dull, mechanical voice.

"Then go!"

He passed his hand across the clerk's forehead. In the twinkling of an eye the clerk was himself again, and a moment later he had crossed the gangway and had vanished in the crowd on the wharf.

It was then about eight o'clock. Dick Seymour went ashore, rather puzzled. Following the wireless message, he had expected some sort of communication to be waiting for him at San Francisco, but as there was none he came to the conclusion that the wireless message had been something in the nature of a cruel hoax, and decided to carry out his former plans and forget his unknown foe who seemed to have been left behind.

At a quarter to ten both Dick Seymour and the professor, together with a goodly number of the Ventura's passengers, took their seats in the "Overland Limited Mail."

During the long journey eastwards across the vast Continent of America Mark Rymer haunted Dick as though he had been his shadow. He dined at the same table with him in the dining-car, he entered into conversation with him in the café, and he occupied a neighbouring berth in the sleeping car. But it was all in vain.

One midnight, however, the longed-for chance at last arrived. The train was then rushing swiftly through the darkness between Omaha and Kansas City. All the occupants of the sleeping car, except Mark Rymer, were fast asleep. One solitary deeply-shaded electric light was the only illumination. The car attendant, for the first time since the train started, had left the car and was holding whispered converse with a fellow-attendant on the platform outside.

Scarcely daring to breathe and quivering with suppressed eagerness, he slipped his hand beneath his pillow and drew forth a tiny glass ball and an ivory-handled weapon, half-dagger and half-stiletto.

With the dagger in his right hand and the glass ball in his left, he crept out of his berth, glanced nervously around him, stole to the berth in which his intended victim was sleeping.

Thrusting the glass ball into the pocket of his pyjama jacket, the professor slid his left hand beneath the sheets and felt for the spot on Dick's chest where the beating of his

heart was most plainly to be felt. Then, with every nerve strung up to concert pitch, he raised his right hand in the air, and was just about to plunge his weapon into Dick's heart, when—

"Help! Murder! Help!"

The cry rang through the sleeping car with the clearness of a bugle call. At the critical moment Dick Seymour had awakened, and, with matchless presence of mind, had grasped the professor's upraised arm in a vice-like grip, and had raised his voice in a ringing shout for help.

Aroused by the shout, the rest of the sleepers awoke. Most of them were Americans, who seldom travel unarmed, and in a few moments a dozen revolvers were levelled at Mark Rymer's head. An instant later the attendant rushed into the car and switched on the rest of the electric lights. Seeing the professor struggling in Dick Seymour's grasp, he whipped out his revolver; but even as he did so, the professor wrenched himself free, thrust his hand into his pyjama pocket and held up the small glass ball.

"Back! Back—all of you!" he snarled. "This is charged with nitro-glycerine, and I have only to drop it on the floor to wreck the car and send you all to kingdom come!"

With a shudder of fear, the panic-stricken passengers recoiled. They had only to look at Mark Rymer's blazing eyes to see that his threat was no idle one.

For three seconds nobody spoke. The silence was positively uncanny. The only audible sounds were the laboured breathings of terror-stricken men and the bee-like hum of the well-oiled wheels of the car.

Then Mark Rymer emitted a sibilant sound that was half a chuckle and half a laugh.

"I think I hold the ace of trumps, gentlemen!" he said, stretching out his hand, with the deadly bomb held lightly between his finger and thumb. "I have no particular wish to be blown sky high, but you can be sure that if any of you move without my permission, either towards myself or towards the door of the car, or towards the electric alarm, I'll drop this ball on the floor, and we'll all go on a trip to the moon together! I would also like to point out that should anyone try to attack me, or fire at me, as I fall to the ground this bomb would be hurled to the floor with me, and would instantly explode. I hope that's clear."

He paused for a second or two to let his words sink in. Then he waved his hand imperiously round the car.

"Back to your berths, if you please, gentlemen," he murmured.

In the twinkling of an eye the professor and the attendant, whose teeth were chattering with fear, were the only persons on the floor of the car.

"Now, stop the train!" said the professor, turning to the attendant.

Like a man in a dream, the attendant staggered to the electric push, and pressed the button. A grinding, grating sound arose, and the train began to slacken speed.

"Thanks," said the professor coolly. "Now, into my berth, if you please, and be quick about it."

The words had scarcely crossed his lips ere the terrified attendant was cowering in the professor's berth. At the same instant a hubbub of excited voices proceeded from the neighbouring cars. The passengers, astonished and alarmed by the application of the brakes, were clamouring for the reason.

Quickly, without the remotest trace of flurry, the professor strode to the door at the end of the car. The train had then slowed down to fifteen miles an hour, and was passing along an elevated track, bounded on each side by gently sloping embankments.

Upon reaching the open platform between the sleeping-car and the next, Mark Rymer halted and spun round on his heel. For one brief fraction of a second he stood with the bomb in his hand. Then, with a mocking laugh, he hurled the bomb into the sleeping car, whilst at the same instant he vaulted over the platform rail and launched himself into space.

None but a man of iron nerve would have dared to run the thing so fine. It was literally a question of the hundredth part of a second, for even whilst he was still in the air, before his falling form had reached the ground, the silence was rent by an appalling roar, accompanied by a dazzling flash, and the next instant the whole of one end of the sleeping-car seemed to melt away in a rain of hurtling splinters.

FOUR hours later a slumbering Catholic priest, living all alone in a desolate little mission house on the outskirts of Maryville, was awakened by the sound of someone moving in one of the rooms downstairs.

He lit a candle and opened his bed-room door with the intention of going downstairs to investigate. Even as he opened the door, however, he found himself face to face with the wild-eyed and dishevelled figure of an elderly man, barefooted, and clad in a ragged, mud-stained suit of pyjamas.

There was a short, sharp scuffle, a single piercing cry for help, then the silence of the grave!

Next morning it was reported in Maryville that the priest in charge of St. Joseph's mission had been foully murdered, and that the sum of fifteen hundred dollars—the proceeds of a recent bazaar—was missing from the safe. Later still—but too late to serve as a clue—it was likewise discovered that the unknown assassin had stolen a suit of clothes, and had left behind, in a cupboard in the vestry, a ragged suit of silk pyjamas.

THREE days later a benevolent-looking individual, arrayed in the garb of a Catholic priest, and giving the name of Father O'Brien, arrived in New York, and engaged a bed-room at the Murray Hill Hotel, in Park Avenue.

This worthy "priest" was none other than Mark Rymer. After killing the priest in charge of St. Joseph's, and disguising himself in his victim's clothes, he had made his way on foot to Albany. Here he had purchased a copy of a local newspaper, from which he had learned, to his mortification and chagrin, that Dick Seymour had been rescued from the wreck of the sleeping-car, with no more serious hurt than a dislocated elbow and a scalp wound. According to the paper, he had left for New York as soon as his injuries had been attended to, therefore, Mark Rymer had come in search of him.

Early one Saturday afternoon, he sallied forth from his hotel, and wended his way to the famous Knickerbocker Apartments on Fifth Avenue. Having rented a suite of bachelor's furnished apartments, with attendance included, he devoted the rest of the afternoon to a round of shopping in Broadway and Union Square. One large suit-case, crammed with wearing apparel, and the like, was ordered to be sent to "Oswald Brooke," Esq., at the Knickerbocker Apartments. A smaller case, containing a suit of ready-made tweeds, a collar, a shirt and tie, was ordered to be sent to Father O'Brien at the Murray Hill Hotel.

In the dusk of evening he paid a visit to a well-known maker of wigs in West Twenty-Third Street. At eight o'clock he returned to his hotel.

Some time after midnight Father O'Brien disappeared from the Murray Hill Hotel, leaving behind him an unpaid bill.

And some time between noon and two o'clock the following day, Mr. Oswald Brooke, a venerable looking gentleman with silvery white hair and beard, drove up to the Knickerbocker Apartments and entered into possession of the suite of rooms, which "his kind friend, the parish priest, had engaged for him."

CHAPTER 10.

Picking Up the Thread!

ON the same day as Mark Rymer, in the guise of Father O'Brien, arrived in New York, Nelson Lee landed at San Francisco from the s.s. Doric. The first thing the detective did was to call a taxi and drive to the office of the O. & O. Steamship Co., where his card procured an immediate interview with Mr. Stubbs, the general manager.

"You received Hackfield's cablegram?" was Nelson Lee's first question.

"I did," said the manager.

"And you carried out my instructions?"

"Practically, yes. I didn't meet the Ventura myself, for I was unexpectedly called away on important business the day before she arrived. But I sent one of my clerks, who saw Mr. Seymour on board the steamer, and delivered the cablegram into his hands."

"And Mr. Seymour said—"

"That he would remain at the Palace Hotel until you arrived."

"Then he is at the Palace Hotel at the present moment?"

"I expect so."

The detective thanked him, and drove to the Palace Hotel, which was only a few blocks away. In ten minutes time he was back at the office again, pale, with mingled anger and anxiety.

"There's something wrong!" he declared. "Mr. Seymour is not at the Palace Hotel. He has never been there. They know nothing about him!"

A gasp of amazement rose to the manager's lips. He snatched up the house 'phone and got through to an office upstairs.

"Tell Kitson I wish to see him at once," he called.

There was a moment's interval, then Kitson appeared—a weedy-looking youth with sandy hair and colourless eyes. He was the clerk who had been hypnotised by Mark Rymer and robbed of the fateful cablegram.

"Tell this gentleman exactly what happened aboard the Ventura," said the manager.

"I boarded the steamer at the same time as the Revenue men," replied the clerk in a sing-song voice. "I asked the purser which was Mr. Seymour, and he pointed him out to me. He was a tall-good-looking young fellow with dark brown hair. I gave him Hackfield's cablegram, and he said I was to thank Mr. Stubbs for his courtesy and to tell him that he would stay at the Palace Hotel until Mr. Lee arrived. I never spoke to anybody else aboard the liner except the purser and Mr. Seymour."

The detective wrinkled his brow, and regarded the clerk with keen and penetrating glance. Somehow or other, the story the clerk had told did not ring true, in the detective's ears. It was too complete, too circumstantial, too suspiciously precise, too much like a lesson learnt by heart and repeated by rote.

"Yet the fellow didn't look as though he had brains enough to have invented such a plausible lie," he murmured to himself. "Can it be that he has been 'got at' by Mark Rymer? Has the professor bribed him? No. Jove! I think I know what's happened. He has been mesmerised!"

He sprang to his feet, his brain in a whirl of excited suspense.

"Look at me!" he exclaimed, seizing the clerk by the shoulders and unconsciously repeating Mark Rymer's command.

The clerk obeyed, as meekly as he had obeyed Mark Rymer. In half a dozen seconds the detective had "put him under control," and in five minutes' time he had wormed the whole story out of him—how he had met Mark Rymer aboard the liner, how the professor had hypnotised him and stolen the cablegram; and how he had been ordered to say that he had given the cablegram to Mr. Seymour and had never spoken to any one else but Dick and the purser,

"I cannot tell how sorry I am that this should have happened," said the manager, when the clerk had been dehypnotised and sent back to his desk. "At the same time, I don't see how I could have prevented it."

"You couldn't," said the detective frankly. "I do not blame you or the clerk. Luck was against us, and again Mark Rymer has scored."

"Do you think he will have murdered Seymour by now?"

"Heaven only knows!" said the detective, with a gesture of despair. "One thing is certain—if he has had half a chance of doing so, you may be sure that he has tried."

"What was Seymour going to do when he reached this place? Was he going to settle here, or was he going farther east?"

"I have no idea. I expected to find him here when I arrived; otherwise I would have cabled to his late employer, and asked him if he knew anything of Seymour's plans for the future. I may do so yet. But in the first place, I shall make it my business to interview the police, and all the hotel proprietors in the place, and the officials at the railway station, with a view to ascertaining what has become of him."

"That's a pretty tall order."

"Not so tall as it appears at first sight. You see, I know for a fact that Seymour and Mark Rymer were in San Francisco four days ago. I have a photograph of Seymour—given to me by his friend, Dr. Irving, of Napier—and I know Mark Rymer sufficiently well to be able to describe him from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet. Under these circumstances, I am not without hope that, with patience and perseverance, I shall ultimately find someone who has seen them, and who can tell me what has become of them."

But he had no need to go to all this trouble, for the local police were able to help him in a way which he could never have foreseen.

"Seymour?" said the chief of police, when the detective had unfolded his tale. "Richard Seymour? I seem to remember the name. Where can I have heard it before? Why—yes, of course! I've got it. Seymour was the name of the young fellow who played such a prominent part in that sensational affair the other night when the Overland Mail was wrecked between Omaha and Kansas City!"

"That's the man I'm after, without a doubt!" said Nelson Lee eagerly. "What happened?"

The chief of police told him all that had taken place in the sleeping-car, and how it had been wrecked by the throwing of a bomb.

"And was Dick Seymour killed?" asked Nelson Lee, in an agony of apprehension.

"No. The car was wrecked, and the cars behind it either left the metals or were overturned. A good many lives were lost, as you

may imagine, but Seymour escaped with nothing worse than a dislocated elbow and a cut on his head. His injuries were attended to by one of the local medical men, and the following morning he left for New York."

"But surely the police took his name and address?"

"Of course; otherwise I shouldn't have known his name was Seymour."

"What address did he give?"

"Continental Hotel, Broadway, New York."

"He is there now?"

"As far as I know."

"And the other man—the elderly, big-nosed man in the silk pyjamas—what became of him?"

"I only wish I knew! Nothing has since been seen or heard of him, though we have a shrewd suspicion that it was he who murdered a priest on the outskirts of Maryville and made off with a suit of clothes and fifteen hundred dollars in hard cash."

"Do you know who he is?"

"No. The police cross-questioned Seymour at great length on the subject, but all he could tell them was that a previous attempt had been made on his life—in the island of Hawaii, where he was working—and that he was firmly convinced that the author of that attempt was the same man who tried to stab him in the train. But who his enemy was, or why he wished to murder him, he hadn't the remotest idea. If you can throw any light on the mystery we shall be greatly obliged."

In response to this suggestion, the detective told the chief the story of Lord Easington's secret marriage, of the hunt for the Silver Dwarf, and of the search for the missing heir.

"And now," he said, at the conclusion of his story, "which is the best and quickest route by which I can get to New York?"

The chief consulted his watch.

"The Overland Air Mail, of course," he said. "It leaves in an hour—that is, if you can afford it."

The detective bade him a hurried farewell and drove in a taxi to the aerodrome. He just had time to send a wire to Dick Seymour at the Continental Hotel, Broadway, New York, telling him that he was coming, bidding him remain at the hotel until he arrived, and warning him to be on his guard against treachery.

Then he took his seat in the aeroplane and flew across the great Continent of North America to New York, landing at Roosevelt Field, and hastening at once to the Continental Hotel.

CHAPTER 11.

An Adventure in the Bowery!

FIVE weary weeks elapsed—five weeks and three days. It was the morning of Thursday, the twenty-seventh of June, and Nelson Lee was as far from finding the missing heir as ever he had been.

Upon arriving at New York, the detective had driven to the Continental Hotel, and had interviewed the proprietor. But the latter could only tell him that no such person as Richard Seymour had ever been at the hotel, and he knew nothing of him whatever.

Disappointed, but in no wise disheartened, the detective engaged a bed-room and a private sitting-room at the Continental Hotel, and had then commenced an exhaustive series of investigations and inquiries. He had interviewed the New York Police, and had wired Dick's description to the Chief Commissioners of all the principal towns on the Atlantic seaboard. He had caused advertisements to be inserted in all the New York papers, offering a reward for such information as would lead to Dick's discovery.

He had called upon all those manufacturers and merchants or stockbrokers likely to have seen Dick Seymour in his search for employment. He had questioned and cross-questioned everyone and anyone he met, and had examined all passenger lists of all the boats leaving New York.

But his labour had been in vain. Nowhere and from nobody had the detective been able to obtain the smallest shred of news respecting the man for whom he was seeking, neither did he get any news of Mark Rymer.

He was continually travelling about after false clues and rumours, but Dick Seymour seemed to have vanished completely, and Mark Rymer with him.

As a matter of fact, the young man was in New York all the time. Dick Seymour was in a low-down German lodging-house in the slums of the great city known as the Bowery.

Dick Seymour's nerves had been completely shattered. The two mysterious attempts which had been made upon his life, his ignorance of his enemy's identity and motives, the uncertainty as to when another attempt would be made to murder him, the loss of the greater part of his money, and all his belongings in the wreck of the sleeping-car, and the terrible shock he had received on that occasion—all these had simply played havoc with his nervous system and had left him a physical and nervous wreck.

Day and night he was haunted by the fear that his unknown foe would renew his attempts to murder him. He started at the slightest unaccustomed sound and blanched whenever a stranger spoke to him. Nellie Pryde had become a dream of the past. All hope of making his fortune and returning to claim her had long since been abandoned. His one ambition—his only aim in life—was to keep his identity secret in order that his unknown and mysterious foe might not be able to trace him.

In pursuance of this aim he had changed his name on arriving in New York, and instead of going to the Continental Hotel he had taken lodgings in one of the northern suburbs. By the time he had recovered from his injuries his slender store of money had well-nigh become exhausted. In order to

husband his resources he had moved into cheaper lodgings, and had set about seeking employment. But as he had always declined to say where he had last been employed, or to give any references, for fear of betraying his identity, it had followed as a matter of course that nobody had been willing to give him a situation. From which again it had followed that his little stock of money had grown smaller and smaller every day, until at last he had been compelled to take refuge in a tramp lodging-house in the Bowery and accept employment as door-keeper at a Jewish theatre.

Heir to one of the proudest titles in the British peerage, owner of one of the finest estates in the United Kingdom, with a rent roll of over a hundred thousand a year, and door-keeper at a Jewish theatre in the Bowery! Little wonder that Nelson Lee had been baffled in his attempts to find him!

But Nelson Lee was not the only person who had been baffled. A silvery-haired old gentleman, living in luxurious apartments on Fifth Avenue, and known to his neighbours as Oswald Brooke, but who was really Mark Rymer, had been equally unsuccessful in his search for the missing heir. Like Nelson Lee, he had laboured night and day in the hope of finding Dick Seymour, but all in vain. He had known that Nelson Lee was in the city, and had actually shadowed the detective in the hope that he would be led to Dick Seymour, but it had all ended in failure.

But one morning, having finished breakfast, Mark Rymer flung himself into an easy-chair, lit a cigar, and opened his copy of the "New York World." Presently his eye fell on the following paragraph under the heading fashionable arrivals.

"Mr. and Miss Pryde, late of Kalapana, Hawaii, have arrived in New York, and are staying at the Fifth Avenue Hotel. Mr. Pryde has sold his extensive plantations in Hawaii, and is proceeding with his daughter to England, where he intends to purchase a country estate and settle down as an English landowner. He and Miss Pryde will sail for Plymouth on Saturday by the s.s. Dardania."

As it happened Nelson Lee was out of New York on that particular morning, having received certain information from Boston that Dick Seymour was in hospital there as a result of a road accident. But it proved false.

If the detective had been in town he would most certainly have gone to the Fifth Avenue Hotel to interview Mr. Pryde in the hope that that gentleman could tell him something of Dick's whereabouts, or, at least, something of his plans for the future.

But that was only "what might have been." Nelson Lee was out of New York and knew nothing of Mr. Pryde's arrival.

But when Mark Rymer read the paragraph he leaped to his feet with a smothered cry of triumph. He had overheard the conversation between Dick Seymour and Mr. Pryde

on the lower slopes of Kilauea, and he knew how deeply Dick Seymour was in love with his former employer's daughter.

"If he's anywhere in New York," he muttered to himself. "And if he sees that paragraph, nothing will prevent him hanging around the hotel in the hope of seeing the girl he loves."

He tore off his wig and beard and dashed into an inner room. A quarter of an hour later he emerged and left the building disguised as an itinerant hawker of music-hall songs.

From ten o'clock in the morning until long past midnight he plied his trade in front of the Fifth Avenue Hotel.

Three times he saw Mr. Pryde and twice he saw his daughter. But of Dick he saw nothing, for the all-sufficient reason that Dick had not yet seen the paragraph in the "World," and had no suspicion that Nellie Pryde was in New York.

Nothing daunted, the professor returned to his post next day, disguised as a newspaper seller. Shortly before noon he saw Mr. Pryde and his daughter emerge, and at four o'clock in the afternoon he saw them return, followed by a porter laden with parcels.

At seven o'clock in the evening he saw them enter a closed car, and he heard the old man give the order, "Grand Opera House." Then five long, weary hours of fruitless waiting ensued.

"He's not in New York, that's certain," he muttered to himself, as a neighbouring clock struck the hour of midnight. "If he'd been in New York—"

His musings ended in a quick, spasmodic gulp. An electric thrill shot through his nerves. Every fibre in his being grew suddenly tense with suppressed excitement.

Round the corner of Twenty-third Street there had just appeared a shabbily dressed young man. As he turned the corner into Madison Square, the piercing light of the overhanging electric lamp beat fiercely down on his pinched, careworn face—the face of Richard Seymour!

Quick as thought the professor crumpled his unsold papers and his contents bill into a shapeless bundle, and dropped them in the gutter. Instinctively his right hand stole into the inside pocket of his ragged coat. Then a look of malignant satisfaction crossed his face. Revolver and bowie knife—both were there!

With hungry, wolfish eyes he watched Dick cross the road and take his stand beneath one of the lamps, just opposite the principal entrance of the hotel.

"It looks as though he knew they were out and had come to see them return," the professor mused.

He was right. Dick did not know that Mr. Pryde and his daughter were out. Although Mark Rymer had not seen him, he had been to the hotel earlier that evening, and had seen them drive off to the opera.

Poor though he was he had followed them and had invested one of his few remaining

coins on a cheap seat, from which he had feasted his eyes on Nellie Pryde for four delightful hours.

The moment the curtain had fallen he had hurried from the building and had hastened back to the hotel in order to obtain what he firmly believed would be the last glimpse he would ever get of the girl he loved but dared not hope to win.

He had not long to wait. A few minutes after his arrival a closed car pulled up in front of the hotel, and Mr. Pryde and Nellie stepped out.

Dick watched them mount the steps and vanish into the brilliantly lighted entrance-hall. Then with a heavy sigh he turned away with the intention of retracing his steps to his dingy lodgings in the Bowery.

Mark Rymer glided after him, down Broadway, across Union Square, along Fourth Avenue, and so into that squalid region of the Bowery. Like a human sleuth-hound the professor dogged his unsuspecting victim through the crooked slums and squalid alleys of this ill-famed quarter of New York.

Twice he found himself within less than a dozen yards of Dick and with nobody else in sight, but on each occasion, just as he was about to whip out his revolver, Dick vanished round a corner, and the opportunity was gone.

At last, however, Mark Rymer's patience met with its reward. With chin on breast, and hands deep down in trousers-pockets, Dick turned down a narrow deserted alley—an open passage, really—between a Chinese joss-house and a cheap amusements arcade.

Fearful of losing sight of him, Mark Rymer quickened his pace and darted into the passage with so much haste that he almost fell over Dick, who had suddenly halted and stooped down in order to tie up a trailing bootlace.

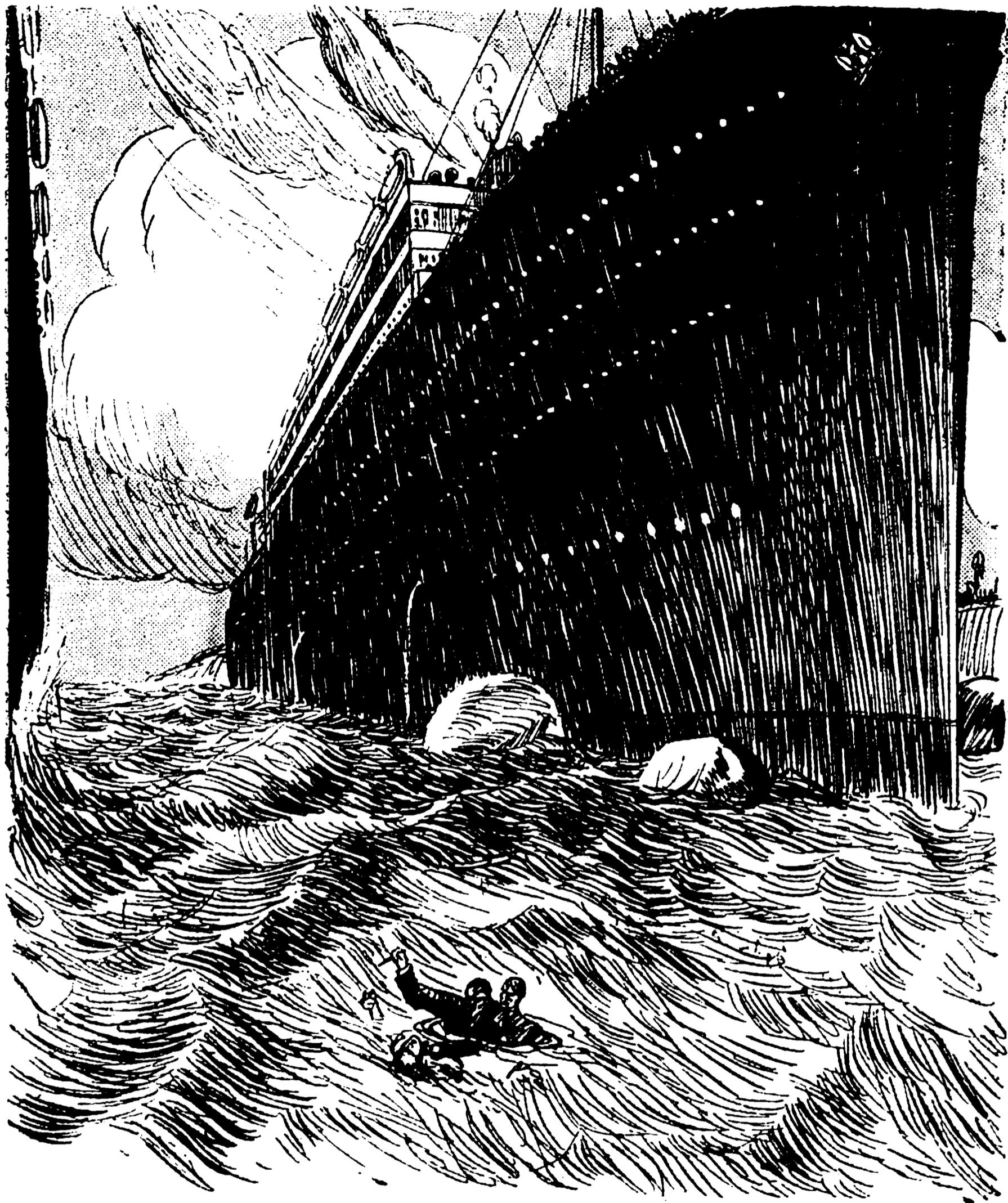
What happened next happened so quickly that even Mark Rymer could never afterwards remember exactly how it came about.

He hurried round the corner into the alley, saw that Dick was just in front of him and bending down, saw that there was nobody about but themselves in the alley, and instantly, almost before he knew what he was doing, he whipped out his bowie knife, and sprang at Dick with a low, fierce snarl of savage triumph.

Quick as he was, however, Dick Seymour was quicker. His five weeks' residence in the Bowery had taught him to be on his guard against prowling footpads and lurking assassins.

A sudden shadow on the gas-lit ground, and a hurried footstep just behind him, warned him of his danger in the nick of time, and, with lightning-like rapidity, he straightened himself and sprang aside.

The natural result of this manoeuvre was that Mark Rymer's knife struck only vacant space, whilst the professor himself, after a vain attempt to recover his balance, pitched forward on his face and measured his length on the ground.



Nelson Lee darted through the water like a fish, and even as Rymer raised his knife to strike the fatal blow, the detective seized his arm from behind in a desperate clutch.

He was on his feet again in an instant, but his knife had fallen from his grasp, and before he could pick it up again Dick darted towards him. Nothing daunted, the professor met him with a skilful feint, which enabled him to get inside his opponent's guard, and in a second he had seized Dick round his waist and had thrown him heavily to the ground.

Half-dazed by his fall, Dick lay for a moment motionless, and by the time he had collected his scattered wits, Mark Rymer was kneeling on his chest, with his fingers inter-

locked behind Dick's neck, and his two thumbs tightly pressed on his victim's wind-pipe, in order to prevent him raising an alarm.

Game to the last, Dick fought and struggled with demoniacal fury, now dashing his fists into the professor's face, now dealing him sledgehammer blows on the chest, now seizing him by the wrists and exerting all his strength to force him to relax his strangling grip. But it was all in vain. Dick's recent illness, coupled with the

want of proper and sufficient food, had robbed him of all his strength. He was as weak as a kitten, as supple as wax in the sinewy hands of his remorseless foe.

Little by little, as the pangs of impending suffocation stole over him, his sense began to desert him. His struggles grew feeble and more erratic. Strange lights began to dance before his starting eyes. Strange noises echoed in his ears; and he was on the point of lapsing into unconsciousness when all at once, mingling with the phantom noises which were humming in his ears, he heard the sharp staccato sound of an approaching footstep.

With a last despairing effort he summoned up all his remaining strength and tore the professor's hands from his throat.

"Help!"

One choking, half inarticulate cry was all that was permitted to cross his lips. The next instant something struck him between the eyes, and he remembered no more.

CHAPTER 12.

Homeward Bound!

WHEN Dick recovered consciousness he found himself lying on a couch in a sumptuously furnished apartment in the Waldorf-Astoria, New York's most luxurious hotel.

Standing by his side were a white-haired American doctor, and a stalwart young Englishman, with a clean-shaved, boyish face and fair hair.

"He's coming round," said the doctor, when Dick opened his eyes. "May I trouble you to ring the bell and ask for a glass of brandy?"

"I'll fetch it myself," said the young Englishman. "We shall get it more quickly that way."

Suiting the action to the word, he turned on his heel and hurried from the room.

"Feeling better now?" asked the doctor, as he readjusted the cushions beneath Dick's head.

"Yes, thank you," said Dick, gazing round him with an air of bewilderment. "But where am I, and who are you?"

"You are in Mr. Langley's private suite at the Waldorf-Astoria," said the doctor. "Mr. Langley heard your shout for help as he was making his way through the Bowery, and ran to your assistance. He wasn't in time to capture your assailant, who took to his heels on hearing somebody coming; but, finding that you were unconscious, Mr. Langley placed you in a taxi and brought you here, and sent for me."

"You are a doctor, then?"

"I am."

"And was that Mr. Langley in the room just now?"

"Yes. You may consider yourself as exceedingly lucky to have attracted his atten-

tion, for a kinder-hearted or more generous young fellow never lived. There are many of my fellow countrymen, I am proud to believe, who would have been equally ready to risk their lives for an unknown dweller in the Bowery, but only an Englishman, I am sure, would ever have dreamed of bringing the man he had rescued to the most expensive hotel in New York, and making himself responsible for his medical attendance. Most men, I fancy, would have considered they had done their duty if they had sent you to the nearest hospital."

"Mr. Langley is an Englishman, then?"

"Yes. Surely you have heard of Jack Langley, as he is always called. He has recently sprung into prominence as one of the foremost electrical engineers in the world. His patents have brought him in a fortune in the last few months. He lives, I believe, in Ponloven Grange, Cornwall. He is at present in New York on business, and is staying at this hotel."

This information did little to enlighten Dick Seymour, who had never heard Jack Langley's name in his life. He was not to know that Jack Langley was one of Nelson Lee's most intimate friends. It was to Jack Langley's house that the Earl of Easington—Dick's father, though he did not know it—had been carried after his fatal accident in the hunting field. It was at Jack Langley's house, moreover, in the presence of Mark Rymor and Nelson Lee, that Lord Easington had breathed his last, after telling the story of his secret marriage to Dick's mother. And finally, it was from Jack Langley's house that the race for the Silver Dwarf and the hunt for the missing heir had practically started, although Langley did not know the name of the missing heir was Dick Seymour.

"Do you think he's seriously hurt?" asked Langley, when he returned with the brandy.

"No," replied the doctor, as he held the glass to Dick's lips. "He has had a nasty knock on the head, but there are no bones broken, and no other injuries that one need worry about. What is serious, however, is his pitiable weakness. He appears to me to have been half-starved. In fact, if I may be so bold as to say so, this is not a case for a doctor, but for a cook. In other words, what he needs far more than drugs, is a thorough rest and plenty of good food."

"And he shall have both," said Jack, with characteristic generosity.

A few minutes later the doctor took his departure, the richer by twenty-five dollars. As soon as he had gone, Jack seated himself beside the couch and endeavoured to draw Dick into conversation. This did not prove a difficult matter, for there was a fascinating charm about Jack Langley's manner which invariably inspired strangers with confidence, and in less than half an hour's time Dick found himself—to his own surprise—telling Jack the whole story of his life.

"And now you know everything," he concluded, when he had narrated his adventure in the Bowery. "Why I have told you all this I hardly know, for I don't suppose you are interested!"

Only one thing had he omitted to mention, and that was the wireless message from Nelson Lee which he had received aboard the Ventura. But as nothing had come of that he had regarded it in the nature of a cruel hoax and dismissed it from his mind.

"Not interested!" cried Jack indignantly. "Why, it's far and away the most interesting story I ever heard, especially the part which deals with the mysterious attempts on your life. Are you sure they were committed by the same man?"

"I am not sure," said Dick. "That is to say, I have no proof that they were all committed by the same person, but, nevertheless, there isn't the slightest shadow of doubt in my own mind that the man who tried to push me into the crater of Kilauea, and the man who wrecked the sleeping-car, and the man who attacked me in the Bowery to-night, were one and the same individual.

"And I really have no suspicion who he is, nor why he wants to murder me. In fact, I can't imagine why anybody in the world should want to murder me, for, as far as I know, I never did anybody a bad turn in all my life, and I'm absolutely certain that nobody has anything to gain by my death."

"What is your mysterious enemy like—in personal appearance, I mean?"

"Strange to say, I cannot tell you. I never saw his face on the first occasion that he tried to kill me. I saw him plain enough in the sleeping-car, of course, but somehow or other the terrible mental shock which I received on that occasion appears to have destroyed a portion of my memory, for whenever I try to conjure up a picture of him, all I can see are two deep-set eyes, glittering at me, and all the rest of his face is a complete blank."

"But you saw his face to-night, didn't you?"

"Yes, but not very distinctly, for the alley was very dimly lighted. Besides, I am pretty sure he was disguised to-night, for the whole of the lower part of his face was concealed by a jet black beard and moustache."

"Well, now, look here," said Jack, laying his hand on Dick's arm, "I don't want to assume a patronising air, but the fact of the matter is that I have taken a very great fancy to you, and if you'll let me I should like to help you."

"You would?" cried Dick, half rising from the couch in his excitement. "Do you mean that?"

"Of course I do."

"Then lend me thirty dollars to pay for a steerage passage to England," said Dick, in eager, rapid tones. "I'm tired of this side of the world. I want to go back to the old

country. If I can only get to England I shall be a new man. I shall be able to pull myself together and shake off my fears, and work like I used to work in the old days. I swear I'll pay you back.

"You shall never have cause to regret your kindness. You will give me a new lease of life, and some day perhaps—who knows?—I may be able to go to Mr. Pryde and claim his daughter's hand!"

Suddenly his manner changed. His excitement died away as quickly as it had arisen. He sank back on his cushions with a wistful, half-ashamed sigh.

"I am an ass to talk like this," he said. "But you'll forgive me, won't you? You'll forget what I've said. It was a piece of gross presumption on my part to ask you to lend me money. Because you have befriended me once——"

"I'll befriend you again," said Jack, interrupting him. "But I won't lend you money; I'll find you a situation."

"When and where?" asked Dick.

"Now, and in England," said Jack. "Shortly before I left home I was induced to invest a few thousand pounds in a limited company which has been formed for the purpose of importing Australian and New Zealand mutton into England. We are in want of a manager—somebody who has lived in the Dominions and who knows all about the frozen meat trade.

"Now, it seems to me you are just the very man we want. At any rate, seeing that I am the chairman of the board of directors, and can do pretty much what I like, I'm going to take upon myself to appoint you our general manager. Your appointment shall date from to-day, and your salary, to commence, will be eight hundred pounds a year, part of which I shall be prepared to pay in advance as soon as you are fit to leave for England. The cost of your passage, of course, will be paid by the company."

Dick could scarcely keep the tears from his eyes.

"You are too good to me," he murmured. "How do you know that I am worthy of such generous treatment?"

"I know an honest man when I see one," said Jack simply. "You accept the appointment?"

"Need you ask?"

"Then we'll consider that settled. I leave here for England on Tuesday. It is now Friday night—or, rather, it's two o'clock on Saturday morning. Do you think you will be well enough to go back with me when I leave on Tuesday?"

"Well enough by Tuesday!" cried Dick, as he staggered to his feet, his pale face aglow with new-found happiness. "I'm well enough now! Your kindness has made a new man of me. You have given me something to live for, something to hope for. My only anxiety is to get away from New York at the earliest possible moment. There are three liners sailing for Europe about to-day—

the Dardania, the Umbria and the Hamburg. If it makes no difference to you, I should very much like to sail on one of them."

"It makes no difference to me, of course," said Jack. "But do you really think you are fit enough in health to undertake a sea voyage at such short notice?"

"Perfectly fit," said Dick eagerly. "The mere prospect of leaving New York has already worked wonders with me, and the short sea voyage is the very thing I need to complete the cure."

"Of course, if you are anxious to sail to-day I won't stand in your way," said Jack. "But there is just one thing I should like to mention before you finally decide. I arrived in New York last Wednesday afternoon. On Thursday morning I learnt, quite by accident, that a friend of mine, who is a detective, and well known all over the world, was in New York and staying at the Continental Hotel. I called there to see him only to learn that he had gone off to Boston on busi-

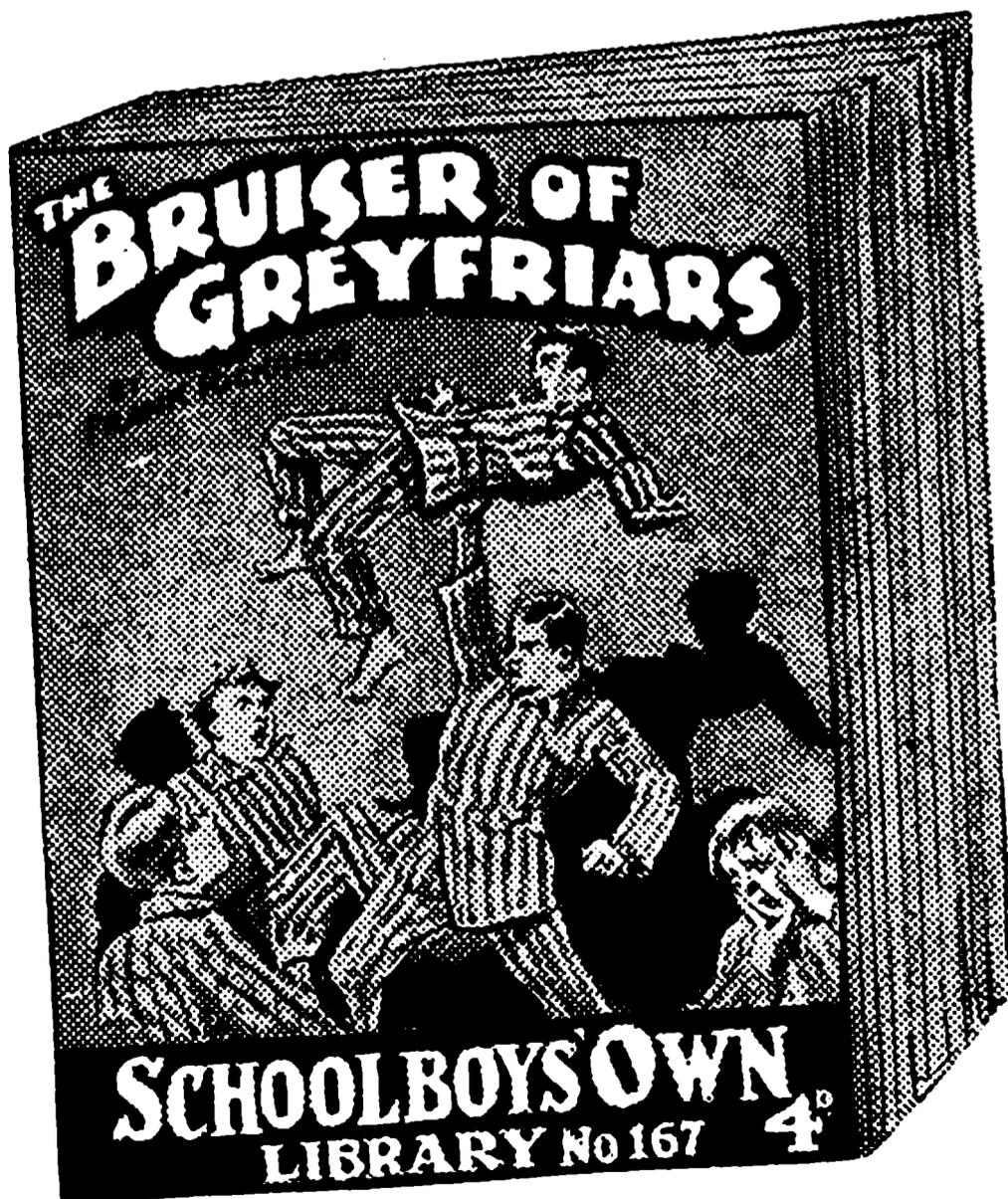
ness, but was expected back at the end of the week.

"I might mention that my friend is engaged on a long and trying case that has already taken him more than half way round the world. He and a scoundrel named Mark Rymer are trying to find the missing heir to the Easington title and estates. Mark Rymer wishes to find this missing heir in order to kill him and so remove the only obstacle in the way of himself inheriting the Easington fortune. I haven't heard from my friend for some time, but from what I gather I should think he had found the missing heir at Boston.

"You may take it from me that my friend is one of the cleverest detectives in the world. If you were to remain in New York until Tuesday, it is more than likely that you would see him, for I don't suppose he'll stay in Boston later than Monday at the very outside, and he's sure to come to call on me as soon as he hears that I'm in New York."

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"Well?" said Dick, as his companion paused.

"Well, don't you see," said Jack, "if you met my friend and told him your story, and got him interested in your case, he might be able to take it up and unravel the mystery which at present enshrouds your unknown foe, and his motive for trying to murder you. Mind you, I cannot promise that he would. In fact, if he hasn't found Lord Easington's missing heir, I'm pretty sure he wouldn't, for he always makes a point of never starting a new case until he has completely finished with the one in hand. All the same, I can't help thinking that it might be worth while your waiting until he returns to New York, on the off-chance of securing his assistance. That is my firm impression."

"It's awfully good of you to think of such a thing," said Dick. "At the same time, as I have said before, I should very much like to leave for England to-day. The air of New York stifles me. I want to get away from America, and now that you have given me the chance of doing so, I grudge every moment that delays my departure. Of course, if you would very much prefer that I should stay——"

In the midst of Dick's speech, Jack suddenly burst into a merry laugh. He had just remembered that Mr. Pryde and his daughter were leaving for England that day by the liner Dardania.

"What a thick-headed idiot I am!" he exclaimed, regarding Dick with a quizzical air. "Of course, you want to leave for England to-day, and, of course, you shall. What is an interview with any friend of mine compared with four and half days of Miss Pryde's company? You need not blush, my boy. I've been that way myself, and I know the feeling."

"Then I may go to-day?" asked Dick eagerly.

"Of course you may," replied Jack, pulling out a roll of notes. "Here's three months salary in advance. Buy yourself a new rig out as soon as the shops are open, and whilst you're engaged in that interesting occupation I'll go down to the shipping office and book you a first-class passago in the Dardania."

"Not first-class," protested Dick.

"First-class," repeated Jack. "The manager of our company has a position to keep up. It would be bad form to go steerage."

"But——"

"Not another word," said Jack firmly. "To quote the words of a famous statesman, 'What I have said I have said!' You shall go by the Dardania, and you shall travel first-class."

He was as good as his word, and ten hours later he and Dick were standing on the Dardania's upper deck, not more than a dozen yards from Mr. Pryde and Nellie.

"Now, remember," said Jack, as he took Dick's hand. "You are to stay at my house, Penleven Grange, until I return. That note

which I have just given you to give to my wife will explain everything to her, and will ensure you a hearty welcome."

A bell rang and a siren hooted. Then followed the order, "All ashore!"

"Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!"

The two men shook hands, and a moment later Jack Langley was crossing the gangway. He was the last to leave the liner, and as he stepped ashore a man came racing down the wharf, elbowed him aside, dashed across the moving gangway, and sprang aboard the boat, just as the last of the moorings were cast off, and she was moving out from the landing stage.

Two minutes later the Dardania was steaming down the river, and Jack Langley was staring after her in open-mouthed surprise and bewilderment, for he had caught a glimpse of the face of the man who had elbowed him aside and leaped aboard the liner.

There had been a difference, but he felt sure he could never mistake those awful eyes. They were the eyes of Mark Rymer, professor of chemistry at Westminster University! He felt sure of it!

CHAPTER 13.

The Last Lap!

IT was half-past twelve when Jack Langley returned to the Waldorf-Astoria.

"There's a gentleman upstairs in your room, sir," said the hall porter, touching his gold-laced cap. "He came just after you went out. And when I told him you had only gone down to the landing-stage to see a friend off to England, he said he would go up to your room and wait for you."

"And you allowed him to do so? You gave him the key of my private sitting-room?"

"Yes, sir. I knew you wouldn't mind."

"But I do mind—very much indeed."

"I don't think you will, sir, when I tell you the gentleman's name."

"What is his name?"

"Mr. Nelson Lee."

Jack didn't mind. He was up in his room in half a second under record time.

"This is great!" he cried, as he wrung the great detective's hand. "You've got back from Boston earlier than you expected. Haven't you?"

"Yes," said Nelson Lee. "But first let me congratulate you, Jack, on the change in your fortunes since I last stood in your house at Cornwall. Now you are rich, but then, if you remember, you could afford no better conveyance than a motor-bike. I'm glad of it, for your sake, old man."

"Thanks," said Jack simply. "I have been lucky, I admit. But tell me about yourself. Does your early return from Boston mean that you have been successful in finding the missing heir to the Easington fortune?"

"Unfortunately, no. On the contrary, it means that I have failed."

"You haven't found him?"

"No. The young man in the Boston hospital turns out to be an escaped convict who was born in Chicago and has never been out of the States in his life. That fact alone proves that he is not the missing heir, for Dick Seymour lived in Australia for many years, and afterwards—"

"Dick Seymour!"

Jack leapt to his feet, white as a ghost, and trembling in every limb.

"Lee—Lee!" he almost moaned. "For heavens' sake don't tell me that Lord Easington's missing heir is a young man named Dick Seymour, who was formerly employed as a stockman on Garoo Downs, in New South Wales, and afterwards emigrated to New Zealand, and from there to the Sandwich Islands, and from there to New York!"

"That's the man!" cried Nelson Lee excitedly. "You have described his history exactly. What do you know about him? Quick! Don't keep me in suspense!"

"I—I have just parted from him," groaned Jack, as he sank back in his chair. "I have given him money and have paid his passage to England, and he sailed in the Dardania this morning! Oh, what a blind fool I've been!"

Nelson Leo stared at him in incredulous amazement. He could scarcely credit what he heard.

"Tell me all about it," he said hoarsely. "When, and where, and how did you make his acquaintance?"

In answer to this question, Jack told the detective of his midnight adventure in the Bowery and of his subsequent long conversation with Dick Seymour and of the latter's departure for England in the Dardania.

"And to think that he was actually in New York all the time," sighed Nelson Leo regretfully. "After pursuing him all round the world, I have missed him at last by hair's breadth, as it were. However, it doesn't really matter, although I should have liked the honour and glory of escorting him back to his native land. If he's going to your house we have only to use the wireless—"

"But I haven't told you the worst," interrupted Jack, whose handsome face had suddenly grown haggard and drawn within the last few minutes. "Just as the Dardania was moving away from the wharf, a man rushed past me and leaped aboard. I caught a glimpse of his face. Even then I should not have recognised him. He must have been disguised. But I saw his eyes, and I feel sure I am not mistaken. It was Mark Rymer!"

The detective recoiled as though he had been struck.

"Mark Rymer—Mark Rymer!" he gasped. "Then Dick Seymour's doom is sealed!"

"That's just what I fear!" groaned Jack, rocking himself to and fro in his agony of self-reproach. "And I am the cause of it all! I have sent him to his death."

"Now you're talking nonsense," said Nelson Lee, laying his hand affectionately on

Jack's shoulder. "The outlook is sufficiently black, I admit, but there is no blame attaching to you, my dear fellow. You only did what any other generously-disposed person would have done under similar circumstances. You didn't know, you couldn't know, that Dick Seymour was the man I was hunting for. Neither could you be expected to know, when you booked Dick's passage, that Mark Rymer had booked his passage, or was going to book his passage in the very same vessel, the Dardania.

"But I am wasting time," he continued, suddenly relapsing into his customary business-like tones. "We must not only wireless the Dardania, but we must follow on by the next boat."

He picked up the telephone and called the shipping offices.

"Has the Umbria left yet?"

"Yes, sir, an hour and a half ago."

"And the Hamburg?"

"No, sir. She should have left at noon, but there was trouble with her steering gear. She will leave in an hour's time."

"Good. Any berths vacant?"

"Several, sir. Do you wish to book a berth?"

"Yes, please. One—"

"Two!" said Jack, interrupting.

The detective turned round and regarded him with an air of genuine surprise.

"Two?" he said. "Are you coming with me?"

"You bet!" said Jack.

"But I thought you had business in New York which would keep you here until Tuesday."

"Business can wait," said Jack. "I'm going to see this affair through."

"Right you are!" said Nelson Leo.

He turned to the telephone again.

"My friend will come with me," he said. "Reserve us the best available double-berth deck cabin you have left. We'll be down at the office in half an hour."

He was as good as his word, and by half-past three they were aboard the Hamburg, which left a quarter of an hour later for Plymouth and the Continent.

ONCE clear of the Ambrose light, Nelson Leo and Jack got busy getting into wireless communication with the Dardania, which was some hours ahead of them, out in the Atlantic.

The detective had closely questioned Jack Langley, and had realised that Dick Seymour had not thought it worth while to mention the wireless message he had received aboard the Ventura in the Pacific on the voyage from Honolulu to San Francisco. Nelson Leo was quick to realise that as nothing had come of that message, Dick would not be inclined to think it of importance, therefore he got Jack to wireless to Dick. He did not think it advisable to say any more than was absolutely necessary, as Dick had enough to worry him without adding to the number of his troubles. The

news that he was the heir to the Easington fortune could wait until he was safe in England and safe from the clutches of Mark Rymer. If Dick knew the truth it might make him more anxious for his own safety than ever.

Accordingly, Jack Langley sent the following wireless message:

"Your unknown foe aboard the Dardania. Be warned. Am following on the Hamburg. —LANGLEY."

After that Nelson Lee wirelessed to the captain of the Dardania, asking him to ascertain whether a big-nosed man with arched shoulders, named Mark Rymer, was aboard. But the answer came back that there was no passenger of that name or description aboard.

The detective could have asked that the man who had boarded the liner at the last moment should be placed under lock and key, but there were two reasons why that was impracticable. Firstly, Nelson Lee was a private detective and not an official detective, and therefore could not arrest anyone except by special warrant or if he caught a criminal red-handed. And, secondly, there might be a mistake, and if he caused the arrest of an innocent man there would be serious trouble later on.

Therefore, having warned Dick Seymour they could do nothing but leave matters where they were. There was the hope that the Hamburg, which was a very fast ship, might overtake the Dardania and reach Plymouth first, but it was doubtful, as she was late leaving New York, although they might get to Plymouth almost as soon as the Dardania.

Nelson Lee had a long talk with the captain of the Hamburg, and he was given the hope that they might overtake the Dardania before she reached Plymouth on the Wednesday afternoon.

It may have been that the captain over-estimated the speed of his own vessel, or it may have been that he had under-estimated the speed of the Dardania. It may have been that the Dardania was making an unusually fast passage, or it may have been that the Hamburg was making an unusually slow passage.

Whatever the cause, the fact remains that up to daybreak on Friday morning, when the Hamburg was abreast of the Scilly Isles, the Dardania had not even been sighted, much less overtaken and passed.

Shortly after passing the Scilly Isles the Hamburg ran into an impenetrable bank of fog, in consequence of which her engines were first reduced to half-speed, and afterwards to quarter. At this pace she crawled up the fog-enshrouded Channel for an hour or more, when suddenly, out of the fog immediately ahead, came the warning blare of a steamer's siren, followed scarcely a moment afterwards by the lurid flash of an ascending rocket.

Instantly the Hamburg's engines were reversed, and in a few moments her decks were crowded with alarmed and excited passengers, some of them having come straight from their bunks in their night attire.

"What's the matter?" asked Nelson Lee, addressing the chief officer, who was coming down from the bridge.

"Nothing at present," was the surly reply. The man was worried, and had no desire to alarm the more timid of the passengers by stating what was in his own mind.

"If nothing's the matter why have the engines been reversed?" asked Jack, who was standing by the detective's side.

"Because there's evidently another vessel just in front of us."

"But I heard someone say that a rocket had been fired. Is the vessel ahead of us on the rocks?"

"It may be so."

"Then if the other vessel is on the rocks, and is just ahead of us, we can't be far from the rocks ourselves. In other words, you must have lost your bearings and brought the Hamburg too close inshore."

The chief officer, who had been on the bridge at the time, and had just been superseded by the captain, scowled angrily, but before he could frame a suitable reply the air was rent by a deafening shout of terrified amazement.

For at that moment the fog had suddenly lifted, revealing the fact that the Hamburg was bearing down on the Dardania, which was stranded on the rocks at the mouth of Penleven Cove, immediately underneath Jack Langley's house!

CHAPTER 14.

A Fighting Finish!

THE voyage of the Dardania had not been a pleasant one for Dick Seymour. For one thing Jack Langley's wireless message did not help to make him feel at his ease. He kept his eyes open for the slightest sign of his unknown foe, trying hard to recall what little he could remember of that awful face.

But Mark Rymer had seen the steward hand the wireless message to Dick Seymour, and he guessed just what that meant, and accordingly he not only took great pains with his disguise, but also was very careful to keep out of sight of Dick's searching eyes, while, at the same time he watched for his opportunity at all hours of the night and day.

The professor would not have been surprised had the captain come to arrest him, but he was ready with faked alibis and all sorts of threats and excuses. But when they were two days out of New York and nothing had happened, Mark Rymer guessed that Nelson Lee either did not know he was aboard the Dardania or was not in a position to secure his arrest. From that time, half at least of

his worries were over for the time being, and he concentrated upon his one resolve—to remove Dick Seymour from his path. He knew it had to be accomplished before the ship reached Plymouth or his chance would be gone for ever.

Strange to say, neither Nellie nor her father noticed that Dick was on board until the voyage was several hours old. In fact, it was not until the passengers assembled for evening dinner that Nellie's eyes, roaming round the crowded and brilliantly lighted saloon, fell on the care-worn face of her handsome and unfortunate lover.

With an involuntary cry of delighted surprise, she pointed him out to her father, who, as soon as the meal was ended, drew Dick aside and asked him how he had fared since he had left the Sandwich Islands. When Dick had told his story, the old man laid his hand on his shoulder and spoke to him, not unkindly, perhaps, but in unemotional, business-like tones, from which sentiment was conspicuous by its absence.

"You seem to have had a pretty rough time since you left my employment," he said. "Everything appears to have been against you; but you've got your feet on the bottom rung of the ladder, now, with this new appointment of yours, and no one will be more sincerely pleased to see you at the top than I shall."

"And your promise?" said Dick eagerly. "That still hold good?"

"Certainly!" said Mr. Pryde, smiling at the absurdity of the idea. "Come to me in two years' time, or less, and prove to me that you have an assured income of thirty thousand dollars a year, and if Nellie still wants you, I won't say no to your marriage. That was my promise, wasn't it?"

"It was," said Dick.

"And, in the meantime, of course," said Mr. Pryde, "I shall expect you to keep your part of the bargain. You promised me, you will remember, that until you had an income of thirty thousand dollars a year you wouldn't speak to Nellie, or write to her, or communicate with her in any way whatsoever. I trust you haven't booked your passage in the Dardania with the intention of breaking your promise?"

Dick coloured to the roots of his hair. As a matter of fact, he had chosen the Dardania partly because he would be able to see Nellie every day, but partly also in the hope that her father would at least allow him to speak to her occasionally.

"Am I to understand," he asked, "that you wish to keep to the strict letter of my promise?"

"That is my wish," said Mr. Pryde, in a hard, matter-of-fact voice. "You pledged your word to me that you wouldn't speak to her until you had an income such as I have named, and I expect you, as an honourable man, to fulfil your word."

Dick inclined his head.

"Very good, sir," he said, in a husky voice. "Very good, sir. It shall be as you say."

Now, this decree of Mr. Pryde's—the forbidding Dick to speak to Nellie—would have been quite sufficient in itself to rob the voyage of all enjoyment so far as Dick Seymour was concerned. For how could he be expected to enjoy himself when he was seeing Nellie every hour of the day and was forbidden to exchange a single syllable of conversation with her?

And surely he would have been something more or less than mortal if he had not found it gall and wormwood to have to "keep his distance" whilst other men were escorting

COMING NEXT WEDNESDAY!



Nellie down to dinner, or finding her a comfortable chair on deck, or sitting by her side in the lounge and chatting with her.

But Mr. Pryde's decree was not the only thing which made the voyage an extremely unpleasant one for Dick Seymour. He had the worry and anxiety of knowing that his unknown foe was aboard. And on the third day out from New York Mark Rymer contrived, unseen by the rest of the passengers, to empty the contents of a small glass capsule into Dick's cup of after-dinner coffee.

By a phenomenal stroke of luck, the cup was upset by a clumsy steward before Dick had drunk much more than a quarter of its poisonous contents, but even the little he had drunk proved quite sufficient to give rise to exceedingly unpleasant symptoms.

For the whole of Tuesday night and for the greater part of Wednesday, Dick was in the hands of the ship's surgeon, who never left him for a single instant, and who pried him with stomach-pump, with nauseous emetics and with disgusting antidotes.

On Wednesday evening he was pronounced cured, but was not allowed to leave his bunk. On Thursday he was permitted to sit up, but was still kept a prisoner in his cabin, which nobody but the doctor was allowed to enter. And at daybreak on Friday he was awakened by a sudden and violent shock, which jarred the vessel from stem to stern, and flung him out of his bunk.

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ORDER IN ADVANCE!

Most decidedly it was not a pleasant or an agreeable voyage for Dick!

But the most unpleasant part was yet to come.

As soon as he had collected his senses he picked himself up, dressed himself in feverish haste and hurried on deck, where he found himself a unit in a surging crowd of alarmed and excited passengers. Several minutes elapsed before he could obtain a coherent account of what had happened; but at last he learned that the Dardania had lost her way in the fog, and had run aground on the rocky reef at the mouth of Penleven Cove.

"No, there's no danger—absolutely none," said the captain, in answer to the passenger's frantic queries. "The sea, as you can see for yourselves, is comparatively calm,

and there isn't a breath of wind. We have sustained no damage worth mentioning, and the ship will probably float off at high tide. In the meantime, in order to alleviate all anxiety, the boats shall be got ready to be lowered at a moment's notice, and we'll signal on shore for the lifeboat to stand by, in case it should be required."

Reassured by the captain's words, a goodly number of the passengers returned to their cabins to complete their toilets. The great majority, however, still remained on deck, and amongst these were Mark Rymer and Dick Seymour.

For several minutes the two men stood shoulder to shoulder—and in the excitement the professor had left his cabin without adopting his disguise! They strove in vain to pierce the fog which hid the shore from their view. Then, for no particular reason except a desire to stretch his legs, Dick elbowed his way through the crowd and strolled away in the direction of the after part of the upper deck, which was then completely deserted and enwrapped in almost total darkness.

In the twinkling of an eye Mark Rymer was gliding after him, his hand in the inside pocket of his coat, nervously fingering an ivory-handled dagger.

"My chance at last!" he muttered to himself, when he saw Dick halt and lean over the taffrail. "The chance I have waited for so long! I have only to steal up to him from behind—"

His musings ended in a startled gasp, for at that moment the Dardania's steam siren uttered a discordant roar, whilst an instant later a rocket soared into the fog enshrouded sky.

This, which was meant as a signal to those on shore, not only had the effect of interrupting the professor's musings, but it also sent Dick hurrying back to rejoin his fellow-passengers. A few moments later, however, he again returned to his post on the deserted upper deck, and again Mark Rymer followed him.

With stealthy, cat-like steps the professor crept towards his unsuspecting victim. Shorter and shorter grew the distance between them, until at last it was less than half a dozen yards. Then, suddenly, Dick spun round on his heel with a hoarse shout of alarm. Indistinctly through the fog he had just caught sight of another liner which appeared to be bearing down on the Dardania, in such a way as to render a collision inevitable.

The next instant, however, he had forgotten all about the approaching liner, for upon turning round he found himself face to face with the professor, who was there in the act of crouching for his spring, with his weapon in his upraised hand.

Almost before he had time to realise what was happening, the professor leaped upon him; but with marvellous agility Dick dodged the descending blow, and dealt the

professor a sharp, swift blow on the wrist which caused him to drop his weapon.

For the brief fraction of a second the two men stood glaring at each other like gladiators, measuring each other's strength. Then, with a low, fierce snarl, the professor once more rushed at Dick, and in the twinkling of an eye they were locked in each other's arms, and were reeling to and fro across the deck in a grim and desperate wrestling bout.

In the midst of their struggle the fog suddenly lifted. At the same instant a chorus of ear-splitting yells burst forth from the rest of the *Dardania's* passengers—yells of excitement at the sight of two men struggling on the upper deck, and yells of alarm at the vision of the *Hamburg*, which was then but half a cable's length away, and had only just succeeded in altering her course in time to avert a collision.

The excitement aboard the *Hamburg* was every whit as great as that aboard the *Dardania*. Jack Langley and Nelson Lee, who were standing side by side on the promenade deck, were amongst the first to see the stranded liner, and the struggling figures of Dick and the professor. Both men recognised the struggling figures at the selfsame moment, but Jack was the first to speak.

"Lee—good Heavens!—look!" he cried, his voice vibrating with intense excitement. "Dick Seymour!"

"And Mark Rymer!"

Scarcely had he spoken ere the air was rent by a perfect pandemonium of shouts and shrieks and women's screams. For even whilst Mark Rymer's name was trembling on the detective's lips, the two men overbalanced themselves, crashed against the taffrail, fell clean over it, and toppled backwards into the sea, still locked in each other's arms.

"Stop him!"

The cry burst from a hundred throats. But it came too late. Like an arrow from a bow the detective had darted from Jack's side, had cleared the taffrail of the *Hamburg* at a flying leap, and had plunged into the sea.

Amid a scene of indescribable excitement he swam towards the spot where Dick and the professor had disappeared. Before he reached it, however, the two men rose to the surface again, separated from each other by a distance of perhaps a dozen yards. Dick was evidently quite exhausted, and blood was streaming from an ugly gash on his forehead, caused by his head having come into contact with one of the jagged spurs of the rocky reef. Mark Rymer, on the other hand, was apparently as fresh as ever, but his eyes were glittering with a wild, unearthly light.

Mad though he was—and there is no doubt that such was his condition—he was still sufficiently sane to see that Dick was practically at his mercy, for the latter was half fainting from loss of blood, and had all his work out to keep himself afloat. The moment the professor rose to the surface,

therefore, he thrust his hand into his pocket, whipped out a clasp knife, opened the blade with his teeth, darted through the water like a fish, and was just about to plunge his weapon into Dick's heart when Nelson Lee, with a couple of powerful strokes, swam up to him from behind and seized his uplifted arm before he could deal the fatal blow.

With a venomous oath the professor wrenched himself free and turned on Nelson Lee. Quick as thought the detective lashed out with his fist and sent the weapon flying from Mark Rymer's grasp. Nothing daunted, however, the professor literally hurled himself through the water and fastened his hands on the detective's throat.

"Our duel started here—it shall end here!" he yelled with a maniacal laugh.

As he uttered these words he loosed his hands from Nelson Lee's throat, and flung his arms round his waist, whilst at the same time he wound his legs round the lower part of the detective's body.

Down, down, down they sank, till at last they came to rest on the rocky ocean bed. In spite of all that Nelson Lee could do, in spite of the ceaseless shower of blows which he rained down on his adversary's face, Mark Rymer only clung to him more tightly, and never for an instant allowed his grip to relax. He had evidently made up his mind that he and his rival should perish together, and with this end in view he refrained from returning the detective's blows, but contented himself with holding the detective down and preventing him rising to the surface.

Slowly but surely the pangs of impending suffocation began to creep over Nelson Lee. Feebler and feebler grew his blows, wilder and more erratic became his struggles. At last, however, by a superhuman effort, he managed to plant one hand on the professor's forehead, and the other on his chin. Then, summoning up all his remaining strength, he forced the professor's jaws apart, and compelled him to open his mouth.

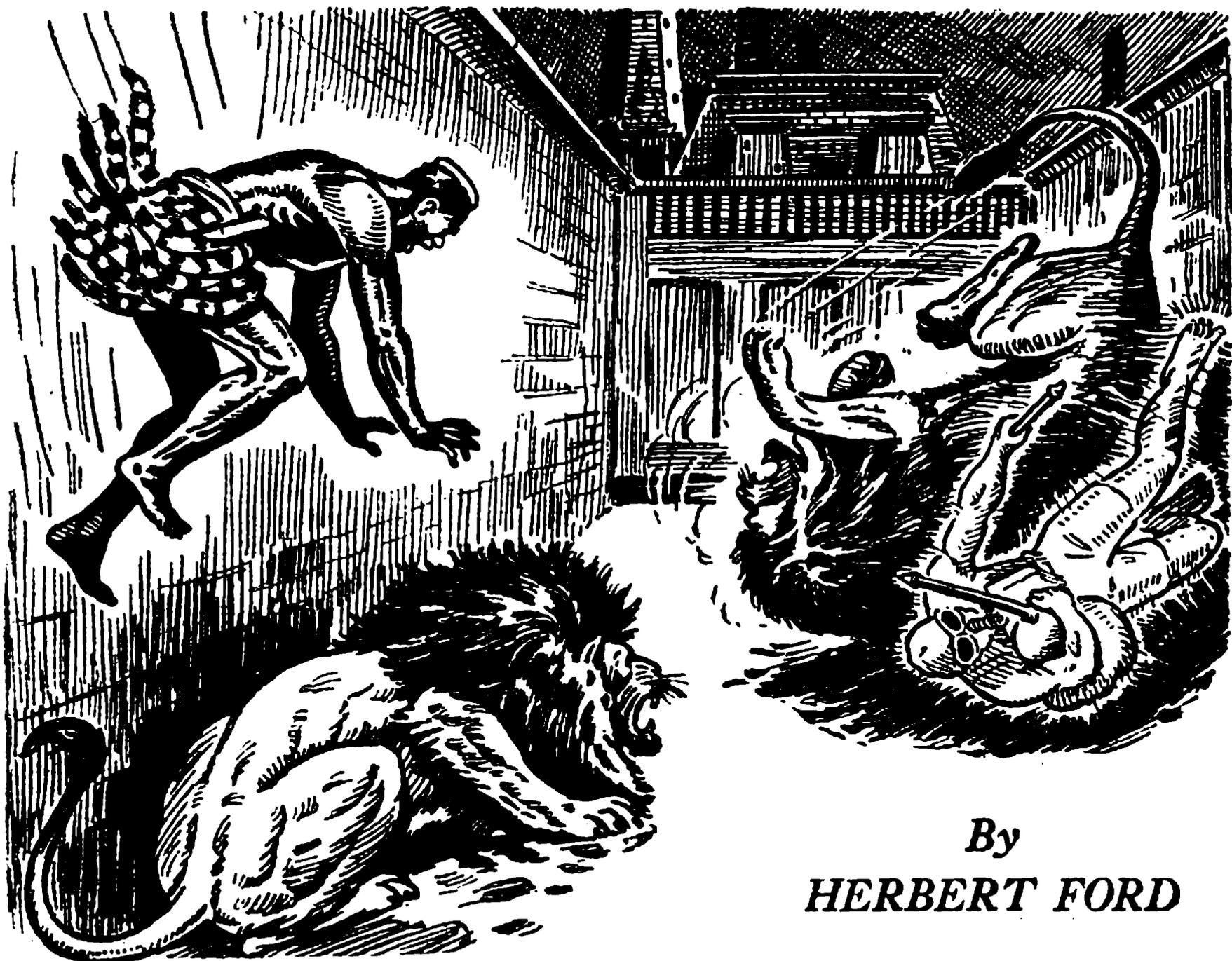
There was a gurgling sound, as the imprisoned air, escaping from Mark Rymer's lungs, rose bubbling to the surface, and the sea-water rushed in to take its place. The encircling arms and legs, after one convulsive spasm, rapidly unwound themselves, and Nelson Lee began to rise. A moment later he had reached the surface, where his appearance was greeted by a rousing cheer from those on board the liners. He glanced around, and saw that Jack Langley had leapt overboard and was supporting Dick Seymour's half-unconscious form. Then he filled his lungs with a long, deep draught of cool, refreshing air, and once more dived below the surface.

For half a dozen seconds those on board the liners held their breath in tense and excited suspense. Then a mighty roar of

(Continued on page 44.)

Thrill-Packed Story of Treasure-hunting in Mysterious and Unknown Africa!

The CITY of GOLD!



By
HERBERT FORD

Tom Cook, together with his cousin Alva Vandeck and a Zulu warrior, set out in their wonder craft, the Flying Fish, in search of the City of Gold. After many adventures they arrive at the Golden City, and to their amazement they are greeted at the foot of a gigantic golden statue by a vast multitude of priests and warriors.

The White Boy God!

AS the raucous notes on the syren rang out in imitation of the "Voice" of "Balaam's Ass," the people remained prostrate until the echoes had died away, then, led by the singing men and the priests, they raised a chant:

"Tomkuk the Great;
Tomkuk the All-Powerful;
Tomkuk the Merciful,
Is with is people once more!
Hail! Hail! Hail!"

"By jinks, old man, you couldn't have a bigger reception than that if you were a million-dollar-a-week-film-star!" chuckled Alva Van-

deck, popping his head out of the foward hatch just at Tom's feet. "Keep it up, bo; we'll have 'em runnin' all ways at once to do our biddin' directly and they'll be bringin' us the best diamonds on a tray for breakfast! Atta-boy!"

"It's all very well, but I don't half like this," said Tom, but with a furtive glance up at the gigantic golden statue which was the living image of himself. Actually it had been carved to represent Tom Cook's ancestor who had befriended these people many years ago. "I'm not goin' to try to spoof these poor heathen that I'm a re-incarnation of their king or god or whatever he was!"

"Tosh! It's them doin' the spoofin', not you!" retorted Alva. "For my sake shut up and carry on. How in peace d'you know you're not a reincarnation o' the old buster, anyway? Look at it how you like, you're his dead spittin' image, and I'll lay a thousand dollars to a pants button he was your lost grandad! Geo, boyee, be yerself. You cain't chuck aside a heaven-sent chance like this for the sake o' your mouldy scruples. Have a heart and get on with the good work."

He switched on the power and threw the clutch into gear.

"Hang on and we'll show 'em a piece just to impress 'em some more. Lulu!"

"Ja baas?"

"Just spiel 'em a bit more; tell 'em that the mighty Tomkuk'll now show 'em how we got here. Give it 'em hot and we'll make their eyes bung out o' their heads! I don't like the look o' that old priest; he's got a kind o' sceptical eye, and mebbe he don't believe in Tomkuk. We've gotta learn him! Attahoy!"

Lulu's experience in side shows now stood him in good stead, for he made a trumpet of his hands and his magnificent voice pealed out in an address that would have made an American "ballyhoo" man at Coney Island envious.

Then the "Flying Fish" began to slowly circle around the basin which was formed below the great statue of Tomkuk, until, as she gathered speed, she rose on her tail and then finally left the water and took to the air, as her wings gracefully opened out on either side. Gathering speed she circled around the great statue until she rose above it and hovered for a few moments with the syren blaring out "Waugh-augh-haugh-waugh!" until the hills re-echoed.

Then Alva had another idea. There were two small searchlights on either side of the Fish, right up in the bows for use at night, and he switched these on as the flying boat hovered directly in front of, and on a level with the head. They were fitted with coloured blinds behind the lenses, with which he could change colour at will. As Tom faced the giant head the whole face seemed to light up in recognition, whilst the eyes glowed with the changing colours and it almost looked as if the statue and its human double conversed.

"By gum, that's got 'em!" chuckled Alva. "Now, Tom, old bird, do your stuff like a good 'un. Stand right up in the bows and point to that decrepit pair of oxen that old nigger has just driven down to the river. They look as if they hadn't been fed for a month, and it's about time they were put to sleep, anyway!"

"Here, what's the stunt?" growled Tom. "Don't play the fool, Al!"

"Shurrup; fool yerself!" growled his cousin. "Cain't you see that a li'l demonstration of Tomkuk's power is goin' to give these fellers an idea of our importance and mebbe stop 'em takin' liberties with us? They're numerous enough and strong enough to swallow us up, and if it came to scrappin' there'd be some terrible bloodshed with our modern weapons. Isn't it better to sacrifice a span of worn-out oxen than to have p'raps hundreds o' these people slaughtered if they try any funny businay with us?"

Tom growled a reluctant assent. Ben hastily loaded the concealed gun, pointing it at the two emaciated bullocks which a wizened old black slave had driven down to the water's edge.

"Oh, people, be not afeared!" bellowed Lulu, in his most impressive bass. "I am the dog and the mouthpiece of Tomkuk the Great, whom I serve. Listen therefore to my voice and take heed! He has shown ye how he and we his attendants have come hither, through the passage of The Voice, from afar to dwell amongst ye and bring luck, peace and prosperity to the Golden City. But, lest ye doubt, or any of ye have evil in your hearts, whether ye be priests, nobles, or common folks, it pleases the lord Tomkuk to give ye a small example of his power. See yonder oxen. Tomkuk can slay them from afar with his finger—as he could slay ye one and all as ye stand, but he is merciful!"

"All set, Tom; point at the moo-moos!" hissed Al.

Reluctantly Tom stood forward at the prow and just stretched out his hand towards the cattle. There was a slight hiss as the compressed air gun sent the tiny gas bullets hurtling through the air, and the two old oxen vanished as if they had never been, only the hoofs and horns remaining, so powerful was the explosive in the tiny missiles.

With a yell of fear the people flopped down on their faces again, and this time there was no hesitation on the part of any, even the ancient old reprobate under the canopy and the masked priests doing homage to the power of "Tomkuk the Great!"

Whatever fakes they had made use of for their own profit in the name of the Golden God they saw now a demonstration of power which left them all agog, and they were convinced that Tom had indeed come to life and was a mighty powerful potentate that it would not pay to run counter to!

"Stuff to give 'em!" grinned Al complacently. "Lulu, tell 'em they can go home now. Tom will visit the city at dawn or after, as pleases him. This night he will give a further demonstration of his power, but they need not get rattled. He wishes well to his people. Oh, you know what to spil 'em!"

Lulu certainly did, and for nearly ten minutes he held forth, thundering out the commands of Tom until he sent the mob scuttling back for the city as fast as they could.

"That's that!" sighed Al contentedly, as the last of the crowd hustled back up the desfile. "Now we can take an easy, have a bit o' grub, and to-night we'll give 'em something to think about!"

"What's the game?" demanded Tom. "No more of your fakes, old man. I'm not goin' to have a hand in spoofin' these simple folk just because they've mistaken me for Tom; it give me the pip, I don't mind tellin' you. Let's treat 'em fair, trade with 'em and that, but no fakes!"

He had lived all his life amongst negroes, the African natives, and had a great respect for many of them. Men like Lulu, himself; descendants of great African kings, with pedigrees as long as an English earl's, and he had found them good fellows, with a code of honour and a

bravery that could be of the highest standard and he was as simple-hearted himself as his black friend.

"Look here, old boss," reasoned the shrewd American quietly. "I'll tell you something. When we were up in the air I kept my eyes open, and saw something that p'raps you didn't. Back of the crowd, behind the priests, hemmed in by the soldiers in gold armour, behind that old mummified high priest bloke, was a little mob of people, men, women and children, all huddled together with their arms bound behind 'em. They were so thin and wretched and scared lookin' they just made my blood run cold. D'you know what they were? Slaves, old man; slaves, brought down there to be sacrificed to the statue of Tom yonder!"

"Al! How d'ye know?" asked Tom sharply.

For answer Al pointed to the rocks on which the statue was erected. For the first time Tom noticed that there were a number of great iron rings let into the rocks just below the surface, and that above the water the rocks themselves were stained a brownish red.

Then, as he stared in half-comprehension, a scaly, ugly head was thrust above the water and drawn back with a sullen splash.

"That feller's even bigger than the white croc. Lulu killed back there in Leper's Canyon," Al went on. "I'm bettin' ten thousand dollars to a nickel that that croc. and his kind grow fat on the sacrifices—human sacrifices, mark you, made to Tahmkuk, yonder, and those fiendish priests encourage it. Now, if they like to accept you as Tahmkuk, their king and god, what's it matter? You could do these people a bit o' good and teach 'em to live decently, do away with slavery, and human sacrifices!"

"But I——"

"What does it matter if we spoof 'em a bit, if it's in a good cause? And Tom, old sport, there was a white boy amongst those slaves! Now, what about it?"

For a few seconds Tom Cook stared up at the great, impassive face of the statue, as if reading something there in the noble countenance—perhaps a message passed from that ancestor of the same name, who had lived those long years ago as ruler of this people, for he bowed his head in assent and said:

"You're right, Al! I'll do it! Now, what's this stunt you've got at the back of your nut?"

The Slaves!

"THE moon don't rise till about 2 a.m., accordin' to the calendar, which is all the better for us and our li'l stunt 'ull be a heap more impressive in the dark," said Al, some time later. "I can fly the old Fish fairly high above the city and just hover over that temple place with silenced engines, then you'll do your bit, Tommy, see? Ben, got those rockets and the other stuff ready?"

"Okay, bawss, all ready an' r'arin' to go!" grinned the American. "Thar's about two hundred feet o' best tested wire that 'ud bear a young nelefunt, let alone the young baas. But we kin sling Lulu over the side to test it if yer like?"

"Sez you!" retorted the Zulu, giving a contemptuous imitation of the American's own expression. "Hand me on the end of a line like a garfish? Ikona!"

"All right, big boy, if yer skeered we won't say no more about it," said Ben, with a wink at Al. "Jest gimme a hand with this windlass and we'll plonk a weight over and see how she goes. Will yuh git inter yer harness, bawss, an' see if it's okay?"

He had rigged up a small windlass in the centre of the flying-boat, and to this was wound over two hundred feet of thin but tremendously strong wire, with a hook at the end which could be attached to a sort of swimming belt which he had constructed.

They had flown back over the forest on the other side of the river from the Golden City, so as to be out of the way of observation whilst they practised the "stunt" which was to astonish the citizens.

They waited until sunset, for it was necessary for the success of the stunt that the machine should not be seen, then they rose to two thousand feet and glided over the city with engines silenced and only the auto-gyro whirling to enable the Fish to hover.

Tom went into the tiny cabin with Alva, who daubed his naked body from head to foot with luminous paint, using the same for the "harness" by which he was to be suspended from the Fish. There was a faint light from a huge bonfire which had been built in the market place opposite the temple, and many of the people carried torches as they stood about in groups discussing the recent marvellous happenings, waiting pop-eyed for the promised visitation from the Tahmkuk. Suddenly a yell went up from the crowds as showers of Bengal fires fell from the sky, followed by rockets that threw out brilliant flares high above their heads. But the Flying Fish was far above the range of the lights, and as they gradually died down a figure, faintly luminous, floated down in mid air.

Tom was suspended in the "harness" at the extreme end of the two hundred feet of wire, and after the first few moments he found he could rest on its support as if floating in water.

The Fish swayed now up, now down, so that it looked as if the luminous figure was actually flying over the city, whilst Tom took the opportunity to do a little "spotting" until he began to feel cramped and stiff, when he signalled to be taken up again, and as the flying boat rose he gradually disappeared from the astonished people's sight.

"I've spotted it!" he said, as he was helped over the side, and the harness taken off. "They've got those poor beggars of slaves penned in a sort of den at the back of the temple. Al, you

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were right; there's a white boy amongst 'em. There's no roof to the den, but one gate, and that's slowly rising inch by inch. Al, there's four big lions prowling around in a cage behind that lifting gate, and they're scratching and nosing underneath to get to those defenceless people. I reckon it's a sort of slow torture, and they've got to be rescued from those skunks of priests right away. I'm goin' to get down and fetch 'em out before those lions can get at 'em, so make for the temple, and get as low as you can over it, see? I'll take my rifle."

"Hold on, hold on!" cried Alva. "Brain-wave, laddie! I've gotta better notion than firearms, and—noiseless, which is a great thing. Ben, come hither and confer."

He and the little American engineer chattered eagerly for a few minutes, then Ben dived below.

"Asafoetida capsules in number two locker; gasbag and mask in the drawer under my bunk; fill bag, and put capsules in the hand-pump!" Al called after him, whilst Tom looked on in astonishment. "New way o' tamin' lions. Al Vandeck patent, old top! Now, let's get to work on you whilst I tell you what is how!"

He carefully took off the luminous paint from Tom's back, leaving the front still glowing, and dabbed lampblack over his back so that he would be invisible in darkness if he turned his back. By the time they had finished, Ben returned with a gas-mask, coated in front with luminous paint, and a distended gasbag with nozzle, and a small hand-pump which gave forth the penetrating stench of asafoetida, combined with ammonia.

Zulu wants to go, too!" he grinned.

"No; one's enough to risk it," said Tom. "Lulu, you stay here, understand?"

"Ja baas, ne mali kotunda," replied the Zulu, impassively; but he winked a wicked old eye at Ben.

They hovered low over the temple until they judged the Fish was about two hundred feet above it, then once more Tom was lowered with gas mask on, and his strange apparatus under his arm. A flash from his electric torch gave the signal that he had landed, as the wire slackened.

"Hey, what are you up to?" cried Al, as the Zulu threw his long leg over the side, and gripping the wire slid down into the darkness.

"Man o' his word, is Lulu," grinned Ben.

Lulu, like many of his tribe, and "savage" races generally, could practically see in the dark, and he followed stealthily after his "baas" as the illuminated figure fitted towards the temple. Tom has been dropped inside the high wall which surrounded the arena-like place where the prisoners were confined. But he skirted the roofless pen and halted just above the cage in which the four lions prowled. They were busy eagerly watching the gate, which rose a quarter of an inch or so every now and again with a creaky sound.

The prisoners were huddled together, watching with fearful and fascinated eyes the gradual opening of the gate.

"Just about time I took a hand," muttered Tom and, he vaulted lightly over the protecting wall and landed into the pen of lions.

Trapped in a Lion's Den!

THE gasbag was constructed so that he could hold it's bulk, bulging with the gas, under his arm like a bagpipe, when a small pressure would force the gas through the nozzle.

As he landed there came another ominous creak, and the gate slid up another inch.

Tom gave a sharp hiss through his teeth and a growl deep down in his throat as he advanced towards the beasts with the nozzle of the gasbag well to the fore.

In a flash the four great heads turned towards him, and the hindmost animal slunk towards him, growling.

But the shining figure, the strange looking head, and Tom's fearsome appearance generally, puzzled and alarmed the animal. He snarled and drew back, and Tom seized the opportunity to squirt the mixture from the hand-pump straight into his face. The strong fumes of the ammonia mixture took the brute's breath away and he coughed and spluttered.

Tom knew that the element of surprise was his greatest asset in dealing with lions and, letting out a fiendish yell, he jumped towards them. Two sprang aside in alarm, but the other, a gigantic old beast with a mangy mane and a body covered in scars, crunched, growling and snarling fiercely. Tom could see by the quivering of it's haunches and the lashing tail that it was about to spring, and he pressed the gasbag under his arm, directing the nozzle full at the huge head.

Then he realised the full use of the gasbag, for as the stuff sprayed invisibly over the lion's head he gave one rending cough and rolled upon the floor with his legs stiff in the air.

"Some gas!" Tom muttered, "who's the next?"

The lion he had sprayed with the ammonia was recovering, and with his eyes streaming he came coughing at the intruder. A whiff of the gas full into his open mouth settled him, and he, too, rolled in the sand with stiff legs.

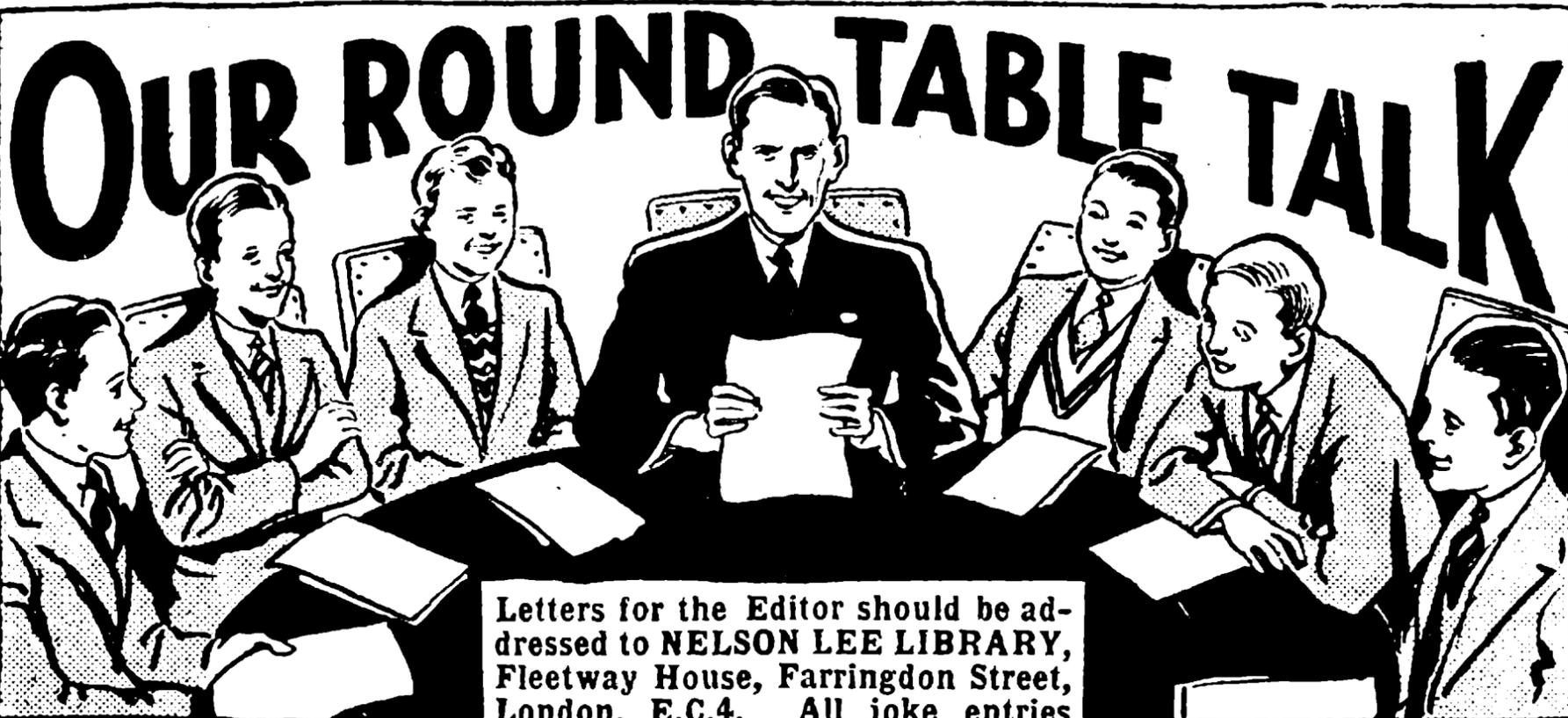
But the other two were not done with, and had artfully separated, so that one would be behind Tom when he attended to the other. He darted at one and sprayed towards him, but the beast leapt aside and got only a portion of the gas which made him cough, but also made him exceedingly angry.

He dashed in and gave a dab with his paw, which would have finished Tom if he had not skipped aside in time, but with disastrous results. Under the sand was smooth paving and, his foot slipping, he was down on one knee as the big brute turned like lightning and made for him. He gave a convulsive squeeze to the gasbag and the lion keeled over almost on top of him, sending him spinning straight towards the fourth one.

Then there was a yell from the top of the wall, and Lulu crashed down straight on to the back of the beast as it was about to spring on his "young baas."

(Trapped in a lion's den in the heart of the City of Gold! Such is the terrible position of Tom and his Zulu pal. Will they escape? See next week's chapters of this Great Treasure-hunt story.)

Would you like a penknife, wallet, or Book? Send in a joke to the Editor!



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.

ZINGRAVE'S DARING ESCAPE!

DOWN the long winding road the prison van, carrying the world's most ruthless master-crook, Professor Zingrave, speeds towards the distant grey walled prison. Suddenly, right before its path, a giant tree collapses, crashes across the road, bringing the vehicle to a shattering halt. A burst of gun-fire, a chorus of yells, and the League of the Green Triangle make their bold bid to free their chief.

It is all over in a moment. The prison van, half a wreck, still forms of warders . . . Zingrave has gone! Where?

That is the opening of next week's Extra-special complete Detective-Thriller, starring Nelson Lee, and the Boys of St. Frank's.

Following Zingrave's audacious escape comes the most amazing series of adventures Nelson Lee and Nipper & Co. have ever experienced. The whole story fairly quivers with unexpected and sensational happenings, and like all tales that have appeared in the Old Paper, it is full value for money.

MORE THRILLERS TO COME!

I am glad to say the post bag is still heavy with letters of appreciation from readers who have just finished reading the latest of our Detective-Thrillers. While those of you who have missed "Handforth's Weekly" will find it just as merry and bright as ever in next week's issue. The wise reader will order his copy of the **NELSON LEE At Once!**

Barber (who has just cut customer): "The boss fines me a tanner for every cut I makes, but I does 'im down if I makes two cuts. I joins 'em and save a tanner."

(R. H. Renton, 29, Glenfield Road, W. Ealing W.13—a pocket wallet.)

Tommy: "I saw an armless sculptor at work to-day."

Willie: "Impossible. How did he work?"

Tommy: "He held the chisel in his mouth and his assistant hit him on the back of his head with the hammer."

(C. Parker, 19, McKenzie Street, Burswick, Melbourne, Australia—a grand price.)

Mike: "Did ye ever spake before a large audience, Pat?"

Pat: "Oi did once."

Mike: "An' phwat did ye say?"

Pat: "Not guilty."

(W. R. Munson, 24, Cyril Road, Bournemouth—a penknife.)

Schoolmaster (to boy who is late on very slippery morning): "My boy, why are you lato?"

Boy: "Well, sir, for every step I took I slid two back."

Master: "How did you get to the school, then?"

Boy: "Please sir, I turned round and went home."

(N. Wright, Post Office, Mottram, St. Andrew, near Macclesfield, Cheshire—a grand book.)

Tramp (tapping at Scotsman's window one cold night): "Can yer give me a tanner for a bed?"

Scotsman (looking out): "Ay, bide a wee, an' I'll come down an' ha'o a look at it."

(W. G. Fox, 42, Lawson Road, Enfield Highway, Middlesex—a grand book.)

"Waiter, my bill comes to thirteen shillings, and you have made it fourteen."

"Sorry, sir. I heard your friend say that you were superstitious."

(C. Brimelow, 25, Bridge St., Runcorn, Cheshire—a penknife.)

Pat: "Don't shoot! The gun isn't loaded."

Mike: "I've got to—the bird won't wait."

(A. Wickes, 36, Thornhill Square, Barnsbury, N.1—a grand book.)

First Sailor: "'Ow's your new cabin-boy getting on, Joe?"

Second Sailor: "'E broko all the saucers and we 'ave to drink out of the cups."

(L. Isaacs, 2, Pleasant Terrace, Ystrad Rhondda Glam.—a pocket wallet.)

THE FINAL ROUND!

(Continued from page 38.)

applause rent the air. The detective had risen to the surface again, no longer alone, but bearing on his arm the form of his vanquished foe.

But the professor was dead!

As the professor had truly said, it was the hand of Fate. On the summit of the cliff which guards the entrance to Penleven Cove the duel between himself and Nelson Lee had commenced. At the foot of the selfsame cliff, after a journey round the world, the long, stern duel had ended.

And Nelson Lee had triumphed all along the line. The Silver Dwarf had given up its secret, the missing heir had been found, and Professor Mark Rymer was dead.

THE rest is soon told. Nearly a couple of months elapsed before Dick Seymour recovered from the effects of the terrible grueling he had received at Mark Rymer's hands. By that time the Silver Dwarf, together with its precious contents, had been taken from the strong room of the bank at Sydney, and had been sent to England. Lord Easington's confession, and the proofs of his secret marriage, were then submitted to the courts, and a formal application was made that Dick should be declared to be the late earl's son, and the heir to his title and estates.

The application was immediately granted, and before the end of the summer Dick Seymour was duly installed as the tenth Lord Easington. As soon as the requisite formalities had been complied with, he sought an interview with Mr. Pryde, and reminded him of his promise.

"An income of thirty thousand dollars a year was what you insisted I must have before you would give my consent to my marriage with your daughter," he said. "I haven't yet had time to ascertain the exact amount of my rent roll, but from what my lawyer tells me I rather think it will be well over a hundred thousand pounds a year. Is that enough?"

It was enough. Three months later Dick and Nellie were married at St. George's, Hanover Square. Nelson Lee, by special request, fulfilled the duties of best man, and to-day there is no more welcome visitor at Easington Towers, which has lately been restored to its former magnificence, than the brave detective to whom the youthful owner of that stately home is indebted for his title, his estates, his wife.

The Case of the Missing Heir was at an end, and Nelson Lee, after bidding farewell to the new Lord Easington, set out once more for St. Frank's.

THE END.

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